

Contribute New York
:the people and ideas of giving

the Contribute 200

Your Guide to Investor-Worthy Charities

As competition for your donor dollar gets stronger, *CONTRIBUTE* understands the value of charity accountability, transparency, and fundraising efficiency. To that end this holiday season, we offer you a ranking of 200 organizations, as measured in the *CONTRIBUTE GUIDE* since the launch of this magazine in April 2006. Twenty-five of the charities listed appear for the first time in this issue.

The Guide offers *CONTRIBUTE* readers a list of organizations in the New York/New Jersey/Connecticut area that are reviewed for financial best practices. Each of the charities reviewed by *CONTRIBUTE*, in addition to having 501(c)(3) federal tax-exempt status, has represented that a minimum of 70 percent of its budget goes to program services.

CONTRIBUTE's reviews provide information on each charity's program focus, sustainability, fundraising efficiency, and financial stability and shows which charities have obtained independent, certified audits. We do this using five consecutive years of the charity's financial information, based on its latest available public 990 federal tax returns.

Organizational information used in the Guide is verified through GuideStar, the New York Philanthropic Advisory Service of the Better Business Bureau, Charity Navigator, the New York Attorney

General's Office, the American Institute of Philanthropy, the Nonprofit Coordinating Committee of New York, the IRS database, and the charities themselves.

New this year are two additional methods of evaluating area nonprofits. First, we ranked organization performance in descending order within cause classifications, based on an aggregate of the five categories used to measure financial best practices (see "Methodology," as applicable).

Second, exemplary financial performance goes beyond revenues and cause categories and into how efficiently an organization acquires and spends the funds it has—regardless of how high or low the amounts. Therefore, we rank a number of these organizations based solely on their outstanding fiscal management abilities, regardless of cause classification. A key factor is program focus—the percentage of charity income that is spent on those

served. We recognize, however, that in the absence of industry standards, there is spirited debate over what constitutes optimal overhead expenses.

Additionally, as we move into a new year, it is important to note that financial information for the last five consecutive years has changed for the 125 nonprofits we measured from April 2006 through April 2007. Roughly 40 percent of that group maintained the same program focus, 37 percent gave more, and 24 percent gave less. Only two organizations, the Connecticut Zoological Society and North Shore Animal League, fell below the 70 percent *CONTRIBUTE* benchmark.

Finally, this summary is not meant to be a comprehensive rating of a charity's overall value, but instead, a tool for donors seeking to size up a group's fiscal management prowess. We welcome your input.

OVERALL TOP-RANKED NONPROFITS BY CAUSE

COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT & CIVIC

Mayor's Fund to Advance NYC

ANIMAL WELFARE

Central Westchester Humane Society

EDUCATION & LITERACY

TEAK Fellowship

ARTS & CULTURE

Jacob Burns Film Center

ENVIRONMENT & PARKS

Westchester Land Trust

CHILDREN & YOUTH

Fresh Youth Initiatives

HUMAN & SUPPORT SERVICES

Paterson Habitat for Humanity

HEALTH & MEDICAL

Young Survival Coalition

INTERNATIONAL

Asha for Education

RANK/ORGANIZATION	WEB SITE	PROGRAM FOCUS (%)	FUNDRAISING EFFICIENCY	SUSTAINABILITY	RESERVE FUNDS	INDEPENDENT, CERTIFIED AUDIT
1 Westchester Land Trust Conserves land in partnership with private property owners, helps communities create new parks and preserves, and works to foster sound land-use planning.	westchesterlandtrust.org	88	▲▲▲▲	●●●*	■	✓
2 New York Botanical Garden This center for plant research, with one of the world's largest collections of plants, also offers educational programs focused on gardening and horticulture.	nybg.org	73	▲▲	●●●*	■	✓
3 New Jersey Conservation Foundation Aims to preserve land and natural resources for the benefit and enjoyment of all.	njconservation.org	70	▲▲	●●●*	■	✓
4 Riverside Park Fund Works to improve New York's waterfront green space for the four miles along the Hudson River, from 62nd to 158th streets.	riversideparkfund.org	88	▲▲	●●●	■	✓
5 New Jersey Audubon Society Encourages New Jersey residents to care for the local environment and to protect the state's endangered birds, mammals, plants, and natural habitats.	njaudubon.org	85	▲▲	●●●*	■	✓
6 The Garden Conservancy Works to preserve exceptional American gardens for the public's education and enjoyment.	gardenconservancy.org	83	▲	●●●	■	✓
7 Mohonk Preserve, Inc. A mountain refuge for people and nature located two hours north of New York City in the Hudson Valley.	mohonkpreserve.org	75	▲	●●●*	■	✓
8 Upper Raritan Watershed Association Works to save and improve the environment of the Upper Raritan Watershed of New Jersey.	urwa.org	66	▲	●●●*	■	✓
9 Greenburgh Nature Center Works to educate and promote conservation, research, and appreciation of nature and the environment.	greenburghnaturecenter.org	79	▲▲▲	●	■	✓
10 New York City Audubon Works for the protection of wild birds and habitat in the five boroughs of New York City.	nycaudubon.org	79	▲	●●●	■	✓
11 The Battery Conservancy Works to rebuild and revitalize the Battery and Castle Clinton National Monument, Battery Park's major landmark.	thebattery.org	74	▲	●●●	■	✓
12 Prospect Park Alliance Works with the City of New York to restore, develop, and operate Brooklyn's Prospect Park for public use and enjoyment.	prospectpark.org	80	▲	●●●*	■	✓
13 The Connecticut Audubon Society, Inc. Conserves Connecticut's environment through science-based education/advocacy focused on bird populations and habitats.	ctaudubon.org	75	▲	●●●*	■	✓
14 Scenic Hudson Works to protect and restore the Hudson River.	scenichudson.org	73	▲	●●●*	■	✓
15 Riverkeeper Aims to protect the Hudson River and to safeguard New York City's and Westchester's drinking water supply.	riverkeeper.org	76	▲	●●	■	✓
16 Green Guerillas Works with hundreds of grass roots groups throughout New York City to strengthen underserved neighborhoods through community gardening.	greenguerillas.org	85	▲	●	■	✓
17 Keep America Beautiful Engages individuals in programs that prevent litter, reduce waste, and beautify communities.	kab.org	76	▲	●	■	✓

Ratings Methodology

1. Program Focus (program spending to total spending) is one ratio used to evaluate the performance of a charity. Expressed here as a numerical percentage, this figure shows what portion of the charity's spending goes directly to those served. While revenue represents the direct results of fundraising, not all funds may be used during the same fiscal year in which they were raised. Therefore, the percent of total spending used on programs, as opposed to revenue, is used as one measure of the effectiveness of a charity. For purposes of this evaluation, all revenue is considered to be the result of fundraising activity.

2. Fundraising Efficiency (total revenue to fundraising expense) is a measure of a charity's return on its fundraising efforts. It is comparable to a for-profit company's "return on investments." Since fundraising efforts are essentially "marketing" the charity for purposes of increasing revenue, this is one key way to rank the financial performance of a nonprofit company. This ratio indicates the return to the charity for every dollar spent on fundraising.

- ▲ Good: 15 and below
- ▲ ▲ Better: 16–30
- ▲ ▲ ▲ Best: 31 and over

3. Sustainability (end-of-year fund balances to annual expenses) is one measure of a charity's ability to survive and continue servicing its community in the event of a sudden interruption of funding. The ratio shows the number of years a charity can survive based on its current assets and spending. It is important for a charity to maintain some reserves to ensure that it is able to help those it serves in the face of a financial emergency, such as a sudden decline in funds.

- Good: 0–6 months
- ● Better: 6 months to 1 year
- ● ● Best: 1 year to 2 years

*As this ratio grows beyond 2 years, some ratings groups suggest the charity should be expanding its reach in the community and increasing its expenditures on programs.

4. Financial Stability (based on 5 years of balance sheets) is one measure of a charity's ability to operate in the black.

- Poor: 2 or more years of the last 5 years in the red
- ■ Fair: 1 of the last 5 years in the red
- ■ ■ Good: 5 of the last 5 years in the black

% Program Focus ▲ Fundraising Efficiency ● Sustainability (*See Ratings Methodology) ■ Financial Stability ✓ Independent Certified Audit