

6 Great Charities

New Charity Ratings Groups Focus on Finding the Best Nonprofits Instead of Simply Avoiding the Worst

December 1, 2010 – Looking for a great charity you can have confidence in? Some leading charity evaluators are here to help, recommending 6 great charities based on their extensive research processes.

Every holiday season, charities deluge people with phone calls, letters and fundraisers. Trying to separate the bad from the good, and the good from the best, is an overwhelming task.

Traditionally, "charity watchdogs" have focused on helping donors weed out frauds, focusing on financial metrics such as the overhead ratio (a measure of how much of each donation is spent on "programs" versus administrative and fundraising costs). But [a consensus in the philanthropy sector has emerged](#) that these financial metrics can be highly misleading, and can't tell you what's most important—whether a charity actually makes a difference.

To fill that gap, three newer groups—GiveWell, Philanthropedia and Root Cause—have taken a different approach. They focus on finding the best instead of just avoiding the worst. They aim to help donors take control of the giving process—actively trying to make a positive change, instead of just giving to whichever group happens to ask most loudly and persistently.

- GiveWell (www.givewell.org) analyzes hundreds of charities' evidence of effectiveness—as well as academic research on the problems they're trying to solve—and looks for groups that can show that they're making a difference.
- Philanthropedia (www.myphilanthropedia.org) identifies high-impact charities by crowdsourcing nonprofit analysis. Leveraging the wisdom of more than 1,400 experts, it provides reviews on 1,600 nonprofits across 15 causes.
- Root Cause's research department, Social Impact Research (www.socialimpactresearch.org), identifies best approaches to addressing social issues and recommends high performing nonprofits based on rigorous analysis.

To learn more about these charity evaluators and the nonprofits they recommend, donors can visit the websites listed above. For donors looking to give quickly and easily, these three groups have each named two of their favorites:

Guttmacher Institute – reproductive health, rights, and justice (recommended by Philanthropedia). Through its evidence-based research, policy analysis, and education, the Guttmacher Institute has made a major impact on the sexual and reproductive health field over the last 40 years. They produce trusted, scientific research that is made accessible to the public in a user friendly way through media kits and fact sheets.

Horizons for Homeless Children (HHC) – School Readiness (recommended by Root Cause). HHC partners with shelters to offer a comprehensive preschool program, a model that has the potential to greatly improve educational opportunities for one of our country's most

vulnerable populations. An investment in HHC goes to improving the lives of Boston-area homeless children and to advocacy efforts to spread its model nationwide.

National Skills Coalition – workforce development (recommended by Philanthropedia).

National Skills Coalition is the leading policy and advocacy group in the workforce arena because they help federal and state policy makers understand the need for material and political investment in low-income working adults by making community college educational reform and ‘middle-skill’ job training a priority issue.

Small Enterprise Foundation - microfinance (recommended by GiveWell). Microfinance has been the subject of great hopes (including a Nobel Peace Prize) and great controversy (including accusations of exploiting the poor). GiveWell's exhaustive review of the sector concludes that Small Enterprise Foundation, a small organization in South Africa, stands out for its focus on helping people make their lives better for the long term (not just the loan term).

StreetSquash (SS) – College Access and Success (recommended by Root Cause). By 2018, 63% of US jobs will require postsecondary education but only 39% of Americans hold a college degree. SS works to fill this gap by providing academic services and squash instruction to low-income, minority students in Harlem starting in 6th grade. SS's unique model enables youth to discover and achieve their academic and personal potential.

VillageReach - developing-world health (recommended by GiveWell). Vaccines are one of the cheapest ways to save lives, yet getting them out to the poorest villages has been a persistent challenge. VillageReach's pioneering, proven approach to logistics aims to revolutionize health systems worldwide, while saving thousands of lives in the meantime.

“These recommendations are based on smart analysis, which we think is essential to better philanthropy,” says Jacob Harold, Program Officer of the William and Flora Hewlett Foundation's Philanthropy Program.

Smart analysis reveals that these charities have more going for them than good intentions, and donors can have confidence that they are making a difference.

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