

“Charities of Choice”

If you’ve convinced yourself that it’s okay to do nothing more than sit on your front porch this summer, soaking up the shade with a glass of orange juice and a portable fan, you are probably not alone. But who says that the “season of giving” has to be limited to the winter holidays?

In fact, during this summer’s brightest days, many of our neighbors’ lives will be eclipsed by the shadow of need. That shadow could come in the form of a lack of food, shelter, safety, or nurturing. It might materialize as illiteracy, disability, or the loneliness that comes when one is elderly and alone.

Our community and the state of Florida are blessed, however, with organizations and agencies dedicated to meeting the most critical needs of our neighbors. Countless Floridians depend on groups such as the Salvation Army, the American Red Cross, and the United Way. In turn, many of these organizations depend on various government funding streams to carry out their missions and enhance the lives of the people they serve.

Yet as Mother Nature will confirm, some streams eventually dry up. Florida’s budget is ever-growing, with education, healthcare, public safety, and environmental preservation programs all projected to consume growing numbers of state dollars in the future. Many not-for-profits receive their funding from the same pot of money, requiring entities to compete for funding. We remain committed to providing meaningful support to the agencies that serve so many of our most vulnerable citizens, as most not-for-profits try to refrain from relying solely on government funding for their day-to-day operations.

That is why I encourage you to embrace a “Charity of Choice.” By narrowing your focus to one not-for-profit organization in our community, you will help to solidify that organization’s very foundation. Ultimately, it will develop the ability to thrive on a lesser amount of government assistance.

To achieve this goal, not-for-profits will depend on volunteers more than ever, because they will have a dual objective: to raise more money via private and community donations, and to depend less on government assistance. Area charitable organizations may increasingly count on volunteers such as you to perform a variety of services. Not-for-profits might also look for innovative fundraising techniques, actively seek grants, and solicit donations from area businesses and individuals. The bottom line is this: these efforts will allow local not-for-profit agencies to gradually become less dependent on the government to secure their funding.

Our community’s charitable organizations should be proud of the high level of services that they provide. I have no doubt that with dedicated volunteers willing to adopt a “Charity of Choice,” the help of community outreach efforts, and the creation of

alternative, innovative funding sources, the agencies in our community will continue to provide top-notch services to the individuals and families they serve.

So while we might traditionally find ourselves in the giving spirit during the winter holidays, let's take this opportunity to brave the summer heat, get out into our community, and take some action. And remember: while it may seem like another clear, sunny day to you or me, it might not be so bright for someone else.

For a list of organizations who can become your "Charity of Choice", please dial 2-1-1 or visit one of the following websites; www.211.org or www.tccc.info.