

## How Not to Make Donations

I hate charities.

More precisely, I hate the fact that charities need to exist. In my fantasy world where I am the benevolent dictator, everyone's needs are met by my government, and we don't have to decide which of the desperately underfunded charities we're going to donate to each year.

I'm reluctant to admit that my decisions about which ones make my cut are shockingly random. There are several to which I consistently contribute, and many more that may or may not receive my support (unfortunately) based on how much I know about them and how generous I feel at the precise moment I open their mail.

If I don't throw away the solicitation letter at home, I'll take it to work and toss it on my desk. The next time it works its way to the top of one of my numerous paper piles I'll probably send them a check - unless I'm really busy that day, in which case they'll hit the trash can anyway.

It rankles me that I don't have a better system. Fortunately, the bulk of my donations are made through the United Way, which is gearing up for its fall campaign. I've supported them for decades, mostly because I like all the agencies they support, and they have a pretty good system that evaluates the programs and dictates how much goes to whom. Or, you can direct the funds to whatever agency you prefer.

The haphazardness of my "system" is introduced when I'm deciding which United Way charities deserve additional funds and which non-United Way agencies I want to support. The more I know about each of them, the harder it is to ignore their appeal letters.

That's why I've already committed to Iowa Touchdowns for Kids, a relatively new fundraising event for the UI Children's Hospital. Not that this group sends out appeal letters anyway - they have no budget and no paid staff, just a lot of volunteers and enthusiasm.

Hopefully you've already heard of them. Do-gooders like you and I are encouraged to pledge \$1 (or more!) for each touchdown the Iowa football team scores during its regular 2010 season. Last year they managed 32, to give you a feel for it.

Hawkeye football is one of my few guilty pleasures, so I figure I may as well tie it into something productive. I'm looking forward to seeing messages on the Kinnick Jumbotron after every touchdown which celebrate the amount of money that was instantly raised – the lofty goal is to reach \$50,000 per TD.

Hereabouts, most folks are well acquainted with Iowa football but maybe not so much with the UI Children's Hospital. If you're lucky, that is – most pediatric patients and their families who are there would rather be almost anywhere else.

You may not be aware that we probably have the best children's hospital in the country that doesn't have its own freestanding building – something the UI hopes to remedy eventually. Preliminary plans place it just across the street and overlooking Kinnick Stadium.

If you're infused with the Hawkeye spirit but haven't quite pulled the trigger on this event yet, go to [www.iowatouchdownsforkids.com](http://www.iowatouchdownsforkids.com) and sign up - there are almost 300 individuals and businesses that have made pledges so far. While you're at it, become a Facebook fan of the Iowa Touchdowns for Kids site – there are more than 1100 of us and that number is growing quickly.

We have only three weeks left until our opening home game against Eastern Illinois, so why not make a shockingly random charitable decision today that you'll feel good about - win or lose - every Saturday for the next few months? GO HAWKS!