

The Center For Consumer Freedom®

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Gayle Goodson Butler
Editor in Chief
Better Homes and Gardens
1716 Locust Street
Des Moines, IA 50309

Dear Ms. Butler:

I was extremely disappointed to read that you listed the Humane Society of the United States (HSUS) as a charity worth donating to in the October issue's "Between Friends" essay. While HSUS puts on an extremely good marketing campaign, a number of independent charity watchdogs have raised questions about the group's operations.

The respected American Institute of Philanthropy has consistently given HSUS a "D" grade in its tri-annual watchdog report of America's charities. These low marks are due to HSUS's relatively high fundraising costs coupled to its relatively low program spending.

Additionally, *Animal People News*, a newspaper of the animal rights movement, publishes a yearly watchdog report. In its new report, the paper finds that 43 percent of HSUS's budget goes to overhead costs. A good nonprofit, however, is expected to spend no more than 35 percent of its budget on overhead. (The difference is huge in a \$120 million budget.)

Your article, though short, could have been a good opportunity to dispel some of the common misconceptions about HSUS. According to recent public polling, 71 percent of Americans think HSUS is a pet-shelter "umbrella group" (it's not); 63 percent think their local humane society is affiliated with HSUS (it isn't); and 59 percent believe that HSUS gives most of its money to local organizations that shelter pets (it doesn't).

This last one is especially important. Americans shouldn't be under mistaken pretenses about where their donations are going. While they think donations to HSUS largely go toward the care of pets, HSUS shares less than 1 percent of its budget with pet shelters.

In fact, our analysis of HSUS tax returns determined that since 1998 the organization has put more money into its executive pension plan than it has put it into pet-shelter grants. HSUS also regularly spends more on lobbying than it does on donations to pet shelters.

You may have already heard from subscribers who are similarly disappointed. There are many animal lovers who are distraught at the way HSUS raises and spends money while hiding a radical animal-rights agenda from the public.

I invite you to write about HSUS again in your next column—with a more in-depth look at the organization and why it's so controversial. And in its stead, I'd ask that you consider promoting hardworking local humane societies that do provide care to millions of animals.

Sincerely,

Rick Berman
Executive Director