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## Charitable Bang Per Buck Biggest Here

The Tampa Tribune

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The Community Foundation of Tampa Bay is now ranked as one of the most efficient charities in the country.

"We don't do galas. We don't do golf tournaments," explains the foundation's president and CEO, David Fischer. "Our money comes in and stays."

Charity Navigator, the nation's largest charity watchdog, ranks the Tampa-based foundation among the nation's 10 "slam-dunk" charities. Nonprofits on the list are so efficient that donors know they can't possibly miss.

No other charity in Florida qualified as a slam-dunk. Unfortunately, some of the state's nonprofits did show up on the list of least-efficient charities. Leading the dogs was the National Save the Sea Turtle Foundation of Fort Lauderdale.

A good measure of a charity's effectiveness is how much it spends on administration and fundraising. Tampa's Community Foundation spends a mere 1.8 percent on administration and 1.7 percent on fundraising, which leaves almost all its resources to fulfill its mission of connecting "donors who care with causes that matter."

In contrast, the sea turtle effort spends 95.2 percent on fundraising and administration. For every dollar you give, the sea turtles get less than a nickel, the numbers show.

One reason the Community Foundation's efficiency is so high is because it gets free help from local lawyers, accountants and money managers who put potential donors in touch with the foundation. There are virtually no fundraising costs.

The donors can see how their money is being used and gauge the impact for themselves. Ideas that don't work can be dropped with no bureaucratic foot-dragging.

The same model is used by some 700 other community foundations nationwide. Many of them have a big head start on our 18-year-old foundation, and are now in their third generation of philanthropists. That raises the question of why Tampa's tops the chart in efficiency.

Fischer, a former mayor of St. Petersburg, explains: "They have big headquarters. My theory is, we want to have the appearance of stability, but don't want to look pretentious. The donors appreciate that. We're very frugal."

Donors also appreciate that the foundation respects their privacy and doesn't sell their names to other fundraisers.

The Tampa-based foundation has affiliated divisions in Sun City Center, Pasco and Hernando counties, and St. Petersburg. They are managed by volunteer boards, and Fischer's main office takes care of administration, allowing them to operate with no overhead.

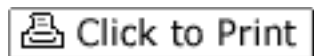
The foundation's assets have grown by \$50 million in the past four years. It now has about \$140 million, and manages endowments for more than 100 local nonprofits.

It has become a community treasure with the potential to keep giving forever.

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