

Where Humane Society Donations Really Go

From www.ajc.com

Posted: 4:03 pm EDT May 14, 2009 Updated: 6:50 pm EDT May 14, 2009

ATLANTA -- A Channel 2 investigation is looking into millions of dollars in donations given to the Humane Society of the United States. A national consumer organization says the society solicits pet-lovers for money, but little to none of that money ever goes to help local shelters.

WEB EXTRA: [Humane Society Statement](#)

Critics tell Channel 2 Action News reporter Amanda Rosseter that this isn't just consumers misunderstanding who they are giving to -- but an organization actively misleading donors to get money. "They do their marketing very well, that's for sure," said Trey Burley of PAWS Atlanta. Critics say the national organization takes advantage of people who think they are giving to local shelters. DeKalb's "PAWS" shelter says there is no regular funding help from the \$100 million HSUS budget. "I think that some of the folks who donate to the national organization may be under the false pretense that that money is going to a local cause," said Burley. While the HSUS does work to stop puppy mills, it also gets media coverage and donations doing it. But the puppies then go to local shelters who have to pay and care for them. "They may initialize the resources for a rescue, but again the animals go to a shelter somewhere in the country," said Richard Rice, VP of the Atlanta Humane Society. Critics said HSUS also takes advantage of high-profile events. After hurricane Katrina, HSUS CEO Wayne Pacelle promised on national TV to reunite pets with their owners -- and raised \$34 million for the cause. But public disclosures of where that money went add up to less than \$7 million. The Louisiana attorney general launched an 18-month-long investigation, and then ended it, when HSUS offered to build the state a new shelter. The HSUS annual report for 2007 showed \$120 million in revenue, including \$5.4 million just from online donors. Then there's \$112 million in expenses -- most of which appears to have gone to legislation for animal rights bills. The list includes raccoons, mice, wild horses, burros and primates. The center for consumer freedom says all worthy causes, but HSUS shouldn't mislead to get money. So where does all the money go? "It goes to lobbying, it goes to political contributions, it goes to pay huge staff salaries and benefits," said David Martosko with Center for Consumer Freedom. Channel 2 Action News went to a local HSUS meeting to find out. The two hour discussion was about activist plans and lobbying. The Georgia director for the HSUS agrees that's mostly what she does. "I think that in all of our literature, it is very explicit as to what our campaigns are and what we are doing," said Cheryl McAuliffe, Georgia Director for HSUS. "We help where we can and focus on our programs, which are national and international." McAuliffe said there are just too many local shelters to help. "I always tell people, contribute to your local shelter first," said McAuliffe. When asked how much her budget is for the state of Georgia, McAuliffe said she didn't have a budget and neither did other states. McAuliffe said all money is controlled from headquarters in Washington, D.C. HSUS later contacted Channel 2 about their work during hurricane Katrina. They say all of the money they collected has been spent since the initial crisis on helping Katrina families and pets.

Copyright 2009 by [WSBTV.com](http://www.WSBTV.com). All rights reserved. This material may not be published,