

MANAGING YOUR MONEY

Making Giving A Part Of Your Budget

(NAPSA)—Americans gave nearly \$300 billion to charitable causes in 2006, with more than \$225 billion coming from individual donors. According to Giving USA, the average gift per household was about \$1,620, or just over three percent of annual income.

If you want to join the millions of Americans who contribute to a charitable cause, consider the following tips on incorporating giving into your budget:

- **Every bit counts.** For most nonprofit organizations, any amount you can afford to give is encouraged—and appreciated. Contact the charity of your choice to discuss how a donation of any size can be most effectively used to help make a difference in your community.

- **Budget charitable giving.** Treat your philanthropic activities just as you would other financial obligations. You can schedule the payments to be deducted automatically from your checking account.

- **Consider a write-in.** Even though solicitation forms sent out by most nonprofit organizations give suggested donation amounts, you can write in an amount that fits your budget.

- **Know how much of your donation is tax-deductible.** For gifts of less than \$250, a canceled check or credit card statement is sufficient for IRS requirements to receive a tax deduction; a properly worded receipt is required for larger gifts. Also, if you receive something in exchange for a donation—at a silent auction, for instance—your tax deduction is reduced by the fair market value of the premium.

- **Research matching donations.** Many employers match gifts



Many employers now match charitable donations made by their employees. You can also have donations deducted automatically from a checking account.

made by their employees, and some larger donors challenge others with pledges of matching gifts during a certain time frame (often at the end of the year). If you're interested in a particular nonprofit, subscribe to its e-newsletter and/or mailing list, which regularly contains information on matching opportunities.

One well-known local bank, SunTrust, is currently offering new and existing clients the opportunity to have \$100 donated to their favorite charity or to receive a \$50 gift card for their own cause. To take advantage of this opportunity, the clients must open a new personal or business checking account during the promotion period (Aug. 6-Oct. 12), accept a new SunTrust Visa® Check Card, make any purchase with the new card, and complete and submit an online redemption form by November 15, 2007. Clients can make sure their favorite charity is eligible by visiting suntrust.com/mycause.

Learn more at suntrust.com/mycause and givingusa.org.