



PRESS RELEASE

Attorney General Frosh Announces Multistate Settlement with Healing Heroes Network *Organization Solicited Donations under the Premise of Helping Wounded Veterans*

BALTIMORE, MD (January 12, 2021) – Maryland Attorney General Brian E. Frosh, along with 10 other state states, today announced a settlement with Florida-based veterans’ charity Healing Heroes Network, Inc. and its former directors, Stacey Spiegel, Allan Spiegel and Neal Spiegel. Also part of the settlement is Hero Giveaways, LLC, a business formed by Stacey Spiegel and Neal Spiegel after Healing Heroes Network, Inc. became the subject of a multistate investigation into its use of deceptive charitable solicitations including misleading sweepstakes mailers and a telemarketing campaign.

The investigation revealed that Maryland donors contributed an estimated \$146,576 between 2014 and 2018 as a result of deceptive sweepstakes mailers and telephone solicitations. The organization promised to use donations to help wounded veterans of the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan receive medical treatments that the Department of Veterans Affairs did not readily provide. The charity also falsely claimed on social media in 2016 and 2017 that the charity dedicated 100% of proceeds to wounded veterans. The investigation revealed that very little of the charitable contributions received by the Healing Heroes Network, Inc. were used to further this charitable mission. Instead, donations were used to pay professional fundraisers, on-line advertising fees, the salaries of Stacey Spiegel and her son, Neal Spiegel, and to purchase t-shirts from another family member’s t-shirt business.

“The Speigels preyed upon consumers’ compassion and desire to help veterans in need,” said Attorney General Frosh. “Instead, they used the money they collected to enrich themselves. They hurt legitimate charitable organizations by siphoning off support from their good work. We remain committed to putting these types of fraudsters out of business.”

“Once again, we have ended another scheme that exploited Maryland donors’ goodwill and generosity,” said Maryland Secretary of State John C. Wobensmith. “This case reminds all of us to remain vigilant when solicited for a donation by mail or telephone. Take the time to ask questions about how your money will be used, and research a charity’s claims before donating.”

The settlement announced today requires Healing Heroes Network, Inc. and Hero Giveaways, LLC to permanently cease all charitable solicitations, and Stacey Spiegel, Allan Spiegel and Neal Spiegel have agreed to pay \$95,000. The money will go to a veterans’ charity whose

mission matches the representations made by Healing Heroes. Stacey Spiegel, Allan Spiegel and Neal Spiegel are also subject to a five-year ban from overseeing, managing, or soliciting charitable contributions for any nonprofit organization.

This action is part of Operation Donate With Honor, a nationwide consumer protection law enforcement sweep to combat veterans' fundraising fraud through education and enforcement. Operation Donate with Honor was coordinated in 2018 by the Federal Trade Commission and the National Association of State Charities Officials, to target fraudulent charities affecting veterans and groups that claimed to be using their donations to help America's former servicemen and women, but were in fact designed primarily to enrich the charities' founders and professional fundraisers.

In addition to Maryland, the settlement was joined by the states of California, Florida, Illinois, Minnesota, Missouri, New Mexico, Ohio, Oregon, the Commonwealth of Virginia, and Washington.

When donating, please consider the following tips to help ensure your money goes to the charitable purpose you intend.

- When you receive a request to donate money, ask questions.
 - Ask for the charity's name and web address.
 - Where is its physical location, phone number, and types of programs run by the charity?
 - How much of the donated money supports the programs you want to support?

If the charity is unwilling to answer your questions, that is a red flag.

- Research before you give. Search the charity's name online with the words "scam" or "complaint," and check the following resources for information about the charity:
 - Look up the charity's name on [Maryland's Charity Database](#) to ensure that they are registered and in compliance with any applicable reporting requirements.
 - Charity Watch is available at <https://www.charitywatch.org>
 - Charity Navigator is available at <https://www.charitynavigator.org>
 - BBB Wise Giving Alliance is available at <https://give.org>
- Avoid paying with cash, gift cards, or wire transfers. Payment by these methods is difficult to track and therefore, difficult to recover. Consider donating by using a credit card, which tends to be more secure and trackable.
- Be sure you know and trust the professional fundraiser who offers to send a courier to pick up a check or cash donation.
- Don't be swayed by the name of the charity alone. Often, charity names are selected to have an emotional impact on specific groups of donors. For example, many veterans' charity names often include "veterans," "heroes," "wounded," "injured," and "warriors." This doesn't always mean the charity will donate to the named groups or prioritize this group above others. Do your research.
- If you have questions about information that appears on Maryland's Charity Database or wish to report suspicious fundraising activity, you can contact the Charitable Organizations Division, Office of the Secretary of State, 16 Francis Street, Annapolis, Maryland 21401, 410-974-5534 / 800-825-4510 or submit a complaint online at <https://sos.maryland.gov/Charity/Pages/Concern.aspx/>

The Maryland Attorney General's Office publishes the Maryland Veterans Resource Guide with additional information for veterans and their families:

http://www.marylandattorneygeneral.gov/Pages/Maryland_Veterans_Resource_Guide.pdf