



JACQUELINE A. SEABROOKS, CHIEF OF POLICE  
SANTA MONICA POLICE DEPARTMENT

# Press Release

## Three Men Charged In Santa Monica Charity Scam

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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On November 26, 2012, after a joint investigation between the Santa Monica Police Department and the Santa Monica City Attorney's Consumer Protection Unit, three individuals who were allegedly posing as charitable solicitors on the Third Street Promenade were arrested after they were observed displaying false credentials and soliciting patrons for cash donations for organizations such as the AIDS Health Foundation and Another Chance Ministry.

The suspects are identified as 56-year-old Rodney Muhammad of Compton, 53-year-old Derek Haskins of Los Angeles and 53-year-old Jerry White of Santa Monica.

The Santa Monica City Attorney's Consumer Protection Unit filed a criminal complaint against the three defendants, charging each of them with theft by false pretenses, identity theft, false advertising, forgery of a government seal, and aggressive panhandling. The defendants were arraigned yesterday in the Los Angeles County Superior Court LAX Division on the above charges. A pretrial conference has been scheduled for January 8, 2013.

The Santa Monica Police Department and the City Attorney's Office urges caution when making charitable donations. "Consumers should take the time to research any charity before making a donation," said Deputy City Attorney Gary Rhoades. "Don't make a donation on the street without first calling the organization and verifying that the solicitor is legitimate. You should also check online to make sure the organization itself is legit."

Some tips for charitable giving:

1. Call the charity directly and make sure the solicitor is legitimate.
2. Find out what percentage of donations actually goes to the cause, as opposed to administration and paying the solicitors. (By law, charities are required to disclose this information.)
3. When solicited for charity, learn about the organization, its activities and fundraising practices.
4. Ask for written information.
5. Watch out for copycat scams. Some questionable organizations use names that closely resemble those of well-established charitable organizations.

This investigation is ongoing and any consumers who have given money to these individuals or have additional information should contact the City Attorney's Consumer Affairs Specialist Paula Rockenstein at (310) 458-8364 or Santa Monica Police Detective Robert D'Andrea at (310) 458-2201 ext. 6679.

If you wish to remain anonymous, you can call WeTip at 1-800-78-CRIME (1-800-78-27463), or submit the tip online at [www.wetip.com](http://www.wetip.com). You will remain completely anonymous and may be eligible for a reward, up to \$1,000.00, if your information leads to an arrest and conviction.

Anonymous tipsters may also contact Crime Stoppers at (800) 222-TIPS (8477) or [www.lacrimestoppers.org](http://www.lacrimestoppers.org). To text an anonymous tip to Crime Stoppers; please view their webpage for detailed instructions. If the information leads to an arrest, the tipster is eligible to receive a reward of up to \$1, 000.00.

