Give because you want to

To the editor: About this time each year appeals rapidly begin to appear in our mailboxes, asking us to give more to charities like the United Way or directly to deserving nonprofits. Those making the appeals often resort to tried and true techniques to get our attention.

The experts on "framing" tell us to make the appeal human or vivid by repeating a moving story. One letter's focus might be on a food pantry meeting the needs of hungry children, while another might focus on a family whose unemployment benefits have run out. Other experts on framing advise establishing a baseline of knowledge involving hard data such as the latest dismal statistic on the jobless recovery or that 93 percent of donors surveyed indicate they will definitely scale back their giving this year.

So for the curious, watch how the spinners experiment with appeals to bring you the truth about the desperate situation that many of our citizens are experiencing in the wake of this recession. My advice: Contribute to whatever seems the most important cause and to groups where your dollars can have real impact. And yes, it is OK to support causes that tug at your heartstrings, but here is the bottom line: Give as generously as you can, especially this year. Defy those dire predictions that even those who have resources are hunkering down.

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