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List of Schiavo Donors Will Be Sold by Direct-Marketing Firm

By DAVID D. KIRKPATRICK and JOHN SCHWARTZ
Correction Appended

WASHINGTON, March 28 - The parents of Terri Schiavo have authorized a conservative direct-mailing firm to sell a list of their financial supporters, making it likely that thousands of strangers moved by her plight will receive a steady stream of solicitations from anti-abortion and conservative groups.

"These compassionate pro-lifers donated toward Bob Schindler's legal battle to keep Terri's estranged husband from removing the feeding tube from Terri," says a description of the list on the Web site of the firm, Response Unlimited, which is asking $150 a month for 6,000 names and $500 a month for 4,000 e-mail addresses of people who responded last month to an e-mail plea from Ms. Schiavo's father. "These individuals are passionate about the way they value human life, adamantly oppose euthanasia and are pro-life in every sense of the word!"

Privacy experts said the sale of the list was legal and even predictable, if ghoulish.

"I think it's amusing," said Robert Gellman, a privacy and information policy consultant. "I think it's absolutely classic America. Everything is for sale in America, every type of personal information."

Executives of Response Unlimited declined to comment. Gary McCullough, director of the Christian Communication Network and a spokesman for Ms. Schiavo's parents, confirmed that Mr. Schindler had agreed to let Response Unlimited rent out the list as part of a deal for the firm to send an e-mail solicitation raising money on the family's behalf.
The Schindlers have waged a lengthy legal battle against their son-in-law Michael Schiavo to prevent the removal of the feeding tube from their daughter, who doctors say is in a persistent vegetative state.

Mr. McCullough said he was present when Mr. Schindler agreed to the arrangement in a conversation with Phil Sheldon, the co-founder of a conservative online marketing organization, RightMarch.com, who acted as a broker for Response Unlimited.

"So the Schindlers do know the details," Mr. McCullough said on Monday. How much attention they paid to the matter is hard to assess, he added. "The Schindlers right now know that their daughter is starving to death, and if I ask about anything else, they say, 'I don't want to hear about it.'"

Direct mail and mass e-mailings are ubiquitous fund-raising tools of interest groups on the left as well as the right, and others in the direct-mail business defended the sale of lists like the roster of donors to the Schindlers as a useful way for potential donors to learn of causes that might appeal to them.

Pamela Hennessy, an unpaid spokeswoman for the Schindlers, said she was initially appalled when she learned of the list's existence.

"It is possibly the most distasteful thing I have ever seen," Ms. Hennessy said. "Everybody is making a buck off of her."

Ms. Hennessy, who operates the Schindlers' Web site, www.terrisfight.org, said the family had not released any of the names or e-mail addresses gathered there. "Obviously these people are enterprising, and they are taking advantage of this very desperate father," she said.

On Sunday, as the Schindlers gave up on their legal battle and their daughter passed her 10th day without food, others continued to rally supporters and solicit money in an effort to restore the feeding tube.

"This time, we have a real chance to break through the 'roadblocks' that the enemies of life have been putting up in front of us," said a mass e-mailing from RightMarch.com, asking supporters to urge Gov. Jeb Bush to intervene somehow.
The message added: "We're asking you to give a donation to help with our activism efforts to save Terri's life. Battles cost money; resources cost money; media costs money; we could go on, but you get the picture."

Mr. Sheldon - whose father, the Rev. Lou Sheldon, founder of the Traditional Values Coalition, has also sent appeals urging support for Ms. Schiavo - apparently played a dual role as a partner in RightMarch.com, which is working with the anti-abortion activist Randall Terry, and as a broker for Response Unlimited. Mr. Sheldon did not respond to phone calls yesterday.

"I think it sounds a little unusual right now because of the situation where she is in the process of dying," said Richard Viguerie, another major conservative direct-mail operator. "If you came across this information six months or a year from now, I don't think you would give it too much thought."

**Correction Tuesday, April 5, 2005**

An article last Tuesday about the decision by the parents of Terri Schiavo to let a conservative direct-mailing firm sell a list of their financial supporters referred incorrectly to the price the firm would charge. It is $150 per thousand names or e-mail addresses, not $150 a month for all of them. (The list consists of 6,000 names and 4,000 e-mail addresses.)