

Editorial: Connecticut Nature Center navigates storm over Monsanto contribution, says don't blacklist corp donors

The Denison Pequotsepos Nature Center in Mystic deserves a chance to utilize its new policy for the acceptance of corporate gifts. Some activists, however, want a definitive declaration that it will not have any association with the Monsanto, the powerful international agrochemical and biotechnology corporation.

The controversy began when the private, nonprofit nature center accepted a \$5,000 gift from Monsanto to fund a school program, "Plants & Pollinators: Perfect Partners," that taught first-graders about bees, butterflies and bats.

Monsanto may hold the title as the most controversial publicly traded American corporation. It is also among the most successful. Declaring no donations will be accepted from the company may make critics feel good, but it's not sound policy.

Monsanto is neither the evil empire depicted by its critics nor the benevolent company using science to feed the world, as portrayed in its marketing campaigns. It is a corporation focused on maximizing profit.

Given such controversy surrounding Monsanto, the nature center is not reapplying for the grant. Its new policy "encourage(s) gift-making that promotes our mission, programs and reputation." The executive director and advancement chair must preapprove a potential donor's gifts if there is a potential conflict with the nature center's image or mission, according to the rules change.

A petition with 150 signatures demands more – a ban on any "alliance" with Monsanto. The approach by the board of trustees is the better option for a couple of reasons. The actions of the donor, not its name or reputation, should drive the organization's decision to seek or accept a gift. Blacklisting a particular company would invite demands for adding others to the list.

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