

Giving begins at (the) home(page)

Local news and charities

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Abstract

This paper considers the ways in which local news outlets have operated as important conduits for charitable works in their communities (with a focus on Toronto), and how this role may be changing alongside the restructuring of the local news ecosystem. A short history of news publishers as reporters and publicists of charities are examined. As well, a consideration of the ways in which some outlets created their own charitable campaigns such as summer camp funds, Christmas toy drives, and food bank collections is included. Among the hypotheses suggested is the possibility that newspapers lent legitimacy to religious organizations by supporting charitable works before serving as a pivot point for the creation of a secular welfare state. And finally, that local news outlets are now using philanthropic projects in part to shore up their own status as community actors while preserving their consumer base.

Keywords

local news, charity, newspapers, journalism

Introduction

Public journalism long has served neighbourhoods as a key generator of social networks, capital, and civic engagement. As part of local community life, charities and volunteer organizations are also obvious players in these sectors. Traditionally, charitable works have intersected with news outlets in their roles as instigators,

motivators, conduits, and watchdogs.

Current research into generosity sometimes involves journalistic reporting: How are natural disasters and relief efforts covered (Waters, 2013; Weberling, 2009)? How do celebrities influence giving (Cloud, 2014)? What effect does reporting on fraud have on giving (Carman, 2011)?

Not as much attention has been given to the relationship of journalistic organizations to forms of generosity (including foundations created by news owners), as well as the alliance of news outlets with religious and secular charities and foundations. And yet the paths connecting local charities and news are myriad: awareness and fundraising campaigns, foundations, telethons, community event listings, and even obituaries suggesting preferred destinations for charitable donations.

To what extent are generous initiatives by local news organizations about having one's brand in the public sphere and building audiences (including basic literacy campaigns), versus uplifting the community and/or hewing to the agenda pursued by the editorial pages? How do local news outlets and associated charities operate as social symbols of belonging and community cohesion?

Research into news and generosity must consider the relationship of individual to group activity as well as the anonymous versus the identified action. If Basil is correct that in comparison to Americans, Canadians tend to adopt more collectivist than individual outlooks when choosing where to spend their charitable dollars, news outlets may perform an important function for rallying and consolidating public agendas (Basil, 2007). And the idea that even anonymous communication between potential recipients and a donor results in larger donations than without communication (Mohlin & Johannesson, 2008) is a tantalizing suggestion of the importance of news stories with respect to occasioning generosity.

In this paper, I examine some ways in which the worlds of local journalism and local charities have connected, and suggest how the evolution of technology and business models for journalism may alter these relationships. If local news organizations as they have existed for centuries falter, what will this mean for the generosity they both actively and indirectly influence?

Defining charity and generosity

In this consideration of local news and generosity, while some charities which are included may be national or international in scope (e.g. the Canadian Red Cross, Médecins Sans Frontières), the emphasis will be on activities which support local communities, or where local communities are engaged in fundraising for projects and organizations which may be extra-local.

It is also important to define what kinds of activity are being described as “charities” or forms of “generosity.” [The Science of Generosity Project](#) uses generosity to describe: “the virtue of giving good things to others freely and abundantly.” These things can include: money, possessions, time, attention, aid, encouragement, emotional availability, and more (University of Notre Dame, n.d.). This definition covers the kinds of things local news does with respect to media sponsorships for community organizations (time, possessions in terms of space and air time, encouragement), the coverage of events and projects (attention), as well as direct campaigns like toy drives (money, possessions, aid). The Science of Generosity Project notes that generosity “is not identical to pure altruism, since people can be authentically generous in part for reasons that serve their own interests as well as those of others. Indeed, insofar as generosity is a virtue, to practice it for the good of others also necessarily means that doing so achieves one’s own true, long-term good as well.” For our purposes here, receiving a financial benefit from practising generosity does not change the generous act. Cooperating in generous ways can be a “win-win” for news outlets as well as local communities.

Morality and money: The historical connection between charity and newspaper circulation

The history of American newspaper charitable campaigns suggests that some winners, however, are bigger than others. The economically dire late 1890s in New York occasioned an entanglement of charity, public morality, and circulation wars. In 1893, Joseph Pulitzer’s *World* established a Free Bread Fund, with wagons featuring the paper’s logo working their way through streets. Free loaves, creating what would become known as a “bread river,” were given away with no investigation into individual need. The costs were covered by public fundraising drives tied to sentimental (and often sensational) stories of individual distress. Follow-up stories were written by reporters including the famous muckraker Nellie Bly. Not to be outdone, the *New York Herald* started a clothing fund (Burrows & Wallace, 1999).

But this approach to assisting people suffering from unemployment came under scrutiny by social workers of the time. They worried about the power wielded by the newspapers as the source of the generosity while also the purveyors of human interest “sob” stories. The additional shame of publicity for those already made vulnerable by poverty was an issue, as was the idea of “amateur” journalists stepping into the social work role of organized charities (Burgess, 1962).

Another source of criticism came from a competing newspaper, the *Tribune*. The *Tribune* also channeled charitable donations from their readers to the needy via a Coal and Food Fund, but they were adamant that recipients would be vetted to make sure that only the truly poor were receiving aid. The *Tribune* published accounts of such fact finding “investigations” aimed at rooting out cheats (Burrows & Wallace, 1999, p. 1189). Later, in 1916, a *Tribune* editor confessed that at least some motivation for their Coal and Food Fund was based on a desire to increase the paper’s circulation.

Despite the hype, less than 4 per cent of aid during the winter of 1893–94 came from newspaper funds (Burgess, 1962). However, it is not clear what the newspapers did for other charities by highlighting need.

While bread rivers and coal funds don’t exist today, Fresh Air Funds have continued as one of the most visible and popular connections between local news and local charities. The first began in 1877, created by a minister in rural Pennsylvania. Rather than directly benefiting those in his own church, the program encouraged congregants to host needy New York City children for a country vacation in the “fresh air.” This outreach to those living in unhealthy conditions in city tenements quickly took off, and according to the Fresh Air Fund, “by 1881, the work of The Fresh Air Fund was expanding so rapidly that Reverend Parsons asked for and secured support from *The New York Tribune*. By 1888, The Fresh Air Fund was incorporated as ‘The Tribune Fresh Air Fund Aid Society.’ Today, [The Fresh Air Fund](#) continues to benefit from the support of the media with invaluable assistance from *The New York Times*” (The Fresh Air Fund, 2017).

In Toronto, similar desperate social situations were present, and Joseph Atkinson of the *Toronto Star* [responded in similar ways](#). The *Star*’s FAQ page for the fund describes “Holy Joe” Atkinson in 1901, strolling through the hot city, and, realizing that poor children needed a respite, he set up the paper’s Fresh Air Fund. Interestingly, there is no mention of publisher Atkinson being inspired by the funds set up earlier south of the border (*Star* Staff, n.d.).

Sentiment and the need for public acknowledgement

As with the food, clothing, and coal fundraising drives, money was and continues to be raised from readers via stories about children in difficult situations who benefit from a healthy vacation. These sentimental stories may occasion donors to give, but they also construct and reinforce a narrative about unhealthy cities versus the healthy countryside/woods. A 2016 story from the *Hamilton Spectator* featured kids from the Bronx coming to rural southern Ontario for their Fresh Air holiday (OpHardt, 2016):

“There's, like, no stuff on the floor. New York has so much pollution, you don't even want to know!” an animated Tomi shouts, exploding with energy after running into the arms of his host family who eagerly awaited his arrival in a Grimsby parking lot. (...)

“My first Fresh Air child had never seen a lawn mower before, and had never seen the stars,” said volunteer Jeanette Murphy. But Fresh Air has become about more than just stars, grass and open spaces.

They form bonds with these families and they grow up together.

While this story identifies a number of the host families as well as the children receiving generous hospitality, donors to the fund are no longer named in the front-page manner of the past. However, the *Toronto Star*, as with other news outlets, continues to publicize the names of donors, if not the amounts they gave, to Fresh Air, Santa Claus Fund, and other fundraising campaigns.

At the time of giving, *Toronto Star* donors are asked to provide their name, or a listing of up to 25 characters noting the gift is “In memory of...” or “In lieu of gift to clients of...” or “Anonymous.”

Clearly, some donors are interested in seeing their listing in print, as question 3 of the Fresh Air Fund FAQ reads:

3. When will my name appear in the paper as a donor? Donor lists are printed during the campaign from late May to early August. Once a full page of donor names has been compiled and space becomes available in the *Toronto Star*, we then print the donor list of names. This list may appear on any day of the week and in any section of the paper (The *Toronto Star*, 2017).

This continued desire to see one's generosity acknowledged in print may speak to similar motivations as those identified by Hess in her discussion of the continuing power of published death notices (Hess, 2016). There is some validation of the donation, as well as individual acknowledgment, albeit alongside others. The *Star*, as well as other news outlets, sometimes features individual donors. In many cases, the narrative is one of former recipients of charities now "paying back" generosity:

So who are these kind people?

Well, there's Audrey Welsh of Niagara Falls, a long-time subscriber who has supported the Fresh Air Fund and *Star* Santa Claus Fund for years, after herself benefitting from them as a child.

"I am an 81-year-old pensioner who has had a good life," wrote the retired Ministry of the Attorney General employee. She recalled receiving a *Star* gift box at Christmas during the Depression years. She also spent two summers at Bolton Camp, thanks to the Fresh Air Fund. (...)

After reading about 7-year-old Julian Wells, who's raised almost \$500 for the kids in the past three years selling his superb lemonade, realtor Robert Nimmo wrote a cheque, too.

Helen and John Ishmael of Brampton were inspired by stories written by *Star* columnist Catherine Porter on Haiti.

Assunta Di Trani made a donation in memory of her parents, Elvira and Guiseppie [sic]. Growing up, she and her siblings received a gift at Christmas from the Santa Claus Fund. "I need to say thank you for making my Christmas," said Di Trani, 53, in a note with her contribution. (Ferenc, 2010)

Names and motivations are included, and it's worth noticing that in some cases, the *Star*'s own reporting is mentioned as inciting the generosity. Not only is there the recursive nature of former recipients becoming donors, but also the reporting of need and of generosity occasioning more charity.

"Thanks to readers like you, Fresh Air Fund reaches goal," was the headline of a story marking the 2017 fundraising success (over the \$650,000 goal).

"The generosity of the donors was amazing. It's a statement about the quality of our community," said John Boynton, president and CEO of *TorStar* and publisher of the *Toronto Star*.

"We are pleased that the *Star* is the means through which so many people have come forward to ensure that thousands of deserving young people have had a chance to enjoy a camp experience this summer." (Mathieu, 2017)

Boynton's statement is in line with the win-win of generosity married with local news outlets: a note about the "quality" of the community, the headline's identification and personalization of "readers like you," and the idea that it is the newspaper which makes it possible for this generosity to be transferred to "deserving" young people.

Society pages and snapd

The continuation of Fresh Air and Santa Claus funds are not, however, the story of other links between local generosity projects and local news. For many years, "society" and "women's" pages featured news of fundraisers like this:

50 debutantes made their bow to society last evening at the West End Crèche charity ball, which brought together the most brilliant company Toronto has witnessed for some time. Soft lights, exquisite gowns, flowers and music, all contributed to the charm and splendor of the affair ... the president, Miss Joan Arnoldi, received the guests, assisted during the evening by different members of the committee. Miss Arnoldi wore a lovely gown of eggplant satin, simply fashioned in long graceful lines, and unique gold earrings. (*The Globe and Mail*, November 7, 1931)

What was the West End Creche, founded in 1909 as a daycare centre in Toronto, continues today as the Child Development Institute, providing outpatient care for children with brain damage and mental illnesses (Child Development Institute, n.d.). Although this description of gowns and jewelry would today sound anachronistic in a newspaper like *The Globe and Mail*, it served not only to highlight the activities of the city's elites, but to provide free publicity for charities. The West End Creche annual ball raised between 15 and 26 per cent of the centre's annual revenue, peaking at \$3,500 in 1934, no small feat given the Depression (Johnstone, Chambon, & Lightman, 2014).

Some have argued that in the past, charitable organizations allowed women—otherwise sidelined from formal political office or professional leadership

roles—a means of influencing their local communities (Clift, 2005). Apart from owning a “lovely gown of eggplant satin,” Joan Arnoldi was a founder of the Imperial Order of Daughters of the Empire (IODE), saw active service in England during World War I as a Field Comfort Commissioner, and co-founded the West End Creche. Johnstone describes her as part of the “first generation of social workers in Canada,” a “voluntary worker supported comfortably by her professional family of origin” (Johnstone, 2015, p. 71). In reporting on women like Arnoldi, and the charities with which she was associated, local news brought a spotlight to social needs as well as giving those who supported such causes visibility and social standing. As with descriptions of Fresh Air Fund donors, this also can encourage other would-be donors and volunteers.

But today, apart from occasional columns like those by the *Toronto Star*'s [Shinan Govani](#), and photo spreads featuring the more glamorous attendees of galas but with little information about the charities, such “society pages” have all but disappeared from local Canadian news. Recognition of current “Miss Arnoldis” may have shifted to online networks. As Gruidly Moore and Philbin write about women and philanthropy: “High-profile donors become highly associated with their causes. Donors who do not regularly appear as boldface names on the society pages also come to be known in their circles and communities as ‘the powerhouse’ or a key insider at a particular charity. This creates the interesting phenomena of donor ownership, or social claim to a particular cause or organization” (Gruidly Moore & Philbin, 2005, pp. 66–67).

The appetite for charity event coverage certainly has not been extinguished. One need only see the proliferation of outlets like [snapd](#), online and printed tabloids filled with little but local ads and photos of people at local events, to see how interest in community events, including those involved in charities, continues to exist ([snapd](#), n.d.). The troubling question for the relationship between local news and charity is: What happens when this kind of coverage, particularly of women involved in philanthropic work, is moved off traditional legacy media, and into virtual social networks or alternative marketing? Apart from losing advertising revenue to outlets like [snapd](#), there is also the loss of visibility for the charities. While they may continue their work, only those who are somehow connected online will know who is doing what.

Secular news outlets and their relationships with religious institutions

Another change in the nature of the relationship between local news and charities is the overt religious nature of such networks. One will remember that the originator of

the first Fresh Air Fund was a cleric. The Reverend Willard Parsons was a Congregationalist based in Sherman, Pennsylvania who then went on to be one of the watchdogs for the *New York Tribune's* Coal and Food Fund. Religious organizations such as Catholic and Jewish Federated charities were among those to “certify” that the deserving would benefit from collected funds (“Neediest get help of Arab refugees,” 1949). Joseph Atkinson’s creation of the Fresh Air and other funds were without doubt influenced by [his social gospel-style Christianity](#). Fresh Air Funds continue to work in concert with camps and programs which have religious roots. To some extent, this inclusion of religious agencies for evaluating and channeling funds raised by news organizations created a legitimization loop. The religious organizations were used to legitimate the fundraising by the newspapers. But by recruiting the organizations to act as watchdogs and partners, the newspaper was also granting them legitimacy in the public, secular sphere.

Not so long ago, newspapers were unabashedly using their pages to adopt and support the hegemony of a Christian outlook. A December 26, 1949 editorial in *The Globe and Mail* titled “Inasmuch as Ye Have Done...” noted:

Since men of our faith believe giving to be a mark of divinity, unselfishness is a human virtue which brings us close to the highest we may reach. It relates us to God. (...) There could be no better way to implant the teachings of Christ in the minds of our children than to use this opportunity for unselfish giving. Let us this day share the joy of our family circle by making a contribution to the Hospital for Sick Children. Boys and girls who have been given money for Christmas should be encouraged to send some of it to the new building fund, and so have a part in the work of relieving suffering and healing the illnesses of other children for years to come.

It’s striking to read the strong, unapologetic identification with Christianity. Also notable is that this religiously-motivated generosity is aimed at supporting a secular hospital, now known internationally as SickKids. But some research suggests that journalists, including those who describe themselves as non-religious, continue to be active volunteers in their communities, perhaps even more so than the average citizen (Barber & Rauhala, 2005). How might this connection with the community at a personal level translate into editorial policy and output?

Journalists as individual actors for local generosity

A number of reporters, columnists, and editors have championed social causes in

print, as well as through philanthropies. In Canada, there are few who would trump the late June Callwood. A reporter for the *Brantford Expositor*, the *Globe and Mail*, *Maclean's* magazine, and CBC television, she was also the moving force behind a variety of social action organizations, including a Toronto hospice for people with AIDS (Casey House), a local program for teen mothers (Jessie's), as well as PEN Canada. Callwood wrote and reported about social ills, but she also worked to create solutions, working to raise funds for a variety of causes.

Given the *Star's* 2017 dismissal of columnist Desmond Cole after he continued to be active in protesting police stops of Toronto citizens who are overwhelmingly people of colour, it isn't clear that there continues to be an appetite for such local engagement. As former *Star* columnist Michele Landsberg has observed:

I marched on picket lines; I protested at Queen's Park. I know I brought large numbers of readers to the paper. I know the paper valued and rewarded me. Is race less vital than poverty or sex discrimination? People of colour who are (or were) loyal to the *Star*, will not ignore the fact that one of their own has effectively been shown the door for his activism on their behalf. (Landsberg 2017)

As Landsberg notes, the *Toronto Star*, while being active via their Fresh Air and Santa Claus funds, has in the past also made reporting on social causes, including those involving charities, front and centre. As with the New York newspapers' charity drives of the late 1800s, the *Star's* former publisher saw how reporting on such matters could improve circulation:

After hearing of the following that American reporters like Winifred Black Bonfils, of the *San Francisco Examiner*, had attained—breaking out of the women's page ghettos and onto the front pages—with their melodramatic tales of human suffering, the *Star* followed suit. Sob sisters were a fixture at the *Star* until the '50s. Reporters like Alexandrine Gibb and Jessie McTaggart talked their way into the homes of the dispossessed to describe the hardships of fatherless children, poorly paid workers and families stricken by poverty or illness. (Vincent, 1999)

A willingness to report on issues requiring—or even occasioning—charity may be increasingly important. Research by Greenberg and Walters has found that charities that already have large budgets receive more publicity. Those that serve financial, cultural, or sporting aims are also more likely to get media notice than

charities which are multicultural or religious in nature (Greenberg & Walters, 2004). It may be that apart from the budgets of charities, the nature of the work also makes it more or less attractive to local news outlets. Being the media sponsor for high school sports may be perceived to be a “safer” public role than being a flag bearer for an anti-racism movement.

Technological challenges and evolution

No one doubts that local news is undergoing serious challenges to its survival. To what extent is the technological evolution of charities adding to this? Consider the story of [Interplast](#), an international charity bringing plastic surgery to those in need worldwide. As part of a discussion of technology and philanthropy, Daniel Ben-Horin described how:

(...) Interplast has a staff of about twenty, and for a long time it had a brochure kind of web site and was really dependent on the media to tell its story. Then young Seth [Mazow] took it upon himself to get doctors affiliated with the organization to blog, and eventually they ended up with Six Apart’s tool [a communications app]. Well, the Six Apart people were blown away when they saw how their tool was making a difference in the lives of disadvantaged people around the world, and, after hearing Seth’s presentation, they went to work to make it possible for volunteer surgeons, using their cell phones, to post before-and-after pictures to the Interplast site. That, as you might imagine, has increased the immediacy and impact of the site enormously. (Nauffts, 2007b, p. 155)

The anecdote begins by describing an NGO dependent on the media, and ends with a technology making it possible (and more powerful) for donors and participants to be directly in touch. The growth of sites like Kickstarter and GoFundMe speak to the way in which such giving can be simultaneously hyperlocal as well as global, should the requests become viral. The collection of funds is immediate, and the appeal by those in need is direct, without any journalistic gatekeeping.

If digital disruption removes news outlets as the necessary middle man between donors and organizations, and along with women’s and society pages there is a disappearance of event listings and reporting, what role may continue for local news?

Apart from annual fundraising drives, it may be the watchdog role which remains. In discussing this, Diana Aviv, now CEO of Feeding America, said: “We often

say that leaders and staff at nonprofit organizations should ask themselves, Am I comfortable with our activities and policies being reported by the local newspaper? If the answer is no, they need to think about whether they are comfortable with what they are doing. It would be great, as well, to hear more about the hundreds of thousands of nonprofits doing good work” (Nauffts, 2007a, pp. 165–166). This identification of the local newspaper as the watchdog is straightforward; so what happens when the local newspaper hasn’t the resources to keep an eye on the local charities? Or doesn’t exist?

Aviv’s second statement, that it would be nice for more nonprofits to receive media notice is also important. It recalls one of the statements included in *snapd*’s mission: “*snapd* does not pretend to be what it is not. We represent the optimistic side of the community and focus on illuminating the outer smiles and the inner pride within all our communities” (*snapd*, n.d.). If local news cedes the good news stories about local generosity to the likes of *snapd*, and retains only the critical but ‘bad news’ stories about fraud and misdoings, it is not only failing to accurately represent the community, but cutting off support not only to charities but to itself.

Classified advertising began to decrease with the rise of online free sites like craigslist and Kijiji, a trend studied by a number of industry and academic researchers (Fine, 2005; Ross, 2009). What is not as clear is the future of personal classifieds, including death notices. Reports by industry organizations like [News Media Canada](#) do not break out personal classifieds from those for rentals, real estate, and other commercial ads (News Media Canada, n.d.). Should death notices themselves die, this would be a two-fold loss: loss of income for newspapers, but also loss of immediate visibility for charities which are often listed as ways in which people can memorialize their loved ones. There are online companies like [Legacy.com](#) which partner with newspapers to host notices online, and notices posted on Facebook are becoming increasingly common.

But Hess suggests that the printed birth and death notices may survive the digital evolution (Hess, 2016), at least in part because of the way in which their publication serves to confirm and ritually mark the passing for a local community, particularly for those outside the family’s immediate social circle. The fact that Legacy.com makes possible a searchable database as well as linking from the news organization’s web page suggests a combination which may safeguard the ritual as well as practical need for death notices. For some small communities, the process itself of submitting [a memorial notice](#) may involve acts of generosity: an Irish study suggests that the people employed by a newspaper to take memorial notice

information from family and friends may in fact do emotional, philanthropic work for the community, by comforting the grief-stricken (O'Donohoe & Turley, 2006).

This kind of interaction will not be true in every local news situation, which is also true of the nature of local generosity. As Randall, Clews, and Furlong write in their book on “helping” professions in rural New Brunswick, including those which would fit the Science of Generosity’s definition of generosity: “(...) in our experience, helping is a highly contextual endeavor, its style and substance depending intensely on where it is done” (Randall, Clews, & Furlong, 2015, p. xi). This would suggest the importance of local news to properly represent such work.

Donors become the recipients of capital as well as social capital

Recently, as the business models for local (and all) news have started to collapse, some news outlets themselves have become recipients of charity. In Canada there have been several public appeals for help from citizens, foundations, and government to shore up local news (cf. *The shattered mirror*, a Public Policy Forum report (Public Policy Forum, 2017)). Televised pleas for public support for Canadian local television news in 2009 included mention of their aid to local charities and causes: broadcast advertisements for the “Local News Matters” campaign [specifically included the connection](#) (*Local TV matters PSA*, 2009).

The idea of news outlets being recipients of generosity changes greatly depending on whether they are publicly or privately owned. For public broadcasters, one might argue that partnerships with foundations serve as a form of reciprocal generosity. Emmett Carson, former president and CEO of the Minneapolis Foundation described the Minnesota Meetings, public gatherings on topics such as education and immigration.

Funding for Minnesota Meeting represents a modest cost relative to other grants we’ve made, and yet we draw upwards of eight hundred people to each meeting. The meetings are also broadcast on Minnesota Public Radio, are taped and re-broadcast on local public television stations, and are broadcast live by satellite to several out-of-state locations. And I can tell you, we can literally see how those meetings transform people’s thinking about an issue. (Nauffts, 2007c, p. 124).

The Canadian Broadcasting Corporation (supported both by taxes and

advertising) and its support of charities such as food banks and shelters through local Christmas Carol readings (CBC, n.d.) and [day-long live broadcasts](#) are well-known examples of the public broadcaster's activity at this intersection. They also provide generosity in the form of media sponsorships for cultural events. Without active recourse to foundations for support (a rare commodity in Canada), the public broadcaster's fundraising efforts are instead focused on community. However it is worth asking if, in the climate of tight budgets and reliance on government funding, these activities are also a way of cementing the CBC's place in the community. Where once broadcasters and publishers lent a legitimizing nod by including religious and other charitable groups in their coverage and projects, being active in community charity may do the same for safeguarding a local news outlet's own place.

Future research

In this paper I have suggested ways in which local news and local forms of generosity have intersected with each other. I see several ways in which future research can continue to interrogate these connections:

- To what extent is a healthy community dependent on local news to articulate the importance of charitable endeavours? Is it important that local generosity be included in news outlets' agenda-setting?
- Quite literally, how do people *see* generosity? What photographs and video images are provided of the activities, the beneficiaries, and the donors? Are these people with whom a potential donor might identify? Is this a way of modeling behaviour? Are news outlets focused on group, anonymous generous acts, or on named, identifiable ones? How often are recipients and donors photographed and named? How representative is coverage of the totality of local generosity, including not just corporate or upper-middle class projects, but those led by racialized or marginalized groups, and by women?
- Is civic engagement and news consumption co-incident with generous behavior? Interrogating this triad could yield important information for the continued well-being of communities at the local level.

In conclusion, there has been a long history of intersection between local news and local forms of generosity, albeit little studied or acknowledged. The question which remains to be answered is whether their respective futures are also dependent on each other.

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