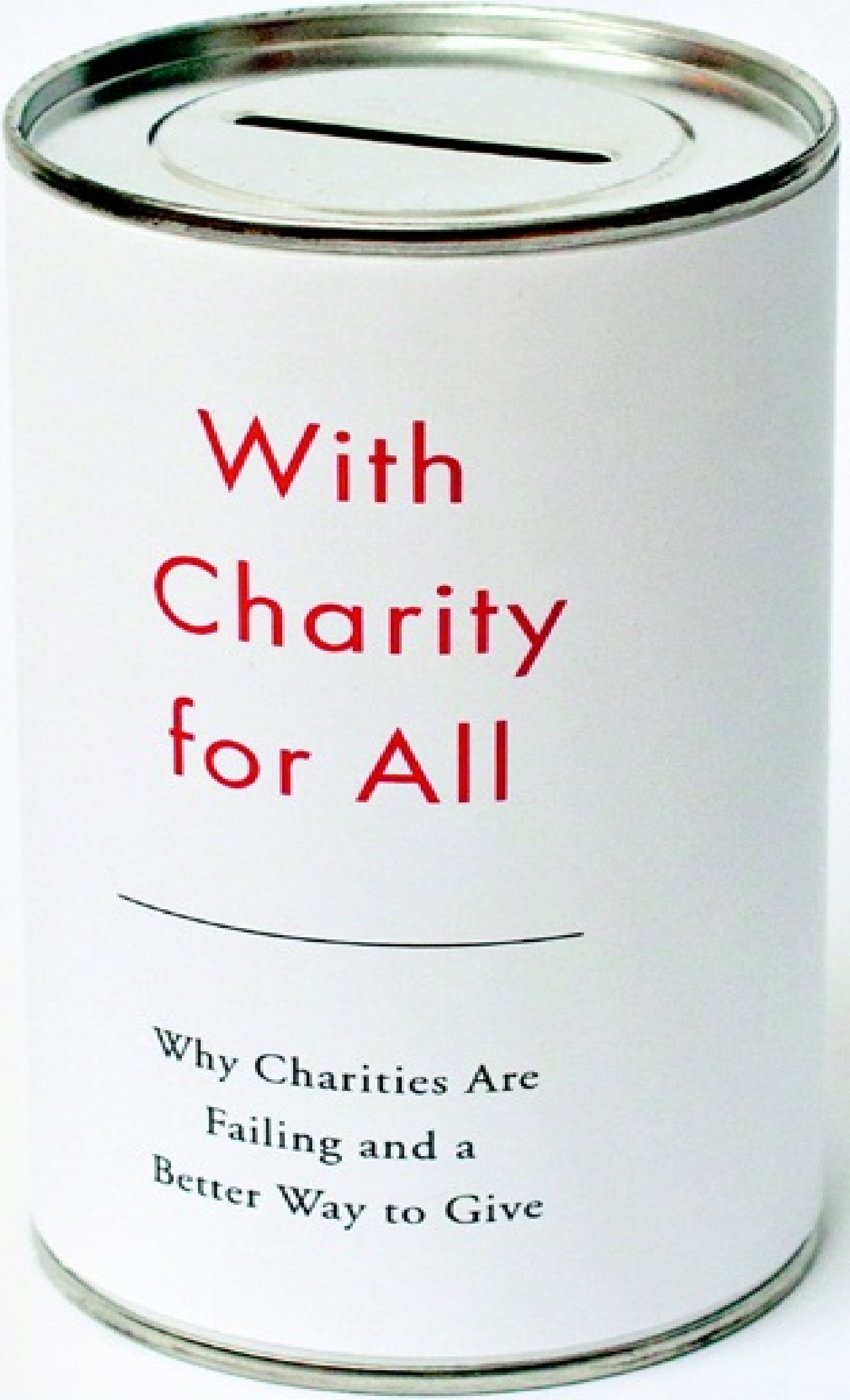
With Charity for All
Why Charities Are Failing and a Better Way to Give

KEN STERN

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For my son, Nate,
who will someday write books of his own

When the Frenchman Pierre L'Enfant laid out his plans for the new District of Columbia
1791, he designed Sixteenth Street to be one of the grand avenues of the new capita
Two hundred and twenty years later, his vision has been mostly realized. Sixteenth Stre
rises from the foot of the White House, runs north past luxury hotels, rows of embassies, th
blank façade of the national headquarters of the Freemasons, through parks and th
prosperous leafy neighborhoods of Washington's Gold Coast, up past Walter Reed Hospita
before reaching a tired ending among the down-market strip malls and mini-marts of Silve
Spring, Maryland. At key points, it commands sweeping views not only of the White Hous
but of the Washington Monument and the Jefferson Memorial beyond.

Living in the Mount Pleasant section of Washington, I frequent a stretch along this storie
street. From my home, it's a fifteen-minute walk along Sixteenth Street to our local grocer
store. Along the way, I pass some of the landmarks of the neighborhood: the All Sou
Unitarian Church, the Little Flower Montessori School, the Scottish Rite Temple, a dormitor
for Howard University students. In a span of about eight blocks, I pass no fewer than sixtee
nonprofit organizations: five churches, four educational institutions, five social servic
organizations, one credit union, and one fraternal organization.

Most people would be hard-pressed to name sixteen charities, but in fact my little trip
not that unusual. Every day our lives are touched by the charitable sector. To the extent th
we think about charities, we tend to associate them with services for the poor and th
dispossessed. But the charitable sector is much more than that. It educates our young; it take
care of our old and infirm; it fields the teams that we cheer for on Saturdays and serves u
spiritual sustenance on Sundays; it provides much of the intellectual and cultural nourishme
for this country. The nonprofit community occupies some of the most sacred real estate
our public square and cushions some of our most important private and intimate moment
We entrust our children and our parents to it, and it is often the first and most importa
responder in times of crisis—whether those crises are personal in nature or global in reach.

There are approximately 1.1 million charities in this country—not local chapters, b
unique, full-fledged organizations.[1] Stop and think about that number for a moment. It mea
tens of thousands of charities in every state, thousands in every county. And the numb
grows by more than fifty thousand every year, in good times and in bad. The charitab
sector employs approximately thirteen million people. In addition, more than sixty-o
million Americans volunteer for charities, adding about eight billion hours of effort
charitable causes—roughly the equivalent of another five million full-time employee
Charities take in over $1.5 trillion each year in revenues and have assets approaching $
trillion.[2] Charitable activity accounts for 10 percent of the economic life of this country.[3] An
this percentage is certain to grow as the challenges of our society multiply and governme
proves unable to respond in a meaningful way.

Almost all of us are engaged in the charitable sector in direct ways: as employees, a
volunteers, as donors, or as customers and clients. And even those few not so involved a
indirectly entangled as taxpayers and citizens. While considerable funding for charities come
from purely private sources, our governments—federal, state, and local—provide hundreds o

billions of dollars in direct grants each year. A figure for total government support of th nonprofit sector is difficult to calculate, but most estimates put direct charitable revenu from government at roughly $500 billion a year.[4] These same governments also provide a enormous amount in indirect support by exempting charities from income and property tax and providing deductions for charitable donations. Even in this age of multitrillion-doll government budgets, that indirect support is significant. If we chose to eliminate or even ca just these exemptions, our public coffers would swell by tens of billions of dollars yearly— line with the entire federal appropriation for housing and education.

The charitable sector is one of the anchors of American public life. Its vast scope makes ar quick catalog of its functions incomplete, but it includes areas as diverse as education, glob health services, shelter for the homeless, preservation of public and private land, athletic arts and culture, and some of our most important scientific research. We support this broa array of services because absent a robust charitable economy, these functions would eith cease or devolve to government—an unpalatable option in a time of rising public debt ar dwindling faith in the efficacy of government. In effect, we have privatized these publ functions in the belief that charities can perform these tasks better and with greater efficienc than government. The public—and private—investment in the social sector is one of th critical elements of the American social compact, yet it is one of the oddities of public li that each year we renew this investment without ever pausing to ask the same questions th we ask of every other public and private investment: What are we getting in return, is th investment structured correctly, is the money going to the right places? Remarkably, w don't think much about the nonprofit sector at all. Our attention to it is largely scandal-drive (think of the United Way and ACORN) and ephemeral, due to a web of factors including th cloaked nature of the public investment, the fact that the public rarely perceives the millior of disparate charitable businesses to be a unified industry, and the fact that the secto includes sacred institutions of American life such as churches and schools.

We live in a society that is obsessed with results—from businesses, from government, fro sporting events. Markets are endlessly debated, scrutinized, reduced to reams of dat Governments rise and fall on issues of accountability and results. Managers are fired, playe traded, teams dismantled if a squad falls short of the expectations of ownership or of fan Yet in this results-obsessed country, the public rarely demands measures of how effectiv charities are in implementing their services and meeting their service goals. And, as we sha see throughout this book, when the public generally and funders more specifically do n press for results-oriented organizations—and indeed value qualities that are inversely relate to effectiveness—charities respond accordingly. The implications are extensive, not just fo the prudent use of resources, but for how we as a society tackle our most challengi problems and how we serve the poor, the infirm, the hungry, the homeless, and others wh do not have full voice in our public life. This book's story of charitable ineffectiveness is n one of greed or incompetence—though there are chapters on that—but one of misguide incentives and failed market structures. And it begins with one of the most venerated nam in American charity.

With Hurricane Katrina bearing down on New Orleans in August 2005, the American Re Cross geared up for action. For the Red Cross, born in the blood of the American Civil W and tested through countless disasters, this was its Super Bowl, the biggest challenge of th new century. Contingency plans were activated; shelters opened; tens of thousands of meal bottles of water, and other necessary supplies pre-positioned; thousands of voluntee drafted. Relief trucks began to roll even before the storm hit. The action, coordinated fro the Red Cross's emergency operations bunker in Washington, D.C., had all the hallmarks military precision, not surprising given the Red Cross's propensity to hire retired militar supply-chain experts. And the size of its effort has rarely been seen outside a militar operation. In many ways, it was the largest peacetime call-up in American history, ultimate activating 250,000 employees and volunteers across a thousand miles of the southern Unite States.

The Red Cross's brethren at the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) als sprang into action, dispatching about eighty of its best disaster-recovery experts to suppo this mobilization. Among them was Thomas Riess, a veteran logistician from Germany. Wh Riess, used to working with relatively few resources in third-world countries, found upo arriving at the Red Cross site in Mobile, Alabama, astonished him. The human resources an material aid were tremendous, but the system of quality control was in absolute tatter Volunteers were assigned to tasks without adequate training or any attempt to match the skills to the work. Goods poured into the Mobile warehouse, but often without regard need. Included in the supply flow were Uno card games, stale Danish pastries, buns marke "perishable" that had to be destroyed, and radios without batteries. Whatever came in wa shipped out to the field, regardless of its usefulness to the relief effort. Riess reported a lac of centralized planning and communications and a lack of accountability and record keepin goods coming into the warehouse were not registered or recorded; pilfering was common. H colleagues observed similar chaos. Mike Goodhand, head of logistics for the British Re Cross, described the American Red Cross efforts in Mississippi as "amateurish." He noted on case where a Red Cross vehicle manager admitted to him that he had no idea as to th whereabouts of his entire fleet of more than a hundred cars and trucks.

The disorganization Goodhand and Riess witnessed was replicated across the regio Shelters were under- or incorrectly supplied, goods rotted in warehouses, the wrong thing went to the wrong places, cash disappeared, supplies walked away. Too many ke management positions were occupied by volunteers who were ill prepared and ill equipped handle the flood of challenges. Rental cars, generators, air mattresses, and compute disappeared. At one point, it was reported that fully half of the goods supplied to the Re Cross could not be traced to confirm that they made it to their intended destination. The Re Cross supply-chain and inventory control management systems cracked. In the end, th British Red Cross and the ICRC characterized the effort as a "dangerous combination ignorance and arrogance."[5]

The Red Cross failures during Katrina unfortunately do not stand out in any way. Not on did these failures largely duplicate the Red Cross's shortcomings after 9/11, they mirror, on much larger scale, the inefficiencies and ineffectiveness displayed by hundreds of othe nonprofits seeking to respond to the disaster. Katrina was a gold rush for the nonprof community; hundreds of organizations descended on the Gulf Coast, hoping to aid in th relief and rebuilding of the area and share in the billions of dollars washing through. B many of them lacked the capacity and expertise to contribute significantly to the recover and their uncoordinated efforts ultimately led to confusion, delay, and the thinning of fini resources. These problems were magnified by the policies of the IRS, which fast-tracked mo than four hundred new Katrina-related charities in the wake of the storm, in some cas granting tax-exempt status within hours of receiving an application. Not surprisingly, the va majority of those new charities, organized during a flood of good intentions, have sin failed, disappeared, or been diverted to other purposes.

It was neither the government nor the nonprofit community that reacted most effective to Katrina. It was the private sector. Private companies were on the ground with disast relief efforts before the American Red Cross, FEMA, and even the U.S. military. Walma proved especially effective during Katrina, moving tens of millions of dollars in emergen supplies into the area, creating fast-action distribution centers, and rapidly responding local conditions and needs. Its advantages were numerous: it had the scale and staffing quickly mobilize a two-hundred-person emergency response center that could coordina efforts around the clock; the company had the expertise in supply-chain management to mov the right goods to the right places, and it had unrivaled local knowledge from its operatio in three thousand communities around the country. In many places, Walmart was the first the ground with goods and services, and its reports from the field became critical government responders. At the time, Sheriff Harry Lee of Jefferson Parish in suburban Ne Orleans said, "If [the] American government would have responded like Wal-Mart h responded, we wouldn't be in this crisis."[6] Later, reacting to both internal and extern criticism, the Red Cross announced its intention to redesign its supply-chain manageme system, this time to be driven by the expertise of businesses like Walmart.

It's tempting to shrug off this story as unrepresentative, the product of one unlikely-to-b rivaled event. Katrina was a flood of biblical proportions that exposed the failings numerous institutions, both inside and outside the charitable sector. Unfortunately, t modern history of the Red Cross is marked by the same type of organizational breakdow (and post-event confession of failures) across many major disasters. Those breakdowns ha not affected every part of the enterprise, however; its fund-raising ability, especially duri crises, has been nothing short of spectacular. Within weeks of the 2010 Haiti earthquake, f example, the Red Cross raised more than $450 million in the United States and more than $ billion in total across its worldwide network.

But the more difficult task for the Red Cross in Haiti has been spending. Two years aft the Haiti earthquake, the Red Cross was still sitting on more than $150 million in unspe and unallocated donations, a surprisingly large amount given the acuteness of Haiti's nee and the fact that most of the distributed funds went to intermediate organizations such as t United Nations, Habitat for Humanity, and the International Organization for Migration.[7]

On the surface, it is hard to figure out why the Red Cross fails so consistently. It is amo the most storied and best resourced charities in this country. The organization's staff handpicked from the top levels of business, government, and the military, and though slo footed and devoutly bureaucratic, it has avoided many of the pitfalls and scandals that ha tripped up other charities. Rather, the roots of the Red Cross's failures during Katrina a other crises lie in its inability—a failing shared by virtually all charities—to make t necessary internal investments that are the hallmark of all good organizations, be they fo profit businesses, charities, or government agencies.

This inability was clearly illustrated in the days after 9/11.[8] As in Katrina, the Red Cro during 9/11 proved unable to respond quickly and effectively. Resources were not adequate deployed, and blood and relief supplies were not moved quickly enough from place to plac In an acute embarrassment to the organization, the Red Cross proved unable to support th Pentagon victims, even though the scene of the attack was only about two miles from Re Cross headquarters and its emergency response center. Bernadine Healy, then president of th Red Cross, was aghast to find on September 12 that no volunteers or supplies had gone to th Pentagon—no specialized teams, no emergency response vehicles, not even cots or food fo the firefighters. Yet despite the organizational limitations of the Red Cross, as during Katrin money poured in via the Liberty Fund, set up by the Red Cross to aid the victims. All in al more than $543 million was donated to the fund, a remarkable outpouring of support by th American public and an amount that quickly far outstripped what the Red Cross cou reasonably spend on the relief needs of what was ultimately a finite pool of victims of th attack. Recognizing that the Red Cross's failures during 9/11 reflected poor infrastructur inadequate telecommunications, and insufficient supply-chain management, Healy made th understandable judgment to help the next victims by using excess funds from the Libert Fund to build the capacity of the Red Cross to respond to large-scale disasters, and to increa the available blood supply from its then-depleted levels—so that in a future crisis, the Re Cross would not duplicate its failings. When that decision became public, however, a hug outcry ensued, with many in the public, the media, and Congress insisting that all the Libert Fund money had to be spent on the 9/11 victims, regardless of the actual need. At th inevitable public hearing, members of Congress shouted down Healy when she tried t explain the decision, and within days she resigned amid speculation about possible frau prosecutions. The point was not lost on her successors, who hastily reversed cours announcing that Liberty Fund dollars would be spent only on victims of 9/11 and appointin the former senator George Mitchell to oversee the process and calm the waters.

The widespread fury was both predictable and misguided. Healy's goal of investing infrastructure in order to avoid a repeat of the 9/11 failures was entirely understandable, b the dismay over the spending plans reflects a bedrock and simplistic assumption that has lon shackled the charitable world: that money spent on direct services is the only worthy use charitable funds, while money invested in organizational effectiveness is to be kept as clos to zero as possible. It is an equation widely accepted by the donating public, by the press, b charity watchdogs, by government regulators, and by most charities themselves. To kee overhead costs down, charities forgo necessary investments with devastating and sometim deadly results. When Katrina came four years after the 9/11 hearings, the results we entirely predictable: telecommunications failed, inventory and supply-chain management fe apart, the same antiquated systems bent and broke under the stress of the crisis. Equal predictably, many of the same pundits and members of Congress who decried the liberatio of the Liberty Fund excoriated the Red Cross for its Katrina failings, never acknowledging perhaps even recognizing that the failure to invest in 2001 had direct implications for th breakdowns in 2005.

The overhead imperative is so deeply ingrained in the charitable world that it is hard ever questioned, even though the causal link between overhead spending and organization effectiveness is probably the inverse of what most people assume. Organizations that inve effectively and fully in infrastructure, technology, training, strategic planning, building ne programs and initiatives that mature over time, research, and self-evaluation will almo certainly bring the most value to their communities of interest. Yet the demands of th donating public ensure that the number of such organizations is kept to a minimum. Whe even the highest-revenue charity in the country is bound together by rubber bands and du tape, it is a sign of profound misunderstanding of how to build effective charities.

The struggles at the Red Cross are representative of, yet probably understate, th challenges within the charitable sector as a whole. Compared with virtually every othe American charity, the Red Cross is well resourced, strategically focused, and outcom oriented. Most American charities, by contrast, struggle with lack of resources, muddle strategies, operational challenges, and lack of clarity around impact; even the most doe-eye defender of charitable institutions would hesitate to dispute these facts. But it is only no becoming clear how much charities are being weighed down by market forces—of which th low-overhead imperative is just one—and how few can demonstrate measurable success.

The difficulty of identifying effective charities is well captured in the creation story of a Ne York–based charity evaluation organization called GiveWell. In the summer of 2006, eig friends working in the financial services industry decided to pool their efforts and make common commitment for their end-of-year charitable giving. All of them were single, in the twenties, and doing very well financially for having relatively little professional experienc They worked for a publicity-shy hedge fund called Bridgewater Associates, a company litt known outside the clubby financial world but one of astonishing reach and wealt Bridgewater, now reputed to be the world's largest hedge fund, manages about $160 billio in assets—a number roughly equivalent to the combined gross domestic product of Kuwa and Bulgaria. The group of friends, informally headed by two recent Ivy League graduate Elie Hassenfeld and Holden Karnofsky, agreed to research and share information on differen charities. Given the mind-numbing number of charities, they decided to focus on one industr per person (Karnofsky chose New York educational charities; Hassenfeld picked wate charities in Africa) and limit themselves to charities awarded three or four stars by Charit Navigator, a reputable rating agency. They thought it would be easy; this was, after all, wh they did every day for a living—research, analyze, and recommend the best investme opportunities.

Throughout the late summer and fall, the group met regularly in a conference room Bridgewater to discuss their findings; in between sessions they searched the Web for data an called and asked for information from a vast number of charities. They discovered that th Charity Navigator rankings were unhelpful, as they were based largely on ratios of overhea to programmatic spending that they quickly realized had no correlation to organization effectiveness and impact. They also found out that even if they wanted to rely on thes ratings, it was unwise to do so because Charity Navigator depended on self-reports from th charities, which could easily, and frequently did, game the ratings. They read annual repor and IRS filings. They were mailed glossy brochures full of vivid pictures and stirrin anecdotes. UNICEF even sent an oral rehydration package as proof of its good work—alon with a donor card. None of the materials, from dozens of organizations, hinted at what the were trying to find out: Do the charitable programs effectively solve the targeted soci problems? Their frustration wasn't for lack of trying, on the part of either the Bridgewater or the staff of some of the charities they contacted. When pressed for more information fro the Bridgewater group, the charities often furnished their own confidential internal repor and data—the inadequacy of which led the group at Bridgewater to understand that th charities themselves did not know whether they were helping or hurting a given situation. I a small number of cases their inquiries were met with hostility tinged with paranoia. As pa of his inquiry, for instance, Karnofsky contacted Smile Train, a prominent charity th sponsors cleft palate surgery for third-world children. He was looking for basic informatio on effectiveness: In what parts of the world was Smile Train operating? How many of th Smile Train children come from financially disadvantaged families? Was Smile Train able t track the children after surgery to assess the impact of the operation? Smile Train sta refused to provide any of the answers, eventually telling Karnofsky that he would have t pursue the questions directly with the organization's president. Eventually, he received a ca from the Smile Train CEO, who told him that no donors had ever sought this informatio before and openly accused him of spying for Operation Smile, a rival medical charit Needless to say, Karnofsky never received any of the requested information. After six mont of inquiry, the Bridgewater group found itself no closer to identifying effective charities tha when they had started. In the end, they threw up their hands and made the best gue possible with their year-end charitable gifts, an unfulfilling outcome perhaps but one th closely tracks the thought process behind billions of dollars in giving each year.

The exercise, frustrating as it may have been, was a revelation to the Bridgewater grou they concluded that there had to be a better way of evaluating charities and helping dono find effective outlets for their contributions. In the summer of 2007, Karnofsky an Hassenfeld left Bridgewater to set up GiveWell, an organization dedicated to identifyi demonstrably effective charities where donor money could be put to good use. The approach was based upon the methodologies they had learned at Bridgewater: in-dept research-driven evaluations supported by facts and data, not formulas and marketi brochures. By its nature, it is slow and handcrafted work that cannot be mass-produce certainly not by a team that originally comprised only two people. Hassenfeld and Karnofsk determined to focus their work on a few charitable segments where they figured there wou be reliable data (HIV, malaria prevention, water, and education, to name a few) and only o top-tier charities willing to provide access to relevant data.

Over the past five years, GiveWell, by now expanded to seven employees, has produce over five hundred investment grade reports, both on entire charitable sectors and o individual charities. After all this work, it has identified only eight organizations that ca fully demonstrate material and effective impact and efficiently use additional funds. This not to say that each one of the other 98.5 percent of charities is a failed organization, but it to say that none of these charities can concretely demonstrate that they can effective deliver promised results. In 2009, the GiveWell group decided to rate only charities that m a minimal standard of transparency—that the charity published on its Web site som meaningful self-evaluation. There was no requirement that the self-evaluation be positiv simply that the charity offer some proof of its commitment to making results public accessible. Only fifteen out of more than four hundred charities reviewed passed over th low bar—even though the organizations they targeted for review were culled from lists of th most respected and prominent charities in America. When Hassenfeld and Karnofsky du deeper, they met resistance from startling quarters. Many nationally prominent chariti simply refused to share relevant data with them. The Harlem Children's Zone and the Carte Center—organizations with outsized reputations for being effective, businesslike, and dat driven—both stonewalled the GiveWell team. Heifer International and the Millenniu Villages Project required confidentiality and then still provided no pervasive research. Th projects a deeply unsettling image of many of the stars of the charitable world—Geoffre Canada (Harlem Children's Zone), Jimmy Carter (Habitat for Humanity), and Jeffrey Sach (Millennium Villages Project)—as unable or unwilling to show whether their organizatio are effective. It is hard to know what is worse, that Karnofsky and Hassenfeld can only find handful of highly effective charities after years of intensive effort or that the organizatio that failed their test are among the best that the charitable world has to offer.

The GiveWell staffers are not muckrakers. It is not their purpose to expose the failed, th muddled, the hopelessly un-strategic; rather, it is their goal to drive donations to the mo measurably effective charities and create incentives for other charities to adopt simila standards of evaluation. In this, they have a long way to go. As we shall see, the mark incentives of the nonprofit world push charities toward happy anecdote and inspirin narrative rather than toward careful planning, research, and evidence-based investments, t crippling effect.

I experienced some of these skewed incentives in my own work in the charitable sector. joined National Public Radio (NPR) as chief operating officer in 1999 and became its chi executive officer in 2006. During my nine years running the company, NPR more tha doubled its audience, despite the general national decline in radio listening, and more tha tripled its revenues. We launched numerous successful digital initiatives, ranging from NPR satellite radio channels to the award-winning NPR Music site. From the outside and by a reasonable measures, NPR was a high-performing organization, one doing almost unique well in a difficult media environment. On the inside, however, I found myself endless embroiled in diplomatic logjams with the NPR board and the public radio stations th controlled the board.

Public radio was in the midst of a media revolution, a transformation almost as profoun as that brought on by the printing press. I knew that NPR needed to change just to survive. wanted to see results demonstrating how NPR was reshaping itself to be more competitive the digital age, results that were not merely anecdotal but specific and measurable: the reac of NPR to tens of millions of people, the growth of online and digital services, the impact o new programming to reach more diverse audiences, the financial health of the organizatio We implemented a strategy to broaden NPR's reach beyond radio to the Internet, mobi phones, satellite radio—to meet and serve the audience wherever it was going to be—and t expand the historic definition of NPR's audience by creating new programming for young audiences and audiences of color. In many ways, this clashed with the historic view held b many public radio stations that NPR should be an organization that served public rad stations first, with other activities viewed as either irrelevant or threatening. The NPR boar was sympathetic to that view. The board was made up of donors and public broadcastin system politicians—station managers elected by their peers. They were not indifferent t measures of the organization’s health, but they valued system peace over anything else. Th results didn’t matter as much for them.

This book is not my story. This is a story about how the charitable sector has lost its wa The NPR board, as it turns out, was far more in tune with the culture of the nonprofit wor than I was. As a country, we direct enormous resources to and place substantial soci responsibilities on the charitable sector, yet the vast majority of nonprofits can’t demonstra any commensurate return on this investment. The glossy fund-raising brochures, the movi videos, and the carefully crafted inspirational anecdotes often mask problems that range fro inefficiency and ineffectiveness to outright fraud and waste. There is little credible eviden that many charitable organizations produce lasting social value. Study after study tells th opposite story: of organizations that fail to achieve meaningful impact yet press on with the strategies and services despite significant, at times overwhelming, evidence that they dor work. These failures are often well known within the nonprofit community but are not mo generally discussed because the studies either are buried or tend to be so organization- ar issue-specific that broader sector-wide conclusions are easy to avoid.

It’s no joy to write these words, no fun to suggest that hundreds of thousands of peop may be toiling in vain, but it is critical to ask how this can be, how the well-intentione efforts of so many can result in so little concrete progress toward common social goals. Th answer starts with the absence of market mechanisms that reward good work and punis failure. Those mechanisms are missing because the funders, the true customers of charitab organizations, are generally indifferent to results, for a number of reasons we shall explor And even when donors do care, there is little available to guide them in their fundin decisions. Few charities even try to measure their results in a meaningful way, and neith government regulators nor online charity monitors provide useful alternatives.

This could have been a bleak book. My early research was not promising. I found stor after story of organizational and service failure, of charities that refused to evaluate the programs or, worse, swept unfavorable results under the rug. But over time, another stor began to emerge, of a nascent movement to rethink how the charitable sector works, to bui market mechanisms to reward effective charities and discourage the ineffective ones, and t create tools that will allow people to turn themselves from donors to investors. It is a sma movement, operating in the millions at the edges of a trillion-dollar industry, but it’s a sign what the charitable sector can become. This book begins with the story of charitable failur a narrative of systematic shortcomings, but it ends with a glimpse of those who are beginni to reshape the charitable world and show us what it can be.

ONE

Big Promises, Small Outcomes

Ineffectiveness in the Charitable Sector

BY CASUAL MEASURES, Ryan Hreljac is like any other twenty-one-year-old Canadian. He love hockey and virtually any sport that requires a ball, stick, or some form of legalize contact, is obsessed with video games, and enjoys *The Simpsons* perhaps a bit too much. If yo observed him in the classrooms of the University of King's College in Halifax, or saw him c the streets of his hometown of Kemptville, Ontario, he would probably escape your notic with the possible exception of his six-foot, six-inch frame, which has made him a passab basketball player, at least by Canadian standards.

But Ryan is no ordinary young man, a fact that began to emerge when he was just six. an age when sharing Thomas trains with a sibling might be considered a surpassing act social virtue, Ryan launched a personal crusade to provide safe drinking water communities around the world. It was all triggered by his first-grade teacher, Mrs. Prest, wh told her impressionable charges about the needs of poor people in Africa and how little would take to help: a penny for a pencil, a dollar for a day's supply of food for an enti family, and $70 to build a safe water supply for a school or small village.

That evening, as he tells it, Ryan lobbied his parents to let him do odd jobs around th house so he might raise the money necessary to build a well. Perhaps the Hreljacs doubte the effectiveness of a six-year-old's housekeeping efforts, because it took a few days c incessant pleading before they agreed to the proposition. But once empowered, Ryan washe windows and vacuumed his way to his goal, reaching $70 after what must have seemed a eternity to a six-year-old but was only four months in adult time. His mother proudly too him to the offices of WaterCan, a charity that builds wells in third-world countries, to preser the money, but they were in for a rude surprise. Mrs. Prest, as it turned out, had thin wrong. A no doubt mortified WaterCan executive had to tell young Ryan that $70 would on pay for a hand pump, not the well itself. He was short about $1,930 of the $2,000 that would take to finance a new well in Africa.

By all rights, that should have been that; at his prior earnings rate of about $17.50 month, it would take Ryan ten years (roughly a lifetime and a half from his perspective) raise the entire sum. But the unwelcome news did not daunt Ryan. He took on new chor and unknowingly began to act as a nonprofit executive, waging a vigorous fund-raisi campaign among friends, family, and neighbors and leveraging the Canadian government standing offer of matching funds. It took months of effort, but Ryan, through astonishi focus and hard work and no doubt more than a little bit of youthful charm, collected th necessary funds. In January 1999, after Ryan had turned seven, the Canadian Physicians f Aid and Relief drilled his well, fittingly enough, next to a primary school in northern Ugand

Ryan did not stop there. He continued to raise money for safe water, and in 2001, at th advanced age of ten, he formalized his efforts into a charity called Ryan's Well Foundatio

Since then, Ryan's Well has raised over $2 million and funded over 630 water projects sixteen countries on three continents. By its own calculations, the charity has brought sa water and sanitation services to more than 700,000 people. Even as he progressed throug school, Ryan became a public ambassador for the cause of improved sanitation and sa drinking water, traveling extensively not only in furtherance of specific projects but also educate the public on the critical and urgent need for safe water supplies.

When Mrs. Prest lectured her young charges about the need to improve drinking wat supplies in Africa, she hit upon perhaps the world's biggest and most persistent public heal challenge. Almost 900 million people worldwide lack access to safe drinking water, and eve supposedly safe sources are often subject to contamination and supply degradation. Two ar a half billion people lack access to basic sanitation for the adequate disposal of human wast Over two million tons of untreated refuse—an unthinkable tidal wave amounting to fou billion pounds of garbage, sewage, and industrial and human waste—are dumped *every d* into water supplies around the globe. The consequences of contaminated water are painf and wide-ranging. Waterborne illnesses include cholera, typhoid, guinea worms, hepatiti and diarrhea. Children in the third world, it is estimated, have on average about a thousar parasites in their bodies. The health tolls of this parasitic invasion are staggering. Rough speaking, more than four million cases of serious diarrhea are reported each year, leading about two million deaths—virtually all of them among children—surpassing even war as th principal cause of man-made and preventable death.[1] Somewhere in the third world, fou children have died from diarrhea in the minute or so it has taken to read this paragraph.

It is a little surprising that the world's water supply is so precarious. The problem is n know-how—the Romans maintained a usable public water supply two thousand years ago[2]- nor is it a lack of understanding of the consequences of adulterated water, though ou understanding of that is of far more recent vintage. In the first half of the nineteenth centur the prevailing view in educated circles was that miasma—impure air caused by open sewag decomposing vegetation, and rotting corpses—was the source of cholera and other terrib diseases that from time to time decapitated the growing urban centers of Europe. It was compelling theory, given the observed patterns of outbreaks and the vast amounts of noxio and polluted air roiling these cities, but it had the misfortune of being flat wrong. To be fa to the scientific classes of modern Europe, the best minds of science were not terrib occupied with the issue, since cholera, while clearly horrible, was understood to be a po man's disease. The indifference of the medical class changed quickly when the great 183 London epidemic made clear that cholera was actually nondiscriminatory, felling the upp classes, the medical community, and the working classes with an indifferent equality. response, the public health authorities in London began a relentless campaign to mitigate fo air. Still, virulent outbreaks plagued major Western population centers through much of th nineteenth century. In one particularly nasty pocket epidemic in 1854 in Soho, more than fiv hundred people died over ten days in one small neighborhood, making it one of the wor occurrences of sudden mortality in recorded history.

The miasma theory led to numerous false starts in the fight against cholera, but ironically did produce the greatest public works project of the nineteenth century, a project th ultimately revolutionized public health in England and around the world. In the summer 1858, London suffered a searing heat wave: temperatures crawled into the nineties ar refused to leave. The heat was accompanied by a relentless drought, and waste, typical washed away by the rain, piled up across the city. The Thames became so foul and noxiou that people could not bear to be near it. "The Great Stink," as it became known, mac London virtually uninhabitable, and Parliament fled the city. Within weeks, the city fathe declared their intention to completely rebuild the London sewage system, which had bee designed to drain off rainwater, not to handle vast amounts of solid waste. The rebuilding the sewage system was a feat of civil engineering on an extraordinary scale. Under relentlessly busy metropolis, the City of London set out to build twelve hundred miles tunnels to carry off every bit of waste for more than three million people. The system had accommodate expected developments such as population growth, urban sprawl, ar expansion of the London Underground and be sufficiently capacious to accommodate wha the former secretary of defense Donald Rumsfeld would one day refer to as the "know unknowns"—the knowledge that there inevitably will be unknown future development which in this case turned out to be gas and electrical lines that would power one of the mo important and vibrant cities in the world. All this had to be accomplished on the mode budget of £3 million. The project required 318 million bricks and necessitated th redistribution of more than 3.5 million cubic yards of earth. It was a spectacular success. Th sewage works built during the 1860s still drain the city more than a century and a half late And when the German doctor Robert Koch discovered the cholera microbe in 1883 ar revealed that it inhabited water supplies, London was already enviably positioned to ensu clean water supplies to its population.[3] In the wake of Koch's discoveries, most of the gre developed cities invested significantly in sewage disposal and clean water facilities. By th twentieth century, contaminant-free water was increasingly an expectation of modern life.

Unfortunately, for much of the world, where running water and sewage systems are n available, this expectation is increasingly an illusory one. The press of human demand, th depletion of natural aquifers, and unregulated dumping of industrial and agricultural was will only get worse as the earth's population grows from six billion to nine billion over th next fifty years. As if the health effects were not crippling enough, the problems inadequate water and sanitation have repercussions in other areas, such as educatio women's rights, and the environment. Each day, millions of people, almost always wome and children, undertake the laborious and sometimes dangerous task of fetching water fro distant sites in forty-pound jerricans. The time-consuming task of retrieving and boiling wat effectively shackles the bearers to the water cans, meaning that opportunities for educatio work, or advancement are narrowed or sacrificed.

The charitable community has energetically responded to this water crisis. Dozens ar dozens of charities have been launched to provide safe drinking water in crisis zones. Not ju Ryan's Well, but Water for People, Water Missions International, WaterAid, Lifewat International, Living Water International, Water.org, and WaterCan. The list stretches on, trademark lawyer's joy but a marketer's despair. All these charities have been organiz around the simple plan of drilling new wells in population centers and giving communitie often for the first time, direct and immediate access to clean drinking water.

In part, the explosion in water charities reflects the urgency of a genuine public healt crisis. But the charitable sector is also reacting to the seeming simplicity of the solution. Th technology has long existed to provide water even in the world's most challeng communities. With a little bit of elbow grease, a modest amount of money, and perhaps just little sacrifice, it seems as if the problem can be quickly solved. As described by the Adver Conspiracy (an international effort to reframe Christmas from getting to giving) and repeate endlessly around the Web: "[Ten dollars] will give a child clean water for life. That's not a estimate. It's a fact. And here's another fact. Solving this problem once and for all will co about $10 billion. Not bad considering Americans spent $450 billion on Christmas last year." Or put in very immediate terms, as the charities sometimes do, the cost of once and foreve solving a problem that fells two million children each year is equivalent to three week worth of American war spending in Iraq and Afghanistan.[5]

As a result of these promises, hundreds of millions, maybe even billions, of dollars hav been poured into the fight for clean water, and many of the players claim victories, big an small. Even the smallest charities claim to have solved water problems for huge swaths o Africa, Asia, and Central America. Lifewater brags of bringing clean water to 2 millio people, WaterAid has solved the problem for more than 7.5 million, and Water.org conten itself with the notion of sustaining "millions" of people with clean water. When these effor are taken together, along with those of much larger governmental groups, the picture of a effective international movement begins to emerge. Add up the claims and the glob community should be well on the way to meeting the UN goal of reducing the at-ris population by half by 2015.

Indeed, the stories of success offered by these charities can be deeply moving. Wate Missions International, a Christian-inspired water and sanitation engineering charit operating in about nine third-world countries, tells this story about one of its projects:

> A community in Kenya called Wachakaheri "Tangi Nyeusi" meaning Black tank serves the marginalized Samburu and Turkana tribes. The site had an old diesel pump that had not been functioning for over seven years. Community members used to walk for 8km to fetch water that was unsafe. 410 Bridge [a U.S.-based Christian charity that works extensively in Kenya] funded the installation of a solar power system and renovation of the Tank.
>
> When WMI team arrived, the area looked deserted and we could hardly believe that a population of 4,000 people lived in this area. Some community members were just gazing and mocking us for wasting our time on an unfeasible project. On the fifth day, when we hooked on the solar powered system and water started flowing, the man who had been watching us was overwhelmed. With joy and disbelief, he climbed on top of the black tank and started shouting at the top of his voice. Within no time we saw a stream of women and children flocking in with containers, the 4,000 population became a reality! We could not believe the number of people. After fetching water, they took us to their huts commonly known as "Manyatta" and it was a joy to fellowship with them, now a church stands on that site.[6]

It's a compelling image: a man standing on top of the tank exulting at the arrival o freshwater in his village for the first time in the better part of a decade; the communit streaming forth to share in his joy and a moment that promises to transform their lives innumerable ways, big and small. It would take an iron heart to see that and not feel hope fo the future of that community.

It is hard, however, to reconcile that picture with a global water situation that is n improving but in fact rapidly worsening. Some of that is due to factors outside the control any charity: population explosion, rapid urbanization, governmental inefficiency, an corruption, to name just a few. But beyond the global trends, the data show that th particular efforts of the nonprofit community have largely failed, despite the claims to th contrary. Studies of most public water programs—whether a standpost project, a boreho project, or a public well project—show little or no impact on public health.[7] Despite th compelling story lines, the water charity community, in the aggregate, has been singular ineffective in relieving the problems of waterborne diseases.

The difficult truth is that while the charities promote stories of villagers celebrating gushing well tapped minutes before, the "real image," writes Edward Breslin, the CEO Water for People, "should be the one that plays itself out every day all over the world of th woman walking slowly past a broken handpump, bucket at her side or on her head, on h way to (or from) that scoop hole or dirty puddle that she once hoped would never again part of her life."[8] Drilling a clean well is far easier than maintaining one. Infrastructu maintenance has typically lagged in third-world countries, particularly in rural areas. Th World Bank has estimated that about one-third of all water infrastructure projects in Sou Asia have been abandoned due to lack of maintenance.[9] Many water charities propose community-based maintenance model, but fully 50 percent of the boreholes dug in easter Africa and maintained in this model have fallen into disrepair. Drilling the hole is simply first step in a process that requires training, tools, parts, and the supply lines to support the The water charities lack the resources, the expertise, and indeed the intention to deal wi what is actually a complex, long-term problem.

What's more, drinking water is one source of infectious microbes but by no means th primary source. Fecal matter and other pollutants can congregate not just in water but food, on hands, and in fields. Sanitation, food quality, and hygiene are all important variabl in the public health fight. Indeed, water is less important in this equation as a drinking sourc than as a cleansing agent, permitting cleaning of hands, clothes, and food supplies. Th evidence is substantial that bringing a water source into the home improves public healt because it allows for frequent cleaning of children's hands. Providing a public water poi does not.[10] Even a new, more accessible public water point does not lead to greater use water, more frequent washing, or better hygiene habits. Thus, a supply of clean water b itself does not solve the public health challenge.

This uncomfortable story of the failure of water drilling in the long and short terms is n found in the glossy literature or on the Web sites of the water organizations. Indeed, th entire business model of these charities is built around ignoring these problems. Money usually raised for the drilling of wells, not for the more expensive and far less glamorous tas of monitoring and infrastructure maintenance, or for the more complicated public healt challenges that persist even when a public water point is available. It's relatively easy engage people with stories of children delighting in the first burst of water from a new wel it's far harder to get donors excited when the primary visual is of a sanitary enginee checking or rethreading a pump long in operation. When Ryan Hreljac presented his har earned $2,000 to WaterCan in 1999, he brought every dollar necessary to dig that well Uganda and not a single penny to ensure that the pump remained in operation over time. Th heartwarming story from Water Missions International obscures but does not completely hic the fact that a well was already in place, a well that had sat idle for seven years. Th evidence of the maintenance crisis—tens of thousands of abandoned wells across th developing world—is well known within the development community but largely unreporte to the general public. The real story is displaced by one of exaggerated victory—all to ensu the flow of contributions for the underserved and needy, even when those contributions don provide meaningful long-term help to them.

Much of the charitable industry is driven by just such marketing requirements, by the nee to tell affecting stories rather than prove real, long-term results. Charities, like every othe business, respond to market forces, which in their case means focusing on what generate donations. In a revealing article in the December 2009 issue of *Outside* magazine, Nichola Kristof, the crusading columnist for *The New York Times*, argued that the charitable secto needs to be more aggressive in promoting stories like Ryan's vignette. Forget "logic arguments," forget descriptions of large-scale needs, forget careful impact studies, he wrot what generates contributions, the bread and butter of charities, are stories of individu empowerment, of individual hope, and the promise that the donors can make a difference i someone's life.[11] Kristof is almost certainly right about what drives donor dollars, as we wi explore later in the book, but his argument neglects the negative effect that this has c program development. When the WaterAid America site promises that $25 is enough t provide one person with "water, sanitation and hygiene programs," it signals that it will b putting all of its efforts into drilling holes, not creating long-term, provable, and measurab solutions to the water crisis. Twenty-five dollars will not do that.

Surprisingly, the most pointed critique of the water charity industry has come from with its own leadership. In 2010, Breslin, the CEO of Water for People quoted above, posted c his Web site a lengthy and detailed report accusing the water charity industry of everythin from ineffectiveness to outright fraud. In his open letter, Breslin argued that the resource exist to solve the clean water and sanitation crisis, but that water charities have largely faile to make a dent because their resources have been focused on drilling new holes, not c ensuring the long-term effectiveness of existing investments. "The images that dominate th sector—pictures of children happily gulping water from a new tap or the counter-image c women collecting water from dirty puddles—do not tell the whole story … Africa, Asia ar Latin America have become wastelands for broken water and sanitation infrastructure. Go t schools throughout the developing countries and you will often find a broken handpum around the corner, or a disused latrine that filled years ago. Sector agencies intuitively kno this but the general public is shielded from these hard truths as perceptions of failure cou threaten 'the cause' of reaching the underserved."[12] The water crisis, according to Breslin, one not of inadequate resources but of misallocation of resources, lack of accountability, ar a perverse incentive system that obscures the real results in the name of keeping the tap ope —not the water tap, but the dollar flows from donors.[13] In one case in Malawi involvir Water for People, he notes that "reports have been exaggerated to keep funds flowing, wit claims of diarrheal reduction that are absolutely unsubstantiated but remain unquestioned b financial donors." Breslin's world is haunted with misleading marketing, failing projects, ar buried results.

PlayPumps International is one such failed project. PlayPumps are essentially merry-g round water pumps, powered by the joy of children. As the children play on the merry-go-round, pumps connected to the apparatus drive water up into a large storage tank, the sides of which are covered with a combination of paid advertising and public service announcements. The concept thus kneads together several enticing ingredients: the provision of a clean and easily accessible water supply, the building of community playgrounds for children, prominent messaging on matters of public importance, and a business model cleverly built on local advertising. It's a charity marketer's dream. The concept was first described in 1990 but did not become fashionable for almost a decade. But once it did, it went through the roof. First Lady Laura Bush announced a major grant for PlayPumps at the Clinton Global Initiative in 2006, and contributions and awards flowed to the PlayPumps company from the U.S. government and the Case Foundation, among others, as part of a plan to install four thousand PlayPumps in Africa by 2010. It is hard to exaggerate the significance of this type of platform for a small organization like PlayPumps. The Clinton Global Initiative is a huge stage, and having the First Lady trumpet the promise of this technology to boot is like winning a Grammy and an Oscar on the same night. Thousands of the devices were installed across Africa within a few years, often replacing perfectly adequate hand pumps, before a young engineer from Engineers Without Borders Canada pointed out in a series of embarrassing blog posts that the emperor had no clothes:[14] the pumps were expensive, broke frequently, and could not be repaired at the local level; the business model never worked because there was no advertising economy in rural villages; and, worst of all, kids did not use the merry-go-rounds very often, apparently favoring soccer and other more locally familiar activities. Lacking kid power, the pumps could only be powered by local women laboriously pushing the heavy wheel around and around. Rather than creating an effective mash-up of water supply and play, the PlayPumps displaced functioning water sources with a cumbersome, difficult to use, and hard to maintain albatross. The blog posts stopped the program in its tracks, and the Case Foundation issued a mea culpa report,[15] but not before thousands of PlayPumps had been installed across sub-Saharan Africa at the cost of tens of millions of dollars and much social disruption. All of this could have been easily averted by research and field testing, an approach that is all too rare in the charitable world.

Edward Breslin's analysis and the PlayPumps debacle should have been a wake-up call for the charity water industry, but they seem to have achieved little other than perhaps making Breslin a lonely figure at industry conferences. There have been no serious debates, no outcry from donors, no observable change in business practices or programmatic approaches from the industry. Breslin's message does not resonate, because all the marketplace signals go the other way. Positive reinforcement comes to these organizations from all directions. For example, virtually every charity referenced in this section is a four-star charity, the highest rating offered by Charity Navigator, the most widely followed of the charity watchdog organizations. These ratings reflect traditional measures such as administrative ratios and compensation policies, neither of which bear any demonstrable relationship to actual impact on target populations, and yet they are widely accepted as the most valuable independent standards of charitable success. Positive market signals also come from donors who by and large are not that different from the six-year-old Ryan Hreljac; they are drawn to the exuberant image of water flowing for the first time, not to the less captivating, though no less important, picture of tightening bolts, oiling joints, and replacing corroded parts. With these unchanging incentives, it is natural that the charities continue to focus on drilling holes. A institutions are creatures of economic forces, and the incentives for water charities, ar indeed for the entire charitable sector, encourage easy wins, short-term solutions, an unfortunately, minimal or indeterminate impact.

Ryan Hreljac is a metaphor for charitable success—and charitable failure. Inspired ar inspiring, he has dedicated his still young life to one of the most important issues of our tim a global public health crisis that also has implications for gender equality, econom opportunity, and social justice. The world needs more Ryan Hreljacs, but it also nee organizations that rigorously pursue effective solutions to problems. The difficulty generating scalable solutions to a problem of enormous complexity can frustrate the best intentions, and it would be both unfair and cynical to say that Ryan's lifelong efforts hav been for naught. Cynicism is better left for our next story of charitable failure.

Big-city police chiefs, for all their power and resources, are largely an anonymous bree trotted out from time to time to decry the latest urban mayhem and declare the intent of th police to bring perpetrators to swift justice. They tend to be bureaucrats, skilled in ci politics, reassuringly bland before the cameras. Not Daryl Gates. For fourteen years as chi of the Los Angeles police, Gates cultivated an image as a hard-charging, straight-shootin leader whose skills were honed as a beat cop rather than as a city hall politician. He was relentless innovator. He fathered the SWAT (special weapons and tactics) program to hand particularly volatile and dangerous armed confrontations and developed a model citywic communications system that substantially reduced police response time.[16] And he authored a aggressive, military style of policing to combat a rising level of gang and drug violence. H torturously named CRASH (Community Resources Against Street Hoodlums) units hammere gangs with intensive door-to-door sweeps, and his penchant for dramatic tactics was capture in the use of armored assault vehicles tipped with steel battering rams. President George I W. Bush called him "an all-American hero."

But his aggressive approach courted controversy, which plagued the LAPD throughout h tenure. His CRASH teams—later immortalized in the movie *Colors*, starring Sean Penn ar Robert Duvall, and in the federal courts by the Rampart Division scandal—were bo successful in taking numerous gang members off the streets and notorious due to widesprea complaints of false arrests and excessive use of force and for creating general hostili between the then mostly white LAPD officers and their largely black and Latino targets. Th tense and deteriorating relationship between Gates and the black community reached a lo point with the Rodney King incident in 1991, when a high-speed police chase ended in vicious facedown beating that left King with a broken cheekbone, eleven broken bones at th base of the skull, and a broken leg. The level of hostility between the black community ar Gates personally was captured by two very different public personalities: Ice Cube, wh rapped, "Don't let me catch Daryl Gates in traffic / I gotta have it to peel his cap backwards and the former secretary of state Warren Christopher, whose investigative commission 1991 blamed the excessive force used by the LAPD on a lack of top leadership ar management controls.

Gates, while universally described as courtly and pleasant in person, also had a pencha for incendiary rhetoric. After his officers were criticized for using a carotid choke hold th caused injury and sometimes death, Gates commented, "We may be finding in some blac [that] when it is applied, the veins or arteries do not open up as fast as … on normal people In 1990, Gates told a Senate Judiciary Committee hearing that "casual drug users ought to b taken out and shot."[17] His views on drug issues were colored by both personal ar professional experiences. Gates's rise to the top of the LAPD more or less coincided with th intensification of the nationwide war on drugs, and he was an implacable, take-no-prisone warrior in the fight; some of his most vitriolic rhetoric and most violent police operatio occurred in this context. The fact that Gates's son struggled for years with drug addictio served as a sad, painful backdrop to his professional life.

Ironically, it was in the war on drugs—the arena where he earned his reputation as tough, grinding battlefield commander—that Gates devised his most durable, perhaps h most important, and certainly his most community-oriented and pacific strategy. In 1983, partnership with the Rotary Club of Los Angeles, he took the fight against illegal drugs to new, unexpected front, the elementary school classroom. His weapon, a new nonprofit calle Drug Abuse Resistance Education (D.A.R.E.), was an innovation in solving the drug proble from the demand side. It envisioned a curriculum for students as young as fifth graders abo the dangers of drugs, both illegal drugs and legal ones such as tobacco and alcohol. Th D.A.R.E. model is highly structured, involving ten to twenty weekly hour-long sessio featuring lectures, class discussion, and role-playing. The goal of the program is to educa students about the dangers of drugs, build good decision-making and peer pressure resistan skills, and boost students' self-esteem. Critical to the concept of the program is that all th teachers of the D.A.R.E. curriculum are police officers who have received at least eight hours of specialized training in child development, classroom management, elementary scho teaching, and communications skills. Thus D.A.R.E., in addition to creating a strong classroo experience, sought to forge an understanding between children and the police forc Ironically, Gates, who had stood strong as the old guard against the innovations community policing, had birthed a unique relationship between the police and the younge members of his public.

The timing of D.A.R.E. could not have been better. In addition to having the built- institutional support of the third-largest and perhaps most storied police force in America— force made iconic by *Dragnet* and *Adam-12* and lampooned by O. J. Simpson of all people *The Naked Gun: From the Files of Police Squad!*—D.A.R.E. hit all the right political notes durin the Reagan and the first Bush administrations' war on drugs. It had the proper mix of politic theology—a strong stand against the evils of drugs, action at the local level—and it leavene to some degree other more punitive programs that were the foundations of the enforceme effort. Significant federal funding followed, and D.A.R.E. grew at extraordinary rates. By th end of the 1990s, it had become by far the largest drug education program in the countr penetrating 75 percent of American school districts. At its apex, D.A.R.E. annually reache thirty-five million children in the United States alone and was present in fifty-four countri around the world. While those numbers are slightly lower today, it remains by far the mo expansive and prominent American drug prevention organization.

By most measures, D.A.R.E. is a great example of the power of the charitable sector, organization that has built a novel and needed program and scaled itself dramatically to rea its vast target audience. D.A.R.E. has leveraged substantial cooperation and funding fro individuals, nonprofits, and government to create a wide and strong base of support. Its We site and literature are filled with warm anecdotes from police officers, parents, and studen testifying to the success of the program. It is widely known and largely admired, so much s that President Obama has, as did presidents before him, annually declared a Nation D.A.R.E. Day in early April. There is only one minor blemish to this picture: virtually ever piece of quantitative evidence demonstrates that the D.A.R.E. program doesn't actually work

With its astonishingly rapid spread around the country and its connection to the broade and politically charged war on drugs, D.A.R.E. not surprisingly drew substantial scholar scrutiny. D.A.R.E. in fact did not spring fully developed from the fertile mind of Daryl Gate it was based upon the intriguing, but largely untested, social influence theory of a wel known psychologist named William Hansen. Hansen's model was built around the concept o resistance-skills training, giving youth the skills to reject negative social pressures. Whi D.A.R.E. had these respectable theoretical roots, it was unheard of for an education program to be so extensively implemented without trial runs and careful testing. Many in th educational research community were understandably suspicious that D.A.R.E.'s growth owe more to political convenience and the personal influence of Gates than to good and caref educational policy, and they set out to test its effectiveness.

In the early 1990s, researchers began to release the first studies on the impact of D.A.R.E and the results were not promising. In 1991, a Kentucky study for the National Institute o Drug Abuse found "no statistically significant differences" between the drug habits of yout who went through the program and youth who did not. In 1993, a Research Triangle Institu report declared that D.A.R.E. has "a limited to essentially non-existent effect" on drug us and a Canadian government study found "no significant effect on the use of … marijuan acid, heroin, crack, glue and P.C.P."[18] Most of the reporting, which generated substanti debate about D.A.R.E., was challenged by the program's advocates as preliminary in natu or lacking in the long-term statistically valid tracking that could form the foundation for firm evaluation of the program.[19] That was not available until 1998.

"Assessing the Effects of School-Based Drug Education: A Six-Year Multilevel Analysis o Project D.A.R.E." was—and still is—the most comprehensive study of D.A.R.E.[20] The stud was much anticipated by D.A.R.E. proponents since the lead investigator, Dennis Rosenbaum the head of the Department of Criminal Justice at the University of Illinois at Chicago, was longtime advocate for the program and because it was such a comprehensive undertakin Over six years, researchers followed different groups of students, some of whom wer randomly assigned into D.A.R.E. programs and some of whom were randomly placed in control groups. Six years is a long time to wait for a report, so one can imagine th excitement and perhaps trepidation with which it was anticipated. It is only a little harder imagine the profound disappointment when the report landed with a big negative thu overall, the study found that D.A.R.E. had no material effect on participants, certainly not the long term. In just one or two subcategories, the study found D.A.R.E. to have som modest positive short-term effects, but the positive effects disappeared completely by th critical high school years. The researchers even found a small "boomerang" effect o suburban students; that is, suburban students who went through the D.A.R.E. program we *more* likely to gravitate toward drugs than their control group peers. The researchers offere a number of theories for this unexpected and unintended consequence, with the mo

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