



Editorial

Introduction to Charitable Giving and Fundraising Special issue

In this special issue of the Journal of Public Economics we hope to showcase the broad palette of approaches taken and questions asked about charitable giving in current economic research. The papers published here use administrative data in the tradition of public economics, field experiments with real donors to charities, and pure laboratory experiments. The questions addressed here will inform research on the effects of government tax and spending policies toward charities and donors, the organization of fundraising, the effectiveness of different fundraising tools, who gives, and what makes a donor say yes to a solicitation.

Despite the different approaches and questions, there is a remarkable degree of coherence to the papers. All are interested in how donors and charities interact, with the goal of improving the best practices of both government policy and charitable fundraising. All of the papers will help us understand how donors to charity, recipients of charity, government policy toward charity, and organizers of the charities themselves all combine to provide public goods and overcome free riding.

The papers in this special issue were presented at the Middlebury College Workshop on Philanthropy, held April 24–26, 2009, at Middlebury College with the generous support of the Christian A. Johnson Economics Enrichment Fund and the discretionary funds of the President of Middlebury College, Ronald Liebowitz. The conference was spearheaded by Jeffrey Carpenter, and organized by Jeff, Peter Matthews, Jessica Holmes, Jim Andreoni, and John List. And the key contributor, Janine Podraza, did an excellent job of coordinating all of the travel and local arrangements for the conference.

The participants at the conference were Lise Vesterlund (University of Pittsburgh), Imran Rasul (University College London), Angela de Oliveira (University of Massachusetts, Amherst), Clair Null (Emory University), Brian McManus (University of North Carolina), Margaret McConnell (California Institute of Technology), Jonathan Meer (Texas A&M), Peter Hans Matthews (Middlebury College), Erzo Luttmer (Harvard), John List (University of Chicago), Sera Linardi (University

of Pittsburgh), Jessica Holmes (Middlebury College), Christina Fong (Carnegie Mellon), Jeff Carpenter (Middlebury College), and Jim Andreoni (University of California, San Diego). We also are pleased to acknowledge the undergraduates from Middlebury who commented on the papers presented: Max Benjamin '11, Alexandra Bornstein '11, Andrew Chong '10, Agnes Hever '11, and Phuong Le '09.

We would like to express our appreciation to all those mentioned above who made the conference possible, and whose contributions, both charitable and intellectual, made it such a productive endeavor. We also want to thank the editors of the Journal of Public Economics for agreeing to publish this special issue, and to Liz Anderson for her professionalism and personal charm in helping to edit the manuscripts.

Finally, one of the joys of interacting with fellow travelers in the world of giving, charity, and altruism is that the field tends to select people who are both keenly aware of the need for social goods, and who are willing to perform heroic acts to satisfy those needs. Thus we owe a special thanks to Lise Vesterlund for recognizing on the last evening of the conference that Sama's Café was still open after the Inn we were at had run out of the social goods that were facilitating such a lively and interesting academic discussion, and that Sama's was close enough for a young and athletic person to (literally) run to, purchase more of the social goods, and run back to the Inn.

We also wish to thank Jon Meer for being young and athletic.

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