

making good happen

How can playful love
increase donor
excitement in digital
fundraising?

Professor Jen Shang

April 2025





What is Excitement?

- Excitement is a **positive affect** – the good feeling associated with emotions like happiness and enthusiasm.
- In academic literature, excitement is typically associated with other positive affects such as feeling **active, alert, attentive, determined, enthusiastic, inspired, interested, proud, and strong.**
- Along with joy and enthusiasm, excitement is thought of as part of the umbrella positive affect of **joviality** (e.g., the quality of being **cheerful, friendly, and good-humored**, often associated with a **lighthearted and enjoyable** atmosphere).



What is Playful Love?

- Individuals who experience playful love often approach relationships as an **exciting, low-commitment dynamic**, favoring multiple partners or casual arrangements to avoid complexity.
- This style of love can **foster enthusiasm and a sense of youthful spontaneity**. This might make it useful for fun forms of fundraising (e.g., social media engagement; event invitations).
- Highly sensitive individuals may find playful love challenging, as it may not align with their emotional needs.



How can playful love increase donor excitement in digital fundraising?



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Date: Friday 2 May 2025
Time: 5pm UK

The Fundraising Taxonomy of Love

Types of Love	Definition	Typical Target	Charity Typified	Forms of Giving
Playful Love (Ludus)	Short-lived, light-hearted fun in uncommitted relationships.	Organization, beneficiary, other donors.	Children's charities, animal welfare, charities with a younger donor base.	Fundraising events, pub/bar quizzes, gifts exchanges, competitions, lotteries, giving days, auctions, social media campaigns.
Passionate Love (Eros)	Short-lived passion experienced in uncommitted relationships, with the potential to develop into more committed relationships.	Fundraiser, organization.	Museums, concerts, public broadcasting, international aid.	One-to-one conversations, street fundraising, fundraising events, gala, VR experiences, volunteering, participating in sponsorship events (e.g. marathon).
Self-Kindness (Philautia)	Long-suffering experience with, or witnessing of a problem/suffering, and relief of this distress/guilt.	Self, donor, peers, fundraiser.	Health and disability charities, animal welfare.	Acknowledgements, recognition, participating in sponsorship events.
Familial/ Friendship Love (Storge/Philia)	Moderately intense, enduring and warm relationships, usually experienced around a feeling of community, family, or friendship.	Family, organization, other donors, cause, leader, fundraiser.	Universities, faith-based organizations, local rescue, international aid, animal welfare.	Celebrations, child sponsorships.
Pragmatic Love (Pragma)	Long-term commitment to a relationship that has been proven to allow them to achieve their goals.	Founder, organization	University, public broadcasting, international aid/development.	Receipts, sustainable communications, monthly giving, acknowledgements, corporate.



Where is playful love in digital fundraising?

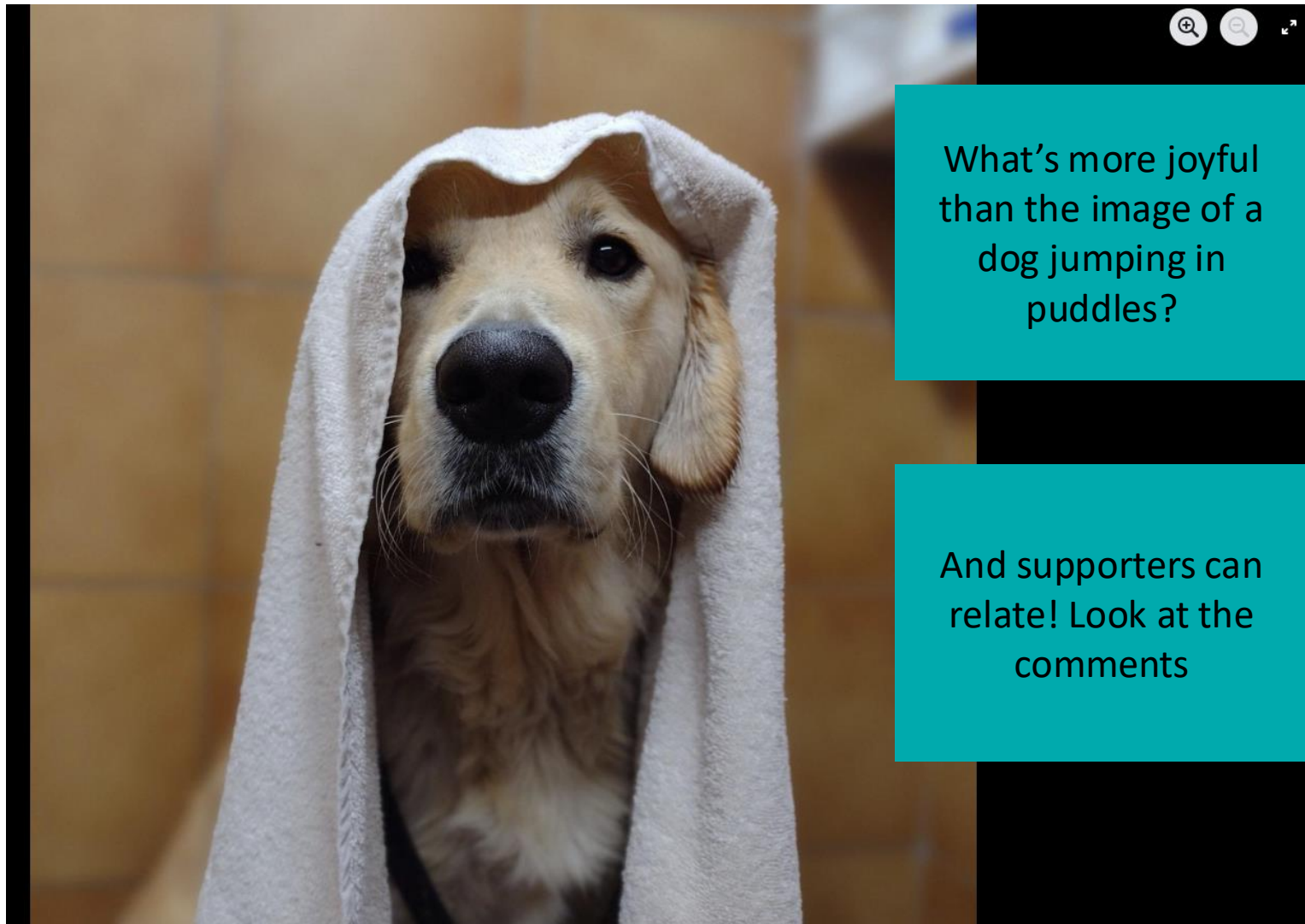




Every Animal Lover's Light-Hearted Fun

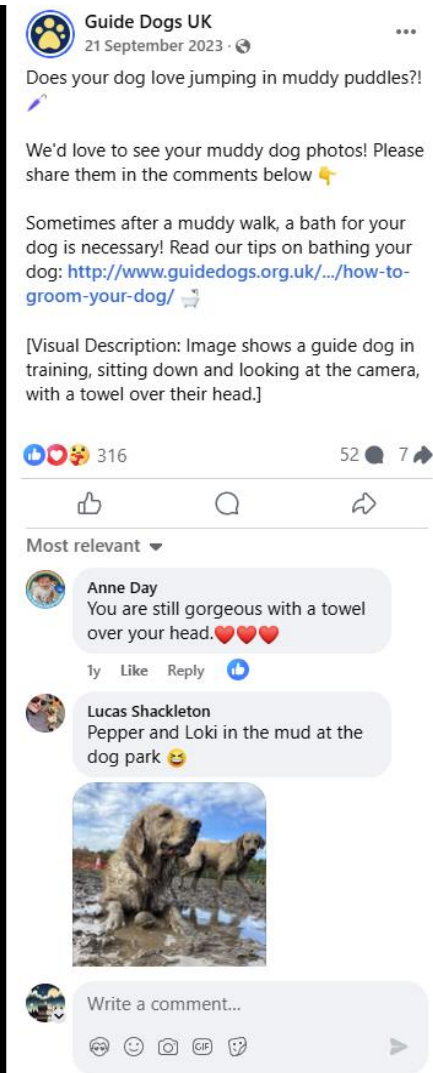
Colorado Gives Foundation.org

Facebook



What's more joyful
than the image of a
dog jumping in
puddles?

And supporters can
relate! Look at the
comments





E-Communications



*Thank you for
opening young
minds to nature's
wonders*

**Nothing connects
you better to
nature than a
hugging tree**





How can playful love increase donor excitement in digital fundraising?





Kindchenschema (cuteness)

Wang, Mukhopadhyay, & Patrick (2017)

Kindchenschema is the classical definition of cuteness – the degree to which something appears baby-like. This infantility is tied to helplessness of the young.

Baby-like images have:

- Big eyes
- Round faces
- Chubby bodies

This doesn't JUST apply to babies, but anything baby-like.



Baby photo

Wiseman (2009)

- Wiseman scattered 240 wallets across the city of Edinburgh in Scotland and counted how many were returned.
- Along with a return address, these wallets had a picture inside of either a baby, puppy, family, or an elderly couple.
- Having a picture of a baby inside meant your wallet was the most likely to be returned!

Baby photo – 88% returned

Puppy – 53% returned

Family – 48% returned

Elderly couple – 28% returned



Kindchenschema (cuteness)

Wang, Mukhopadhyay, & Patrick (2017)

- The researchers added cute posters to student areas where individuals recycled their rubbish.
- The amount of recycling in student areas with the 'cute' posters increased 27%.





Kindchenschema (cuteness)

Wang, Mukhopadhyay, & Patrick (2017)

- And using cute images like below resulted in a **17.6%** higher intention to donate compared to campaigns that used 'less cute' dog imagery.

Rated cute by donors

Your donation can help animals

Donate NOW !



Rated less cute by donors

Your donation can help animals

Donate NOW !





What if cuteness is not an option?





Insiders' Joke – E-Newsletter Heading

ColoradoGivesFoundation.org

MARY POPPINS SHOULD TAKE LESSONS *from you*

An update from Beth McNutt, Child Life Coordinator at the Saint John Regional Hospital (A.K.A. the Fun Lady), on how your generosity helps kids in our hospital this Christmas.



Extending huge and heartfelt thanks to Barb Magee, Desjardins Insurance Agent (left), for the thoughtful \$500 gift to Child Life made through Desjardins' employee giving program. Every gift makes even more nurturing care happen.

Insiders' Joke – Email Subject Line



Original subject line:

You're invited - Cinderella Dress Rehearsal

Revised subject line:

Mary, your magic carriage awaits

Insiders' Joke: Quiz Information Page



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Amnesty International UK / Groups

OXFORD CITY CENTRAL



Pub Quiz in Oxford



IN THESE TIMES

Join the Oxford City Amnesty Group for a Pub Quiz on Wednesday 8th May at the White House (Tap Social) to raise funds for Amnesty. Get your thinking caps on!

Suggested contribution of £1 per person, max of 6 people per team. Cash

Posted 11 Apr 2024, 12:19pm

0 comments

Share

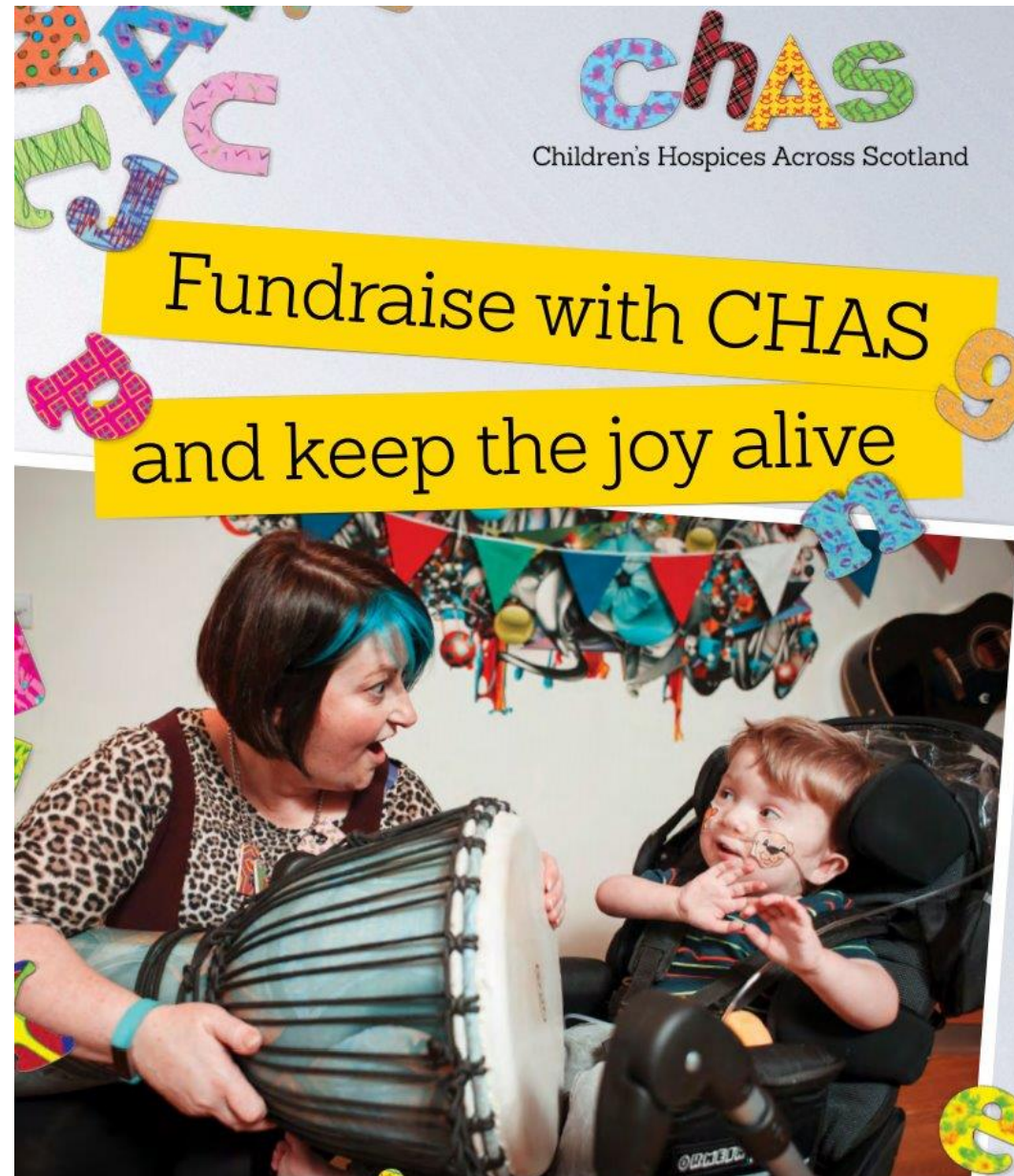


Great fun photo!! Theme runs into the copy with 'thinking caps'



What if playful love
doesn't feel right?







The Ultimate Challenge?

The ALS Ice Bucket Challenge





FOCUS - Facebook

A popular challenge on Instagram and TikTok is the '10-year challenge'.

Share a photo of yourself 10 years ago, and now. Awkward teenage photos ensued...

FOCUS took a wholesome approach to this challenge and showed how much they'd grown!

FOCUS - Fellowship of Christian University Students · Follow

22 January 2019 · 🌐

...

Ten year challenge 2009 - 2019 😊



👍❤️😂 323

16 comments 23 shares

👍 Like

💬 Comment

➦ Share



A Thank You Email!

Theme runs throughout

Subject: Kids say the darndest things!



Dear <name>,

Shama, age 6, asked me “what do you do here?” I tried to explain. “I ask nice people (like YOU, <name>) to give their hard-earned money to pay for things like new books, camping trips, board games, art supplies, Community BBQ nights, and bike helmets.”

The questions I got in return. “Who will give me money? Why? Can we buy CANDY? Do you beg for money, Miss??”

Let's use this little 'Kids say the Darndest Things' story to illustrate three amazing things you make happen with your gift.

Can we buy
CANDY?
Fun, and relatable
to those with young
children



Gamification and Playful Love





The application of gaming elements (e.g., point scoring, competition with others, rules of play) to other areas of activity, typically as an online marketing technique to encourage engagement with a product or service.



Rifkin, Du & Berger (2021)

- The authors conducted a field experiment to see if they could increase the number of people who offered baristas tips.
- The baseline rate for tipping was 40.9%. This increased to 77.3%!

How?

- The authors developed a field experiment where consumers 'voted' for cats or dogs using their tips.





Heaven on Earth Perry's Place – Instagram

ColoradoGivesFoundation.org

A fun way to
show cats who
need adopting

Cat owners
will relate...

NICE CAT OF THE WEEK



ELIJAH

has opened up and showed
the staff how much he loves
belly rubs

NAUGHTY CAT OF THE WEEK



POPSICLE

stole treats from Daniel, his
BLIND roommate



perrys_place_la • Follow
Heaven on Earth



perrys_place_la Happy #Saturday!

Meet our Naughty & Nice Cats of the
Week: Elijah and Popsicle

🐱 Elijah, a handsome boy with the
sweetest purrsonality, has been on the
'nice' list for a while. And, he's still
available for adoption 🐾

🐱 Popsicle loves snacks, even moreso
when they're stolen from his roommates.
Popsicle is also available for adoption.

Want to learn more about these cuties?
Reach out to
adoptions@heavenlypets.org ❤️🐾

#PerrysPlace #AdoptMe #nicecat
#naughtycat #cats #catlovers
#catsofinstagram #catrescue #rescuecat



767,645 likes

19 November 2022

Log in to like or comment.

Look at the
numbers of
likes!!



Shelter goes viral for its ‘nice and naughty’ cat of the week series

By Fox News

Published Feb. 14, 2023, 2:49 p.m. ET

5 Comments



An adoption center and cat sanctuary in Los Angeles has gone viral after launching its “nice and naughty” cat of the week series.

Toni Barrett, development manager for Heaven on Earth Perry’s Place, said she and her staff were inspired by a popular cat influencer on TikTok who goes by the name “Pot Roast’s Mom,” who would label her own cats as “good or bad” cat of the week.

Heaven on Earth Perry’s Place went viral!

Barrett thought the idea was a funny idea and decided to apply it to her work at the sanctuary, she told Fox News Digital.

“We should do that at Perry’s Place because we have so many cats, and we always have someone doing something naughty or volunteers telling us how much they loved [how] this cat was well-behaved this week,” Barrett said.



Another just
for fun....

Thousands of users now interact with the shelter's "Nice Cat/Naughty Cat" posts.

Heaven on Earth Perry's Place

Volunteers and staff members are the ones to nominate a cat to be selected for the "nice and naughty" cat of the week award.



Gamification and Excitement

- Sisson and Whalen (2021) examined the relationship between gamification event marketing and excitement.
- They sent some attendees of a conference an email and measured positive behavioral intentions that result. Others received an email, but there was no gamification included.

Gamification:

You receive the following message from the conference organizer for the upcoming professional conference

“We are excited to announce that we will be offering a game at this year’s conference. You will be able to compete against your fellow attendees for prizes and recognition. Details for playing the game will be sent out soon, so stay tuned!”

No Gamification:

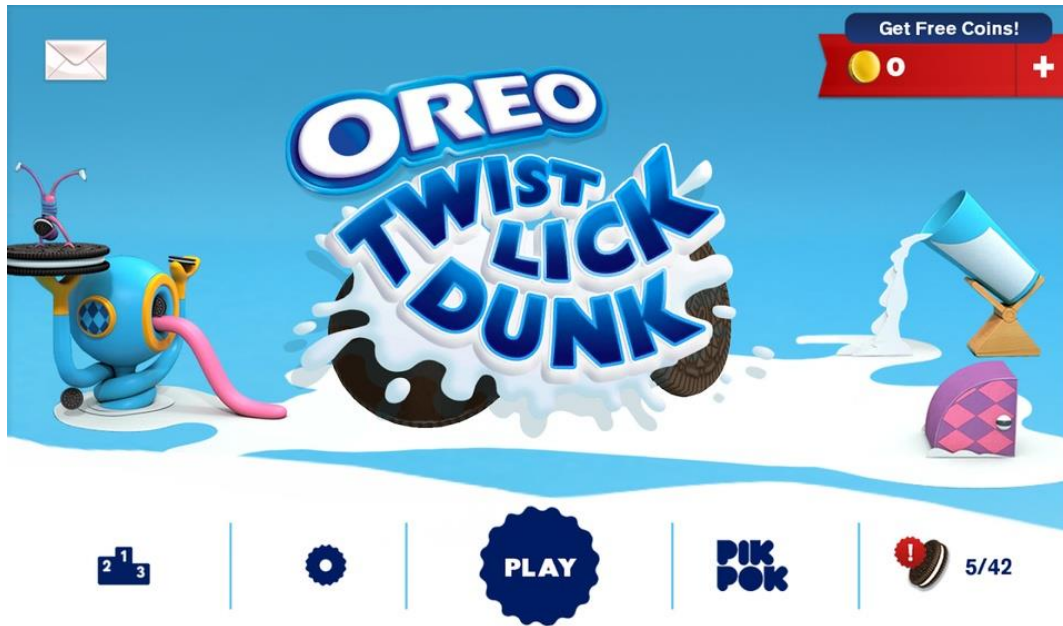
You receive the following message from the conference organizer for the upcoming professional conference

“We are excited for this year’s conference. Details for the conference will be sent out soon, so stay tuned!”



Gamification and Excitement

Yang et al. (2017) sent students the Oreo: Twist, Lick, or Dunk mobile game and measured their excitement, brand attitude and behavioral intentions.



They found that **perceived enjoyment** of the game was the strongest predictor of intention of engaging with the game.

They also found that **enjoyment of the game** was a strong predictor of positive brand attitude.



A word on matched giving...

Should you use it and how?





What are matching gifts?

A Matching Gift, also known as a Matching Fund, is a gift made to your organization by a matching donor on the condition that another donor first makes their own gift to that organization.



Matching Gifts in Practice

Karlan & List (2007)

- The authors investigated the ratio of gift to matched gift that works best to instigate giving.
- The mere presence of a match has been shown to increase the revenue per solicitation and it does so substantively, by **19%**. In addition, the match offer significantly increases the probability that an individual donates - by **22%**. (Karlan and List 2007)



Matching Gifts in Practice

Karlan & List (2007)

Which gift ratio worked best?

\$1 gift = \$1 matched gift

- Offering a 1:1 matching gift significantly increased the likelihood that someone would give at all by **22%** and the average gift size by **19%** compared to no match.
- Beyond that, the match did not matter. A 2:1 ratio or even a 3:1 ratio did not further increase response rate or average gift size.
- This finding was robust across several studies.



Matching Gifts in Practice



Matched gift appeals seem to be particularly popular towards the end of the calendar and tax year, notably in the United States.

A recent survey conducted by the digital research agency M+R found that 81% of groups in their sample promoted a match in their year-end campaign and many were found to be increasing the size of the match as the end of year approached.

“Your gift doubled” and “your gift trebled” were found to be the most common approaches, with the authors concluding that “having no match at year-end will put (the) organization at a competitive disadvantage in the marketplace.” (Peyrot 2015).



Limitations of Matching Gifts

- A further reason for the discrepancies could be the time in an organization's history when these various studies were conducted. Organizations doing a lot of match appeals may retain a donor base that are particularly warm to this approach and thus sensitive to the size of the multiplier. Over the years, messaging “trains” supporters in respect of what to look for in a campaign, and possibly to save their giving until the “optimal” matching offer is available.



Matching versus Leveraging

- Jeff Brooks lends further weight to this argument, supplying anecdotal evidence that the size of the multiplier of the match does in practice impact positively on behavior. He also argues that giving the match an exciting name (like “Million Dollar Match”) can improve the response even more.
- You can improve these simple low-cost offers by introducing some kind of leverage.

Overcoming the limitation with love

Colorado Gives Foundation.org




MATCH: Celebrate World Refugee Day

Double your impact, double your love. Your kindness today will be MATCHED to give even more hope to vulnerable families.

DONATE NOW


Overcoming the limitation with love



DONATE >

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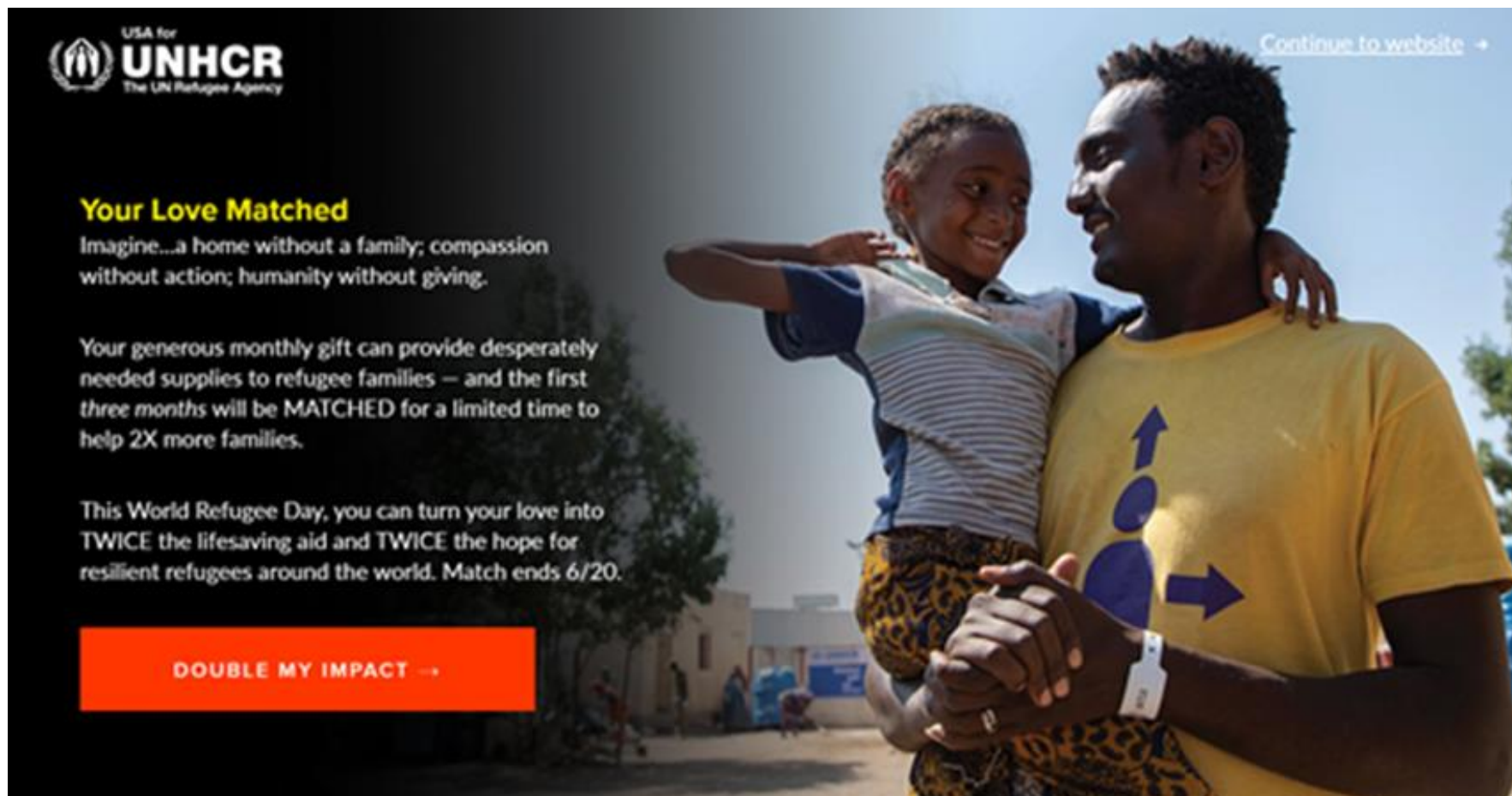


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Overcoming the limitation with love



USA for **UNHCR**
The UN Refugee Agency

[Continue to website →](#)

Your Love Matched

Imagine...a home without a family; compassion without action; humanity without giving.

Your generous monthly gift can provide desperately needed supplies to refugee families — and the first three months will be **MATCHED** for a limited time to help 2X more families.

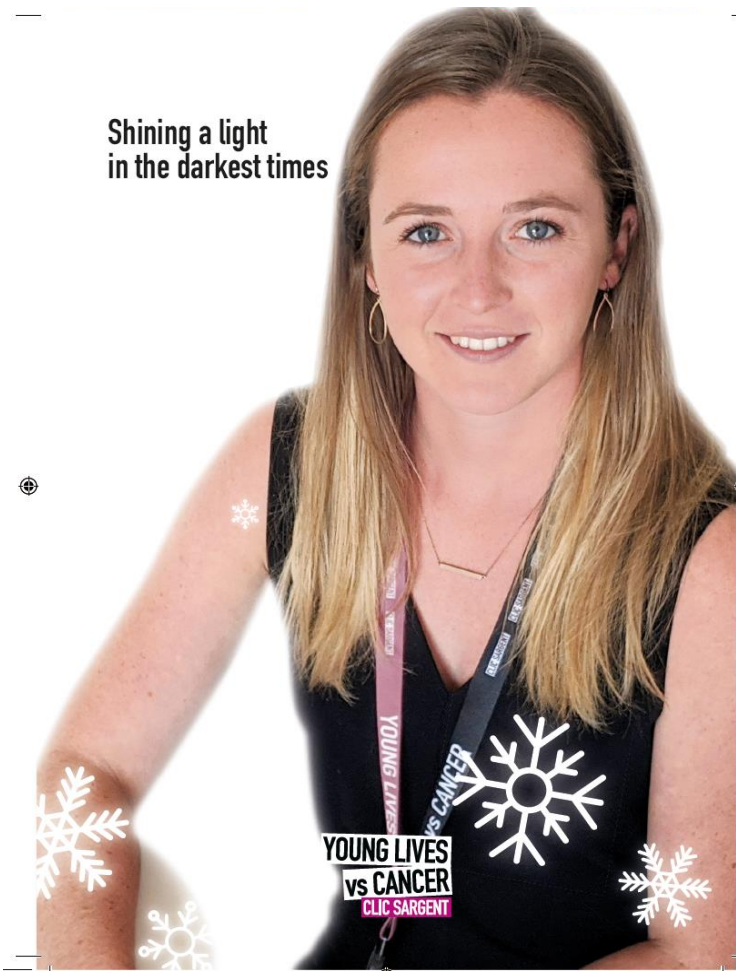
This World Refugee Day, you can turn your love into **TWICE** the lifesaving aid and **TWICE** the hope for resilient refugees around the world. Match ends 6/20.

DOUBLE MY IMPACT →



Go even deeper with love

Shining a light
in the darkest times





Go even deeper with love





Go even deeper with love





Go even deeper with love

Whatever love you have for these young lives, I promise, I will match it with mine.

YOUNG LIVES vs CANCER CLIC SARGENT

Social Sami

Influential Izzie

Potential Pippa

Established Ernie



Go even deeper with love

The collage features a woman on the left with a 'YOUNG LIVES vs CANCER CLIC SARGENT' lanyard and snowflake tattoos. On the right is a black and white photo of a couple kissing with the same text overlay. At the bottom are four character icons: Social Sami, Influential Izzie, Potential Pippa, and Established Ernie.

Whatever difference you want to make for these young lives, I promise, I will match it with mine.



THANK YOU!!

jen@philanthropy-institute.org.uk



To register for an exclusive Q&A
with Prof. Jen on this presentation
Date: Friday 2 May 2025
Time: 5pm UK

For **20% off** the
Certificate in Philanthropic Psychology
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CG520