

Funding Non-Profits through Photographs

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Preface

I ask that as you read this thesis you think of non-profit organizations that support a cause that you hold dear. Find local non-profits and humanitarian aid organizations that you can help either financially or through volunteer work. All of these organizations do not function without people like you. Lastly, I hope you enjoy this work and the accompanying photo book. This represents the last two years of my life with TRAIL Ministries and a collection of memories I would not trade for anything. Enjoy!

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Introduction

How does one fundraise well? Simple, tell a story that people cannot help but be moved by. For instance, TRAIL Ministries is an organization out of Cleveland, Tennessee, run by Chachi Averitt, that focuses on ministering to and equipping college-aged men and women to be the best version of themselves as well as helping them learn to listen to God on a daily basis. TRAIL does this through outdoor programming and what they refer to as “experiential discipleship,” meaning TRAIL is using experiences in the wilderness to reinforce its discipleship teachings (Averitt). Such a statement, in and of itself, does little to incite investment in TRAIL.

However, I can tell about a young man who stumbled into the TRAIL office in downtown Cleveland. He was going through a rough time in life and wanted to get away. The thought of going camping to escape some of the stress of his day-to-day life was appealing. He then got involved with the local club that TRAIL runs called The Outpost, which leads backpacking and camping trips on a biweekly schedule. He went on to join a Wednesday night discipleship group where he made some wonderful friends, like Logan Hall, whom you will get to know later. Through these relationships and the discipleship teachings they were experiencing, the two of them (as well as six other college-aged men) decided to go out west on a summer fly fishing trip. While out West, this young man got frustrated trying to fly fish, took a nap on a beautiful scenic, river bank, and picked up a camera. That moment when he was given the space for him to not be a fly fishermen like the rest of the group, and instead be a photographer, helped shape his identity and who he is today. That summer, he spent the remainder of the trip learning to

take better photos and loved it so much he went on another trip. During that time, he decided to transition to Middle Tennessee State University (MTSU). He continues to pursue a degree in Video and Film, as well as, further his knowledge through the photography program.

I am that young man. My name is Guy Shelton. Today, I am at MTSU working on this thesis project. I am studying how to help fund non-profits and humanitarian aid organizations, such as TRAIL, through photography and cinematography. I am being influenced daily by wonderful professors who encourage my love for the outdoors and photography then challenge me daily to continue to pursue both of those. Through TRAIL, I was given the opportunity to return out west for three trips documenting and photographing what TRAIL does best: **experiential discipleship**. Through this experience, I learned about working with clients and organizations, as well as what it is like to be on the staff of a non-profit.

Research

To properly discuss funding non-profits like TRAIL, a precise definition of “non-profits” is necessary. A non-profit organization is a business that uses its excess profits to further achieve a particular social goal rather than to use those profits as income payable to the organization's shareholders, executives, and staff (Jahre 44-45). This means that these organizations add any extra profits they have made back into their company or donate them to other causes instead of writing a bonus for their executives or distributing extra dividends back to their stockholders at the end of the year. A humanitarian aid organization is a subset of non-profits that focuses on providing support and relief to

poverty-stricken areas and natural disaster sites (“Code Of Conduct” 268-69). According to GrantSpace.org, there are approximately 1.5 million of these organizations worldwide. For the scope of the academic research portion of the present project, I chose to further research three of them: Corporation for Assistance Everywhere (CARE), The Red Cross, and Doctors Without Borders.

CARE is an organization committed to fighting the effects of world poverty, specifically hunger. Along with its focus on malnutrition, CARE also has several global initiatives concentrating on women and youth empowerment, HIV and AIDS, child marriage, climate control, economic development, clean water, education, and many other issues. It was founded by Wallace Justin Campbell and Arthur C. Ringland over seventy years ago and currently has 830 active projects in over ninety five countries which helped sixty five million people in 2015. CARE prides itself on being non-governmental, non-religiously-affiliated, impartial assistance program (CARE).

The Red Cross, also known as The Red Crescent in several Islamic countries, is one of the largest relief organizations in the world. It was one of the first to provide relief to Haiti in the wake of multiple hurricanes over the last several decades, and the 2010 earthquake, one of the largest in Haitian history, that sent the capitol of Port-au-Prince into complete disorder (American Red Cross). This organization provided blankets, clean water, food, and mattresses to families that were dislodged during the earthquake and has continued to provide support in the nation through several major hurricanes. Since the Red Cross is a non-religious based organization, these relief efforts are what paved the way for my local church to take a mission trip there in 2014, of which I was blessed to be

a part. It gave us the ability to do outreach and mission work and to share the gospel to people in a time of need. This was done while simultaneously meeting their physical needs of food and clothing.

The Red Cross works globally through its international branches but focuses a large portion of its efforts on issues within the borders of the United States through The *American* Red Cross. Its main priority is disaster relief within the borders of the United States, such as rebuilding efforts in the wake of Hurricane Katrina and Hurricane Sandy. The American Red Cross also helps with blood donations and distributions, as well as training everyday people in lifesaving skills such as CPR and general preparedness for natural disasters. One of The American Red Cross's slogans is, "We Are All The American Red Cross — Sleeves Up. Hearts Open. All In.," emphasizing its commitment to training local communities and always being willing to help those in need (American Red Cross).

The final organization included in this study is Doctors Without Borders. Doctors Without Borders is a medical outreach that originated with a group of doctors in France who wanted to help provide medical services to people in war-ridden and poverty-stricken places. Today, Doctors Without Borders provides assistance in volatile countries such as Syria, Afghanistan, Somalia, and several others. Doctors Without Borders holds tightly to being a politically neutral and religiously impartial group, so much so that its motto is: "Medical Aid Where It Is Needed Most. Independent. Neutral. Impartial." This impartiality allows it access into these dangerous locations from which other relief organizations would be turned away (Doctors Without Borders).

All three of these organizations are prime examples of both large scale non-profits and humanitarian aid organizations. The reason I chose these organizations as examples is because CARE, The Red Cross, and Doctors Without Borders are all largely privately funded by donors, not governments or government grants.

CARE, The Red Cross, and Doctors Without Borders use open financial information and have a powerful electronic media presence,¹ which helps promote their messages and gives updates to donors who have invested in specific projects. All three of these organizations' websites provide easy access to their financial information, which goes back multiple years and shows exactly how they spent the money they were donated as well as their tax records. By having open financial records, trust is built between donors and organizations.

One of these organizations' most valuable tools in bringing in donations are their media pages. On these pages, they publish news of what is happening in the field and what kind of relief is being provided. These pages are also where they post news video packages and picture slideshows that instill empathy, and compel people to donate to further support their causes. I hope to be able to replicate these organizations' fundraising success through media as I work with TRAIL.

Implementation

My job this summer with TRAIL Ministries was as the Staff Photographer. This entailed website development, staff photos, capturing each trip out west, the post-processing of images after each trip, and delivering those images to our participants. I was also involved in the preplanning of devotions for each trip, which commonly was

round table discussions of ideas such as: ‘What does it mean to be a son or daughter of God?’ or ‘What’s your life story?’.

When we were not doing staff and devotional development we were doing research. Chachi was making contacts with people we knew out west, such as fly shops, river guides, local cabin owners, and personal friends who all help us be able to successfully and safely run the program. Logan was planning hikes through Grand Teton National Park and doing gear checks to make sure everything was ready to go when we left. I was updating the website with new photos and helping reorganize pages so they flowed better. We did this for several weeks leading up to the first trips.

Two weeks before the first trip, Chachi headed out West ahead of us to make sure campsites and fishing spots were still accessible and ready. When the first trip rolled around, Logan picked up a 15 passenger van and I opened the office. Then we waited for the group to arrive. One by one people would show up excited about the adventure ahead of us. Once everyone arrived, Logan went over policies and procedures and we loaded up to head for Jackson, Wyoming. That drive takes 36 hours, so needless to say, the excitement fades and everyone settles in for the journey that is, until we hit Cheyenne, Wyoming.

Cheyenne is an important place on this journey because it is roughly 6 hours out of Jackson. Groups typically get there around breakfast, and that is when the terrain first starts to change more towards the rugged landscape of the Rocky Mountains. As they drive the last few hours into Jackson, the mountains start to rise around them and the rivers begin to flow next to road. Every turn is another beautiful view. Upon finally

arriving in Jackson, they stop and stretch their legs in town. That is where they can buy fishing licenses, any last second gear, and my job as the staff photographer starts to take off.

From there, the group drives north out of Jackson, and for the first time they see the Teton mountains. For some of these guys, it is the first time they have ever seen them, and that's always a special moment (Figs. 1 & 2). We settle into camp for 3 days in Wyoming and that is where every guy on the trip gets the opportunity to share his story. This is a safe place for them to be open and honest with this new found group of brothers about what they have experienced and been through. This is often the first time guys have been given the space to openly share like this, and it is a real bonding experience for everyone. They also get in 3 full days of fishing and resting before continuing to the second leg of their adventure. After their stay in Wyoming, they move on to either Colorado or Montana depending on the trip.

Colorado is more of an adventure-based trip filled with rafting, possible mountain climbing, and, of course, ample amounts of fly fishing. It is roughly an eight hour drive south of Jackson to Buena Vista, Colorado. Once there, they raft the Arkansas river with Noah's Ark Whitewater Rafting. TRAIL also planned climbs on Grays-Torreys, a 14,000 feet saddle peak⁸, which sadly this year they did not get to experience due to weather. The group also fishes several rivers in the Buena Vista area, including a night fishing trip where the smallest fish caught to date is fourteen inches.

Montana, on the other hand, is a more relaxed trip with slower mornings and more flexible schedules. The group stays on the Rock Creek river, where they have the luxury

of being walking distance from fishing at all times. This allows the group to plan what they want to do as a group. If they decide to take a slower morning just staying at camp to fish and rest, then they can. Alternatively, if they decide to drive up the river to another section and fish, then they can do that as well. This flexibility it makes this trip far more easy-going and relaxing.

Photographers

Taking lessons I learned from the non-profit organizations, such as continually publishing content, pairing stories with the people being impacted by them, and capturing both high points and low points, I then turned my attention to replicating their media successes. To do this, I first had to study various photographers. I studied Ansel Adams, Elia Locardi, Chris Burkard, Henri Cartier-Bresson, Steve McCurry, and Dana Gluckenstein. These people are all either historical photographers, human rights activists, iconic photojournalists, or modern outdoor and traveling photographers. These photographers have all influenced the way I take pictures, and I attempted to model some of my photos after some of their styles.

I modeled some of my landscape photos after the famous shots of Ansel Adams (Fig. 3). Adams was known for his composition² or eye for taking photos. However, I most admire his ability to think through the photographic process. Adams would commonly shoot photos with a specific set of lens, certain film, or a certain camera based on his knowledge of how to manipulate that photo in the post production process (Swift). I did the same in my photo by knowing that I can bring up shadows and darker spots in my foreground but cannot bring down washed out highlights in my sky. I intentionally

took a slightly darker photo in order to be able to adjust it in post production (Fig. 4). This adjustment makes my photo look correctly exposed³ when in fact it was actually underexposed. This is an extremely useful tool when you do not have the ability to use things like a graduated neutral density filter.⁴

Elia Locardi specializes in composite photos, meaning merging multiple photos into one well composed and well lit photo (Locardi) (Fig. 5). I employed this technique in my photo titled “Grand Teton Stars” (Fig. 6) in which I merged the foreground, middle ground, and background of 3 separate photos in one black and white photo. The reason I used this technique is because I wanted to capture The Teton Mountains more like I remember them even if that is not how they actually are. Locardi explains this in a seminar he taught on multi-exposure photography: “The whole memory of it becomes this single event that your trying to describe, and you show a photo.” He then goes on to argue that a single photo does not typically capture the full atmosphere of a place because our memories tend to merge all the events that happened at the location into a single memory. Following this style, I took my favorite photo of the Flat River snaking through a plain, the most detailed photo of the Teton Mountains, and the best photo of the stars from that portion of the trip and merged them all into one. I then turned it into a black-and-white photo to better merge the different times of daylight.

I also heavily studied Chris Burkard. Burkard studied in surf photography and then became one of the most prominent landscape and adventure photographers of the modern day (Fig. 7). Burkard has several online tutorials and workshops, which I went through for personal knowledge and to apply to my photos this summer. Through those, I

learned tips and tricks for shooting landscape photos, such as using wide angle lenses to capture large landscapes and using a graduated neutral density filter to help darken the skies and equalize the foregrounds (Burkard). This allows me to not have to fix those discrepancies in post production like I did when I was shooting in the style of Ansel Adams (Fig. 8). The reason one would use this technique over Adams is because it does all of the work outside of one's camera so the captured image is properly exposed as opposed to doing it after the fact in post production. However, Adam's technique comes in handy if there is no easy access to a graduated neutral density filter or when shooting things like action sports.

I also took on the shooting style of Henri Cartier-Bresson by using only a 50mm lens for several days. Bresson did this for two reasons. First, lenses are expensive and heavy. To have only one when traveling makes logical sense. Second, when using a fixed lens the perceived distance through the camera lens to my subject does not change. This is useful because it allows the camera operator to get a feel for how close he or she needs to be to something to be able to capture the subject. Bresson used this for photographing current events which could change at a moment's notice. This familiarity with his camera gear allowed him not to have to struggle to frame and focus a shot properly; instead, he was able to point, focus, and capture remarkable moments (Thames & Hudson) (Fig. 9). I used this same technique to capture action shots while fly fishing (Fig. 10). I also found my 50mm lens very useful for shooting detail shots of fish because it has a close focal distance⁵ (Fig. 11).

I also adopted some of the portraiture styles of Dana Gluckenstien and Steve McCurry, who specialize in using natural light to illuminate their subjects. Here, I leaned more on Gluckernstien's style but used one of McCurry's most famous photos, Afghan Girl, as a reference (Fig. 12). McCurry's photo highly emphasized the eyes. He believed that the eyes are what draw one into a portrait (McCurry). Gluckenstien emphasized the use of shadows and sunlight in her photos to affect the mood of the picture. She also said in her speech for the Baldwin photographic gallery that in order to get large eyes from people one has to shoot somewhere that is not in direct light (Gluckenstien). It is a simple concept, but something I had never really considered before (Fig. 13). The photograph referenced is of Logan Hall, one of the staff members of TRAIL, and another one of the people who have been positively affected by TRAIL.

Experiences

An example of the type of testimonial we pair with photographs is Logan Hall. Logan became involved with TRAIL his freshmen year of college through some friends who were involved with it. The following semester he started sporadically attending TRAIL's weekly bible studies. Hall was no stranger to outdoor activities. That summer he took a job as a river guide on the Ocoee River.

The following semester he became involved with The Outpost and took a trip to North Carolina with 18 other students (Fig. 13). This sparked his love for backpacking and the community TRAIL strives to build. From there, he became consistently involved in weekly bible studies. These bible studies instilled purpose and identity outside of

outdoor activities. They also provided deeper friendships and relationships with a safe place to talk about both religious issues and the ups and downs of life.

The next summer he took a job with a catering company that paid a little better but found himself missing the outdoors. That summer he remembered TRAIL's summer program, where he could go travel out West and experience God's creation first hand. This allows him not to have to leave his job and still be able to experience the time outdoors that he loves. That summer, he became the first in his family to experience traveling out west, which gave him a better perspective on the size of America. When recalling the trips Hall stated, "I never realized how small America was. I always thought Wyoming was so far away but when you get in a car and drive there it really helped put in perspective that it was much closer than I thought."

That summer, Hall found the solitude he needed to help process the stresses of life while simultaneously finding the adventure of exploring new and exciting places. On that trip, he was offered the opportunity to come back out for a second trip. It was a no brainer. He went home for a few days, got some more time off work, and on August 1st, 2016, Hall and a smaller group of 4 set off for Jackson, Wyoming again. Hall described that trip as "a more comfortable, relaxed trip" since all of the people on that trip had been a part of the previous trip. Reminiscing on that trip Hall recalled an "anticipation of escape, to solitude and a stress free environment." Hall states, "For a week I had no work, freedom from any problems back home, and another chance to gain more clarity in my mind."

Coming back from those summer trips, Hall's role with TRAIL changed and he started to lead Outpost trips. He made a conscious effort to be available and even more involved. This led to even deeper relationships with the guys in his discipleship groups: "In a safe setting with a few similarities it allowed dudes from different walks of life to become brothers." For the last 3 years these guys have been growing together and they do things outside of TRAIL. Creating community through common activities like swimming in the Ocoee river, climbing meet ups, and Sunday spikeball⁶ hangouts.

The following summer, Hall became the Student Staff member for the summer. Hall became a large part of the pre-planning and summer program, where he spent the whole summer on staff out west. This time he took on a different role than the participant role he had been in. He took a WFR⁷ course and prepped for the summer. When the time came for taking guys out west for the summer program Logan was the leader of the trip. He was responsible for transporting the group from Cleveland to Wyoming, where we would meet up with Chachi. Then he would drive them from Wyoming to either Montana or Colorado depending on what trip they were on. The trust Chachi placed in him helped build his confidence. "As a college kid you don't necessarily get that a lot so having the opportunity to be believed in like that helps shows you that you're capable of doing things you didn't think you could. It also taught me that I'm not always perfect but can work through the mistakes." Hall continues, "Then when we actually led program successfully I proved to myself that I was capable of doing something that seemed so out of my realm of possibility; that I could travel [out West] and help facilitate the discipleship programs I had taken place in."

This semester, Hall became the director of the Outpost. That is a student staff position during the school year that comes with the responsibility of being in charge of recruiting and retaining college aged students in The Outpost, planning and leading 6 backpacking trips per semester (including gear and food prep for every trip). It also encompasses training other trip leaders and helping teach them TRAIL's backcountry instructor safety course. He is also requested to be at Wednesday night devotion groups and Sunday night spikeball hangouts. A large portion of his job is also just being a presence on campus representing TRAIL to people like his freshmen self, who may not know what we do, but may be interested in learning more. "TRAIL Ministries has allowed me to find my own understanding of religion as well as grow into the man God has called me to be" (Fig. 10).

This is another story of how TRAIL has positively impacted a young man, similar to the same one I described earlier in this paper, but you now have several photos to reference who Logan is and what he loves doing. By pairing those with organizational information, we have successfully created a connection between you and him and hopefully that connection is enough to make you want to donate. These donations allow people like Logan to keep impacting college aged people and adults on a routine basis.

TRAIL

To date, TRAIL Ministries has 120 men and women between ages 18-24 enrolled in their co-ed outdoors club, The Outpost. It takes \$6,000 to run The Outpost yearly. They also have 45 women involved in the newly developing women's discipleship side of TRAIL. They have 75 young men involved in small groups through out the week, as well

as, 25 men, aged 24 and up, who meet for a Saturday morning devotional group. To run the Saturday morning group it only cost \$1,500, that is one large donation or one person donating \$125 a month. To fund a student for a full year of discipleship, including a trip to Wyoming, Colorado, or Montana cost \$1,800. That is only \$150 a month to impact a young man or woman's life permanently. To fund all of TRAIL's discipleship groups cost \$72,000 annually. To fund TRAIL completely for a year is \$120,000. This does not happen by a single person writing a yearly check but rather by 65-70 people routinely writing checks of various amounts (Avirett). These checks all come together to form the organization that shapes young people, like Logan and myself.

Without TRAIL, I am not sure I would be here today. TRAIL Gave me a safe place to learn what I enjoyed and did not enjoy as well as, a place to strengthen my faith with like minded individuals. I probably would not be a Christian if it were not for TRAILL Ministries. I also would not care for people outside of myself as much as I do. These were all values taught to me through countless discipleship groups, backpacking trips, and long nights talking around a campfire that I would not trade for anything. TRAIL has instilled values of self worth and the value of others in me, and continues to do the same for hundreds of young adults on a routine basis.

Conclusion

After all of this if you are still asking, "So how does photography work to help TRAIL specifically?" let me give you another explanation. Simply put, the photographs taken on TRAIL trips go back to TRAIL, royalty free. TRAIL, has full rights to print for their official use, post to their social media, include in their newsletters and emails, and

send out in their annual mailings. These photos help to build empathy, which is the same empathy that having the opportunity to sit down and talk with TRAIL's director, Chachi, or one of TRAIL's participants, does. It also allows the receivers of physical mailings to have a photo to put on their fridge or desk. We ask that every time they see these photos that they say a prayer for TRAIL and what we are striving to do. If you are interested in partnering with TRAIL you can find more information in the endnotes of this project.⁹

As you can see, non-profits and humanitarian aid organizations serve people and impact people's lives a daily basis. Photography is vital in helping tell the stories of these organizations and individuals. Through photography, anyone has the opportunity to connect almost as if they were sitting across the table from these people. It give everyone the ability to look into someone else's eyes, see activities they love to do, interact with the people they love to help, and hopefully encourages the recipient of these photographs to take the opportunity to be empathetic. TRAIL is just one of thousands of non-profits that do work like this everyday, so I encourage you to find a problem you care about, find an organization that is addressing that issue, and partner with them. Thank you.



Figure 1



Figure 2



Figure 3



Figure 4



Figure 5



Figure 6



Figure 7



Figure 8



Figure 9



Figure 10



Figure 11



Figure 12



Figure 13

1. Electronic Media is photos, news, social media, cinematography, and any other form of news that you would access through online resources.
2. How a photographer positions objects within their frame or the border of the photo.
3. Exposure refers to the general brightness or darkness of an image. Overexposed is too bright where as underexposed it too dark.
4. A piece of glass that gradually gets darker from the top to the bottom. Generally used for the balancing of brighter and darker portions that meet in a generally straight line.
5. The distance from the front of a camera lens to the object being focused on.
6. Spikeball is a game where two teams of two players each try to bounce a rubber ball off of a circle net approximately 3 feet in diameter. The goal of the game is to bounce the ball off the net and your opponents not be able to return a singular bounce off the net with one hit each and without the ball hitting the ground.
7. WFR stands for Wilderness First Responder. To attain a WFR credential you first attend a 2 week intensive training course. There you learn skills such as basic CPR, injury assessment, some weather predictions, and how to handle emergency situations.
8. A saddle peak is where two mountains meet and have a smaller valley between the two summits.
9. www.trailministries.org is TRAIL's official website. If you are interested in donating or just want further information I highly encourage you to check it out. Thank you.

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