

# COMMENT

## CARING AND GIVING

### New life for an old word

Today's philanthropy is not restricted to the wealthy

SHEREE MEREDITH

"I would never have thought of myself as a philanthropist until others started to call me that. But as I look back, my philanthropy actually started a long time ago. It just looked really different and it is so much more than giving money."

While few of us would describe ourselves as a philanthropist, some may be surprised to hear that view expressed by Heidi Balsillie, one of Canada's leading philanthropists. The story she will share at Hamilton Community Foundation's upcoming Women 4 Change breakfast underscores the need to reimagine, redefine and then celebrate the nature and potential of philanthropy in today's world.

Philanthropy is not just the domain of the wealthy. Nor is it all about money. Today's philanthropy looks different, and November, National Philanthropy Month, marks the perfect time to breathe new life into this old word.

We often hear reference to the "time, talent and treasure" trio as the way people give and make a difference in their communities. More recently, "ties" has been added to this list in recognition of the power of social media and networks in drawing attention and responding to important issues and causes. At Hamilton Community Foundation, however, we have come to believe that today's philanthropy is much richer and more varied. To be most effective, it requires us each to ask ourselves, "How do I use all of my assets to have the impact I want to have?" Exploring this can enable each of us to make the most of what we have to give.

If there is a recipe, it is to begin by thinking about what is important to you — reflect on your values, issues that concern you, things that you believe are important to sustain and grow or your vision for the future. From the long list, identify what you consider to be the top priorities.

Then deepen your understanding of these priorities through research: connecting with others who share your interest or seeking out knowledgeable partners such as organizations addressing these issues. Ask questions that help you identify what really makes a difference, and what has been successful in achieving what you hope to achieve. Many of the challenges we face today have been described as "wicked problems." They are complex, requiring multiple and varied interventions.

From this, develop your strategy for involvement: your personal philanthropic plan. Be creative as you look through your personal tool box. Consider how you might contribute not just your time or finances, but also your other "assets." Our lives comprise a rich fabric of relationships, roles, experiences, skills, resources and opportunities, which create endless options for impact. Aligning your strategy with those of others may increase your effectiveness. Activate your networks and connect with new ones. The mix and extent of the assets you have available will vary across your lifespan and circumstances — but we all have them.

Daily at Hamilton Community Foundation we see evidence of the power and impact of modern philanthropists. This includes graduates of the Neighbourhood Leadership Institute who identify and work on community improvement projects; donors who support initiatives proven to transform lives; and the contributors to Women 4 Change who are collaboratively engaged in enhancing the lives of women and girls in our city and increasing women's capacity as effective philanthropists. It's also the young working parent balancing career and family who may have few resources for volunteering or giving but who takes this phase of life to engage their children in the community and to nurture the importance of caring about others.

Whatever it is you feel you can do, above all, take action. Philanthropy and the act of giving have proven benefits to your health and well-being and create the kind of strong, caring and vibrant city in which we want to live.

As a community let's celebrate National Philanthropy Month. Sheree Meredith is vice-president of Philanthropic Services at Hamilton Community Foundation.

It just looked really different and is so much more than giving money.

HEIDI BALSILLIE  
CANADIAN PHILANTHROPIST

## RETIREMENT

### There's no retirement in my future

I would rather talk about moving to the next 'phase' of my life, which might be Walmart



PAUL BENEDETTI

Recently, it has come to my attention that some of my friends are retiring.

I know this because they keep saying, "I'm retiring" over and over again and then laughing hysterically.

Though I am having difficulty lately multitasking — and by multitasking I mean breathing and then doing anything else at the same time — I did hear them.

Well, I sort of heard them. When we go out now, especially if it's a noisy restaurant, about half the evening is spent repeating ourselves. The conversation goes something like this:

Friend #1: "I'm retiring from work."

Friend #2: "You're retiring what jerk?"

Me: "Don't rewire anything until you talk to my guy."

Friend #1: "No, no, I'm retiring. I'm done this year."

Friend #2: "Which ear? My right one's shot. I have a hearing aid, but I hate it."

Me: "At what? We haven't even ordered yet."

Friend #1: "Oh hell, never mind."

Me: "You know, you should think about retiring. You're not getting any younger."

When they tell me that they're retiring, right from the bottom of my heart, I hate

them. I'm kidding, of course. I don't hate them. It's really more of a deep, bitter jealousy.

I also can't really believe it. One minute we're sneaking \$2 drafts at Paddy Greene's and the next thing you know people are talking about the end of their work life. OK, so maybe a few decades have slipped by, but retirement? It seems insane.

Actually, according to my financial planner who I see whenever I need to be plunged into a deep depression, the idea of retirement in my case is actually insane.

Your problem, he pointed out, is "timing," explaining that "the 2008 financial crisis and the more recent market correction had a negative impact on your equity-heavy portfolio."

"What does that mean?" I said.

"It means that over the last 15 years, your account has had a net growth of about \$47. Minus my fees, of course." He estimated that, based on this growth pattern, I could probably retire "in 2057 or about 13 years after your death — whichever comes first."

"Your other financial mistake," he continued, "was what we in the investment game call 'ongoing negative income drains' or 'children.'"

It turns out that, economically speaking, each child you have represents a lifetime expense of more than half a million dollars, give or take a couple of sets of braces and one or two fender benders.

"You," he said, "have three children or a net liability of \$1.5 million. I, on the other hand, have two beagles and a brand new Jaguar

convertible. Also, here is a picture of my young and attractive wife. She used to be a lingerie model but had to give it up because she got too busty."

So, as me and my friends hurtle head first into our sixth decade, I find ourselves on the cusp of two amazing moments in life: impending retirement or the distinct possibility of a decade or more of being a Walmart greeter. Not that there's anything wrong with that — you get to meet a lot of nice people and the vest is pretty sharp. Me, I'm resigned to my fate. I was a late starter, spending several years after university trying to "find myself." My dad eventually succeeded in "finding me" — watching TV in the rec room — and told me to find a job. Being a good son, I snapped into action and only two or three years later, I did.

Anyway, all of that means that in practical terms, I'm probably a decade behind my pals who quickly embarked on successful business careers. The rest became teachers. Either way, they're both sitting on pensions that could choke a horse, though I'm not sure what the point of that would be.

Personally, I'd rather be part of the new movement that rejects the whole idea of "retirement" and would rather talk about moving to the next "phase" of my life.

Actually, I'd rather move onto a lawn chair with a good book.

Of course, I might have to do that in the outdoor furniture section of Walmart.

See you there.

Paul Benedetti lives in Hamilton. He teaches journalism at Western University.

## WORLD POLITICS

### The winds of political change blowing hard

Turkey tumbling into chaos under the leadership of Recep Tayyip Erdogan



THOMAS FROESE

ISTANBUL — This starts in Hamilton where I was driving to my local polling station amid dead leaves blowing every where, as hard as the winds of political change.

It was the first time in 14 years I was around in the fall to see the trees lose their lifeblood, a moment in time, even as we all, after our simple X on a paper put in a cardboard box, watched change blow into Ottawa.

In fact, I was brought to Hamilton from my African home for something besides the recent federal vote, to speak to some writers about being "Surprised by the Joy of Journalism." Because this too is a story, my own story, of how I once fell into this old, venerable trade with about as much planning as a man who turns a corner and falls down a manhole.

So it was after this voting and sharing when I flew back through Istanbul to see another election, the fourth in 20 months for Turks, a snap election called by the president who, in June, had lost his majority.

To get it back, Recep Tayyip Erdogan, who critics call a devolving megalomaniac, has been easing his country into a George Orwell novel: meddling in the courts, covering corruption and making strange manoeuvres of grandiosity.

Since June, about 1,000 Turks have perished in a surge of violent nationalism, this in what was once the poster-child of Muslim democracy.

Indeed, if I was a Turkish journalist, I could share on being "Surprised by the Joys of Journalism," because, just as I landed, riot police were crashing the doors of opposition newspapers now shut down, along with broadcasters blacked out while they were live on-air.

Along with jailed journalists, other Turks are being charged these days with the acrimonious crime of "insulting the president," including two boys, 12 and 13, after they unwittingly tore an Erdogan poster off a billboard to sell for scrap.

It's no surprise, then, that one survey shows two in three Turks now fear their president, about the same ratio who reportedly believe that both Erdogan and ISIL are responsible for the October terror bombing that killed more than 100, mostly Kurdish



PHOTO BY THOMAS FROESE

A man and woman in Istanbul in front of a Turkish flag just prior to Turkey's election. The former poster-child of Muslim democracy, Turkey has seen a surge in violence and instability in recent months leading up to the vote.

peace marchers, in Ankara.

A soft-spoken silk weaver in the Istiklal district told me that Erdogan is "a crazy man," while an Armenian jeweller in this city's legendary Grand Bazaar told me the president is "poison." This is the word from the streets of Istanbul, where Erdogan was once mayor.

Erdogan, meanwhile, lives with his own fears of poison, so he's building an intricate food-testing lab in his audacious 1,350-room palace, his symbol of a return to Ottoman glory.

You'd be forgiven for imagining that all this would lead Turkish voters to make different choices, but this is the Middle East, remember. Like in Africa, citizens know civil war can result from choosing change, and strongmen can be preferred to deal with the outside world, in Turkey's case threats from neighbouring Iraq and the basket-case of Syria.

So after Erdogan's Justice and Development Party dropped the hint that if their ma-

majority was not restored, then the electorate could just try it all again in 2016, last Sunday Turks indeed voted the president back with that majority.

By then I was out of this strange democracy of masochism.

Then again, when seeing some of its faces up-close you can't help but wonder if Turks actually desire something besides pain, something else, something more. Surely they want what anyone wants: a chance at it, at life, the good life or even the fair life, peace and security for loved ones, education for the children, stable work, a future with at least some assurance and hope.

How this scared and troubled patch of earth will get these blessings — and they are blessings — remains a mystery. Even as it remains to be seen how this once proud and stable secular republic will stave off the full-blown religious and political crises of the region.

What I do know is that when you blow in and out of such a place, with a Canadian passport in your back pocket, (because of dumb luck more than your own deservingness), you're never really left the same.

Thomas Froese writes about news, travel and life. Read him at [www.dailydad.net](http://www.dailydad.net) and [www.thomasfroese.com](http://www.thomasfroese.com)

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