

Opinion

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WHERE I STAND

Invest in nonprofits, and our future

By Beth Hines

As we approach the end of the year, many individuals and businesses reflect on ways to give back to their communities. While there are countless worthy causes, I want to highlight the critical role nonprofit organizations play in shaping our collective future and why their funding is not just charitable but imperative.

Nonprofit organizations in Connecticut and across the nation do far more than

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provide services; they create jobs, stimulate local economies, and address pressing societal challenges. In Connecticut alone, community nonprofits serve more than half a million

residents annually, offering essential services such as mental health treatment, housing support, and food assistance. These efforts not only improve lives but also save taxpayer dollars by preventing crises that would otherwise require costly government intervention.

Programs that focus on reducing recidivism — a key area of Community Partners in Action — are a prime example of this cost-saving potential. The average annual cost of incarcerating one individual in Connecticut is about \$60,000. By investing in rehabilitation and reentry programs, we can significantly reduce these costs, providing safer communities and better outcomes for individuals at a fraction of the expense.

Yet, the funding landscape for nonprofits is deeply challenging. Inflation has left nonprofit buying power approximately 30 percent behind where it was prior to the 2008 recession. Rising costs — including a 30 percent increase in food prices and a 25 percent surge in insurance costs — are putting unprecedented pressure on these organizations. Meanwhile, a workforce crisis has resulted in vacancy rates as high as 25 percent, further straining the ability of nonprofits to meet growing demands for their services.

SHEEMAN THE STAR-LEADER



FORUM

Amazon/PBS deal channels audience for public media

By William Baker

The recent deal between Amazon and PBS for the tech giant's Prime Video platform to stream the public broadcaster's content may end up delivering some much-needed good news to public media.

PBS already had deals with streamers Hulu and YouTube TV, but Amazon would not accept similar terms, which include hundreds of local live streams, due to the limited commercial prospects of a content deluge from nonprofit stations.

The tech giant will instead carry 150 local feeds, plus PBS Kids, which Amazon and Hulu run 24/7, in exchange for PBS creating three ad-supported platforms: two for its contemporary lineup and one for classic programs from its storied past.

The deal lets PBS stations gain potentially vast exposure without paying a dime, and if successful could lay the groundwork for performance-boosting collaboration for other public media entities. Meanwhile, Amazon gets revenue from the commercials played during PBS's deep roster of beloved shows.



SOPA Images/LightRocket via Getty Images

The PBS Kids logo is displayed on a smartphone.

grumblings for years that Netflix and its competitors, with their bottomless film and TV libraries, have caused frustrating "choice overload" to audiences who, by the time they've actually decided on a movie,

are ready to turn in for the night. More recently, the ever-rising costs of streaming subscriptions,

Times' redesigned homepage) and increasingly worrisome threats to its funding on Capitol Hill.

Those threats are nothing new. Fred Rogers, of Mister Rogers' renown, famously inspired Congress to reverse cuts to the Corporation for Public Broadcasting that Richard Nixon proposed in 1969.

The term "nonprofit" often does a disservice to the organizations that provide these critical services. While it accurately reflects their tax status, it fails to capture their role as essential service providers and economic contributors. Nonprofits are not just organizations that "do good"; they are an integral part of our social and economic infrastructure. They address problems today that save money tomorrow, from reducing recidivism rates to providing job training and housing for those in need.

With Connecticut experiencing budget surpluses in recent years, there is a unique opportunity to prioritize and restore funding to nonprofits. But this call extends beyond government action. Philanthropic giving, corporate partnerships, and individual contributions are all essential to ensuring these organizations can continue their vital work. By indexing funding to inflation and addressing the long-term underfunding that has plagued the sector, we can create a sustainable future for nonprofits and the communities they serve.

As you consider your year-end contributions, think of nonprofits not as charities but as partners in building a better future. They are there when we need them most, providing a safety net for our most vulnerable neighbors and creating opportunities for growth and stability. Your support — whether through donations, advocacy, or volunteering — is an investment in our shared future.

Nonprofits have always been there for us. Let's make sure we're there for them.

Beth Hines is executive director of Community Partners in Action and a member of the CT Community Nonprofit Alliance.

PBS in particular has reason to cheer. Not only does the deal deliver its content to Amazon Prime Video's 200 million monthly subscribers, but it will be available to non-Prime members under the "Watch for Free" tab. One more upside for viewers: they will be spared the handful of third-party advertisements that typically play on a maddening loop on ad-backed streamers and instead see the same commercials beamed out on linear PBS stations.

Two intriguing facets of the deal are based on nostalgia.

Firstly, retro programming plays a big part in the terms. "Reading Rainbow" late last month became the first throwback popup channel to emerge from the deal.

Secondly, the deal speaks to an ascendent longing for the old days of channel surfing, when viewing options were solely determined by broadcasters. There have been

and choice overload between proliferating platforms, may be causing some cable cutters to wonder if the bad old days of cable packages were all that bad to begin with. Content notes that a Horowitz Research report from earlier this year found that "two in three TV watchers in the U.S. are using free ad-supported streaming television (FAST) channels every month."

We will keep an eye on this potential big boon to local public stations who like local newspapers have been hobbled by corporate digital dominance.

It would take even more ingenuity to ease the worries surrounding public radio, whose manifold challenges include declining overall radio listenership; competition from the white-hot podcast sector, including well-financed forays into by legacy players such as the New York Times (note the prominent placement of the Audio tab on the

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John Breunig/Hearst CT Media

AN INVITATION

SHARING

What's the oldest holiday memory you have down over decades? A lawn decoration that's bridged generations? A vintage more recent decoration?

Share photos of the items, along with your story, at opinion@hearstmediact.com.

Please include your name and