

“Heaven’s Special Child”: The Making of Poster Children

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Tiny Tim was a little “crippled” boy whose sweetness and courage and pathetic plight melted the heart of miserly Ebenezer Scrooge. Scrooge’s charity toward Tim secured his own redemption. Dickens’s *A Christmas Carol* was a Yuletide staple. Between 1901 and 2009, the entertainment industry produced fifty-six live-action and fifteen animated movie and television versions. Many were available on video and were rerun on TV each December.¹ Book retailers sold illustrated volumes as a holiday gift.² And each December it seemed that every theater in the U.S. staged the story as a play.³ Americans saw a lot of Tim.

But Tiny Tim was more than a character in Dickens’s tale. He was a ubiquitous cultural figure. The annual return of *A Christmas Carol* did not exhaust his appearances or significance. He arrived not just seasonally but almost year-round. Or rather, not Tim himself, but the Tiny Tim image was made into a constant and powerful cultural symbol, especially on telethons. Its main purveyors were the disability charities. Within both the charity tradition and the operation of the medical model, that persona helped to shape the identities of millions of people with disabilities. Disability rights advocates challenged the ideology behind that imposed identity.

Telethons in effect reenacted a version of *A Christmas Carol*. The hosts and audiences were huge Cratchit clans, with disabled children—and adults—playing Tiny Tim. Jerry Lewis on the MDA pageant, Dennis James in the UCP spectacle, Pat Boone on the Easter Seals rite, and the other hosts, male and female, conflated the roles of the Christmas Ghosts and Bob and Mrs. Cratchit. They were moral preceptors to potential donors, instructing them in their duty to look after Tiny Tim’s siblings. At the same time, the hosts and the givers were the Cratchits gathered around the sweet pathetic children. Viewers at risk of becoming Scrooges peered through their TV screens and learned that they could join the family by opening their hearts to the afflicted Tims. By looking after the “most weak,” they could buy a place at the telathon hearth.

Telethon Tiny Tims were not just *Jerry’s* kids. They belonged to anyone who phoned in a pledge to any of the telethons. Some Easter Seals posters declared “He’s yours too.” Easter Seals local hosts touted “Adopt-a-Child.” As with charities for Third World children, sponsors supported a particular youngster, who would write them a personal thank-you.⁴ On some Easter Seals telecasts, Pat Boone spoke for those children in song:

I am your child.
Wherever you go,
You take me too.
Whatever I'll know,
I'll learn from you.
Whatever I do,
You'll teach me to do.
I am your child . . .
You are my hope.
You are my chance.
And I am your child.⁵

"Believe me," declared UCP's Dennis James, "we're all taking care of heaven's special child."⁶

Through much of Western history, disabled and sick children were central to the practice of charity. In early modern Britain, children's hospitals drew more support than those treating adults with venereal disease. Though the latter were desperately needed, philanthropists feared they would be seen as supporting vice and debauchery. Beneficence to children instead associated them with innocent suffering. In any era, donation typically went to institutions that promised the greatest public approbation. That was one reason children were always popular as objects of charity. Older people were much less likely to receive such relief and remained desperately in need until the establishment of state pensions in the twentieth century.⁷

The eighteenth-century English artist William Hogarth may have pioneered images of children as a charity fundraising tool. A governor of London's first foundling hospital, established in 1737, he designed both "a distinctive uniform" for the infant inmates and "an affecting coat-of-arms" for the institution. The latter displayed "a new-born child flanked by the figures of Nature and Britannia, with the plaintive motto 'Help!'" He and other artists exhibited their paintings at the hospital, inviting wealthy patrons to buy them. This advanced Hogarth's aim to make British art competitive with Continental art in the

British marketplace. It also anticipated twentieth-century fundraising that linked charity with commerce and patriotism.⁸

In 1930s America, the National Society for Crippled Children and Adults and the polio crusade invented child-based methods that became standard in disability-related soliciting. As the Society (founded in 1919) launched its 1934 drive, finance chair Paul King asked *Cleveland Plain Dealer* cartoonist J. H. Donahey to design a stamp supporters could purchase for a penny and place on envelopes and letters. That first Easter Seal pictured a boy wearing leg braces and leaning on crutches, his head bent sadly. Behind him was a white cross and—reminiscent of Hogarth's coat-of-arms—the words "Help Crippled Children." The design expressed clients' alleged plea "simply for the right to live a normal life." The huge public response eventually prompted the organization to rename itself the National Easter Seal Society. In 1952, it made the lily part of its logo. The flower explicitly represented spring, while implicitly referring to the season's religious holiday and the charity's "quasi-religious tenor." The Society also held annual contests in each state to select children as the public faces of its affiliates' fundraising.⁹

Meanwhile, the polio campaign crafted its own child-centered strategy. As early as 1932, the Warm Springs Foundation enlisted illustrator Howard Chandler Christy—famous for his World War I Uncle Sam "I-Want-You" recruiting poster—to design a poster featuring a disabled child. He also drew program covers for the President's Birthday Balls. Unlike later images, these drawings did not make the children's disabilities visible.¹⁰ But as time went on, the drive began to stress those physical differences. In 1934, exhorting his audience to support the Birthday Balls, nicknamed "Paralysis Dances," syndicated columnist and radio personality Walter Winchell invoked the image of a paralyzed child. "If

you buy a ticket to dance,” he said, “then some little child who can’t even walk may be able to dance some day.” Polio publicists blazoned the slogan “Dance so that a child may walk.” They filled the nation’s newspapers with studies in physical contrast, photos of nondisabled adult dancers alongside pictures of children *crippled* by polio.¹¹

In 1937, strategists at the new National Foundation for Infantile Paralysis “shifted the main appeal” from paying tribute to FDR as a victor over polio to “unashamed exploitation of the pathetic appeals of crippled children.” NFIP’s March of Dimes hammered at the radical difference between *crippled* children and *normal* kids. Its first drive in 1938 featured nondisabled children wearing buttons that proclaimed, “I’m glad I’m well.”¹² In 1946, it begat its first poster child.¹³ And its ominous film “The Crippler” blended sentimentality and pity with terror, fear, and hope. “A figure leaning on a crutch—sinister in its invisibility—stalks the land like death itself. . . . ‘And I’m especially fond of children,’ the voice-over intones with fiendish glee. . . .”¹⁴

The strategies contrived in the 1930s persisted over the next seven decades. Disability charities drew on the cult of sentimentalism’s traditional tropes as they focused public attention on the icon of the innocent helpless child.¹⁵ The agencies also used adults to illustrate their services, but the grown-ups got nowhere near the publicity beamed at the kids. Poster children were, by design, the most visible symbols of fundraising. At the back of their stages, the UCP, MDA, and Easter Seals telethons displayed photos of children. Easter Seals’ 1994 opening scrolled images from past programs; nine out of ten showed children. Later, there was a montage of forty-eight years of poster children but no retrospective of adult representatives. Besides “national” children, Easter Seals and MDA exhibited state and local poster kids. UCP

had only local poster children, but its national telecasts were filled with images of youngsters.¹⁶ Even the Arthritis Telethon used children to elicit alms. Of the thirty-seven million Americans with connective-tissue diseases, 200,000 were kids or teens with juvenile rheumatoid arthritis. Still, the telethon showcased a disproportionate number of children.¹⁷

At a 1986 workshop on the how-to’s of telethon success, Easter Seals officials told local chapter executives: “Children raise more money than adults.” Youngsters were effective fundraising tools, they explained, because the public sympathized with images of “the most weak.” They also reported that girls pulled in larger amounts than boys.¹⁸ Of the forty-eight national poster children chosen between 1947 and 1994, two out of three were girls. For MDA, the gender pattern seemed the reverse, with boys—in particular, boys with Duchenne Muscular Dystrophy—attracting more money.

Easter Seals’ strategists also said that White kids drew more donations than children of color, though more nonwhite children would appear by the later decades of the twentieth century. The ethnic ratios on all telethons reflected that strategic judgment, even though disability prevalence rates were higher in minority communities.¹⁹ Among those forty-eight Easter Seals poster children, just one—a girl—was African-American, while another girl was born in India. The selections reflected historic patterns of discrimination in health care. During the 1930s and 1940s, African-American community leaders criticized the Warm Springs Foundation and the National Foundation for Infantile Paralysis for neglecting black polio patients and then treating them in segregated facilities. Following World War II, in response to the civil rights movement and Cold War race politics, the NFIP slowly began to fund integrated training programs and medical rehabilitation

facilities. Concurrently, beginning in 1947 a few African-American children were selected as poster children for local, regional, and national campaigns.²⁰ Beginning in the 1990s, perhaps because of the growth of the middle class in minority communities as well as the impact of civil rights movements, more disabled people of color, adults as well as children, were featured on telethons. For example, those African American and Indian girls were Easter Seal National Child Representatives in the early 1990s, and in 1996 and 1997, MDA chose a Latino lad and an African-American youngster as National Ambassadors.²¹

Given poster children's important function, their selection became an art. Fashions changed in the charity business, noted the *Los Angeles Times* in 1986, but choosing child spokespersons remained highly competitive. It had "earmarks of a beauty pageant: stage mothers trying to boost their youngsters to fame and fortune, children trying too hard to impress, and local Easter Seals officials going to great lengths to promote their nominees." One chapter "arranged for [national communications director Sandi Gordon] Perkins to be flown in on a sponsor's corporate airplane, gave her a party featuring California wine—and followed up with an angry letter when the chapter's candidate was not selected." Local leaders promoted their favorites as embodying sentimental stereotypes. Of one finalist, a functionary wrote: "His clear, sweet, high-pitched voice . . . together with his angelic face, breaks hearts." Another declared that a girl had "a special magnetism that will draw you near and steal your heart."²²

Each charity chose youngsters who embodied its particular message. MDA and Arthritis kids were heart-tugingly dependent; Easter Seals and UCP children were plucky overcomers. But all poster children had this much in common: picked for "practical marketing reasons," they must

be congenial and presentable. They must be attractive, telegenic. "The national child doesn't have to be gorgeous," said Easter Seals' Perkins, "as long as they look OK." Poster kids must not look too different. According to the MDA telethon's producer, Jerry Lewis "prefer[red] his poster child to be ambulatory. He says he doesn't want to bend over a wheelchair to raise a buck." But in fact, Lewis was often shown bending over his "kids" seated on wheelchairs. It was a tricky balance: they had to appear helpless but they mustn't be too disabled.²³

These considerations were crucial because poster children did far more than appear on the telethons. The charities displayed Tiny Tim's siblings year-round. A blizzard of poster-kid pictures blanketed the nation. Their images looked out from drugstore and supermarket displays tied to Easter Seals and MDA promotions. Their photos were fixed on MDA and UCP "banks" beside restaurant and grocery-store cash registers. Newspapers and magazines featured stories about them. They went to charity fundraisers: "bowl-a-thons," golf tournaments, and dinners honoring local business leaders. They posed with sports heroes and Hollywood celebrities. Over the song "You've Got to Have Friends," the Easter Seals Telethon screened a photo montage of national poster children with movie and TV stars.²⁴

Poster kids were "seen and listened to by millions of Americans," noted the *Los Angeles Times*. Just halfway through his "reign," the 1986 National Easter Seals Child had flown tens of thousands of miles, *everywhere* from Washington, DC to Las Vegas to Puerto Rico. He had addressed conventions of *everyone* from realtors to truck drivers. And his image had appeared "on *everything* from Easter Seals' seals to Crayola crayons posters to Safeway delivery trucks." His image had been reproduced "roughly 70 million times." And he still had six months to go as a poster child.²⁵

Especially important, these dependent children were introduced to the executives whose corporations were the charities' most prominent supporters. A review of hundreds of hours of telethons found a few segments featuring executives visiting therapy centers that served adults and just one that showed them meeting an adult with a disability in a business setting. Telethons did not present executives or their employees encountering disabled adults in situations that portrayed them as colleagues or even *potential* co-workers. But they met lots of children.

Poster children also had their pictures taken with elected officials—state governors and legislators, members of Congress, even the President of the United States.²⁶ From Harry S. Truman to William Jefferson Clinton, presidents annually met the national poster children of several disability charities. A photo of MDA's 1993 national child with Clinton ran in 3,900 newspapers.²⁷ In 1995, First Lady Hillary Rodham Clinton appeared on the UCP Telethon with a four year-old girl, a UCP client, to urge viewers to support that charity. In 1992, Easter Seals aired a medley of photos of its national children meeting every President from George H. W. Bush all the way back to Truman while viewers heard the song "Stand By Me."²⁸

"The poster child is our major ambassador to the public," explained a March of Dimes spokeswoman.²⁹ That icon influenced business executives' attitudes about the millions of adults they might have seen as customers, employees, or colleagues, instead of recipients of their charity. It instructed lawmakers as they formulated policies that affected disabled citizens. It defined who Americans with disabilities really were and what they really needed. Reinforcing the medical model, charity images portrayed them as dependent objects of beneficence whose most important needs were medical. In late twentieth-

century America, the Tiny Tim persona was central to framing the cultural, social, and political meaning of disability. The charities depicted the representative disabled person as a vulnerable child, one of "the most weak."

NOTES

1. The names of many of the actors who played Scrooge are included with each entry. Live-action motion pictures and television programs: *A Christmas Carol* (1901); *A Christmas Carol* (Essanay, 1908); *A Christmas Carol* (Edison, 1910), Mark McDermott; *A Christmas Carol* (1912); *A Christmas Carol* (dir. Leedham Bantock, Zenith Film Company, 1913), Seymour Hicks; *A Christmas Carol* (dir. Harold M. Shaw, Fenning London Film Company, 1914), Charles Rock; *The Right to Be Happy aka A Christmas Carol* (dir. Rupert Julian, Universal, 1916); *Scrooge* (dir. George Wynn, 1922), H. V. Esmond; *Tense Moments with Great Authors: "#7 Scrooge"* (dir. H. B. Parkinson, W. Courtney Rowden, 1922), H. V. Esmond; *Scrooge* (dir. Edwin Greenwood, 1923), Russell Thorndike; *Scrooge* (dir. Hugh Croise, 1928), Bransby Williams; *Scrooge* (dir. Henry Edwards, Julius Hagen-Twickenham, 1935), Seymour Hicks; *A Christmas Carol* (dir. Edwin L. Marin, MGM, 1938), Reginald Owen; *A Christmas Carol* (dir. George Lowther, 1943), William Podmore, this version was 60 minutes and, at the time, was the longest U.S. TV program yet broadcast; *A Christmas Carol* (dir. James Caddigan, 1947), John Carradine; *The Philco Television Playhouse: "A Christmas Carol"* (dir. Fred Coe, 1948), Dennis King; *The Christmas Carol* (dir. Arthur Pierson, 1949), was a U.S. TV film narrated by Vincent Price with Taylor Holmes as Scrooge; *A Christmas Carol* (British TV, 1950), Bransby Williams; *Fireside Theatre: "A Christmas Carol"* (dir. Gordon Duff, 1951), Ralph Richardson; *Scrooge, aka A Christmas Carol* (dir. Brian Desmond Hurst, Showcorporation/George Minter/Renown, 1951), Alistair Sim; *Kraft Television Theatre: "A Christmas Carol"* (1952), Malcolm Keen; *Shower of Stars: "A Christmas Carol"* (dir. Ralph Levy, 1954), Fredric March; *The Alcoa Hour: "The Stingiest Man in Town"* (dir. Daniel Petrie, 1955), Basil Rathbone; *Story of the Christmas Carol* (dir. David Barnheizer, 1955), Norman Gottschalk; *General Electric Theater: "The Trail to Christmas"* (dir. James Stewart, 1957), a cowboy tells a boy the Dickens tale with John McIntire as Scrooge; *Tales from*

Dickens: A Dickens Christmas: “A Christmas Carol” (dir. Neil McGuire, 1958), TV series hosted by Fredric March with Basil Rathbone as Scrooge; Mr. Scrooge (dir. Bob Jarvis, 1964), Cyril Ritchard; Carry on Christmas (dir. Ronnie Baxter, 1969), comedy with Sid James; Scrooge (dir. Ronald Neame, Cinema Center, 1970), musical version with Albert Finney; A Christmas Carol (dir. Richard Williams, 1971), British TV movie with Alistair Sim; A Christmas Carol (dir. Moira Armstrong, BBC, 1976), Michael Hordern; Scrooge (dir. John Blanchard, Canadian TV movie, 1978); An American Christmas Carol (Scherick-Chase-Slan/Scrooge Productions/Smith-Hemion, 1979), Henry Winkler as a New England “Scrooge” during the Great Depression, who is redeemed by helping the family of a boy (Chris Crabb) who needs rehabilitation from polio; A Christmas Carol at Ford’s Theatre (1979); Skinflint: A Country Christmas Carol (1979), a country music version with Hoyt Axton as Cyrus Flint; A Christmas Carol (dir. Laird Williamson, 1981), William Paterson, a US TV movie; The Guthrie Theatre Presents a Christmas Carol (The Entertainment Channel, 1982), film of stage production, narrated by John Gielgud; The Gospel According to Scrooge (dir. Mark S. Vegh, 1983); A Christmas Carol (dir. Clive Donner, CBS, 1984), George C. Scott; A Christmas Carol (1994), U.S. ballet; Ebbie (dir. George Kazcender, Victor Television Productions/Maverick Crescent Entertainment Limited, 1994), Susan Lucci as a hard-driving department store owner Elizabeth “Ebbie” Scrooge, whose widowed assistant Roberta Cratchit has a son named Timmy who needs medical treatment; Ebbie decides to provide adequate health insurance for all her employees; John Grin’s Christmas (1986), features an African-American Scrooge, Robert Guillaume, and no Tiny Tim, but does feature a generous and insightful blind woman; Scrooged (dir. Richard Donner, 1988), Bill Murray as a heartless executive producing a telecast of A Christmas Carol with Buddy Hackett as Scrooge; Bah! Humbug!: The Story of Charles Dickens’ “A Christmas Carol” (dir. Derek Bailey, PBS, 1994), a reading by actors James Earl Jones and Martin Sheen; Ebenezer (dir. Ken Jubenvill, 1997), a Wild West version with Jack Palance as a ruthless cattle baron; Ms Scrooge (Wilshire Court/Power Pictures, 1997), Cicely Tyson as Ebenita Scrooge who, like “Ebbie,” decides to pay for medical treatment for Tim (who this time has a slow-growing congenital tumor in his leg) and health insurance for her employees; A Christmas Carol (dir. David Hugh Jones, Flying Freehold,

1999), Patrick Stewart; A Christmas Carol (dir. Catherine Morshead, 2000), British TV movie, Ross Kemp as Eddie Scrooge; A Diva’s Christmas Carol (dir. Richard Shankman, 2000), a TV movie made for VH1 with Vanessa L. Williams as pop singing star Ebony Scrooge; Scrooge and Marley (dir. Fred Holmes, 2001), an evangelical Christian version with Dean Jones; A Carol Christmas (dir. Matthew Imas, Hallmark, 2003), Tori Spelling as Carol Cartman, a selfish TV talk show host; A Christmas Carol: The Musical (dir. Arthur Alan Seidelman, 2004), Kelsey Grammer; A Carol of Christmas (dir. Roland Black, 2005); Chasing Christmas (dir. Ron Oliver, 2005), a time-traveling version with Tom Arnold as a Scrooge-like single dad; The Carol Project (dir. Tim Folkmann, 2006), musical; The Nutcracker: A Christmas Story (2007), a ballet combining the E.T.A. Hoffman story with the Dickens tale. Animated productions: Mister Magoo’s Christmas Carol (dir. Abe Levitow, UPA, 1962); Bah, Humduck! A Looney Tunes Christmas (dir. Charles Visser, Warner, 2006), Daffy Duck; A Christmas Carol (dir. Zoran Janjic, Australia, Air Programs International, 1969), screened on US TV 1970; The Stingiest Man in Town (dirs. Jules Bass, Arthur Rankin Jr., Rankin-Bass, 1978), Walter Matthau as the voice of Scrooge and Robert Morse as the voice of Young Scrooge; A Christmas Carol (Australia, 1982); A Christmas Carol (Burbank Productions, 1982), narrated by Michael Redgrave; Mickey’s Christmas Carol (dir. Burny Mattinson, Disney, 1983), Alan Young as the voice of Scrooge McDuck; The Muppet Christmas Carol (dir. Brian Henson, 1992), Michael Caine as the voice of Scrooge; A Christmas Carol (dirs. Toshiyuki Hiruma, Takashi Masunaga, Jetlag, 1994); A Flintstones Christmas Carol (dir. Joanna Romersa, 1994); A Christmas Carol (dir. Stan Phillips, DIC Entertainment, 1997), narrated by Tim Curry; Christmas Carol: The Movie (dir. Jimmy T. Murakami, 2001), Simon Callow as the voice of Scrooge; A Sesame Street Christmas Carol (dirs. Ken Diego, Victor DiNapoli, Emily Squires, Jon Stone, 2006); Barbie in A Christmas Carol (Australia, 2008); A Christmas Carol (dir. Robert Zemeckis, Disney, 2009), Jim Carrey as the voice of Scrooge. Internet Movie Database, <http://www.imdb.com> (accessed 20–22 November 2009); Martin F. Norden, *The Cinema of Isolation, A History of Physical Disability in the Movies* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1994), 33; Patricia King Harrison and Alan Gevinson, ed., *American Film Institute Catalog 1931–1940* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993), 347.

2. In June 1999, Books in Print listed 66 different editions of the story, including adaptations based on Dickens's basic plot.
3. In the late 1930s, the WPA Federal Theater Project in Los Angeles and other places made a theatrical version part of every Christmas Season program. William F. McDonald, *Federal Relief Administration and the Arts* (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 1969), 554. That customary programming continued decades later. A sampling of the myriad stage productions from 1998 alone included not only major theaters such as Radio City Music Hall in New York City, the San Diego Repertory Theater, and the Geary Theater in San Francisco, but also the Totem Pole Playhouse in Chambersburg, Pennsylvania; the Bardavon Opera House in Poughkeepsie, New York; Triangle Church in Chapel Hill, North Carolina; Hale Center Theater in Orem, Utah; the Hippodrome State Theater in Gainesville, Florida; the Alley Theater in Houston; and *Scrooge: The Ballet!* at the Hawaii Theater Center in Honolulu. In 1999, comedian and composer Steve Allen was reportedly writing songs for a stage musical adaptation. Reed Johnson, "Steve Allen Writes Songs for 'Christmas Carol' Musical," *San Francisco Chronicle*, 24 November 1999. In 2007, playwright Christopher Durang satirized the Dickens's tale. Robert Hurwitt, "'Christmas Carol' Meets 'Wonderful Life' in 'Wild Binge,'" *San Francisco Chronicle*, 4 December 2007, <http://www.sfgate.com> (accessed 4 December 2007).
4. "Adopt-a-Child" donors received a statuette of a disabled child leaning on crutches behind a small dog. Easter Seals Telethon, 1990.
5. *Ibid.*
6. UCP Telethon, 1993.
7. William B. Cohen, "Epilogue: The European Comparison," in *Charity, Philanthropy, and Civility in American History*, ed., Lawrence J. Friedman and Mark D. McGarvie (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 393.
8. Linda Colley, *Britons: Forging the Nation 1707–1837* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1992), 59. The London Foundling Hospital cared for children with many kinds of disabilities, medically and vocationally rehabilitating some and providing lifelong maintenance for others. Alys Levene, *Childcare-Health and Mortality at the London Foundling Hospital 1741–1800: "Left to the Mercy of the World"* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2007), 165–8.
9. The organization officially adopted the name National Easter Seal Society in 1979. Charles A. Riley, II, *Disability and the Media: Prescriptions for Change* (University Press of New England, 2005), 110–11; Easter Seals Telethon, 1991; James E. Williams, Jr., "Easter Seals transforms the telethon," *Fund Raising Management* 26, no. 7 (September 1995): 28–32; Charlotte Snow, "Rehab Rival: Easter Seals is a Healthcare Force to be Reckoned With," *Modern Healthcare* 27, no. 17 (28 April 1997), 18–19, <http://www.lexisnexis.com> (accessed 1 June 2007).
10. Scott M. Cutlip, *The Unseen Power: Public Relations. A History* (Hillsdale, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, 1994), 558–60, 561; Riley, *Disability and the Media*, 111–12. Christy's illustrations for the 1936, 1937, and 1938 Birthday Balls program covers are reproduced online at <http://www.disabilitymuseum.org> (accessed 7 July 2007).
11. Scott M. Cutlip, *Fund Raising in the United States, Its Role in America's Philanthropy* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1965), 361, 365–71.
12. *Ibid.*, 376, 383–7, quotes from 384 and 387; Richard Carter, *The Gentle Legions* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1961), 112; David L. Sills, *The Volunteers: Means and Ends in a National Organization* (1957; repr., New York: Arno Press, 1980), 126–7, 169–70.
13. David Zinman, "Many Former Poster Kids Lead Normal Lives Today," *Los Angeles Times*, 16 December 1984; David M. Oshinsky, *Polio: An American Story* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2005), 83.
14. Tony Gould, *A Summer Plague: Polio and Its Survivors* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1995), xi; Oshinsky, *Polio: An American Story*, 68, 81–3. In 1974, MDA presented a video monologue entitled "I Hate People, Especially Children," in which an actor personified muscular dystrophy and, like "The Crippler," "ominously hovers over the figure of a healthy child." The vignette was written by Budd Schulberg and directed by Jerry Lewis. Lawrence Joseph Londino, "A Descriptive Analysis of 'The Jerry Lewis Labor Day Telethon for Muscular Dystrophy'" (PhD diss.: University of Michigan, 1975), 127–8.
15. See Chapters 7–8. Cutlip, *Fund Raising in the United States*, 51; Riley, *Disability and the Media*, 111–12; Zinman, "Many Former Poster Kids Lead Normal Lives Today"; Ellen L. Barton, "Textual Practices of Erasure: Representations of Disability and the Founding of the United Way," in *Embodied Rhetorics: Disability in Language and Culture*, ed. James C. Wilson and Cynthia Lewiecki-Wilson (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 2001), 178–9, 184, 187, 193.
16. See for instance Shawn Hubler, "After Initial Anguish, Family of Cerebral Palsy Poster Child

- is Picture of Happiness," *Los Angeles Times*, 21 January 1990, South Bay edition.
17. The 1988 Arthritis Telethon paraded photos of kids with arthritis while a singer urged: "Share your love with all the children of the world." See also Herbert J. Vida, "Dana Point Boy Works Hard as Arthritis Foundation Poster Child," *Los Angeles Times*, 8 June 1986, Orange County edition, <http://www.proquest.com> (accessed 7 July 2007).
18. Disability Rag 7, no. 2 (March/April 1986): 22; Dennis Hall and Susan G. Hall, *American icons: An Encyclopedia of the People, Places, and Things That Have Shaped Our Culture*, vol. 1 (Westport, CT: Greenwood Publishing Group, 2006), 574.
19. For a summary of disability prevalence rates in the 1990s U.S. population among African-Americans, Asian-Americans/Pacific Islanders, Hispanic Americans, and Native Americans as compared to European Americans see Rhoda Olkin, *What Psychotherapists Should Know about Disability* (New York: Guilford Press, 1999), 19–20.
20. Naomi Rogers, "Race and the Politics of Polio: Warm Springs, Tuskegee, and the March of Dimes," *American Journal of Public Health* 97, no. 5 (May 2007), 784–95; Oshinsky, *Polio: An American Story*, 65–7.
21. MDA Telethon, 1996; "Benjamin Gives Hope to Others-Again," *Parade* (31 August 1997). In 1986, the MDA poster child for the District of Columbia was an African-American lad. Anne Simpson, "People: MDA Poster Child," *Washington Post*, 8 May 1986. Service organizations in the black community supplied volunteers for the disability charities that may have, over the years, won them greater attention from those agencies. "First Year of Service Noted by AKA Chapter," *Los Angeles Sentinel*, 23 August 1979. The Chicago UCPA's 1991 poster child was a 10-year-old Latino boy. "Mutual admiration," *Chicago Sun-Times*, 8 January 1991.
22. Scott Kraft, "Poster Child Quest: Cute Isn't Enough," *Los Angeles Times*, 7 April 1986. See also Laura Kavesh, "It Takes a Tough Kid to Be a Poster Child," *Chicago Tribune*, 29 March 1985, c edition. On the March of Dimes selecting poster children for both medical and cosmetic reasons see Zinman, "Many Former Poster Kids Lead Normal Lives Today."
23. Kraft, "Poster Child Quest"; David Zinman, "Critics Say Drives Foster Stereotyping of Disabled," *Los Angeles Times*, 16 December 1984; Kavesh, "It Takes a Tough Kid to Be a Poster Child"; Fred Rothenberg, "Waking up Telethon's Wee Hours," *Toronto Globe and Mail*, 3 September 1982, early edition. In a TV commercial publicizing "Aisles of Smiles," he appeared with his "friend," that year's national poster child. The boy sat on a wheelchair, not a power chair he could have operated on his own, but a manual chair pushed by his paternal benefactor Lewis. The spot created an image of helplessness and dependency. Likewise, the 1993 MDA extravaganza opened with a musical number and then showed Lewis approaching and then bending to embrace the national poster child who was sitting in a wheelchair.
24. Easter Seals Telethon, 1993; Kavesh, "It Takes a Tough Kid to Be a Poster Child."
25. Kraft, "Poster Child Quest," emphasis added. See also Kavesh, "It Takes a Tough Kid to Be a Poster Child."
26. Kavesh, "It Takes a Tough Kid to Be a Poster Child."
27. Reported on MDA Telethon, 1993.
28. Easter Seals Telethon, 1991 and 1992.
29. Zinman, "Many Former Poster Kids Lead Normal Lives Today."