



TELEVISION / DRAMA SHOWS

The Most Rabid Fanbase On The Internet Is Actually Making The World A Better Place

BY BJ COLANGELO

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Fandom scholars may one day study the "Heated Rivalry" phenomenon alongside cultural touchstones like Beatlemania. The New York Times bestselling "Game Changers" book series from Rachel Reid first hit shelves in 2018, but after [the Canadian television network Crave adapted the first two books for Jacob Tierney's "Heated Rivalry,"](#) the queer hockey romance ignited a cultural moment. In less than a year, stars Hudson Williams and Connor Storrie have become international sensations, and the show's popularity has grown at a breathtaking pace.

And while the HR fandom includes the same bad-faith actors and totally inappropriate, [if not downright dangerous, weirdos found in every fandom](#) — the majority of HR fan



a love of Reid's world and Tierney's adaptation, fans have transformed their enthusiasm into powerful action.

History shows that passionate fan communities can become effective forces for good. [The controversial Snyderbros](#) raised \$500k for the American Foundation for Suicide Prevention, while Potterheads have organized fundraisers for transgender protection groups to [combat the transphobic actions of the series' creator](#). Despite being one of the newest fandoms on the scene, the "Heated Rivalry" community has already raised *hundreds of thousands of dollars* for charities, advocacy organizations, and institutions connected to both the story's themes and causes personally meaningful to its cast and creative team.

Including smaller-scale events like HR-themed trivia nights and dance parties that double as fundraisers, fans around the world have turned celebration into tangible impact. Thanks to dedicated community members who have documented these efforts, the scale of that generosity is impossible to ignore — and it deserves every bit as much attention as the fandom's loudest critics.

Heated Rivalry fans have raised significant funds for mental health



A community fundraiser championed by Jessica (@slowyearn) alongside Eileen (@comeoneileeeeeeeeeen) and Jenny (@jennyg8) began spontaneously a few days before Ilya Rozanov's canonical 35th birthday, when Jessica encouraged people to donate to a mental health organization in his name after making her own donation to [the National Alliance on Mental Illness \(NAMI\)](#) — a reference to not only the fictional Irina Foundation mental health charity started by Shane and Ilya in the books, but also to honor the mental health struggles depicted in Rachel Reid's book. At the same time, because the fandom "shares one brain cell," as she jokes, Jenny had a similar idea, and it grew into a massive community effort.

"There was no central fund or prescribed charity," Jessica explains. "Fans donated directly to organizations that reflected what Ilya and Heated Rivalry meant to them, then submitted their donations so we could measure the collective impact."

Recognizing this was growing into something substantial, user @comeoneileeeeeeeeeen was critical in spreading the word for the mental health fundraiser, and Farrah Sanjari/@ohheyfarrah stepped in to track the data.

In a few days, "Heated Rivalry" fans made more than 650 donations in 19 currencies and raised over \$40,000 for organizations including [The Trevor Project](#), NAMI, Rainbow Railroad, and many others, and that only includes the donations that were shared on Threads, although the campaign did expand to other platforms.



Seeing people transform their love for him into tangible support for mental health resources, LGBTQ+ people, suicide prevention, and other causes was incredibly moving." Word of the fundraiser even made its way to actor Connor Storrie during Fashion Week in Paris.

Fundraisers in honor of François Arnaud have been massive



While Shane Hollander/Hudson Williams and Ilya Rozanov/Connor Storrie are at the center of most of the fundraisers, fans of actor François Arnaud — who plays the first openly gay hockey player, Scott Hunter — have also generated massive donation drives. On Arnaud's birthday, Isabelle Landreville (@land_isa) organized a fundraiser for LGBTQIA+ advocacy organization [Interligne](#) out of Montreal — Landreville and Arnaud's hometown.

"I thought of that organization because of François' bisexuality and thought it would make him smile knowing his fans are helping the community in his hometown," they tell me. Landreville has been a fan of Arnaud since his appearance in Xavier Dolan's "I Killed My Mother," and promoted the fundraiser mainly on Threads, but a fan page for Arnaud's cross-promoted it on X. "Being pansexual, it was important to me to help my



in total.

Internationally, [the actor's Brazilian fan page](#) held a fundraiser for Rainbow Railroad, raising R\$1.215,94. At the time of publication, there's a massive push to support an organization close to Arnaud's heart, Comfort Cases, which assists children experiencing foster care. The support was so immediate that Threads user @0222csfa0705 spoke with Comfort Cases CEO Rob Scherr, and [a special donation link specifically for "Heated Rivalry" fans to use was created](#). So far, fans have donated over \$15,000.

Not to be left out, to celebrate the birthday of Robbie G.K., who plays Scott's boyfriend Kip on the show, nearly \$2,000 was raised for [You Can Play](#), a social activism campaign that aims to eliminate homophobia in sports.

Grassroots fundraisers from Heated Rivalry fans have been wildly successful



[Double Hockey Stix](#), a company that makes gear for underrepresented hockey fans with the intention of disrupting the problematic and toxic roots of hockey (and who has



athletes, LGBTQ+ Para Hockey Pride! as the beneficiary of an "Heated Rivalry" giveaway hosted by Instagram users [See attached bibliography](#) and [JulietFoxReads](#). The giveaway raised \$37,000 for the cause, which also benefited [Momentum Canada](#), which advocates for transformative change for 2SLGBTQIA+ people in Canada.

Another, Naomi/@frenchnbookish, raised \$7,500 for LGBTQIA+, Anti-Asian hate, and human rights organizations. In just 20 days and thanks to a generous donation match, [@HudEventsOfficial](#), one of the major fanpages for Hudson Williams, raised over \$14,000 (Canadian) for [Rainbow Railroad](#). The Manchester Loons UK Group chat donated £260 to The Proud Trust in honor of Shane & Ilyas' wedding anniversary.

The musical artist Harrison, who provided the cover of t.A.T.u.'s "All the Things She Said" that [absolutely destroyed a generation of "Heated Rivalry" viewers](#) when it was unleashed during Season 1 Episode 4, "Rose," has been hosting one-night-only ["Secret Rivalry" raves](#) across the globe — meaning fans are already supporting an independent artist — but he's extended the generosity, where in order to get information regarding after party's locations, you must prove you've donated \$25 to Rainbow Railroad.

It's impossible to track the totality of Heated Rivalry fans' generosity



The group [Rivals for a Reason](#) has led multiple drives for charitable giving, raising over \$10,000 for The Trevor Project and over \$38,000 for the Michael J. Fox Foundation for Parkinson's Research — as author Rachel Reid was diagnosed with the disease just days before she learned "Heated Rivalry" was going to be adapted. On Hudson Williams' birthday, over \$67,000 was raised for the BC Children's Hospital Foundation, the medical facility that saved his life as a baby per Threads user [@gigi_champagne](#). Global queer activist [Katie Hultquist](#) spoke beautifully about the international support the show has inspired for [Outright International](#). Farrah Sanjari *also* started the petition for the Province of Canada to release the Canadian Olympic fleece Shane wears on the show, and now 10% of net sales profits will support You Can Play, with both the NHL and NHLPA matching contributions up to a combined total of \$50,000 CAD.

Even fanfiction communities have gotten in on the deal. A writer known as Loucifer wrote an alternate universe "Heated Rivalry" story inspired by the television series "Love After Lockup," where Ilya is the prison pen-pal of Shane, and has used the fic's popularity to raise funds for [The Innocence Project](#). As of publication, they've raised nearly \$10,000.

It's impossible to identify every group that has made significant contributions without running the risk of turning this into a laundry list ([I see you, \\$5,000+ from LoonCon!](#)), but I must stress again that all of this is coming from a fandom that exploded *less than a*



how higher the number is going to be after [the ongoing sweepstakes](#) to win a chance to attend the premiere of Season 2, benefitting Rainbow Railroad.

Heated Rivalry fans are making the world a better place



The negative cesspool of online discourse wants us to think fandoms are a bad thing, especially when those fandoms are dominated by women and queer people. The intensity of straight men crying over games, memorizing player stats, and structuring their lives around a team is normalized. Yet when women and queer people invest that same emotional energy into artists, books, or television, they're dismissed as irrational or shallow. The contradiction is impossible to ignore, especially when fandom culture has never been just about celebrity worship. Fandom forges relationships, and what critics dismiss as obsession is often something far more meaningful. As Farrah Sanjari tells me, "'Heated Rivalry' has brought so much joy, connection, and community into my life, and I think these fundraisers show how."

Of course, there are and will always be fans who take things too far, but we need to question who benefits from painting an entire fandom that has data-supported proof of their devotion contributing to a better world as "cringe," (and why writer [Tiffany](#)



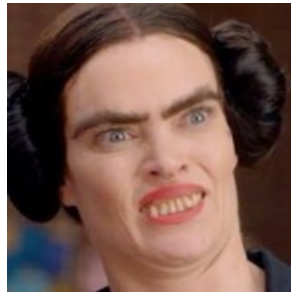
charity is certainly much higher than what we can track, and doesn't take into consideration the bookstores who have seen increased revenue, the event spaces benefitting from sold-out events, the artists featured on the soundtrack who were introduced to a larger audience, the growth of the game of hockey across the globe, and most importantly, the human connections made because two fictional hockey stars shook hands (twice) outside of a hockey rink in Saskatchewan.

"The part I keep coming back to is how the love began with a fictional character, but everything it inspired was real," Jessica tells me. "Real money went to real organizations helping real people, all because this story made so many of us feel seen — and gave us a reason to make someone else feel less alone, too."

RECOMMENDED



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