



The Somerset Fund

Your impact report for 2021-22



Bringing passionate people together
to change the world on their doorstep

Thank you

The last year has presented many different challenges for Somerset's charities and community groups. Many have seen demand for their services rising as the medium and long-term effects of the pandemic took hold. Many have found it hard to plan for the future with so many uncertainties, felt significant pressure as staff and volunteers have needed to isolate, and have had to push through exhaustion and decreased capacity to keep doing the work they are so passionate about.

We launched The Somerset Fund in late 2018 with the ambition of inspiring more local businesses and individuals to help us change the world on our doorstep. We are delighted that, to date, we have raised over £290,000 and this has made a significant difference to so many projects operating at grassroots level, both before and during the pandemic.

We are delighted to have made over 130 grants since we launched this fund, ranging from emergency food provision to community gardens, sports clubs to community shops and family care packages to projects supporting people with disabilities.

We were fortunate in 2021-22 to receive a significant amount of funding through our partnership with Somerset County Council to combat the effects of the pandemic, which needed to be spent rapidly. This meant we rolled forward a portion of funds from The Somerset Fund and made fewer grants than expected in 2021-22. This funding has enabled us to run our first round of grants in spring 2022 and will make a significant difference to many local charities who are helping our communities through the soaring cost of living crisis and helping individuals and communities bounce back from the effects of the pandemic.

Many of the groups we support work at a very local level and are often volunteer-led. For these organisations, a small, flexible grant from The Somerset Fund makes a huge difference and goes a long way to helping them make Somerset a place where everyone has the opportunity to thrive.

Thank you for supporting The Somerset Fund, and for making the work of the organisations that we support possible. Together, I hope we can continue to celebrate all of the wonderful organisations working tirelessly across the county, making Somerset a better place.

Best wishes,



Justin Sargent
Chief Executive



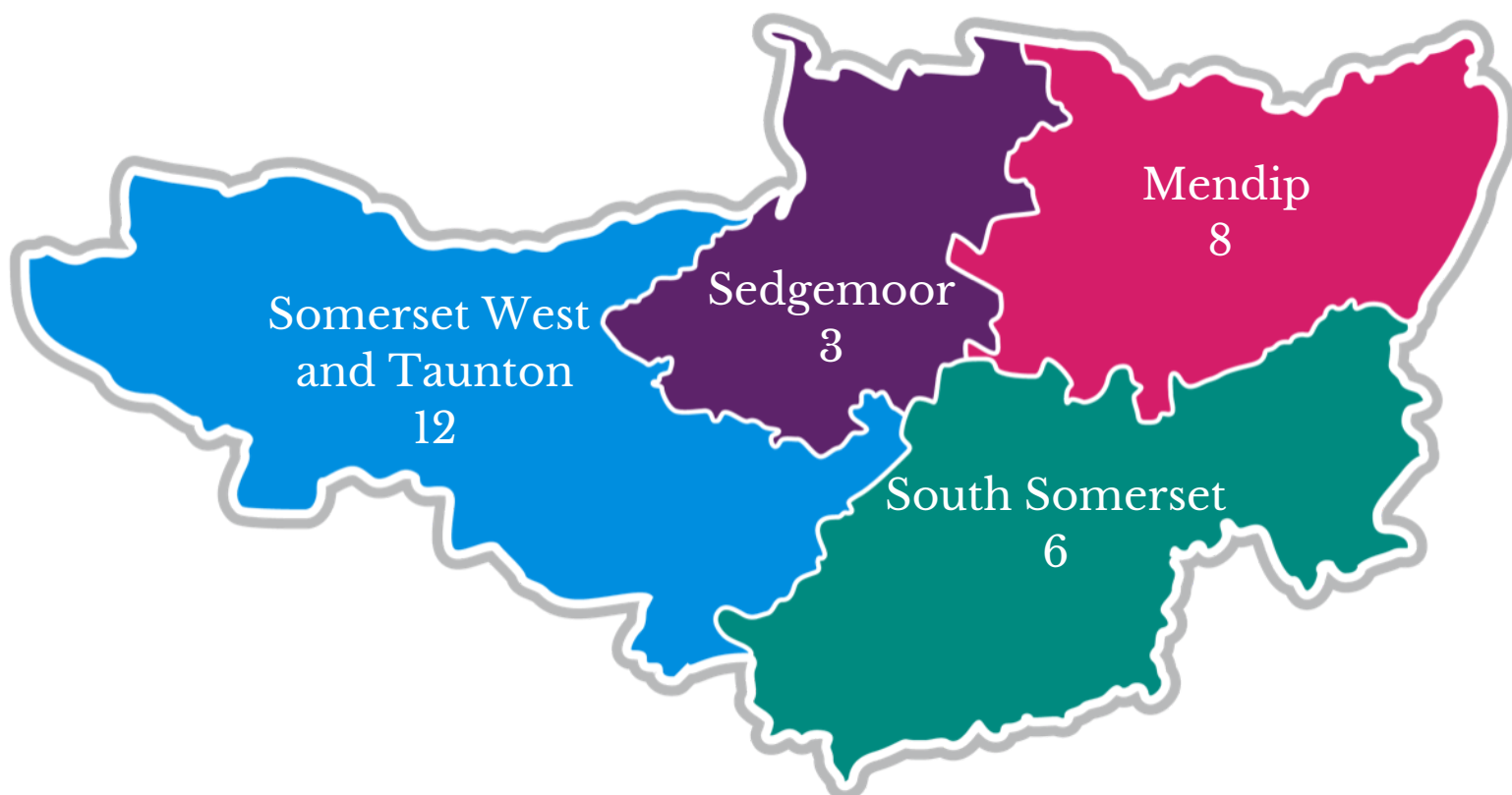
The difference your donations have made this year

Thanks to your support, we've been able to fund a diverse group of passionate, innovative and impactful local charities and community groups who are all helping Somerset to thrive. For these grassroots organisations, a small amount of money can make a huge difference, so you can be sure that every pound you give goes a long way.

2021-22 at a glance*



Where your donations were spent



*These financial results are subject to auditor and trustee approval as at June 2022



Active and In Touch offers a befriending service and other vital support to isolated and lonely adults and older people in Frome and the surrounding villages.

We spoke to manager Dougie Brown, who told us more about how their recent £2,000 grant from The Somerset Fund is helping them continue to save lives - by changing lives.

“The majority of our work is one-to-one befriending for people who are experiencing isolation and loneliness.

Most of the people we support are over 65 and tend to be experiencing permanent loneliness - from losing a life partner or a soul mate. Around 30% of the people we see are experiencing temporary loneliness due to being new to the area, or they are vulnerable and have mobility issues which means they are unable to leave their home. But ultimately, we're here for all adults over 18.

We have over 300 volunteers who do one hour a week, plus 25 community drivers - and eight of our volunteers do both the befriending service and the driving. We like to match people with a volunteer who has similar hobbies and interests. We find that people build up more of a rapport if they have common interests, which can then snowball – meeting friends of friends and so on. The majority of people are referred to us by a GP or health care professionals, and the rest are self-referrals.

Our volunteer drivers take people on essential journeys such as to the GPs, the hospital, or going to a regular social group for example. We've done over 200 trips to vaccination centres in the last six months. We currently do the shopping for 52 people in the Frome area. It used to be shopping *with* people, but since the pandemic we now do a lot of shopping *for* people.

The grant we received from The Somerset Fund was for staffing costs, which makes up nearly all of our core running costs, and it's mainly to coordinate our volunteers.

We're here to help people's health and wellbeing, and alleviate the effects of isolation and loneliness. People over 65 experiencing isolation and loneliness are four times more likely to have a heart attack. It has a real impact on your health.

Ultimately, loneliness is never going to be defeated and people will always need help. And in Frome and the surrounding villages everyone can reach out for help; if it's not to your friends and family, then it's to us.

Just £2 pays for someone to visit for one hour. A £100 donation pays for someone to be visited every week for a year. It's saving lives by changing lives: a lot of the time it's just about getting that confidence back, and it makes a huge difference. And the really lovely thing is that if we stopped doing this tomorrow, out of our 300 volunteers, at least 100 would continue to go on their visits; because through our matched befriending they've become real, true friends.”

The Somerset Fund stories - The Food Forest Project



The Food Forest Project seeks to combat issues such as social isolation, food poverty, habitat depletion and accessibility of locally sourced healthy food, by planting food forests.

We spoke to Tristan Faith, founder of The Food Forest Project who told us how, with help from a £2,000 grant from The Somerset Fund, he's been able to progress growing food for the local food bank.

“The demographic that we aim to support with the market garden are young and low-income households who have found themselves in a situation where they are unable to afford the cost of food.

We knew there were people living in our local area who were using food banks and struggling to feed their families, and we wanted to set up a dignified system where they could join a community, or discretely access the food they require to maintain a healthy and balanced diet.

Many landowners want to see their land used for alternative things, but some lack the time and resources to reach out into their communities to seek initiatives. We were able to bridge that gap, and access land and landowners that were happy for us to open up their land and offer something inclusive to the community.

We know the foodbanks tend not to get donations of fresh and healthy produce, and a well-rounded diet is fundamental to the health and wellbeing of our communities. Healthy, organic food is expensive. There's a whole swathe of society for whom it's just not accessible and we want to address that issue by ensuring that it is within reach for everybody, irrespective of wealth and class.

Cheaper food is often ultra-processed, which has become a big issue, particularly for children. Studies show us that food that is high in additives, salt, fat and sugar has a negative impact on children; a poor diet is linked to problems with concentration in schools, ADHD, mental health and obesity. Unfortunately, it's this food which is also affordable.

We want to make sure healthy wholefoods are getting to the people who need it most. The Somerset Fund grant was put towards maximising the use of one of our food forests in Shepton Mallet. We've set up our permaculture market garden which grows sustainably produced, organic food which we give to our local foodbank, The Salvation Army.”

The Somerset Fund stories - Bridgwater United Community Sports Trust



Formed in 2021, Bridgwater United Community Sports Trust uses football as a driving force to build a stronger and more united community through a wide range of innovative and accessible programmes. The Trust aims to tackle local issues and engage everyone, no matter their age, gender or background.

Community Development Manager Oli Moore told us more about the group and how a £1,950 grant from The Somerset Fund supported their incredible growth and development.

“We strive to support all members of the local community. The sessions we run include Mini Robins (ages 1-4), Youth Female Specific, Young Adults with Disabilities, and Walking Football for the over 50s amongst other football provisions. There is no key demographic, we offer football activities for everyone.

One of the key programmes we offer is our estate support programmes; we’re using sport to combat antisocial behaviour in the Hamp and Sydenham estates. We offer free-to-attend sessions on the estates, here in Bridgwater. These estates are both within England’s top 20% Most Deprived Neighbourhoods, which is why offering these for free is so beneficial for the community. Working in partnership with Avon & Somerset Constabulary PCSO team, we offer all young people of primary and secondary school age engaging activities and workshops, designed to explore motivations and identify positive alternatives for an hour a week. A recent summary found that the rate of anti-social behaviour in Bridgwater is more than double the Somerset county rate. These programmes help to keep young people off the streets and offer them a safe and supportive environment. We support young people to reach their potential through the development of key skills, improving self-esteem and increasing aspirations, helping them to make good choices and diverting them away from harmful and risky behaviour.

In an area where there are such high levels of deprivation, one of our biggest challenges is funding the activities we put on and paying to access activities. Our grant from The Somerset Fund was to cover our running and operational costs, which has allowed us to continue to deliver free or minimal cost sessions.

We’re relatively new, and we started because we recognised that the Sedgemoor area in particular lacked a community-oriented football club with an outreach arm. We’re now running 16 sessions a week and over 300 people engage in our activities. These are opportunities that didn’t previously exist in our area.

We want to create a more united, inspired and engaged community by providing opportunities for all through football activities. Doing this will reduce anti-social behaviour, inactivity levels and social isolation through our community programmes. We plan to continue growing and expanding, as we have been doing since May 2021, providing more innovative and inclusive activities for all in our communities.”

The Somerset Fund stories - The Hub at Bridgwater



The Hub at Bridgwater is a community resource working in partnership with several organisations. They bring people together to benefit the wider community through activities, information, training, signposting, support and networking with the overall aim to improve lives, gain skills, enjoy new experiences and provide an evolving environment.

We spoke to Centre Manager John Hardy who told us how a £2,500 grant from The Somerset Fund helped to keep them going through the height of the pandemic.

“We support a range of individuals here, alongside hosting many different community groups, too. In recent years we’ve seen a lot of people become homeless - for lots of different reasons, of course, but the social challenges that the pandemic presented have certainly not helped. We’ve held a lot of support groups here over the past two years for people who otherwise would have been completely alone. I still do a weekly shop for someone.

We’re also a collection centre and take donations which then get distributed to places such as the foodbank - and the Village Agents collect things from us too. We never say no to a donation, something can always be recycled or repurposed.

The Somerset Fund grant was put towards a variety of things; a prescription collection service for those who were shielding; volunteers’ expenses; our core costs for the hall; and a fridge-freezer. Another community group were making meals for us, and we were able to store the food in our new fridge before taking it out on our outreach assignments, or bringing people in to feed them a hot meal.

We’re really grateful to receive this funding from The Somerset Fund, it was crucial at the time, as our normal fundraising had stopped; there were no coffee mornings or bingo evenings due to the Covid restrictions.

In the future we’d like more permanency, as we’re currently on a temporary lease. I’d like our new centre to be a 24-hour, multi-functional place of safety that would include emergency accommodation, community training and office spaces, with an outside working area too.

We really value the importance of keeping people connected. We’re an information point, a resource centre, a meeting place – a place where you can find useful information. We have our Talking Café every Thursday, and we’ve recently started up a group for women experiencing the menopause. We’re a resource for the community and that’s a really important thing. People need to be able to share their experiences with others and The Hub is central to that. Our communities are really suffering at the moment, and a small amount of funding goes a long way and can make a big difference for a lot of people.”

Somerset West and Taunton

The Somerset Fund stories - Bradford-on-Tone Village Shop



The Bradford-on-Tone village shop is run for the community by volunteers from within the community, on a not-for-profit basis.

We spoke to a member of the committee, Viv Adams, who told us how a £2,500 grant from The Somerset Fund meant they were able to invest in a new display freezer, buy new signage and display cases, and give the whole shop a makeover.

“There are many older people who live in the village. We supply the basics so they don’t have to go far for things like milk and bread. We have lots of regular customers - many people from the parish come in to pick up their daily newspapers. They know the shop is a community endeavour, so they make the effort to support us on a regular basis.

Our grant from The Somerset Fund mainly went towards replacing our old freezer which was beyond repair - it was a huge expense. We were also able to do a general upgrade just to make the place fresh and clean; it’s been a community shop since 1998 and over the years it had started to look a bit tired.

We originally set up the shop by selling Shop Association membership to people in the village. As an association we have around 60 members – most of whom live in the parish.

We’re more than just a shop: we’re next to the pub, the church and the village hall, so we’re right at the heart of it all. The community would be hugely affected if we weren’t here – the next closest village shop is around 3 miles away. People pop in for a chat and a catch up with others or they phone to ask if someone could drop something to them. We’re never short of volunteers!

During lockdown we set up accounts for people so they didn’t have to worry about cash. We set up a delivery service, had a collection point and also a facility to take payments by card.

There are a couple of people in the village who sadly haven’t been out since the pandemic and we deliver to them weekly. We aim to be flexible in everything we do.

The Somerset Fund grant has made such a huge difference to us. It was a real boost to be recognised as doing something worthwhile and making a difference in our community.

We’re very grateful indeed.”

Somerset West and Taunton

The Somerset Fund stories - Taunton Art Group



Taunton Art Group (TAG) members enjoy workshops, courses, exhibitions and lectures, alongside regular themed demonstrations by experienced guest artists.

We spoke to joint chairperson Sharon Larkman who told us how a £1,695 grant from The Somerset Fund helped to cover their costs during lockdown, ensuring the future of the group.

“Most of the people in the group are aged over 50 years, and the majority of our members are retired. We have a meeting almost every month of the year. At the meetings we often have demos from other artists where they bring in their art, and each month there’s a topic or theme. We also have workshops on a Saturday where we use a different medium – it’s not always about painting and drawing, we like our members to try out different things.

During the pandemic, when we were able, we met outside, but our membership has dropped off since the start of the lockdowns. We used to have over a 100 members, and now we’re at just under 60. Many people are still reluctant to come out since Covid and have got used to staying in – I think there’s still a bit of underlying anxiety for some. Our membership and income has dropped so we’ve needed financial support to keep running. We’ve had a few new members in the last few months though, so it looks like things are starting to pick up again.

A lot of people who come along are on their own and would be quite lonely without the group. It’s about more than just the art. When you paint you become absorbed in it - completely. There’s a pleasure that’s derived from it and you forget all your worries for that moment in time. It’s extremely relaxing and it’s good for the soul.

Our grant from The Somerset Fund is being used to keep us going. We have quite a few ongoing costs, such as the website, the hall rental, and the people who come and do the demos and workshops – the funding has allowed us to get back on our feet. We didn’t charge people their membership fees during lockdown, and the reality is that we probably would have had to fold if it hadn’t been for this grant.

Any funding that supports community activities is really important. For us, it’s about bringing people together who have a shared passion and interest – especially after what we’ve all been through in the last couple of years. We are here so that people can relax, enjoy themselves, meet others and hopefully go some way to making sure people continue living a full and happy life.”

South Somerset

The Somerset Fund stories - BearCat Collective



The Honesty Jar in Henstridge is the permanent base for the BearCat Collective's community swap-shop recycling station, where anyone can either donate or exchange items, make a donation for items, or take things for free.

Sam Flounders, Project Co-ordinator and Chair, told us how a £2,277 grant from The Somerset Fund in 2021 supported the project during lockdown.

“The donations we get are quite often items that have a sentimental and emotional attachment for the people who are donating them. They know that we’ll honour the items and it gives them a great sense of comfort to know that their donated goods being used by local people in need. Lots of the people who come here are referred – either by their GP, church groups or other agencies. Everyone is equally welcome, regardless of who they are and how much they may or may not have.

People come here for help with things for schooling and education, board games, homeware, or for clothes and shoes. They can bring along items to swap, or make a donation of any size, if they’d like to. It’s all rehomed to local families or given to other local organisations that help people too. What we do is a very circular process.

We have lots of regulars who come in with a bag full and leave with a bag full. It takes the pressure off the landfill, too. We’ve recently started weighing our donations and in January 2022 alone we received and processed 5 tonnes of unwanted items.

People who have brought things in quite often end up chatting to the person interested in one of their items; we see it all the time. People tell stories about the items they’re bringing in and local connections are made. We tend to help people who are struggling financially, but we also find that people come to us for the social contact; we have 30-40 regular volunteers and a lot of them are experiencing loneliness, have been through a bereavement or are home carers. We fund health and social care training and coaching for volunteers and people in the community, where they get support for things like autism, non-verbal communication, dementia, suicide and self-harm. There is a great sense of camaraderie here.

Without the grant from The Somerset Fund we would not have been able to continue once the pandemic hit – and we’re relied upon by a huge number of local people. We used our grant to pay for our regular outgoings - it helped us to remain solvent.

During lockdown we carried on, but with adaptations. We built an outside shelter to quarantine new items - and we set up a click and collect service from the gate. People contacted us for material and sewing supplies and made masks, scrubs for those working in health care settings, and donated items to help families with home schooling. We received constant requests for items throughout lockdown.

We provide items to people in need. Charity shops are there to raise money to support their cause and some people just can’t afford to pay the prices. We want to be able to provide things free of charge to those people. We make the very best of our resources both to help and protect those most in need in our society, and also to help and protect our planet.”

South Somerset

The Somerset Fund stories - Yeovil Youth Theatre



Yeovil Youth Theatre is a not-for-profit theatre group, where young people with an interest in theatre have the opportunity to learn what it's like to be part of a company at a minimal cost through acting, singing, dancing and workshops.

We spoke to chairman Karl Gill who told us how a £1,000 grant from The Somerset Fund helped the group through the 'dark' days.

"We're a fully inclusive youth theatre group and any young person between ages 13 and 21 can join – you don't need any particular skills, just an interest in musical theatre and performing arts. Everyone is welcome and we'll train new members up and show them the ropes. There's always something to do and take part in and all we ask is that you have a willingness to learn, participate, have fun and enjoy yourself.

Across the year we normally put on one small show in the spring and then a larger musical in the autumn which is usually at The Octagon Theatre in Yeovil. In March 2020, one week before our first show of the year was due to go on, we were shut down due to the pandemic. Since then we've put on just one small show, which was at the end of 2021. The main problem is that the majority of the time is spent on the rehearsals for shows, and we've had very little opportunity to do that over the last couple of years, due to the various lockdowns and restrictions that have been in place.

Youth theatre can be a starting block for a career – Sarah Parish, a well-known actress who has starred in many films and TV shows including Broadchurch, W1A and plays the leading role in Bancroft, attended Yeovil Youth Theatre as a child is now our honorary president. But it can also give young people such an enormous boost in confidence. We see so many of our members blossom and make friends for life through the youth theatre – and that's really important.

Looking forward, we are now in the very early planning stages for a big show which will be put on at The Swan Theatre in September of this year.

We're very grateful for our grant from The Somerset Fund, which we put towards buying costumes and the hire of the venue for our last show. The support makes such a difference to so many young people's lives – it's helping to make sure that we can continue to offer something that is affordable, because our membership fees are very low. Dance classes, for example, can be very expensive and families can't always afford them.

Our only sources of income are those which we generate ourselves; our membership fees, income from any fundraising events and activities, and help from outside supporters or sponsors. In the future we would love to be more sustainable and be able to plan beyond our next show. Until we've sold the tickets we really don't know if we have the funding to be able to put on the next show – there are a lot of upfront costs we need to find beforehand, so funding and support from grants like The Somerset Fund are crucial to us."

Grants made in 2021-22

Mendip

- **Active and In Touch - £2,000:** Befriending and support services
- **Coxley Community Land Trust - £1,751:** Creating a community green space
- **Glastonbury Antiquarians Ltd - £1,000:** Establishing a new museum
- **St Mary's Church Frome - £2,500:** Resurfacing and levelling courtyard flooring
- **The Food Forest Project - £2,000:** Community growing project
- **Wells Cricket Club - £2,500:** New training facilities
- **Wookey Hole Cricket Club - £1,000:** Equipment for pitch maintenance

Sedgemoor

- **Berrow Parish Council - £1,000:** Sports pitch maintenance
- **Bridgwater United Community Sports Trust - £1,950:** Delivery of community programmes
- **Sedgemoor Community Partnership - £2,500:** Community hub core costs
- **Theale Village Hall Committee - £1,157:** Two table tennis tables and related equipment

Somerset West and Taunton

- **@2K Theatre - £2,500:** Rehearsal space improvements
- **Bishops Hull Short Mat Bowls Club - £700:** Launching a new community sport
- **Bradford-on-Tone Village Shop Association - £2,500:** Refurbishing village shop
- **Carry Me Kate Parenting Services CIC - £2,500:** Peer support for new parents
- **Let's Sing - £1,250:** Re-establishing a choir
- **Playing Field Management Committee/Trull Parish Council - £850:** Storage container and outdoor lighting
- **Stoke St. Gregory Church Sunday School - £1,000:** Electricity and insurance costs
- **Taunton Art Group - £1,695:** To cover the cost of monthly demonstrations
- **WHERE – £2,500:** Minibus running costs
- **Wellington Mills CIC - £2,400:** Creating a community forest garden
- **Wembdon Cricket Club - £1,745:** Developing three cricket teams for girls
- **Wiveliscombe Community Swimming Pool Club - £2,500:** Pool improvement

South Somerset

- **Bruton United FC - £2,500:** Kit and general upkeep for junior and senior football
- **Kingsdon Community Shop - £2,500:** Roof repair and external wood painting
- **High Ham Parish Council Playing Field Management Committee - £2,000:** Children's climbing frame
- **Reach Out (SW) CiC - £1,892:** Volunteer befriending service
- **Sunflowers of Somerset - £500:** Growing costs and art project
- **St. Michael and All Angels Church - £1,500:** Creating a community garden

Our wonderful supporters

We're particularly grateful to Somerset County Council who partner with us and provide 50% matched funding for every donation received for The Somerset Fund.



This generous gift means our supporters make an even bigger impact in our communities.

- Church House Investment Management
- HOST Somerset
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- North Curry Community Shop
- Somerset County Council
- Stokes Partners
- Summerfield Developments
- Tauntonfield Ltd
- The Bristol & West Endowment Fund
- Venetia Hoare and Hamish Leng

We're also hugely grateful to our other individual donors who wish to remain anonymous.

Thank you for changing lives in Somerset

We hope you will consider continuing your support of The Somerset Fund.

You can also help us to make an even bigger difference by spreading the word and encouraging others to support our work.

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