

Why I Give

by Melissa Reitkopp



Twelve years ago, my 10-year-old son needed to do some community service—not because he was in trouble, but because his school required it. Since sports were his world (outside of video games and art), I searched for something that combined service with athletics. That’s when we stumbled upon Max Levitt and Leveling the Playing Field (LPF) through an online search.

We showed up at the warehouse, threw a soggy tennis ball to Max’s awesome dog Mo, and had no idea that would be the start of something much bigger. Over the years, every member of our extended family has gotten involved—collecting gear, sorting equipment, painting logos in the warehouse, and even serving on the board. My husband, Jeff, and I became officers on that board for six years.

Back then, the board was more of an advisory group, which meant there was plenty of room to grow. Jeff and I worked alongside other officers to help build a basic board structure. While governance wasn’t really my thing, Jeff excelled at it. I brought ideas around fundraising, partnerships, and recruiting staff. One of the initiatives we attempted to kick off was creating a sustaining donor program.

Most people don’t realize how tough it is for smaller nonprofits to keep the lights on monthly. Grant cycles and one-time donations are helpful but not always reliable. A sustaining donor program was key—where people commit to giving something as little as \$10/month. It creates a steady stream of support, allows for better planning, and invites people to start where they are comfortable and gradually engage with the mission more deeply.

We set sustaining (monthly) donations through our Fidelity DAF (donor-advised fund), and the monthly giving and tracking were a breeze. I got involved with this type of donation for LPF because I believe in the mission, and helping them plan better makes sense. The more people we bring in—at any level—the bigger the impact we can make.

Being part of a community means showing up in different ways at different times. As community members, we sometimes need help for our kids (cleats, a mitt, or a ball), and sometimes we're the ones who can give—time, talent, or treasure. I've watched LPF grow from a single warehouse in Maryland to seven locations across six states (plus DC). Costs are rising for participation fees and equipment, but kids' need for play, movement, and community never goes away.

There will always be gently used gear looking for a new home. LPF's model works incredibly well—and it's only getting better. Just imagine what more we could do with a strong base of sustaining donors helping fuel this impact every month! Imagine "A world with no sidelines."

LPF's **Champions of Play Monthly Giving Program** supports LPF as we aim to increase our impact and access to youth sports for ALL kids. Monthly giving plans can be changed at any time and participants can access exclusive LPF merch. Learn more about LPF's Champions of Play program by [visiting our campaign page!](#)