That was music to Bryan Griffin’s ears, a Wilmington, Del., high school coach, after his daughter Molly returned from a Lacrosse Athlete Development Model (LADM) practice with her Greene Turtle Lacrosse Club.

With most sports suffering a 70% dropout rate by age 13, this is exactly what we want to hear. For lacrosse to grow and improve, and for kids to benefit from the social, physical, emotional and educational well-being that lacrosse can offer, we are disrupting the youth lacrosse rat-race with a new finish line focused on enjoyment, development and participation.

The goals are simple: learn it better, love it more, play it longer.

The approach is simple, too:

• Reduce barriers of entry through inexpensive introductory experiences (Try Lax)

• Coach the right lacrosse at the right time with LADM practice plans that fit your athletes and philosophy (Learn to Lax)

• Provide hands-on learning and practice progression experiences with high-engagement activities that bring out the full athletic potential for each child (Performance Camp)

This can be accomplished by adhering to LADM’s six core values: be fun and kid-centered; embrace small-sided and free play; implement a program designed for development; build physical literacy; train coaches; and encourage multi-sport participation.

Why LADM? Historically, lacrosse has been a sport of diminishing opportunity. Youth showing immediate promise are favored, while those who don’t fall through the cracks. Cultivating players with sound fundamentals, encouraging participation and fun, and emphasizing teamwork should be the outcome of any lacrosse experience.

Will Harris, Lincoln Boys Lacrosse head coach in Portland, Ore., is a proponent. “We were no longer playing hero ball, no longer driven by the best athlete, player attitudes were different, parents were happier, kids were engaged.”

Agreement is building. A blog from STX Lacrosse says it’s on board with LADM, and shares why you should be too. “These changes wisely and responsibly address historically troublesome aspects of youth sports,” says Jason Groger, STX president. Top college coaches and players agree.

Reason #1: Consistency in athlete experience. To take the game global, there must be consistency in the way lacrosse is taught and played. “It helps set the standard for coaches and elevates the sport as one that values the development of its athletes,” Joe Breschi, University of North Carolina men’s lacrosse head coach.

Reason #2: Fewer players on the field, more action. Starting with 3v3 at stage 1 means players get involved, and with faster pace of play. “Start small, teach fundamentals, use an appropriately-sized field so kids touch the ball every time they step onto the field,” Jenny Levy, University of North Carolina women’s lacrosse head coach.

Reason #3: Development of a solid foundation. The approach gets back to fundamentals. “The best defensemen have great footwork, body position and understand how to play their angles,” Kyle Harrison, Team USA alum. “That’s what younger players should be focusing on, not swinging their sticks and body checking.”

Reason #4: More people playing lacrosse. LADM creates a roadmap for successful introduction in new areas, making lacrosse easier to understand, retain players and grow participation. “Universal adoption is critical to creating more great athletes down the pipeline” says Steve Stenersen, US Lacrosse CEO.

Reason #5: Kids are having an absolute blast. That’s the goal as we focus on championing the child and enriching lives through lacrosse. “We want the lacrosse experience to be transformational – for more kids to be exposed to it, have fun, and play as long as they want,” says Stenersen.
CHAIRMAN’S PERSPECTIVE

What Does It Mean To Be a Champion?
Edward F. Nordberg, Jr. | Chair US Lacrosse Foundation

As incoming chair of the US Lacrosse Foundation, I have found myself reflecting on the meaning of the word “champion.” Each spring, recreation leagues to elite NCAA programs crown new champions. Every year, a U.S. men’s or women’s national team, sponsored by US Lacrosse, competes against a growing number of other nations for a world championship—the ultimate prize in the game of lacrosse. Champions are also reflected in the excellence exhibited by truly great players and coaches; I am sure we all have our favorites. For me, one stands out from the rest: the legendary Johns Hopkins player and coach, Bob Scott, who passed away a little over a year ago at the age of 85, was a true champion. As a terrific player, and then coach, he led his Hopkins teams to seven national championships over a 20-year period. He wrote the definitive book on the game, Lacrosse: Technique and Tradition, and humbly mentored many of the game’s most successful coaches. But Bob’s greatest legacy may be his eponymous summer camps that introduced a generation of young players (including me) to the game of lacrosse. His camp’s focus on skill and character development foreshadowed some of the key pillars of the mission of US Lacrosse today.

One of our current priorities is to “champion the child”—strengthening the social, physical, emotional and educational well-being of children through lacrosse. From providing sticks and equipment to new programs to keeping children safe to protecting the spirit of the game, your support strengthens this mission. For being a champion also means to be an advocate for a worthy cause, and we appreciate your efforts on behalf of the game we all treasure.

CEO’S PERSPECTIVE

Mission Never More Relevant

Steve Stenersen | CEO and President US Lacrosse

Just over 20 years ago, US Lacrosse was created as a result of years of strategic discussion among the sport’s most prominent stakeholders. Eight national organizations from the men’s and women’s games merged to create the sport’s first unified leadership structure with the goal of consolidating the sport’s first unified leadership structure with the goal of consolidating the sport’s first unified leadership structure with the goal of consolidating the sport’s first unified leadership structure with the goal of consolidating the sport’s first unified leadership structure with the goal of consolidating the sport’s first unified leadership structure with the goal of consolidating the sport’s first unified leadership structure with the goal of consolidating the sport’s first unified leadership structure with the goal of consolidating the sport’s first unified leadership structure with the goal of consolidating the sport’s first unified leadership structure with the goal of consolidating the sport’s first unified leadership structure with the goal of consolidating the sport’s first unified leadership structure with the goal of consolidating the sport’s first unified leadership structure with the goal of consolidating the sport’s first unified leadership structure with the goal of consolidating the sport’s first unified leadership structure with the goal of consolidating the sport’s first unified leadership structure with the goal of consolidating the sport’s first unified leadership structure with the goal of consolidating the sport’s first unified leadership structure with the goal of consolidating the sport’s first unified leadership structure with the goal of consolidating the sport’s first unified leadership structure with the goal of consolidating the sport’s first unified leadership structure with the goal of consolidating the sport’s first unified leadership structure with the goal of consolidating the sport’s first unified leadership structure with the goal of consolidating the sport’s first unified leadership structure with the goal of consolidating the sport’s first unified leadership structure with the goal of consolidating the sport’s first unified leadership.

Two decades later, US Lacrosse has invested over $270 million in the sport’s growth thanks to the support of our national membership and the generosity of donors who believe in our mission to provide leadership, structure and resources to fuel the sport’s growth and enrich the experience of participants. National participation has more than tripled, and US Lacrosse has been a catalyst for that growth by evolving rules, expanding grant resources for new programs, establishing standards for coach and official education, leading unprecedented injury research, and fueling the US Team program, among many other initiatives.

Over the last two years, however, there are signs that our sport is not as healthy as it has been. Participation growth has slowed for a number of reasons, including the erosion of more accessible community programs, early sport specialization and related player injury and burn out, and fragmentation of stakeholders in the sport driven primarily by competing, parochial motivations that too often conflict with the best interests of the sport and those who play.

As a result, the US Lacrosse mission has never been more relevant. Our leadership and impact to date have been significant, but there is much more yet to be accomplished to expand the reach of our sport. And we can’t do it without you.

Team USA:
“Competing for our country is our greatest honor.”

Paul Rabil

Until lacrosse appears in the Olympics again, these are our lacrosse Olympians, named by U.S. Men’s National Team Head Coach John HansEOS to represent the U.S. in the Federation of International Lacrosse Men's World Championship July 12-21 in Netanya, Israel.

The 23-man travel roster was selected from the 48-member U.S. Men’s National Team after the seventh and final player evaluation weekend in January.

“Now it’s time to dig deeper into the team dynamic, place them in situations to be successful and ask them to be accountable to one another. That’s the most exciting part in working with these really high-end accomplished athletes.”

One of those situations will be the MLL All-Star game, to be played on Thursday, June 28 at Harvard Stadium in Cambridge, Mass. This is the fourth time Team USA will play the league’s all-stars; Team USA won all three previous meetings, with the last two decided by a single goal.

The game will conclude a four-day Team USA training camp at Gillette Stadium prior to the game at Harvard, and a little over a week before the team departs for Israel. Donors to Team USA will be invited to join the team in Foxborough during the training camp.

Team USA Women Coaching Staff Named

Jenny Levy, the highly successful women’s lacrosse coach at the University of North Carolina, has been named as the head coach for the U.S. Women’s National Team. A proven winner—UNC has participated in the NCAA tournament 19 times, reached the semifinals nine times and won the national championship in 2013 and 2016—Levy also has a passion for the development of the sport and helping to create the pathway from youth to world-class athletes. She has announced her coaching staff for the program: Amy Altig, Alex Frank and Joe Spallina will serve as assistant coaches, and Colleen Shearer will serve as the team’s assistant general manager.

“I am extremely excited to work with this talented group of coaches who are highly competitive, innovative, strategic, and passionate with a wide range of experience in the game,” Levy said. “Joe, Amy and Colleen represent multiple conferences and lacrosse communities across the country. They will work with me to build an exciting and successful team and develop a sustainable U.S. Women’s National Team program.”

Earlier this year, US Lacrosse announced the formation of the NTDP (National Teams Development Program), which aims to increase and improve the pool of players feeding the national teams, while providing regional opportunities for high school players to receive high performance training by US Lacrosse certified coaches and National Team coaches and players. Levy will play a major role in helping to shape that program, which will launch in 2019.

US Lacrosse has been selected to host the 2021 FIL U19 Women’s World Cup. The event will be held at Towson (Md.) University from July 7-17, 2021.
Just like March Madness, there’s Lax Madness here as these US Lacrosse initiatives, programs and services compete for donor dollars.

Which two make it to your championship to fuel growth and enrich the experience of participants?

WINNER!!

MAKE A GIFT TODAY AT USLACROSSE.ORG/DONATE
**Using Lacrosse To Create A New “New Normal”**

**Photo:** Participants from P. Lauderdale HS (first year First Stick Program), South Plantation HS, and West Broward HS (in hands On February 12th for a moment of silence for all at Marjory Stoneman Douglas HS.

No words can be spoken or written that express how we feel as educators and coaches regarding what has rocked our community and Florida. Our hearts are broken. We all understand it could have been our school. Those brave educators who gave their lives were our colleagues and friends.

So we begin to do the little things that unite us and make us stronger. We came together for our Preseason Jamboree and Officials Training just days after the shooting, and opened and closed our games in a circle—players, coaches and officials—joining hands in unity in a moment of silence for all at Marjory Stoneman Douglas HS.

We coaches, have teachers chosen to make a difference in our students lives. We will, as a lax community, come together and do what is needed to help start with the long healing process. We pray for change. This cannot be the new normal.

**Donna and Bob Rose, Weston, Fl.**

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**Women’s Sports Foundation Helps Team USA Capture Two Golds**

Excellence doesn’t come cheap. Each year, as much as 20 percent of the more than one million dollars raised through the US Lacrosse Foundation Annual Fund is dedicated to helping underwrite the travel and training budget of whichever U.S. National Team is competing internationally that year.

This summer it’s the men’s senior team, which will travel in July to Netanya, Israel, for the 2018 FIL Men’s Senior World Championship. One of 50 participating countries comprising more than 2,000 athletes, the men will join 50 participating countries comprising more than 2,000 athletes, the men will participate in a 2 pm game between host Northwestern and Colorado. Fittingly, it was the day after Valentine’s Day. He was more than happy to talk about his passion for growing and improving “the third team on the field.”

**Passion:** Absolutely. In addition to being a generous donor of Officials Education and Certification through the US Lacrosse Foundation Annual Fund, Niblock has become a mentor, recruiter, and advocate for the value of a good critique.

“I started officiating in 2010 and like all new officials, I got low level games,” said Niblock, who is also a football referee. “I would always seek out senior officials to get their thoughts. Unfortunately, they’d usually say, “You’re doing fine.” Not long after that, he traveled to North Carolina for what was then known as a LAREDO (LAcrosse Referee DevelOpment) Clinic—now called Level 1, 2 & 3 Officials Development Clinics—so a mix of classroom and field training led by experienced officials.

In the middle of that first clinic, “my head exploded,” Niblock joked. Sort of. “I was doing all these things wrong that I had never been told were wrong.” He’s serious about getting better and wants all of his peers in the black and white stripes to be as well.

And he wants more officials. “When I started, the University of Louisville was the only college program in the region. Now there are nine, but the same number officials.”

Charlie Obermayer, US Lacrosse senior manager for officials development, explains why the efforts of officials like Niblock are so important. “The sport’s growth has outpaced our ability to drive change, effectively develop officials, maintain consistent standards, and keep up with the demands and needs of the marketplace.”

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**Chris Niblock’s Passion for Officiating Drives His Support**

Chris Niblock answered his (hands-free) phone in the middle of a six-hour drive from his home outside Louisville, KY to Evanston, IL. He was scheduled to officiate a 2 pm game between host Northwestern and Colorado. Fittingly, it was the day after Valentine’s Day.

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**$1.5 Million to Help Keep Athletes on the Field**

As the Center for Sport Science at US Lacrosse (CSS) turns two this year, its annual research report reveals broad-based efforts to protect athletes from injury, from evaluating sensors used to study concussions to improving the quality of training to prevent lower extremity injuries.

“Our goal is to improve the well-being of lacrosse participants at all levels of play,” said Dr. Bruce Griffin, director of the CSS, who works with members of US Lacrosse’s Sports Science and Safety Committee to identify, fund, and evaluate new research and safety initiatives.

CSS serves as a national hub for the study and improvement of safety and performance in lacrosse. Created in 2016, it is devoted to research, education, collaboration, policy development, and best practices guidelines that benefit the safety and wellness of lacrosse players, with a particular focus on youth players. Since its launch, CSS has committed over $1.5 million in health-related research.

The 2017 Research Report may be found online at https://www.uslacrosse.org/safety/center-for-sport-science.

Chris Niblock, an investment banker with Old National Bank, burns vacation days to help carry the load, doing 40-50 college games and 40+ high school games per season. He also gets in some middle school games “to serve as a mentor, to make it meaningful for officials just getting started.”

One of his recruits is his daughter, Lisa, a former high school All-American who’s now a sophomore at the University of Kentucky. A big bonus for this well-travelled father of two: “It’s a great way to spend time together.”

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WHAT WILL YOUR LEGACY BE?

When a rock hits a pond, the ripples go far beyond the point of impact. That’s the guiding principle behind the Lacrosse Communities Project, a pilot program begun this year in Albany and Brooklyn, NY, and Cleveland, OH, to embed the sport into underserved areas.

At its heart is a comprehensive investment of US Lacrosse programs and services into every school and recreation center into a select urban or rural community—one that’s diverse, racially, ethnically and socio-economically.

To pass the game on, we work with community stakeholders, hire a local manager and, where needed, build or renovate a field to serve as a program “hub.” The goal is to establish the sport there while training coaches, officials, and players who will carry the sport into adjacent areas, sharing a sport they’ve embraced as their own.

That was the spirit embodied by Norm Webb (1942-2004) the Baltimore-born decorated Vietnam veteran known as the “godfather of San Diego lacrosse.” He took the sport wherever he went, and trained generations of players to pass the game on.

HIS LACROSSE LEGACY ENDURES. YOUR LEGACY CAN, TOO.

To learn more about making a planned gift to US Lacrosse through the A. Norman Webb Jr. Legacy Society, visit uslacrosse.org/foundation/legacy-society