

# Jefferson Award Honoree Leo Welder gives a boost to the next wave of young entrepreneurs

When Leo Welder thinks about his volunteer work with the Young Men's Business League, he doesn't just think about business. He thinks about the kids.

The Austin man loves seeing them sing, canoe or play frisbee at the nonprofit's Sunshine Camps; learn good study habits through the group's year-round academic programs; or give back to the community through service learning projects. YMLB gives low-income youth a chance to do things they might never have done, he said. And that's exciting for him to see.

"You start meeting these kids and you start seeing how rare of an opportunity these things are for these kids," said Welder, 35. "We take them for granted."

Welder had just finished graduate school when he connected with YMLB in 2004. The nonprofit seemed like a good fit for him, a place where he could put his business degree to good use. And it worked. Welder helped revamp the group's individual fundraising system, which helped boost the amount of money members raised from \$40,000 a year to \$400,000 a year. He's helped recruit new board members and organize events. He once stayed up all night cooking 110 pounds of brisket to make sure there was enough food at the YMLB party.

Welder, who runs a company that helps entrepreneurs start businesses, says he feels an obligation to do what he can for people who need help. Volunteering is now an integral part of his life.

"You get back 10 times more than you put in," he said. "You really do."



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