Questions for Heather Lotz –
Lotz of Blessings



Heather Lotz's story of how she came to start her non-profit, *Lotz of Blessings* is one of the most heartfelt and inspiring stories I've heard in a long time. Her impetus was completely "Be the Change You Want to See." I love this! I've tried to raise my three children with these same values, but I never took the leap, the giant step to actually start a 501C3, organize and partner with other like-minded individuals and organizations. What a brave, dedicated, and determined community leader Heather Lotz is; her leap of faith is making a difference in the lives of thousands of our friends and neighbors. I'm so proud and happy *Lotz of Blessings* is operating here in Clearwater. Read more about Heather and her story and the impact of *Lotz of Blessings* here:

Thank you Heather, for participating in this interview to share your story and how you came to be Founder and President of *Lotz of Blessings.*

First, I'd invite people to read your story, under "Our Story" on your website. Readers, please take a moment to click here to read Heather's story. You may have tears in your eyes like I did. I promise you'll enjoy it. https://www.lotzofblessings.org/our-story

After reading about your inspiration and beginnings, here are some questions to bring us up to date on how your family and *Lotz of Blessings* is doing now.

Heather, how are you and your family doing now? School's almost over.

We are doing well. We are excited to kick off summer and get into our summertime routine. Our family has a jam-packed summer schedule with a pretty big vacation planned, and we are looking forward to exploring parts of the country. For Lotz of Blessings, we have a ton of events planned, using our new space.

***Lotz of Blessings* has a permanent location. Can you share where it is and what you do there?**

We are located at 1000 Lakeview Rd. Suite 4 in Clearwater. Our space has been built to invite kids and family to come in, work together and complete give back projects with us.

I think you told me your rent at this location is $3000 a month plus utilities. If people are unable to physically help with your programs, I'm sure a monetary donation can help with rent or utilities, right? And did you mention you have an Amazon wish list?

Yes, we are fully funded on donations and grants. Everyone who volunteers with Lotz of Blessings is a volunteer including myself. Our Amazon wish list gets updated frequently to support our different projects. You can find it here:
https://www.amazon.com/hz/wishlist/ls/3MJJJZSYDUPEO/ref=nav_wishlist_lists_3

Our website, lotzofblessings.org has a link to donate and all funds go back into our community.

What types of "giving back" activities is *Lotz of Blessings* involved with now? I know you shared with me some impressive stats about how many people you touch with your work.

Our biggest project is during the school year with Pack-A-Snack. We currently serve 167 students within 5 schools each week. This project ensures these kids have something to eat on the weekends while they aren't in school. This summer we will be at local libraries to pack snacks for Hope Village too.
A few other projects:

- Each summer we collect school supplies and lunch thermals and then deliver them to a local title 1 school for the teachers. We believe teachers shouldn't have to spend their money on school supplies so we give them a brand-new lunch bag with school supplies inside of it to help them kick off their year. We also try to go to the schools that might not have the PTA support like other schools.
- We have 3 blessings boxes in our community (Bellaire Elementary, Skycrest Elementary, and Grace Christian Church) these are like little food pantries that we keep filled for those walking by that may need something to eat but also for those who are able to fill to help the community.
- We also have a brand-new little library at Glen Oaks Park.
- We adopted Crest Lake Park a few years ago and do frequent park clean ups there.
- And, we have made some fun projects for local seniors, firefighters, and police officers.

Do you have any new projects lined up for the summer?
We do. We are keeping busy this summer with a few new projects. One is "Brown Bag Buddies" in which we are making PBJ sandwiches and packing up a lunch and donating it to another non-profit, Good Neighbors who then will give it out to hungry individuals. Another project is "Crafting with Kindness" we will be making a craft that you can keep or give to someone else plus we are throwing in a fun game of bingo at this event. You can find out the days/times of events on our website or FB page.



Why is it so important for you to have children and families involved in the work you do?
I believe that kids should grow up giving back so then as they get older it's a normal routine for them. Imagine if we all did that how great our world would be!

Our mission is to empower and inspire today's youth to change the world with acts of kindness. Being involved in work that gives back to the community allows them to embrace opportunities presented within their sphere of influence to impact others for good

Because your children are so immersed in this work, have any of them come up with new ideas of engagement?
Yes! My older son Carter is on our student advisory board and that group picks out their own projects, how they want to donate the money they raise and then create the marketing materials, fundraising plan and execute on it. Last summer, before school started, they raised $1200 from a lemonade stand and bought new school shoes and socks for foster kids at the Sherriff's Youth Ranch.

This summer they decided to host Bingo and all the money raised will be going to Suncoast Animal League. It's so fun to see these kids come up with their own ideas and plan it out.

What's been the most rewarding aspect of your work with *Lotz of Blessings?*

Honestly, all of it. If you would have told me back in 2018 when I had this random ideal that I wanted to help find opportunities for young kids to give back, I would have thought "Yeah ok it will probably last a few months. " But here we are 5 years later, in our own space, creating bigger and bigger opportunities for our youth to change the world, and we are continuing to grow.

What is most challenging about running a 501C3?

Time and finding money.

From my experience, volunteers often enjoy volunteering but not being the "chair of the committee" or the organizer. Do you find that, too? And if people want to jump in to help, either in leading something, or pitching in, what types of volunteer opportunities do you have at *Lotz of Blessings?*

Yes, people love that they can come in and everything is set up. Right now I'm doing most of the set up. But I would love some more volunteers to head up these committees.

When you and I talked, you indicated that middle and high-school students can volunteer with your organization to earn Bright Scholars and National Honor Society volunteer hours. Can you explain how this works and what opportunities you have for young adults?

Yes. They just have to see their school counselor to let them know they are volunteering with Lotz of Blessings. We had some great NHS students help us this year with our graphics. That relieved so much from us and they were able to do it on their own time. I'm also always looking for photographers at our events!

If people want to learn more, to volunteer, or to donate, what's the best way to contact you?

heather@lotzofblessings.org

So… in your free time (do you even have any?) what do you and your family like to do?

Ha! Free time. What's that again? We enjoy boating and Busch Gardens whenever we get a chance.

What do you like most about Clearwater?

Being close to the water.

If you could change one thing about our community, what might that be?

To make sure everyone had access to food and a bed. And, maybe the stoplights.

Favorite restaurant, park or "hidden treasure" here in our community?

Frenchy's on the beach. It was my husband and my first date a long time ago.

Favorite sports team?

Clearwater Little League. That's the only sports I have time to watch. 😊. But when I can watch something, I would prefer it to be IU basketball.

If someone feels that pull in their heart to engage in a new and scary adventure or career change, (similar to what you did) what advice would you give them?

Do it and don't regret it. As my kids grow up, I hope they will realize that career and passion can come together and be fulfilling in so many ways. My career path looks nothing like I thought it would over 10 years ago, but I love that I get to be able to do what I enjoy every day and that's what matters because it makes me happy. You only get one life to live and you should make it a good one.

Final thoughts? Quote you live by? Anything else you'd like to share?

"You will never regret being kind."