

Game changer

An Acton lawyer has turned his passion for refereeing basketball games into a means for fighting the disease that claimed the life of a close friend.

In addition to donating the officiating fees he earned from 171 high school and youth games over the past basketball season, **Louis N. Levine** says he solicited contributions from colleagues in the legal profession all the way down to the spectators in the stands, raising a grand total of \$51,000 for the battle against cancer.

"I'm grateful for what anybody gives me," Levine says. "I appreciate the guy who gives me 25 cents a game as much as the guy who gives me \$30 a game."

In a creative turn of charitable fundraising, the attorney says he even sold gift cards donated by establishments like

Dunkin' Donuts and Outback Steakhouse during half-time to bring in some additional cash.

"I wound up raising another \$5,000 just by selling gift cards," remarks Levine, a founding member of **D'Agostine, Levine, Parra & Netburn** where he's a land use and civil litigation attorney.

Spurred by a love of basketball, in 1992 Levine started a side career officiating high school and youth games, balancing a full-time practice with hundreds of hours on the basketball court each year.

"Believe me, during the season it's a lot of juggling," Levine says, laughing. "But thank God for cell-phones and smartphones."

Levine joined the fight against cancer in 2011 when, as a member of the International Association of Approved Basketball Officials, he became active in the IAABO's fundraising campaign supporting the American Cancer Society.

Then his involvement became personal. In the fall of 2011, he called a fellow referee he had known for years, Chip Leeds, seeking additional game assignments. Levine was shocked to learn that Leeds had Stage 4 lung cancer.

"After the phone call, I went into the living room, stared at the ceiling for a while and decided I better do something," says Levine, who went on to raise \$3,200 from

the approximately 85 games he officiated during the 2011-2012 basketball season.

Leeds died in September 2012.

The sad turn of events spurred Levine to redouble his efforts.

During the next season,

he donated his fees from 144 games and concentrated on finding sponsors, including attorneys he knew.

"If I was on the phone with you, and we had a case together, there was a 70 percent chance I was going to hit you up for a sponsorship," Levine says.

His efforts netted \$31,139 in donations for the 2012-13 season.

Now Levine is happy to report that some of his fellow officials have been donating their game fees as well, which range from \$40 to \$80.

"A lot of times even a coach who lost will hand me some money," Levine says.

— PAT MURPHY



LEVINE