

## Agency for Change Podcast: Dannielle Stewart, Story Producer

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### **Dannielle Stewart**

Great storytelling is accessible for everyone and critical for everyone.

### **Announcer:**

Welcome to Agency for Change, a podcast from KidGlov that brings you the stories of changemakers who are actively working to improve our communities. In every episode, we'll meet with people who are making a lasting impact in the places we call home.

### **Lyn Wineman:**

Sometimes people ask me why we didn't focus our podcast on marketing. Obviously, we have a great deal of marketing, branding and advertising expertise at KidGlov, and it's something we are very passionate about. And my answer is that we're actually even more passionate about our purpose, which is to put a megaphone in front of those who are doing good.

### **Lyn Wineman:**

Hey, everyone. This is Lyn Wineman, president and chief strategist at KidGlov. Welcome to another episode of Agency for Change Podcast. Today, I'm excited to introduce you to Dannielle Stewart, a nonprofit storyteller extraordinaire from Denver, Colorado. She's going to share her passion, drop some knowledge, and we also have a special announcement, so stay tuned. Hey, Dannielle. Welcome to the podcast.

### **Dannielle Stewart:**

Thanks so much for having me, Lyn.

### **Lyn Wineman:**

You and I have talked many times, and I'm always very excited to talk to you. I feel like we have similar energy. I just want to start, because you are a nonprofit storyteller extraordinaire, I want to start by asking you why you are so passionate about nonprofit storytelling.

### **Dannielle Stewart:**

You and I have similar backgrounds in that we trained in advertising in the College of Journalism. And as I came in, really from the ground up, I made a pivot into nonprofit about halfway through my career. I really saw that nonprofits struggled to tell their stories of impact effectively, and because of this challenge, often they weren't heard, they weren't seen by their donors. They missed opportunities for funding, for volunteer recruitment, for board retention, for all kinds of things. And so, as I really came to know nonprofit from the inside, I've done program and fundraising and marketing. I just feel so passionate that good storytelling is accessible to everyone, and that really is my mantra.

### **Lyn Wineman:**

Dannielle, I feel like you and I must have known each other in a past lifetime because I feel like that's also my mantra. I feel like I have seen so many nonprofits, it almost feels like they're set free by the right messaging, by the right story. It's like once they get those magic words, and they are magic words, the magic words that really describe why they're matchlessly different, that resonate with their target audience, that lean towards their mission, I think that can be so beneficial. So this next question's a little bit loaded because I think I know the answer, and they say you should never ask a question that you don't know the answer to, but I'm curious if you have a particular medium that you like to use or that you feel is most effective for storytelling?

**Dannielle Stewart:**

I think it might actually surprise you.

**Lyn Wineman:**

Oh, yeah.

**Dannielle Stewart:**

I am by training, by passion, by I think just the natural gift is as a writer. I work as a video story producer for podcasts and all sorts of things. But it all begins with doing your homework, that any kind of good story begins with collecting data, listening to stories, making sure you're speaking to the right people and not only at the top. So I love video storytelling. It is incredible. It's incredibly powerful and allows us to get into places in a nonprofit that maybe not everybody can see. One of the examples I use in a class that I teach is a wildlife sanctuary, where they were filming donor thank you videos from inside a primate habitat. But it all really starts with just doing the work of the basics and then deciding, "Where is my audience engaging in media? How do they like to hear stories? How do they like to consume information?" and then picking where that story should live.

**Lyn Wineman:**

I love that answer. It seems like every year our business changes a lot. There's new digital marketing. There's AI. Every year we have new tools in the toolbox, but it still all goes back to understanding. It goes back to setting that foundation that you spoke of. It goes to understanding how your audience wants to receive the information. So I expected you just to talk about video, but I'm with you a hundred percent. You've got to have that solid foundation. But video also is such a powerful tool, to hear the words, to hear the voices, to see the pictures. I am sure the video that you mentioned in the primate area of the wildlife sanctuary, I'm picturing it right now, I bet it was amazing. So, Dannielle, tell us what you're working on right now. I'm really curious.

**Dannielle Stewart:**

I get to spend my days talking about angel investing, that is early seed stage investing. One of the big projects I'm working on right now is a campaign called Seed the Future Campaign. And the foundation, it's a 501(c)(3) that lives alongside ACA, which is a 501(c)(6). The work of the foundation is building to find education and tools and building community that will allow traditionally marginalized communities have more equity in access to capital education. And that is both for founders, for the entrepreneur, and for new angel investors.

**Lyn Wineman:**

Yeah, that's amazing. I think that it's a good reminder. Sometimes when we think about nonprofits, we think about the really traditional ones, the food banks, the ones that help kids, the animal shelters, but there's a lot of different nonprofits doing really important work. I think what you're saying there is so important because it's important to help the founders, but then think of the new products and services that are going to be created from founders from diverse backgrounds as they have access to these programs. Tell me the name of that program again, because that sounds really fascinating, Dannielle.

**Dannielle Stewart:**

The Angel Investor Foundation is leading Seed the Future Campaign. And we are trying to do exactly that, not only introduce more diverse investors to the world of angel investing, but they are then connected to communities where there are innovations happening that could be a life-saving technology. It could be an environmental improvement technology or product that, because there still is inequity in access to capital, might mean that company or that product never sees the market. And so by helping entrepreneurs be better prepared for securing funding and also getting more investors into the marketplace through education, connection to angel groups... For you, it's the Nebraska Angels who are-

**Lyn Wineman:**

I know some of the Nebraska Angels. They're amazing humans.

**Dannielle Stewart:**

I know one of them, but it's from my time living back home. But, yes, I get to do this incredible work where we're providing more educational opportunities and working through the development ecosystem by partnering with economic development agencies and other players in the space so that kind of like what you do for nonprofits, we're giving a megaphone to more parts of the ecosystem.

**Lyn Wineman:**

Oh, I love that. So when I think of angel investors, don't laugh at me here, but the image of Shark Tank pops into my mind. When you do this work, does it feel like you're on Shark Tank?

**Dannielle Stewart:**

What an angel investor will tell you about Shark Tank is that it gives the wrong perception of who angels are. So the folks on the show are nearly limitlessly wealthy, right?

**Lyn Wineman:**

Yeah.

**Dannielle Stewart:**

An angel investor is taking their own checkbook, unlike venture capital, unlike the uber wealthy. An angel investor is taking out their own checkbook to write an early check to invest in that company, and they're providing mentorship, they're providing resources, networking. They might serve on the board. And so that's really the big difference, because these, while they fit the IRS definition of an accredited investor, they really are the most down-to-earth, wonderful people who participate in this sometimes risky asset class because they really believe in the work.

**Lyn Wineman:**

Wow. That's cool. I'm actually glad then that I asked the question because that, I think, was an important distinction. So I want to flip back to some nonprofit storytelling questions, and I'm really curious, you had such an interesting career, worked with so many different organizations and projects, I'm curious if you have any projects that stand out as being most memorable?

**Dannielle Stewart:**

I think that my work in the affordable housing space.

**Lyn Wineman:**

Such important projects.

**Dannielle Stewart:**

I really think that I was gifted the opportunity to meet so many people I would never... Or it would be unlikely to ever just bump into them in life. And the privilege that I get when I sit down and maybe I've met someone by Zoom, maybe not. And in a few minutes, they have to talk about sometimes the hardest parts of their lives or the hardest parts of their stories. But in particular, I did a story about an organization out of Boulder that serves homeless youth, which is generally 18 to 25.

**Lyn Wineman:**

Because they're aging out of the system, and it's hard to get support at that time in your life.

**Dannielle Stewart:**

It is. Almost all chronically homeless youth have been through the foster care system at some point. I met a young man who was kicked out of his family. He had been homeless for, I think, six or seven years at the time that I met him.

**Lyn Wineman:**

Oh my.

**Dannielle Stewart:**

And he was 19.

**Lyn Wineman:**

Oh my.

**Dannielle Stewart:**

He had been kicked out of his family home just because of who he was. He had more wisdom and insight into humanity and into how we treat one another than I think I've ever seen in someone that age. I think about that kid a lot.

**Lyn Wineman:**

Yeah. I wonder where he is today. Do you ever cry when you're talking to people about their stories? I think I would cry, and I do sometimes.

**Dannielle Stewart:**

When I was first getting started, I really tried to keep that in check. I wanted to be professional, or I had an idea of what I felt like being polished was. What I found instead is that kind of vulnerability is really much more of a connector, especially for the storyteller. If they're seeing this organic reaction, and I am a tender heart, so if someone is struggling, that there are certainly times where I really... It really depends on the storyteller, but I absolutely get touched by these stories and cry.

**Lyn Wineman:**

Yeah. I think that's why people like you. And I love this work, because we know that if we can tell the story of that young man and help people understand the cause of teenage homelessness or child homelessness, that really then helps. It helps connect people to that mission in all kinds of positive ways. So, Dannielle, you and I have similar backgrounds. I think we have a lot of similarities, but we have similar backgrounds in that we both graduated from the College of Journalism and Mass Communications at the University of Nebraska. I'm going to resist saying, "Go Huskers," here, but I just said it. I'm curious what your career path has been like. I always just love to know what led people to where they are today.

**Dannielle Stewart:**

When I was in the COJMC, I was in a women's mentoring group, and I got to meet the woman who wrote the More You Know series. Do you remember that?

**Lyn Wineman:**

I do. I do.

**Dannielle Stewart:**

They use it, right, on CBS?

**Lyn Wineman:**

Yeah.

**Dannielle Stewart:**

She was in PR, and she gave me just about the best advice that I could have received, especially at that time. She said, "You really need to think about your career more like a pinball machine and less like a sidewalk." So it almost gave me the freedom to say, "Okay, if it's not a straight line, that's okay." At that time I was so uptight.

**Lyn Wineman:**

Yes, I can identify with that. Yes. "I'm going to get my job. I'm going to work hard. I'm going to get a promotion. I'm going to make some money." Yeah.

**Dannielle Stewart:**

I had some real early failure, and I think it taught me more than anything else that I needed to release desire, if you will, about this perception that I was in control. But I started at healthcare in Lincoln where I began my career. I was an intern at MDS Pharma Services for most of my college education, so three years. I moved into cardiology, a private cardiology practice, and then point of care lab testing. I

really love healthcare. I love talking. I love learning new vocabulary really quickly. And then the economy was kind of tanking. I had a buddy in Chicago, one in Oregon, and one here in Denver, and I literally just picked out of the air. And so since that time, really, I've raised my family, and my career has been devoted to the Colorado community.

**Lyn Wineman:**

Yeah. I love that. So another thing, so we talked about your career journey, but something about you that I've learned through our conversations is that you have climbed both the Great Wall and the Great Pyramids, two places on my bucket list. So can you talk about that? And does that experience impact your work at all?

**Dannielle Stewart:**

I have had the opportunity to climb the Great Wall and the Great Pyramid from the inside. I don't know if you knew this. I'm not sure if it's the case right now, but you could go inside. It was like a single rickety ladder, and you could climb from the inside all the way up to the chamber at the top of the pyramid.

**Lyn Wineman:**

Wow.

**Dannielle Stewart:**

Not for the faint of heart or the claustrophobic, I will say.

**Lyn Wineman:**

I was going to say that hits all of my fears: fear of heights, fear of claustrophobia and fear of rickety ladders.

**Dannielle Stewart:**

At the same time, even then I went after the Arab Spring to Egypt several different times and lived in the Sinai for a while, went back and lived in the Sinai for a while. My trip to China was... I did not do the correct planning.

**Lyn Wineman:**

Uh-oh.

**Dannielle Stewart:**

I was by myself and not in a group. I got lost a few times. So I've been on the Great Wall and had the experience and made it back to the States, which was, I'm sure, a thrill for my family.

**Lyn Wineman:**

Wow. So you are a true adventure. You've got a little bit of willingness to take risks to achieve the right goals. I love that about you. So in the-

**Dannielle Stewart:**

If I can, I didn't really answer. I'll tell you what I think what I have learned from those experiences is that when I'm feeling like I'm having a day where nothing is surmountable and it feels overwhelming, I think about those experiences and go, "Okay, it's not that tough." Yeah.

**Lyn Wineman:**

"I climbed on the Great Wall. I went up a rickety ladder on the inside of the pyramids. I can handle this."

**Dannielle Stewart:**

Yes.

**Lyn Wineman:**

I like it. I like it a lot. I like it a lot. So in the intro I did an official tease, and I told everyone we have a special announcement that involves both you and KidGlov. Do you want to do the honors and share about our collaboration?

**Dannielle Stewart:**

Absolutely. After getting to know Lyn and fangirling over KidGlov for years, I'm so excited to say that I'm coming on board as a story producer for KidGlov. A lot of what I'm doing is relationship building. Folks are often in need of guidance for storytelling and branding and all sorts of needs that make their work in nonprofit easier and better. And so now I get to share the good word of KidGlov with nonprofits and mission-focused businesses in Colorado.

**Lyn Wineman:**

Dannielle, I couldn't be more excited about this. I just feel like your passion and our mission just fit hand in glove, and total pun intended there. I really just can't wait to work together to support more nonprofits, more social impact movements, more purpose-driven businesses. I think we're going to have a lot of fun together, too. So I can't wait for that as well.

**Lyn Wineman:**

I'm going to ask you next my very favorite question, and I can't wait to hear your answer, because everyone who listens to Agency for Change knows that I love motivational quotes. And I feel so lucky to get to talk with such interesting people, very humble people that always the first thing they say is, "I don't know if I have anything to say." So if that's what you're thinking, I already know you have something amazing to say, but I would love an original quote from you to inspire our listeners.

**Dannielle Stewart:**

Well, I hope it's not too long.

**Lyn Wineman:**

It won't be.

**Dannielle Stewart:**

Great storytelling is accessible for everyone and critical for everyone.

**Lyn Wineman:**

Great storytelling is accessible to everyone and critical for everyone. Wow. You packed a punch in those words, Dannielle. That is why you are so good at what you do. Thank you for that. So for our listeners, who would like to learn more about you, about your work, how can they connect with you?

**Dannielle Stewart:**

I would invite anyone who's interested to follow along, especially on LinkedIn. I have a new headshot and bio up on the KidGlov website that people can go check out. But I invite you to follow along with the Nonprofit Professional. I have a few. I have a channel on Facebook and Instagram and often just like talking about topics related to nonprofits around all sorts of categories, but in particular, marketing.

**Lyn Wineman:**

You share some great knowledge on those channels. For anybody who wants to check those out, we'll make sure to have links in the show notes on the website so people can easily link to those. So, Dannielle, as we wrap up this very fun conversation today, what is the most important thing you would like our listeners to remember about the work that you're doing?

**Dannielle Stewart:**

I would love for listeners to think about, to reflect on when we take the time, the opportunity to listen to one another's human stories, it allows us to have growth and empathy and patience and kindness and understanding. And it often allows us to disarm ourselves from maybe what stereotypes or perceptions we have about a particular group of people. Sometimes just taking that moment to really listen to someone's story quietly will open up an entirely new world for you, and it will make your life better.

**Lyn Wineman:**

Dannielle, those were amazing words. I have just had the most fun today talking about your story. I know you typically tell other people's stories, and I'm honored to tell a bit of your story. And I'm going to say this, I fully believe the world needs more people like you. I'm so excited to have the opportunity to work with you as a story producer, and I just thank you for taking time to share with us today.

**Dannielle Stewart:**

I love spending time with you. Thank you so much for having me.

**Announcer:**

We hope you enjoyed today's Agency for Change podcast. To hear all our interviews with those who are making a positive change in our communities, or to nominate a changemaker you'd love to hear from, visit [KidGlov.com](http://KidGlov.com) at [K-I-D-G-L-O-V.com](http://K-I-D-G-L-O-V.com) to get in touch. As always, if you like what you've heard today, be sure to rate, review, subscribe, and share. Thanks for listening, and we'll see you next time.