

Agency for Change Podcast: Donna Dostal, President and CEO, Community foundation for Western Iowa

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Donna Dostal:

Never be a finished product.

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.

Lisa Bowen:

At KidGlov, we work with a number of nonprofits, and no matter their area of focus, whether it's increasing literacy, reducing environmental impact, or supporting the arts. Most rely on donations and grants to carry out the great work they do. Frequently, these grants come from community foundations who are dedicated to supporting the people of a certain geographical area. Community foundations can help multiply the impact of individual donors by pooling funds from multiple sources, like families, businesses, or other donors, and then they direct them to the charities or projects that are most effectively addressing an issue.

According to the Council on Foundations, there are more than 900 such organizations in the United States alone. Today, you're going to hear from one of those community foundations, one that serves the people of Western Iowa. Stay tuned as we find out what issues they're helping to address, what programs they offer to the community, and what they plan to take on next.

Hi, everyone. This is Lisa Bowen, vice president, managing director at KidGlov. Welcome to another episode of the Agency for Change podcast, where we're speaking with Donna Dostal. Donna is the president and CEO of the Community Foundation for Western Iowa, which is dedicated to creating a lasting legacy by engaging citizens and communities for durable change and fostering a culture of philanthropy. Donna, I'm eager to talk with you today and learn more about the great impact you're making on the world starting right here in Western Iowa.

Donna Dostal:

Oh, well, thank you so much for having me today, Lisa. I am so honored and just excited to learn, actually, the more you and I talk, about the wonderful things that KidGlov is doing in our communities to help support our nonprofit sector, which is very fragile, I think. I think the nonprofit sector really needs organizations like yours to help lift them up.

Lisa Bowen:

Oh, well, thank you so much, Donna. Well, I want to start a little bit about talking about you. We'll talk a lot about the foundation today, but I feel like if I looked up the word changemaker in the encyclopedia,

your picture might pop up right there. Can you tell our listeners a little bit about your path and what got you to the foundation and where you are today?

Donna Dostal:

Oh my gosh, I wish that the listeners could see my face right now because it's beet red and I'm very flattered by your kind remarks. Thank you so much. But I made a decision a long time ago that my career path would focus on nonprofits, working with the nonprofit sector just in some sort of a capacity that helps our community. I started my professional career as a mom trying to raise a couple of children. I have two boys who are amazing, and they both live in the metro. They're 34 and 31, and one beautiful grandbaby who I can't neglect and say, "Hey, Vivian, what's up, girl?"

Yeah. So raising those two guys, I worked very closely with the schools that they were in. I made sure that I was involved and tried to teach them about giving back. My grandmother probably was one of the most prolific volunteer ladies that I ever knew, and she kind of set the stage for me being involved in that and set the expectations in my own mind to really give back to our community. So I really started my career towards the helping of our community, making things better by starting with the Columban Fathers in Bellevue, Nebraska.

In Nebraska, we have an international missionary society that started in 1917 by Father Galvin. Galvin Road in Bellevue is named after him, and these guys are missionary priests from Ireland. If you ever have a chance, drive up to their beautiful campus and see them, but they're just like this gem of giving back to the world, quite honestly, and they taught me really, really well how to give back. And working as the missionary, or as the assistant on the missionary magazine really did kind of cement my path in working in nonprofits.

And then I moved to Bellevue University, which was the most pivotal time in my life. At that time, I was a working mom, kind of got married out of high school, worked through... Like everybody else in the Omaha metro, I worked at First Data Resources. Everybody has worked at First Data at one time or another in their lives. But then when I got the role over at Bellevue University Foundation, I remember my mentor at... And she was my supervisor, but also my mentor for years. She said, "If you don't take advantage of the opportunity to be educated through the university and just have education, you're really missing the boat. You're missing the opportunity to really make your life filled with impact."

And so, I did. I took advantage of every opportunity to not only get a bachelor's degree, but then to get a second bachelor's degree and to get my master's while I was at Bellevue University, and worked my way from being in the foundation office to the business side of things at the university, the Strategic Initiatives Division, where I was business development manager, and worked with national and international companies to design learning programs that were specifically geared towards employees.

And really coming from a place of being that trusted service provider, that trusted knowledge partner that Bellevue University is so good at, and being really entrenched in that, I always knew that I wanted to bring that back to the nonprofit sector, because just being involved like I was, I knew that that was a skill set that a lot of nonprofits, they maybe don't think of themselves as, being that trusted knowledge provider, that subject-matter expert to our community in a way that helps put the donor and the philanthropist at the center of the conversation and kind of takes them out of it. Right?

And so, that's what I feel like I have been able to bring to the different roles now that I've moved back into the development, the fundraising kind of aspect of things, and moved from Bellevue University over to Heartland Family Service where I was chief development officer for five years and then ultimately now to my role at the Community Foundation for Western Iowa.

Lisa Bowen:

Well, what a perfect segue. Let's talk about the Community Foundation for Western Iowa and what you're doing there. You're doing so much great work.

Donna Dostal:

Well, thank you. Thank you for asking. So, the Community Foundation for Western Iowa, which was formally the Pottawattamie County Community Foundation, so we were actually formed in 2007 following a study that was done by Iowa West Foundation in conjunction with the larger study about the transfer of wealth by the Indiana School of Philanthropy out of Indiana State or whatever. I think it's University of Indiana, Hoosiers. And so, they did a study that showed in our Midwestern area, and really across the United States, with the Baby Boomers and the Greatest Generation, they're kind of moving forward, and we have other generations coming up that are taking the mantle of being philanthropic in our communities.

How is that transfer of wealth happening, and how can community foundations and other vehicles to facilitate that transfer of wealth into philanthropy? How can they be the best possible resource for those folks that are looking to be philanthropic or maybe don't even realize what it means to be philanthropic? The Iowa West Foundation really felt that they would be able... that they would like to take the opportunity. There were some other community-minded folks that wanted to create our own community foundation here. So, the Iowa West Foundation was one of our first large gifts into the Community Foundation, and that helped to create our endowment, which we now use to not only help our operations, but also to grant out into the community every year.

But the bigger piece of that, and one of the questions is, why do we exist? And the reason we exist is we are really a public trust for good. And so, we are a 501(c)(3). We are the catalyst between helping folks that want to do good in their community, the catalyst between them and the nonprofits and the organizations, the city-county government projects that are really doing the good. And so, how can we help do that, and not only do it today, but do it well into the future?

So, we focus on endowed funds, and the reason that we do, aside from the fact that being that sustainable resource for nonprofits to continue to build on their mission and make sure that they have the money to do that, the State of Iowa also finds that that sort of mission is very valuable. And I'll just tell you a little of the background story around that as well. When gaming became legal in the state of Iowa, the lawmakers made the decision that it was very important that that piece of money, the piece of revenue that's coming from gaming, helped to ensure the long-term sustainability and the long-term investment in all the counties that exist in the state of Iowa.

In that decision-making process, they instituted the County Endowment Program. And so, of the gaming revenue that comes in through the state every year, all the way back from nearly 16, 17 years now that they've been doing it, a certain percentage every year goes directly into county endowment funds in all the counties that do not have gaming. And we actually have gaming in Pottawattamie County, and so we didn't have to form a community foundation at that time. The entity that took care of that gaming revenue is Iowa West. And so, they're a private foundation. They really have autonomy to be able to spend that revenue, that gaming revenue, how they see fit, but they go along the lines of what the state would like to see done and the investment that they would like to see made from that gaming revenue.

As such, in our county, we didn't really have a vehicle that folks could come and say, "Hey, we want to be part of this fun game of philanthropy. We want to be able to give money in to have an impact into the community where we exist." They would have to go to Des Moines or Omaha. And so, that's why Iowa West and the folks that started the Community Foundation, Kelly Summy, Marie Knedler, Bobbette Behrens, Dean Fischer, all here in the county, they started that community foundation so that folks that live here would have a vehicle to be able to do that.

And then over time, we also became nationally accredited, which enabled us to offer the Endow Iowa Tax Credit. So, the State of Iowa has made so many wonderful provisions to not only ensure that nonprofits are successful today, but into the future. And to ensure that keeps happening, they instituted the Endow Iowa Tax Credit as well, and what that is, is if a donor puts money into what's considered an Endow Iowa fund with a nationally accredited community foundation, they're then eligible for a 25% tax credit for the amount of that gift, up to \$100,000. That amazing incentive has just blown up endowments across the state of Iowa, and that continues to create a sustainable revenue-generating stream for our nonprofits for generations to come.

Lisa Bowen:

Wow, that's amazing. You guys sound like you're set up foundationally strong and perfectly positioned to help the community. So, every community has challenges they need to overcome. Can we talk about some of the primary challenges in your area in Western Iowa that the foundation helps fund?

Donna Dostal:

Yes, that's a really great question. So, we really have made the switch, kind of a shift, in ideology too, just away from really philanthropy being very singular and very focused on the individual to having it be philanthropy to help individuals have a greater impact and understanding what that looks like. To your question about what are some of the issues and challenges that are facing our region, we have really put ourselves in a position to identify those challenges and be able to better connect the folks that really want to have an impact with those issues and the solutions, really, and make them an active part of the solution that our communities are facing.

And as we work through looking at, in our county, kind of in a spot in time around the 2018-19 timeframe all the way through, up through today, there are a lot of challenges we believe that are facing families in the southwest Iowa and western Iowa region, primarily stemming around poverty, the poverty levels that are affecting our communities, particularly in some of our urban areas, more urban areas, access to affordable childcare, because that's an economic driver.

If we can't get folks to watch our children, it's really, really difficult to have our moms and dads feel safe and comfortable to work and to be able to even stay in their communities if they're not able to access childcare. Being able to address the issues of homelessness, mental illness, drug addiction, and not only in our urban areas, but in our rural areas. Some of the other issues that really... One of the issues that really surfaced, too, as we were doing some of our research was human trafficking, human trafficking and domestic violence, and it often goes very easily undetected in some of our rural areas.

So, we really felt that it was time for us to create solutions and then also create funds, field-of-interest funds, quite honestly, for folks that want to have an impact in some of those areas to where we can help vet those, vet the opportunities, and folks can feel secure in saying, "Great. If I put money into the Women's Fund for Southwest Iowa, we know, I know that that money is going to go towards issues that are facing women and their families today, and that the Community Foundation is going to do the due diligence necessary to make sure that that money is granted in a way and it's used in a way that is in keeping with my wishes. In general, I want to support women and their issues."

Same thing with the Mental Health and Substance Abuse Fund. Another opportunity is the Mental Health and Substance Abuse Fund. That started from the Mental Health and Substance Abuse Network of Southwest Iowa. They actually disbanded, so to speak, and turned the opportunities and the responsibilities over to their service providers, but they had funds available, where they wanted to be able to make sure that those funds continued to do good in our southwest Iowa communities. So, they actually created their own field-of-interest fund for that where other people can donate in.

And all of these field-of-interest funds that we have at the Community Foundation, which are answering specific needs in the southwest Iowa region, they are led by committees that live, folks that live in those communities. So across the span of the Mental Health Fund, which is 11 counties in southwest Iowa, or 10 counties, we have someone from every one of those counties, or at least someone who does work in those counties, that sits on the committee to make those granting decisions, so we know that when we're making those decisions, when we get those applications in, that there is a voice and a representation from those counties, and that that money is being used to best serve the needs of the communities that it's intended.

Lisa Bowen:

Great. This leads really nicely into my next question. So, I'm sure you have no lack of asks coming in for support and funding. How do you select what you're going to support and what things you might need to pass on?

Donna Dostal:

That's a really great question, because you are right. Every day, folks say, I mean, anywhere from, "Hey, we're having an event, and would the Community Foundation have money for us to buy drinks?" to "We are doing a capital campaign where we're trying to raise \$20 million to do senior housing in some of our rural communities." And so, that's another reason why we created some of these field-of-interest funds, but also that we are trying to be very well-connected in the community and understand where the needs are and be able to talk to the folks that have funds with us and help educate them as to where they might be able to use their philanthropic dollars.

And so, some of the ways that we make the decisions on how we, the money that we have, the autonomy to grant, is just like I mentioned before. We have committees for each one of our field-of-interest funds that they make quarterly at least. And so, for our Women's Fund for Southwest Iowa, they meet monthly and they're making decisions. We have one granting cycle for the Women's Fund. With the Women's Fund, we grant out, at the least, the least... The lowest grant amount is \$10,000 for the community organizations that are doing the work.

And so, it's really important for us to vet those opportunities well and make sure that they align with the intention of the Women's Fund, same thing with the Mental Health and Substance Abuse Fund. We also have a fund that is all about outdoor recreation for Pottawattamie County, that those decisions on that fund are made by our board of directors and our Impact Grants Committee. And so, like I mentioned before, we do have our own endowment with the Community Foundation. And so, that means we can grant out as well. And so, every year, we have an Impact Grant, an Impact Grant cycle, and those grants are anywhere from \$500 to \$5,000, and that is really focused on simply Pottawattamie County.

We have those other... the Women's Fund, the Mental Health Fund, they all grant in the nine counties that we serve. But the Impact Grant Fund, it is intended for Pottawattamie County. And so, we have Pottawattamie County residents that sit on that committee, and they range all the way from folks that are in finance to folks that live on a farm and just really want to have a voice in from their rural communities in Pottawattamie County, and they make the granting decisions. And then everything certainly goes up to our board to be approved, but man, it is all those, the folks that live in those communities, they're making those granting decisions.

Lisa Bowen:

Well, I'm happy to hear that those decisions don't all lie on your shoulders, Donna, because that would not be a fun job. And I also-

Donna Dostal:

It's awesome to watch though, I'll tell you that. It's awesome to watch. And they all ask, and everybody asks, "So tell us what we need to know about this. Tell us what we need to know about the communities and stuff." So, for us... and it's not only me. It's also Catrina Trabal and my team and Rachel Morehead that does our marketing and communications for the Community Foundation. Having us out in the community and being involved is paramount because we help to inform those decisions.

Lisa Bowen:

And I love how proactive you and your team are too. You're out identifying those needs, not waiting for people to come to you. So, I do love that about your foundation as well.

Donna Dostal:

Thank you.

Lisa Bowen:

You've talked about a couple programs. You've talked about the Women's Fund and Mental Health. Are there any other projects or programs that you want to talk about that you support through the foundation?

Donna Dostal:

It's exciting that you would ask me that, because there are several projects and programs, initiatives of the Community Foundation that are designed over and above the granting process, and we really focus... Our intention too is to be that catalyst within the community that helps connect folks to the solutions, that we need to see the issues that are facing our communities. And generally speaking, it's a lot of nonprofits and city-county government entities that are doing that work.

A couple of years ago, and honestly if I back it up even more, when I first started at the Community Foundation, I had a lot of folks sit across from me at my desk and say, "Could you look at my annual appeal letter? Could you help us with our capital campaign? Do you have any ideas on how we can make our event better?" I've had a little bit of experience with all of those things over my time and learned some really cool things through the Association of Fundraising Professionals and the school of hard knocks and those kinds of things. I have great tools and great partners that I've worked with over time.

And so, I came together with my staff and a couple of other folks that I've worked with over the years and said, "We really need to design something that we can give our knowledge back to our nonprofit community." And I don't think they should have to pay for it. I think that they should be able to know this and then they can do with it what they need to. And so, we created a fundraising course, a cohort, to share our knowledge.

And so, I partnered with... We originally partnered with Paul Strawhecker and Associates, as well as Dr. Jenni Frumer, who is from West Palm Beach, Florida. She is a consultant and the former CEO of Alpert Jewish Family Services in West Palm Beach, and she has done some amazing research on what motivates donors and folks, just individuals, to be philanthropic. And what is motivating them then, once they really identify their motivation to be philanthropic, why are they reaching out to one organization compared to another? And so, we used her research and continued to use that in this... It's called the Make it Happen Cohort.

We launched our first group of that cohort in 2019, then we got stuck with COVID and we ended up doing it online, which was good. We did the first couple of sessions in person, second online. It's a

six-month cohort. They meet once a month for a half a day, and it's basically going through everything from soup to nuts. How do you identify your stakeholders? How do you better engage with your board and really understand what it means to have a board that is willing to help you do fundraising? Not necessarily go out and ask for money, but help you to do that fundraising in a meaningful way. What are the things that you should be including in your annual development plan?

There are so many resources and so many things, so many projects that nonprofits can do, and they all want to do everything, but what is realistic for an organization? So, we developed a fabulous cohort. We think it's been great. We had eight nonprofits go through the first cohort. And what we really want to be able to do is teach them not only to create their own plan and be self-sustaining, but then to plan for their future, because that's what we're about is endowment building. And so far, the folks that have gone, the organizations that went through that first cohort have reported back to us that they've been able to really turn the corner with their fundraising and they continue to be engaged with the group that went through that six months.

They had the in-class sessions for six months, and then we did an additional year of quarterly Let's Revisit This and Continue to Make it Happen, is what we called it, and that was air quotes right there, Continue to Make it Happen. And we met every quarter over cocktails and a happy hour, and had subject-matter experts come in about four separate topics that we just didn't hit hard enough that they really wanted to learn more. So marketing, planned giving, what really was the best format to use to document your development plan, and then how do you facilitate capital campaigns.

And so, we're getting ready to launch the next cohort for the Make it Happen series. It's going to launch in January of 2023. We have a bunch of applications for that, and so we're actually meeting soon to make a decision, because we don't charge the nonprofits to go through that. We have an amazing partner that is our presenting sponsor for the Make it Happen Cohort this year. It's D.A. Davidson. They are our investment management firm, and they came forward as wanting to be able to support nonprofits in that way and are supporting... They're sponsoring the entire cohort. So, we're excited about that initiative.

And then we do have another initiative too that's all about capacity building, and this one is a big deal. So, if you're listening within the sound of my voice, chances are you've heard of SHARE Omaha. When Giving Tuesday... Well, Giving Tuesday has been around for a little over 10 years, and it really has emerged as the premier giving day internationally, not only in the United States, but internationally. And in the Omaha metro, we are very fortunate to have Omaha Gives! for several years, and it was very successful for probably the last six years or seven years of Omaha Gives!, six years. We partnered very closely with the Omaha Community Foundation to do Pottawattamie Gives! as well.

Well, in 2020, when the Omaha Community Foundation decided that it was time to sunset that and pass that individual philanthropy mantle over to SHARE Omaha, we said, "Hey, we're really still doing some good stuff over here too in Pott. County. We want to figure out how that we can really continue to lift up our Pottawattamie County voices." That year, that last year of Omaha Gives! and Pottawattamie Gives!, nonprofits on the Pottawattamie County side raised \$850,000, and that was just a record-breaking year. And the momentum was so strong, I really felt it would be doing us a disservice for us to back off and say, "Okay. Now you're kind of on your own and you need to figure out how to use SHARE Omaha as your tool."

And so, I immediately reached out to Marjorie Maas with SHARE Omaha and said, "Hey, what do you think about us having SHARE Iowa and let's partner together and really make it a concerted effort? We'll expand it to the nine counties that we serve with the Women's Fund and with the Mental Health Fund and such and really make it kind of a bi-state initiative." And they had other communities across the

United States that are also on the SHARE platform. And she was just like, "Oh my God, that's amazing. Let's do that."

And so, we actually pivoted right away in 2020, and not only wanted to continue that momentum of Omaha and Pottawattamie Gives!, but really start introducing folks to Giving Tuesday. So, one of the things too that over the last five years at the Community Foundation, we've been incentivizing philanthropic giving into endowments through those days of giving, because we know that those endowments create long-term sustainability for our nonprofit partners. And right now, we have over 40 nonprofits that have endowments with us.

And so, we normally offer a 10% match for gifts that are coming into endowments that live with us because of that original gift from the Iowa West Foundation. But during both Pottawattamie Gives! and Giving Tuesday for that first year, we decided to increase that match to 20%. And so, for us to kind of switch our voice at a very short time frame, a very short runway and say, "We're going to extend that match into Giving Tuesday," we raised nearly \$400,000 into nonprofit endowments with us.

Then, when we partnered even more deeply with SHARE Omaha and really added our voice, the Community Foundation's voice, to SHARE Omaha as they were doing Giving Tuesday 402 and 712 in 2021, we added that additional 20% match for Giving Tuesday for endowments and raised \$1.8 million into endowments with the Community Foundation. And that is all money that is meant to serve our southwest Iowa and Iowa region, nonprofits across the region for generations to come. With our match, it was \$2.2 million.

And so, this year, we're doing it again. I know. We're continuing, and we actually did a full-blown launch of SHARE Iowa in August. And so, there was 100 nonprofits that came over from SHARE Omaha that identified and they've kind of migrated as their primary platform being on SHARE Iowa, but they're able... Anyone in the region can search in the enhanced features now through the SHARE platform for any nonprofit in either state.

And so, if you're looking for animal rescue organizations that exist in Mills County or childcare facilities that are in Montgomery County, you can drill down that granular, or you can be as macro as saying, "I want to look at every animal-serving organization on SHARE and see where they all are," and "Can I see a list of that?" And so, then that way, folks can be engaged through gifts of kind. They can volunteer, they can see what sort of events that organization is hosting, and then they can give gifts of monetary support, and that's what Giving Tuesday is all about.

So this year, Giving Tuesday is on November 29th. The Community Foundation is once again increasing our endowment match to 20% during Giving Tuesday between November 21st and December 2nd. And so, all of the nonprofits that are on SHARE Iowa that have an endowment with us, they now have a special little button on their SHARE platform, on their SHARE profile that says, "This organization actually... They even have an endowment. If you'd like to give to the endowment, just click here," and it'll take them right to their page where they can give to their endowment as well.

And so, it really is our focus on Giving Tuesday to lift up nonprofits' voice. We give them a ton of tools to use Giving Tuesday as their day of giving, similar to what we used to do for Pottawattamie Gives! They can customize them. They can send out emails based with the framework that we've provided for them. And so, we've really tried to make it very simple for them to better communicate with their stakeholders and their donors wherever they live.

Right now, we're working with organizations in Atlantic, Iowa, with organizations in Clarinda, in Mills County, in Montgomery County, in Harrison County. They're setting up their profiles. They're sending out emails and communication all about Giving Tuesday in a way that they've never really been able to do before.

Lisa Bowen:

I love it. I love that you truly believe that the way to build a strong community is to help lift up those nonprofits. And you don't just talk about it, but you're doing it in so many ways, Donna. So, thank you, thank you.

Donna Dostal:

It's exciting. And it's a great investment that we can make in the community, and I'd be remiss if I didn't say that it... We just can't do it alone. Right? And we are not a very large nonprofit. We're not a very large community foundation. We have \$45 million worth of assets right now, because everybody's assets went down with the downturn of the stock market, but we are continuing to build. And because we have limited resources to be able to invest in some of those capacity-building programming, we are very grateful to have the support of organizations like the Charles E. Lakin Foundation here in southwest Iowa. They have been so tremendously generous.

They focus on children and families and making communities strong, and they saw the value of investing in SHARE Iowa as a capacity-building tool for nonprofits. Same thing with Google. Google has a strong presence in southwest Iowa. They see that this is an opportunity to support technology as a differentiator in supporting nonprofits. And so, we're very grateful to them as well. And then Iowa West helped with updating the platform so that we could have that geographic filtering. We could have all the bells and whistles necessary, the events, calendars, and stuff like that, that help our nonprofits on the Southwest Iowa side better engage with their donors and in ways that they never could before.

So many of our nonprofits... Now we have over 140 just since August on the platform, and I would say that there's just only a handful that actually have their own websites. Most of them use Facebook to raise money. And so, for them to have this SHARE Iowa platform for free, they can put all their communications on there. They can put all their events. They can drive folks from Facebook to that platform so that they can actually accept online gifts now. It's a game changer for them.

Lisa Bowen:

It is. It truly is. Okay. So, this next question's going to be a tough one for you, Donna, because it's kind of like asking you to pick your favorite child, but you've done so much for the Community Foundation of Western Iowa. What are you most proud of?

Donna Dostal:

Oh, golly. I think I do have to say it's the Women's Fund. Is that sexist? I don't know what to say, but the Women's Fund, I think, has been... Because when I came to the Community Foundation, I literally... I mean, I didn't even start yet, and I was out to dinner with some folks that were community leaders here and they said, "So what are you going to do about women's issues? You're a woman leader. What are you going to do?" I was like, "Yeah. I don't know. What should we do?" And they're like, "Blah, blah, blah, blah, blah." There are a hundred things that they wanted to do.

And so, I spent a lot of time going from community to community in southwest Iowa and realized very quickly that issues that face women and their families, they're transient. They do not just exist in Council Bluffs. They're not just encapsulated within Pott. County. Those issues that face women in Mills County and in Glenwood and in Tabor and in Harrison County, up in Woodbine, and the issues that face women in Red Oak and such, those are transient issues. They filter in through Pott. County and they go right across the river into Omaha as well.

And so, how could we devise solutions that really help lift up women and their families, help raise them from poverty? Because we know that the face of poverty in our communities is women. From working at Heartland Family Service, 50% of their clients were at or below the poverty level. Eighty percent of those clients that were at or below the poverty level were women, single women with children. The data does not lie. And so, how can we invest in women to change the trajectory? We know also from global research that when communities invest in the health and well-being of their women and help them lift up their families, that those communities thrive.

So, we have a responsibility to do that. We have a responsibility as a community to do that. And so, what could we do as a community foundation that's going to make a difference in the lives of women and then ultimately in our communities? And to me, the writing was pretty clear on the wall. We needed to create a women's fund. And so, I went back to my office after I'd had like 100 meetings, and the most notable one was with Kim Armstrong from the Mutual of Omaha Foundation. And she said, "Donna, all those things..." So, I wanted to just start a fund that was all about childcare, because I knew that that was kind of a differentiator, especially from a workforce perspective.

And she said, "All these issues that you're talking about, that's not just a childcare fund. You're talking about creating a women's fund, and there are some folks that you need to talk to that have done this." And so, I went back to the office, and I talked with Kelly Dix, and if anybody here listening knows Kelly Dix, she is one of the kindest souls in the world, and she's my VP of operations here at the Community Foundation, and she's like, "Well, that's a cool idea. We should do that." She goes, "But I can tell you that we've had this conversation before at the Community Foundation and it didn't go over," but there is one former board member that really wanted to do this, and that was Jerry Banks of Jerry Banks Group, and he actually has... His organization is based out of Omaha, but he was originally from Glenwood.

And so, I called him up and I said, "Jerry, I'm thinking about doing this women's fund thing," and I swear I thought he was going to explode. He's like, "I've been wanting to do this forever. We should do this. I have two daughters that nobody's there to support them, and this is in southwest Iowa. This is what we need to do." And so, Jerry and I really got our heads together. We got the group of women and men together that we thought would be great strategic partners and great strategic minds in how to form this women's fund.

We actually brought over Tracy Zais from Zais Co over in Omaha, who was one of the original Omaha... Women's Fund of Omaha, one of their original board members. Suzanne Kotula, who is a local philanthropist. Her husband, Rudy Kotula, is an epidemiologist with Methodist in Jennie Edmundson here. And so, they're folks from both sides of the river that have come together and help us develop this fund. And so, our goal is to have \$2 million in that fund. We're not quite there. We're about halfway there, but we'd like to be able to grant out about \$100,000 a year in southwest Iowa to nonprofits.

And one of the things that is just a game changer for this women's fund too, is that some of the money that we received early on to help build this was from the Lozier Foundation. And the Lozier Foundation, what we did with some of their money is, we need to build a measurement tool that when nonprofits are applying for grants and they're reporting for grants, a lot of times, they are asked, "What's your intended impact? What is it that you're trying to really move the needle on that's going to create durable change?"

And I know, from what I've seen, that a lot of nonprofits don't know how to measure that, and they don't have a vehicle to do it and they don't know how to ask the questions necessarily. So, we worked with Category One Consulting in Omaha to develop a tool so that the nonprofits that we grant to from the Women's Fund for Southwest Iowa, they're able to measure their impact. They ask really dynamic questions. It's a tool that they can actually wipe clean and use for projects over and over again. They can even use it on the purpose of their entire organization, but it's a tool that we gave to them. We paid for it

all. We give it to them to use at their... to measure the impact of the grants that we give them, but also then to tell their story and create sustainability.

Lisa Bowen:

That's great. Measurement helps so much being able to tell your story and the impact you're having on the community.

Donna Dostal:

Yeah.

Lisa Bowen:

So, you've talked about lots and lots of great things. Is there a next big thing for the foundation that we don't know about yet?

Donna Dostal:

So, I think that the next big thing is, we're having some conversations with one of the changemaking organizations on our side of the river that really wants to help facilitate widespread community change and funnel projects in a way that makes sense for the community, and they continue to see, just like we do, similar requests. And so, how can we work with them to be the hub that helps to vet those requests and kind of extend their reach, but also help incentivize those communities to rally around really great projects and help them understand how to better solicit or to gather funds as well that are going to make those projects a reality?

And so, that, I think, is something that is very promising and it's coming down the pipe. It's a model that was actually designed by the Nebraska Community Foundation, Jeff Yost, and has been adopted on the east coast of Iowa by Nancy Van Milligen at the Community Foundation for Greater Dubuque. They're doing amazing things. They have sort of a matching endowment program that they're trying to institute, that they are. They're working with seven different communities that have already reached their goals and have already started and executed on amazing change projects in the eastern Iowa region. And so, we would like to be able to bring that sort of program to our southwest Iowa communities.

Lisa Bowen:

How exciting. Well, we at KidGlov love motivational quotes, and I'm sure you have a million of them in your back pocket. Can you share a few of your own words of wisdom with our listeners today?

Donna Dostal:

Oh my gosh, that's very thought-provoking, but I do have two in particular that I kind of live by, and one of them is, "Never be a finished product." And that was Dr. Joe Wydeven when I was at Bellevue University. He was one of the pioneers of cohort learning. So, if anybody on this podcast has ever heard of Bellevue University, they're the ones that... They pioneered accelerated learning cohorts, and Joe Wydeven was one of the pioneers of that model. And I was so fortunate to be able to have one of my bachelor's degrees. He was the professor through the whole thing. It was liberal arts and professional application, so it was basically business and liberal arts.

And he always said, "Never be a finished product. Always keep learning." And every time I'd see him until the day he died, he would just say that, "Hey, you're not finished, are you?" And I was like, "Nope, just getting started." So, I love that. And then the other one at the Community Foundation that we really sort

of live by and I think the hashtag that we use when we do social media, I think it's something that really does embody what we do at the Community Foundation and what community foundations across the country do is, "Be the change that you want to see in the world." You have to be that change. You have to live it. You have to see it.

And folks that can see the change happening, I do have to say that I have an amazing mentor friend, and a lot of the folks that are listening today would probably know her. Her name is Maria Valentin, and she used to be one of the leaders of diversity, equity, and inclusion at ConAgra Foods, and then now is... Actually, she's working for No More Empty Pots with Nancy Williams over there. And I remember when I was getting ready to move from Heartland Family Service, which... Or excuse me, from Bellevue University to Heartland Family Service, and I said, "Maria, should I do this? It's just such a huge thing, and I've been at Bellevue University for 13 years. Should I do this? And it's a huge leap." And she said...

Okay. This is really bad, but she knows I love to do an imitation of her because she's from Puerto Rico, but she's like, "Donna, when you go from the most genuine place in your heart, the universe will bless you." And so, that's Maria Valentin's words of wisdom. And every time anybody asks me, "What is it that you kind of drive, what you'd like to see?" Maria comes up, and so does Gandhi.

Lisa Bowen:

Awesome. Very, very great. Great people to follow, for sure.

Donna Dostal:

That's right.

Lisa Bowen:

So, you've shared so much great information today, and I'm sure that people will want to learn more. Can you tell us where we can go to learn more about the Community Foundation for Western Iowa?

Donna Dostal:

Absolutely. So, the main page for the Community Foundation for Western Iowa is www.givewesterniowa.org, and then shareiowa.org is for SHARE, and they are both linked. There's certainly a link to SHARE Iowa from our website. And then we're also on Facebook, Instagram, Twitter. I make posts periodically. I think I want KidGlov to help me with this though a little bit more on LinkedIn, because I feel like there's a lot of things that we should be sharing on LinkedIn. There's a lot of development and fundraising and nonprofit professionals, I think, that would benefit for some of the things that are happening at the Community Foundation.

And so, that's something, I think, that Lisa and I have more conversations to have. But yeah, we're on LinkedIn as well. And so, definitely follow us on Instagram, Facebook, LinkedIn. I think we have done a couple of TikTok things, but I'm not so sure. I like watching TikTok. I haven't done anything on TikTok yet.

Lisa Bowen:

Awesome. Awesome. Well, we at KidGlov love putting a megaphone in front of the people doing great work, and that would definitely be you, so we'd love to partner with you on that, Donna, for sure. So, as we wrap up our time here together today, what is the most important thing you want our listeners to remember or to know about the work you're doing at the foundation?

Donna Dostal:

I think the most important thing for folks to know about the Community Foundation for Western Iowa is that our strategic vision and our mission in this community is to build the culture of philanthropy that helps ensure long-term sustainability and builds communities that people want to live in, work in, play in, and grow. That's our mission. That's our goal. And that we are here to help connect the folks that really want to do the most good to the projects that are doing the good. So those are the two things that I think that we would really want folks to understand and that we're here to help you be philanthropic and here to help nonprofits do the work that they do.

Lisa Bowen:

Wonderful. Well, thank you so much for taking the time to be with us here today, Donna, and for sharing so much great information and all the great work that you're doing to help Western Iowa and beyond.

Donna Dostal:

Well, it's my pleasure, Lisa, and thank you for having me.

Lisa Bowen:

You bet.

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 at 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.