

## Agency for Change Podcast: Brianna Georgeson, Director of Marketing and Development, The Bridge Behavioral Health

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**Brianna Georgeson:** 0:00

Meet people where they're at and invite them along on the journey.

**Announcer:** 0:06

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 we call home.

**Lyn Wineman:** 0:35

Hey everyone, this is Lyn Wineman, president of KidGlov. Welcome back to another episode of the Agency for Change podcast. So today I am excited to welcome a guest from a fabulous organization who has the mission of offering safe passage from addiction to sober living. We are talking with Brianna Georgeson. She is the Director of Marketing and Development at The Bridge Behavioral Health, and she's going to share about the incredible work that this nationally accredited substance use and mental health treatment facility is doing. So one of the many things I love about The Bridge is they do offer compassionate and trauma-informed care to people who are often overlooked and that primarily means the uninsured and the underinsured and because of that, they genuinely are transforming lives. Brianna is one of the key leaders there that is helping to drive this change, and she has a great personal story to share as well. Brianna, I am eager to talk with you today to learn more about the great impact you are making. Welcome to the podcast.

**Brianna Georgeson:** 1:49

Thank you so much, Lyn. I'm so excited to be here.

**Lyn Wineman:** 1:52

I love talking with you and if you could start, because we have listeners from across the country tell us a bit about The Bridge Behavioral Health and its overall mission.

**Brianna Georgeson: 2:08**

Absolutely so. The Bridge Behavioral Health is located here in Lincoln, Nebraska. We are just south of the Haymarket, and we provide hope and a strong foundation for recovery through substance use treatment and behavioral health intervention. That's a really fancy way of saying we help those that are struggling at probably one of their lowest points in life.

**Lyn Wineman: 2:29**

Yeah, it's really important work, Brianna, and I'd love to dive into that a little bit more. I mean, I'd love to hear your perspective I definitely have my own feelings, but your perspective on why the work is so crucial for the community and I know you serve a number of clients who are either uninsured or underinsured. Like why is the service important? Why is it important to add to those or provide for those who maybe don't have it instantly covered?

**Brianna Georgeson: 3:03**

Absolutely so we lovingly say over here at The Bridge that we're like a safety net. We're a safety net as those folks are getting to a place that may look like rock bottom and for some of us, even further than rock bottom. There are lots of different treatment facilities in Lincoln and we are lucky in that way, and everyone plays a different role, and the role that The Bridge plays is kind of that end of the road. We've tried other places. Maybe this person has lost a lot of their support system and our philosophy here is we're always so glad you're here, we want to be here for you. We do. We play an important part at that. It's time it's really time to how do we get you back up on your feet? How do we figure out how to get these next steps going? And that can be a really hard thing to overcome, especially if you have lost all support, if you have no insurance, and you're thinking, gosh, how in the heck?

How am I going to pay for this? How? What's going to happen here? The beauty of The Bridge is you don't have to worry about that. We have staff going to work behind the scenes to make those things happen, so that those that come here can focus on themselves.

**Lyn Wineman: 4:17**

Yeah, I also. Just from your voice and your description and from what I know about The Bridge, not only does it seem like you have open doors, but it feels to me like you have open arms, like no judgment, you know, I mean, I just feel like addiction takes such a hold over people's lives and gets you in such a place that knowing that you can come to a place with no judgment is probably a big sense of relief.

**Brianna Georgeson: 4:47**

Absolutely. What we love to say here is that a good day means one day in recovery.

**Lyn Wineman: 4:54**

Yeah.

**Brianna Georgeson: 4:55**

We tend to see folks that maybe came for 24 hours and then a week and then hopefully we get to a residential state where they're with us for a month, and anytime someone walks back through our door, we're so glad to see you. We're so glad you're back. We're glad that you knew that we're here if life didn't go the way you thought it was going to go.

**Lyn Wineman: 5:16**

Yeah, that's awesome, Brianna, I'm really curious how did you personally get involved in this work and what drives your passion for the work?

**Brianna Georgeson: 5:28**

Absolutely I'm a very open book when it comes to this. I have my own struggle and my own story. And I love to share it because I think there's a lot of stigma around substance use and I like to break that stigma.

**Lyn Wineman: 5:49**

What a generous thing for you to do.

**Brianna Georgeson: 5:53**

So I spent many years in sales and working honestly, some high-pressure jobs and was quietly in the background doing a lot of drinking, and that drinking got to a point that was not manageable. I am very fortunate. I have a huge support system. I have a very loving, supportive husband, and so the day that I woke up and said enough is enough, I need to get on top of this. I had a flood of people that were like we're here to support you and help you overcome this. And so, as I started my sobriety journey almost six years ago, I just really started thinking about how do I pay that forward and it just so happened that, you know, a position came open at The Bridge at the right time and it was like this is a lovely way for me to help really pay that forward and to be able to share my own story with clients this can look different for lots of people, but the struggle is real, whether you're working a high-level job or you've been homeless. Addiction is very real, and so I feel very blessed that I get to come to work every day and help those on their journey.

**Lyn Wineman: 7:27**

That is so meaningful and I so appreciate you sharing. I think I've heard before that addiction and mental health are equal opportunity issues. They impact people from all walks of life, and I can see that a high pressure job. I also think that there's a lot of business situations where social drinking and sometimes social drinking to excess becomes a part of the role, which is, I think, difficult too. So I think, from a work and a leadership standpoint, breaking that cycle as well for people is an important thing to do. So, Brianna, I'd like to talk specifically more about The Bridge's services. Right, we know you're in addiction recovery, we know you're in behavioral health, but what specifically does that look like for your organization?

**Brianna Georgeson: 8:15**

Absolutely so we have four different levels of care, if you will. So starting with withdrawal, so those that are in that early stage really ready to give up whatever their substance of choice is, are able to come and stay with us. And we are a little bit unique in that we offer a level of care that's just a step down from the hospitals, and so we have three beds specifically dedicated to this and we have a nurse on staff 24-7. We also have an APRN that we're partnering with on a daily basis so we're able to step in and say you know, if you need a little bit of medication to help your withdrawal process because of, let's say, seizures or hallucinations throughout your withdrawal, we're able to help manage that.

We also have what we call social withdrawal, which are folks that need a safe, sober place to be but maybe don't need that level of medical attention through the process. So nine beds in total for withdrawal services. On the other side of this, we have nine beds that are for respite, and respite is an opportunity to be in safe, sober housing, and this could be for several different reasons. It could be you went through withdrawal with us and you're waiting for a bed, maybe at St Monica's or maybe even a bed here, but the bed isn't available yet. You are welcome to stay with us in a respite setting, knowing that it's safe, sober, especially if returning home is just not an option. There would be possibility for relapse. We also sometimes see this service used in partnership with other agencies, where another agency is saying this person is in their treatment program and they're struggling. We need to take a little break.

They can come over and stay with you for a week, and so this is a lovely way to just kind of give that time out but also keep them in more of a treatment setting. They still have access to our case managers and our therapists, they're still able to go to things like AA and NA meetings and group, but there's no structured recovery process happening. And so this is both of those services which are all in respite are open to men and women 19 and over, and then we have our residential treatment, and this is men 19 and over and 24 beds in total. This is when you think of really staying in a place and working a program. Those that are in this program are doing 42 hours of programming a week, so it is a full-time job, and we're asking them to just focus on themselves. How do you just dive in and take care of you during this time? Let's let go of all the other things. Don't worry about a job, no worrying about the family. Just how do we focus on you? And they are very lucky that they get their man, their therapists, right there with them or with them, and so they can pop over and have conversation with their therapists. Their therapists are also leading all of their groups, so they're getting to spend a lot of time in that capacity really working on how do I work through not only the actual substance use but the mental health side of this.

We know now through lots of studies that the two go hand in hand, and so let's, let's work on those things and see if we can overcome. And then the beauty of that is we're then working with the community to say, okay, what happens after residential treatment? Is it a halfway house situation? Is it we've done the work in like an apartment situation? But the beauty of that is that the case managers are really navigating that on a one-on-one basis and so that's all residential. And then we have our fourth piece, which is outpatient services. So we have a therapist on staff that will see those that are struggling specifically with substance use, and maybe you're in a place where residential treatment isn't needed, but they need someone to just help navigate. You know this has become a struggle for me, and how can I start using some tools to get past this? And so she's here full time to see anybody in the community that's really struggling with that and wants someone to talk with.

**Lyn Wineman: 12:42**

Amazing, Brianna, those four services withdrawal, respite, residential and outpatient seem so thoughtfully put together. This seems like a good point to ask you, you know, let's say somebody who's listening, is struggling and wants to reach out to you what's the best way to do it? Do you need a doctor's referral? Can you just call? Can you just email? Do you just walk in? How do people receive your services?

**Brianna Georgeson: 13:19**

Really, all of the above. So we are a 24/7 facility, meaning if at 2 AM, you come to the conclusion that you know what, it's time for me to get help, you are welcome to walk in our door. As long as there's a bed available, we will help you out. Oftentime we will see individuals, whether it's with family members or on their own call we can do kind of a prescreen over the phone. Doctor's notes, though, are not a mandate. Referral is not a necessity to receive care from our facility.

**Lyn Wineman: 13:54**

Yeah, ok, so middle of the night, you've hit the wall, they can call or come into The Bridge. That's amazing. Brianna, I know that we have a lot of people, a lot of great listeners for the Agency for Change podcast, who like to help. They're involved, they like to help. I know that you're in the midst and I should say we're recording this in July of 2024. So if you're listening to this after that, you may not still be in the midst of this, but you have the Summer Supply Drive going on and I know that's important to you. Can you tell us more about it and how people can get involved?

**Brianna Georgeson: 14:33**

Yes, so the Summer Supply Drive is specifically looking for items that we need getting through the summer months, oftentimes because we're seeing folks that are primarily uninsured or underinsured. It also means they walk in with maybe just the shirt on their back, and so we are providing folks oftentimes with clothes clothing basic, you know hygiene products, those that are in residential treatment. We're also doing things like rec and getting slowly getting back out into the community and doing some things, practicing, doing these things, sober, yeah and so we rely heavily and we are so lucky, but we rely heavily on the community to help out with some of these items. So, specifically with Summer Supply Drive, we're looking for men's deodorant, men's underwear. We do always ask that underwear is new and not used, but as far as our other clothing, we also will take gently used. So things like gym shorts, running shoes, you know, just things that are going to help with these summer months when it's hot and also keep those that are here in treatment really comfortable.

**Lyn Wineman: 15:44**

Yeah, Brianna, thank you for sharing that and I just want to tell you an appreciation for you being on the podcast. KidGlov is going to be sending a care package for the Summer Supply Drive and we're honored to be able to help out in that way. But I also imagine because a lot of people listen to podcasts later, after they're launched I imagine if somebody is listening to this and it feels the target, their heartstrings, to get involved, I imagine those are things that you need all year round: men's new underwear, deodorant, socks, just some of those basic supplies.

**Brianna Georgeson: 16:23**

Yes, we. You know, our hot items are really men's underwear and men's sweatpants.

**Lyn Wineman: 16:29**

So anytime those would be, you would be open to getting receiving those at any time. So, Brianna, let's talk a little bit more about other initiatives. I know you have a dynamic organization. What things are on the horizon that you're excited about?

**Brianna Georgeson: 16:49**

Well, The Bridge is in a very interesting, fun time in that we are a three-story building and our first floor was vacated. We had a longtime tenant that vacated in the spring and so it opened us up as a nonprofit to what do we do with this space? And you know the development person in me gets really excited for initiatives like this. You know just, oh gosh, what can we dream up, and then where do we go out and make these things happen? So we are looking to expand services into that first floor. We've been working really closely with the Lincoln Police Department, with Region 5, with several of our actually our partners in the community to look at homeless outreach.

So there is a segment of the population that is just very difficult to reach in Lincoln and specifically in the downtown area. So we are in the very early planning stages of how do we get in front of those folks and just provide them a meal and maybe start a conversation. And so I am really excited as this starts to kind of unfold and what's going to come with it, because again, these are folks that that we really do regularly serve, but if they're on the chronic homeless side, often they're at the point of I don't want anyone's help, but we're talking about things like how do we just get you a dentist?

When was the last time someone took a peek at your teeth. Can we get you a dentist to see? Can a doctor take a look at you and make sure that just everything is okay? And so you know those are kind of long-term where we want to head. But step one is can we feed you a hot meal and just have a conversation?

**Lyn Wineman: 18:44**

Yeah, yeah, you know, your location seems so ideal for that, as well as just the pervasive kind of open arms attitude that you present. I think that's so lovely and such a great way to help people and the community and fulfill the mission of The Bridge. So congratulations on that. So for our listeners who would like to learn more we talked about they can call you, they can email you. What's the best way for them to get information about The Bridge for behavioral health?

**Brianna Georgeson: 19:21**

I would say start with the website [thebridgenebraska.org](http://thebridgenebraska.org), and from there it can take you down several different areas. So, specifically about our services, there's things like Amazon wishlists. We keep those updated, based on current needs, and so you could check things out there. If you're someone who is called to donate financially, you can donate through the website, and so that's really a great way to start. You can also follow us. We're on social media. I try to keep us updated on the things happening here and there, and so that's an easy way to kind of get a glimpse of what's going on in the building. You're also always welcome to call over here and ask questions.

**Lyn Wineman: 20:05**

Fantastic, Brianna. We'll make sure. For anyone who maybe didn't get all of those addresses. We'll make sure to have them linked in the show notes on the KidGlov website too, so there'll be easy access there as well. Brianna, I'm loving this conversation that we're having, and one of the things I feel very grateful for is on this podcast. I get to talk with a lot of interesting and passionate people, and I love motivational quotes. I collect quotes, like other people collect other things, but I collect quotes. I'd love to get one from you, a motivational quote from Brianna George of The Bridge.

**Brianna Georgeson: 20:47**

My quote is "Meet people where they're at and invite them along on the journey."

**Lyn Wineman: 20:53**

Oh, I love that, just like the whole theme of this to have open arms and bring people in. Your quote exemplifies that as well, and I would expect nothing less, Brianna, as we wrap up this time together, I'd like to end with what is the most important thing you would like Agency for Change listeners to remember about the work that you're doing at The Bridge.

**Brianna Georgeson: 21:21**

You know, we are all human. We're just all human, and so I think all of us have had tough times in our lives, and some of those look different than others, but the work that The Bridge gets to do is when people are usually in their toughest moments.

And so I just I appreciate that I was able to share a little bit about what we get to do and hopefully we can continue to just help those folks that are really struggling. Get to the other side.

**Lyn Wineman: 21:56**

Oh, Brianna, that's amazing. You hit me in the feels with that one, so I just want to say thank you for taking some time out for us today. I fully believe the world needs more people like you, Brianna, and more organizations like The Bridge, so thank you so much for sharing with us today.

**Announcer: 22:21**

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.