

## Agency for Change Podcast: Tegan Reed, Executive Director, Nebraska Diaper Bank

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**Tegan Reed:** 0:01

Each person holds the power to do good. Embrace that journey.

**Announcer:** 0:08

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:** 0:32

Hey everyone, this is Lyn Wineman. Welcome to another episode of the Agency for Change podcast. So I want you to take a moment with me today. Close your eyes and imagine you're a young mother. You're struggling to afford the essentials for your newborn. You are feeling the weight of every single decision, every single penny spent. Then enter the Nebraska Diaper Bank, the hero in this story, a beacon of hope, providing diapers through social service agencies, ensuring that babies remain happy, healthy, clean and dry. Don't you love a story with a happy ending? Today, I get to talk with Tegan Reed, the Executive director of the Nebraska Diaper Bank. Tegan leads with a deep passion for addressing diaper need, which is a critical but often overlooked issue. The Nebraska Diaper Bank has become a lifeline for countless families across the whole state, offering not just diapers but, along with them, dignity and support. Tegan, I can't wait to hear more about your story. Welcome to the podcast. I'd love to have you start by telling us more about Nebraska Diaper Bank and, honestly, tell us a little bit about how it got started as well.

**Tegan Reed:** 2:04

So the idea of our organization really started with a question from the pastor at my church. He asked a group of us if our doors closed tomorrow, would our community miss that? We love people inside our walls really well, but what about our neighborhood? That set my heart on fire and I just kind of needed to know more about what he was thinking. And it turned out the pastor at our church was really interested in food insecurity and the pastor at our sister church was really interested in diaper need and diaper banking and he had recently read an article about a diaper bank and it was really a new idea at the time. So I had the opportunity to do a community needs assessment where we were and figure out

what the community needed. And at the time we were 120th and center at the time and there really weren't any food pantries in that area and there were no organizations in Omaha that were truly addressing diaper need.

And so we realized like this unique opportunity to provide diapers and do something no other organization was doing

**Lyn Wineman: 3:00**

yeah, Tegan, I cannot imagine how desperate it feels to be a young mom who doesn't have diapers, like that is the most basic thing to take care of your baby, so what a great thing that you're doing.

**Tegan Reed: 3:16**

Thank you, it really. It's exactly that. You know, we serve families face to face and we saw the desperation for diapers in the families, in the moms, and my favorite thing at that time was really to hold the babies, to meet the families and it became really increasingly clear to us that if we wanted to end diaper need and help more families, we had to adopt a diaper bank model. So we actually switched how we were serving and postured ourselves to fill that gap in Omaha and then eventually, through Nebraska and in 2019, we became a diaper bank and then in 2022, we rebranded to Nebraska Diaper Bank, really adopting a different mission, vision and values that was focused solely on ending diaper need.

**Lyn Wineman: 3:57**

That's amazing, you know all right, I mean, we've kind of talked about it like one mom at a time and imagined what it would be like to not have the diapers. But can you tell us more, because I'm sure this came up in your research? Why is this specifically such an important issue for families and for communities?

**Tegan Reed: 4:21**

Yeah. So we know that diaper need is a thing, and it's something that many people don't recognize as an issue or just hasn't been talked about as much or even realized. So if a family's food insecure and they have a diaper wearing child, they're also in diaper need. So one in three families in our state in Nebraska struggle to afford enough clean diapers for their children to keep them happy, healthy, safe and clean. And that's what diaper need is is the lack of a sufficient supply of diapers to keep them clean, and so in Nebraska there's over 30,000 babies who struggle with this.

**Lyn Wineman: 4:56**

Wow.

**Tegan Reed: 4:57**

And there are no federal safety net programs. So Medicaid, SNAP, WIC they don't cover the cost of diapers and, again, a lot of folks don't know that. So this cost is solely on those families who are already trying to make ends meet.

**Lyn Wineman:** 5:10

Wow, that is an astounding figure. One in three families struggles with this, and there are 30,000 babies in the state of Nebraska, so it's pretty easy to do the math on what the need is there. That's wow, that's just astounding. You've just floored me there, Tegan, with that information. So how do you do let this work? Like, what are some of the key initiatives and programs that you have? How do you get the diapers? How do you get the diapers to people? I'm just really curious how it all works.

**Tegan Reed:** 5:50

Nonprofits, who are already doing great work. Currently we have 36 partners with 70 locations across the state and we give 290,000 diapers each month to 4,500 babies. So that's more than a semi-truckload of diapers every single month that we're giving across our state.

**Lyn Wineman:** 6:08

Wow, that's amazing. So I'd love to hear a success story. Tegan, you know that really highlights this impact.

**Tegan Reed:** 6:18

Yeah, I would say for us. We do an impact survey every year just to see how we're meeting the needs of our families, and we were able to see one of those surveys, and a mom had left her phone number on it for us and we called her and she said that she had just left a domestic violence situation and she took her kids with nothing but the clothes on their backs. She had never had to ask for help until then, but was in need of assistance, and so she visited our partner agency to get food and then they offered her diapers for her youngest. Just overcome with relief, she said when we talked to her, someone had hope for me and now I have hope for myself. And, man, that just fits you. And she told us you know, after everything I've gone through, I keep expecting bad things, and I didn't expect the amount of diapers and the good that I was able to receive. So just really, so much gratitude for moms when we're able to help them meet that very basic and very simple need for their babies.

**Lyn Wineman:** 7:30

And I love what she said. Someone had hope for me and now I have hope for myself. Those words are just really, really powerful, and I'm sure over the last decade you've seen and heard a lot of similar stories, but you've been at this for 10 years. I'm really curious what are some of the milestones and achievements you're most proud of in the last decade for the Nebraska Diaper Bank?

**Tegan Reed:** 8:08

Really hard to choose a few, but I would say I'm proud of us for being flexible and adaptable when we understood what the need was in our city and in our state to change our model, to change our

organizational focus, just to continuously like solely focus on diaper needs so that we could really make a huge impact in that need in our community. And then really right beside that is because we chose to do that, we've had exponential growth over the last few years that we most likely wouldn't have had if our attention was continuing to be split between different programming. So just three years ago, in 2021, we gave 592,000 diapers that year, which is fantastic. This year we expect to give 5 million.

**Lyn Wineman:** 8:49

Wow so many diapers.

**Tegan Reed:** 8:50

Yeah so this year we expect to give 3.5 million diapers. So it's a huge growth and it really goes to the ability to be able to work with other nonprofits and more efficiently and effectively meet the needs of families. You know, I would say we're also really proud that that impact survey that I talked about a minute ago, with the story we asked is how diapers help them. You know such a simple thing, but how does that help you? And this year, 82% a family said that their babies were happier, healthier and were sleeping better. So if you had an infant, you know what it's like when they're not sleeping.

**Lyn Wineman:** 9:33

It's the worst. It's the worst. And when your baby cries, when a baby cries, you just feel so helpless. You just want to help.

**Tegan Reed:** 9:45

Yeah, and 65% said that receiving diapers reduce their stress, which is and help them less feel less frustrated. So it goes right into that. You know you, you do feel so helpless when you can't meet those needs. So we're really proud of that. We're proud to help families stay in work or in school and earn their full income potential, because you have to take diapers to daycare if you're going to drop off your baby. So just something so simple makes such a big impact.

**Lyn Wineman:** 10:10

Tegan, I think the state is very lucky to have you and to have this work. And one of my favorite things in our notes for preparing for today's conversation is you have a fundraiser coming up called Music to their Rears. That is so cute. Music to their Rears. Sounds really intriguing. Can you tell us more about the event? And I should mention this is airing in September of 2024. So we're talking about an event that's in September of 2024. But share more about the event, what it's going to be like and how people can get involved.

**Tegan Reed:** 10:52

Yeah, we love this event. This will be our third year for the event. We're doing it a little bit differently this year, typically for the musical acts. We usually have three musical acts that reflect some of the cultures that we serve, and so it's a really neat night. And this year, since it's our 10th anniversary, we're going to have a decade party, so the music is going to be surrounding the different decades.

**Lyn Wineman:** 11:17

Oh, amazing.

**Tegan Reed:** 11:18

Yes, yeah, it's, it's fun. It's a really beautiful night to reflect upon what we're doing and to continue to look forward toward the future and see where we get to go and to have the support of people to be able to do that.

**Lyn Wineman:** 11:33

That's great. So how do people get tickets, Tegan? Do they buy tickets in advance? Do they buy them at the door? How does that all work?

**Tegan Reed:** 11:41

Yes, tickets will go on sale. They'll be on sale now. You can find them on our website at [nebraskadiaperbank.org](http://nebraskadiaperbank.org).

**Lyn Wineman:** 11:50

That's great. You know, this is probably also a good time for us to ask Tegan for people who maybe want to make a donation or just find out more about what you're doing, maybe want to connect to find out about the service, is the website the best place to go? Are there other places people can connect with you?

**Tegan Reed:** 12:06

Yeah, absolutely, our website is always a great place to go just to poke around and see what we do. We also have Instagram, Facebook, and LinkedIn, so those are other places that you can see what we're up to.

**Lyn Wineman:** 12:17

Fantastic. We'll make sure for everyone listening that we have links to all of those sources in the show notes on the KidGlov website as well, so you can click in and check it out and buy tickets to Music to their Rears, which sounds like so much fun. So, Tegan, I'm really curious what advice do you have, then, for individuals or organizations that are looking to support causes like diaper need in their own communities?

**Tegan Reed:** 12:47

I mean specifically for diaper need, find your diaper bank, the diaper bank near you. Diaper drives are fantastic. Volunteer. Find something that you love and volunteer with that organization. We have great volunteer opportunities at Nebraska Diaper Bank as well. But if you're looking to support a cause, learn more and go talk to the organization and just do the next thing to become more informed and to help.

**Lyn Wineman:** 13:12

That is great advice. I love that too. Just do the next thing right. You don't have to do it all, you don't have to figure it all out, but do the next thing, get in motion. And that leads me to one of my favorite questions, Tegan, I have asked this question on every single podcast recording for Agency for Change, but I am really lucky that I get to speak with inspiring people who are doing great things like you. I'd love to have a Tegan Reed original quote to inspire our listeners.

**Tegan Reed:** 13:46

I would just say each person holds the power to do good. Embrace that journey.

**Lyn Wineman:** 13:52

Wow, very well said. Each person holds the power to do good. Embrace that journey. Very nice, Tegan. That goes really nicely with your advice that you just gave us as well to just do the next thing, get started, do the next thing thing, embrace it. I love all of that. Tegan, I have loved this conversation today. As we wrap up our time together, what is the most important thing you would like our listeners to remember about the work that you're doing?

**Tegan Reed:** 14:26

All babies deserve clean diapers and we're here to change lives through a simple need.

**Lyn Wineman:** 14:34

That is so great. Tegan, thank you for taking time today. I fully believe the world needs more people like you, more organizations like the Nebraska Diaper Bank. Thank you for taking time to share with us today.

**Announcer:** 14:55

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