

## Agency for Change Podcast: Tracy Edgerton, President & CEO, Lincoln Community Foundation

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**Tracy Edgerton: 0:01**

There are no philanthropic emergencies, and so we need to slow down, we need to listen and we need to connect.

**Announcer: 0:13**

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: 0:37**

Hey everyone, Welcome back to the Agency for Change podcast. I'm Lyn Wineman, President and Chief Strategist at KidGlov, and today I am talking with Tracy Edgerton, the new President and CEO of the Lincoln Community Foundation. We're going to chat about her fresh perspective in the role, the impact of Give to Lincoln Day and how initiatives like Prosper Lincoln are helping build a stronger community. Tracy, welcome to the podcast.

**Tracy Edgerton: 1:06**

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

**Lyn Wineman: 1:10**

I'm always excited to talk to you, Tracy, and I know we have listeners from across the country, but if you're in Lincoln, Nebraska, I'm just feeling so much good energy coming out of Lincoln Community Foundation right now. I'd love to just have you start by telling us more about the foundation.

**Tracy Edgerton: 1:30**

Well, it's really an exciting time for us. We have transitioned to my leadership just in the last eight months.

**Lyn Wineman: 1:38**

Congratulations, by the way, the new president and CEO of the Lincoln Community Foundation, and very well deserved.

**Tracy Edgerton: 1:47**

Thank you. Thank you. Well, it's been a journey, and I've been with the Community Foundation now for nearly 10 years, but certainly the history of the organization predates that by quite some time. We were first established in 1955. Our first grant that we were ever able to make into the community was for a projector out at Pinewood Bowl.

**Lyn Wineman: 2:12**

Oh, my goodness, I love that. That's fantastic. Tracy, I know that even though you've been with the Community Foundation for 10 years now and that's quite some time you've even been very involved in this community for even longer. I'm really curious what drives your passion for building community and fostering philanthropy?

**Tracy Edgerton: 2:42**

My husband and I came to Lincoln from different communities about 25 years ago and because neither of us were from here, it was an intentional decision to come to this and as a result of that and you know, we're about to launch our youngest kiddo out the door, and we're about to launch our youngest kiddo out the door as he graduates from high school. And you know, it has given us a time to reflect on what this community means to us. And, after that challenge of moving forward, from figuring out that this community really embraces families yes, in such an intentional way, comforting, nurturing way and now it really gives us a better platform from which to understand how special Lincoln is. And the Community Foundation is just such a perfect place to use what we have been given to give back to this community and to make sure that all of our neighbors, all of our fellow Lincolniters have the opportunity to thrive here. And that's really what the Community Foundation is all about, and I'm just grateful to be part of it.

**Lyn Wineman: 4:00**

Absolutely All right. So, Tracy, if I understood that right, you're about to become an empty nester, is that true? All right, I will give you some unsolicited advice, because I've been an empty nester for about nine years and for a minute it's sad, right, for a minute it's kind of sad and lonely. But wow, it's a great time to kind of rediscover things in the community that maybe you haven't had a chance to, because raising kids takes a lot of time and I know you're very involved in their lives and you still will be as they go on to their next chapter. But I think that's something my husband, Neil, and I have found is like time to explore different restaurants or different community activities or different nonprofits, and so it is kind of a really fun time to find yourself and that also makes you forget a little bit that that you don't have those kids in the house that were taking up so much time as well.

**Tracy Edgerton: 5:03**

I appreciate that, Lyn. It really is a time of new adventures for everybody, right?

**Lyn Wineman: 5:08**

Absolutely New adventures, for sure. So, Tracy, I know one of the big activities the foundation does, that you've been doing for a long time, that has raised a lot of money, that does a lot of good, is Give to Lincoln Day, and so we are recording this episode to air in April of 2025. Give to Lincoln Day is on May 29th of 2025, I believe. Can you tell us more about the event and what makes it so special?

**Tracy Edgerton:** 5:40

Oh goodness. Well, it's the community, it's the nonprofits that have really rallied around this opportunity to tell their story in a new way. That makes it so special. This will be the 14th year.

**Lyn Wineman:** 5:55

I can't believe 14 years. That's amazing. Have you tallied up how much money you've raised in the previous years? Let's hear it. I know it's a big number.

**Tracy Edgerton:** 6:04

It is a big number. So to date we've raised more than \$65 million for nonprofits here in Lincoln.

**Lyn Wineman:** 6:13

\$65 million. That is a lot of impact and I can't wait to see what you do this year.

**Tracy Edgerton:** 6:18

And just last year we raised \$8.5 million. Gosh 450 participating nonprofits, and that represents. What's so great about it, though, is just that it's the collective effort, the energy that comes, that came from nearly twenty five thousand donations.

**Lyn Wineman:** 6:40

Oh, twenty five thousand donations. I know it's always fun. I always like to participate on Give to Lincoln Day. It feels a little bit like Christmas to me because I always have my list, right. Like, I have my list and I start down the list and then usually by the end of the day I've gotten an email or a social media post or maybe even a phone call from a nonprofit that for some reason wasn't on my original list and it's like, okay, yes, let's add them too, right? Kind of like that bonus Christmas gift you slide under the tree that you weren't expecting to.

**Tracy Edgerton:** 7:16

Well, I think that I mean the goal of Give to Lincoln Day, there really are three different parts of it. The first part is to introduce new donors to nonprofits they may not know about and it provides such a great platform for information and exploration and getting to know other organizations that are here and serving and providing incredible value in our community. It also allows nonprofits to tell their story, bring new people into the fold, while just shining a spotlight on what charitable giving does and the impact we can have in the community.

**Lyn Wineman: 7:54**

That's fantastic. Tracy, I'm going to give you a big compliment here, because KidGlov gets to work with nonprofits from across the country. We've supported Giving Days in other states and I've got to say I think Give to Lincoln Day is one of the best, because it's really well run, you communicate well with the nonprofits, your online site is very easy to use and you also have a very generous match. I mean, not all giving days have a match, which means that the nonprofits can go out there and raise funds but then get that extra bonus their percentage of the match on top of it.

**Tracy Edgerton: 8:57**

It's one of the reason our giving days works so well. Both the community foundation and the really generous individuals that provide support for our match have rallied around this and are looking forward to celebrating our community through the match fund. There are scores of examples of communities across the country that have sunsetted these days. There just wasn't enough interest, there wasn't enough bang for the buck. But, because we are leveraging everyone's support by doing that active fundraising for the Match Fund. Our community has simply embraced it and upheld it and it continues to set records and provide, more importantly provide, incredible support for nonprofits doing great work.

**Lyn Wineman: 9:30**

Well, I hope that anyone who's listening will help us set another record this year. So if somebody wants to find out more about Give to Lincoln Day, start making their list. I know you can even donate early not this early on in early April, but I know you can donate early. Can you just give us some more information on how to get connected with Give to Lincoln Day?

**Tracy Edgerton: 9:53**

Absolutely, it is [givetolincoln.com](http://givetolincoln.com).

And it really is available nearly the entire month of May. You can give online, beginning on May 1st and running through the day of the event on May 29th. We encourage folks to give online. You'll find all the information about all the nonprofits participating. There are a lot of incentives that various nonprofits are putting out there in the community to engage with folks and then on the day, just make sure that you're monitoring that website because it's a bit of a friendly competition to see who shows up on that leaderboard and encourage their supporters to step up and help them.

**Lyn Wineman: 10:40**

I have to admit I will check in on that leaderboard probably once an hour on that day. It's always fun to watch.

Well, thank you for all the good work there. On behalf of all the nonprofits I've been talking to in Lincoln, they're very excited about Give to Lincoln Day coming up and the support that you have given them in that as well. Tracy, I want to talk about another exciting program, something that makes me proud to

live in Lincoln, Nebraska, and that is a program that the foundation has sponsored and been working on for years called Prosper Lincoln. Can you tell us more about Prosper Lincoln?

**Tracy Edgerton: 11:21**

Sure, my pleasure. You know, the role of a community foundation has really shifted in the last 15, 20 years really across the country, but including here in Lincoln, and we really kind of moved from being just the implementation of the vision of individual donors to being one of more of a convener, someone who brings folks together not only philanthropists but also community leaders so that we can talk about really big game changing initiatives and we can talk about what's going well in our community but where there might be some opportunities and some need to explore change. The way we have positioned that is by using data to explain opportunities and the situations of our neighbors and other Lincolniters. By embracing and looking at the data on what's going well in our community and what needs to perhaps change to support it even better. The Lincoln Vital Signs data that began being available in 2014. That data allowed us to lean in and look differently at our community and through that data, we were able to bring folks together and develop a community agenda, which we've called Prosper Lincoln.

**Lyn Wineman: 12:47**

Awesome, awesome, you know that's gotta be, I remember in the beginning, the first year, 2014, when that vital signs report came out and it was. It was really eye-opening to see the data. But how great is it now to be going into the 11th year, right, more than a decade of data. I'm curious what are some of the ways Prosper Lincoln has made a difference over this time?

**Tracy Edgerton: 13:24**

So the vision of Prosper Lincoln is really about prosperity for all Lincolniters, meaning a stronger and growing community where everyone has the opportunity to reach their full potential.

And really the way to do that is to look at one way that we've been able to do that is by focusing on early childhood, and not just education, but really the whole, the whole being of the child. And how can we embrace our youngest residents and help them have the full potential, reach their full potential. And early on we adapted early childhood education as one of those components of the community agenda, emphasizing the need not only for quality child care but also affordable child care and really finding ways to incentivize quality and provide opportunities to support tuition assistance for families that fall in the gap, those families that make too much money to receive a subsidy from the state but not enough to really be able to afford that quality. Their families can't afford that quality educational experience and that's one way that we've been highlighting the opportunities and by bringing those forward, our Lincoln folks have really stepped up.

**Lyn Wineman: 14:43**

Yeah, you know, I just saw a new report of another large business in Lincoln that was providing their own early childhood program for their employees and I think to me I know that was part of the initiative early on with Prosper Lincoln to have those conversations with employers because it's so important for families, it's so important for the formative years for children, but it's also important to the workforce in Lincoln, Nebraska, in a place that typically has very low unemployment. When you don't have

dependable, reliable and affordable child care, it's very difficult to be a productive member of the workforce.

**Tracy Edgerton: 15:28**

From the very beginning our Lincoln Littles, which is what we've called our early childhood component of Prosper, has focused on engaging business in those solutions, because Lincoln does have a greater percentage of both parents are working in the workforce than is the national average and as a result that means child care is even more important for those families and we can all be, I think it's just makes good sense and businesses understand that if their employees have quality childcare, that they can be assured that their children are receiving the care that they need they're going to be more productive employees.

**Lyn Wineman: 16:10**

Yep, I think I even heard you reference one of those vital science data points just a minute ago too, about you know Lincoln having a lot of dual income parents and that being important to recognize for our community. So, as you look at these programs together two really great programs how does Give to Lincoln Day and Prosper Lincoln, how do those two work together to really support the community?

**Tracy Edgerton: 16:40**

You know, in some ways they're two sides of one coin. You know, Give to Lincoln Day is a way to highlight our nonprofit community organizations that are working hard every day to help Lincolniters thrive, in whatever their particular mission might be. By participating in Give to Lincoln Day, individual folks, everyone can be a philanthropist, Everyone can show by their dollars what's important to them and reflect those values and help those organizations achieve their goals. You know, the flip side of that is that Prosper Lincoln is using data to understand what those challenges and opportunities are and it's bringing folks together to create positive change, to have difficult conversations. What's going well and what are the opportunities to do even better, and how do we look at those systems that might make it really difficult for folks to get to be prosperous in their own lives?

**Lyn Wineman: 17:46**

Yeah, yeah, I love that. It seems like a very strategic combination to support the community. So, Tracy, I know you've only been in this role as CEO and president for less than a year, but I'm really curious, you've got a lot of really great things going on, but what's in the future? What's coming up in the future for Lincoln Community Foundation?

**Tracy Edgerton: 18:12**

Well, later this month actually, it really builds on some of the things that we've talked about, but we do have a launch event of the next iteration of Prosper Lincoln. That will happen on April 23rd at Innovation Campus. It will be really exciting, we have a full lineup of ways to show the progress of where we've come to date and where we think that we're headed moving forward. The specific areas of housing making sure that all residents live in quality housing they can afford. Continuing to lean in on early childhood and ensuring that all children are flourishing socially, emotionally, physically and

educationally, and then, um, also talking more about human connection. That all people are thriving through community engagement and social connections.

**Lyn Wineman:** 19:32

Right the epidemic of loneliness, right is. It's a real thing, I think, spreading across all generations, so that human connection is really important.

**Tracy Edgerton:** 19:35

It is indeed I mean there's more research along those lines all the time and really finding ways that we can connect beyond our screens that we can truly reach our utmost potential.

**Lyn Wineman:** 19:52

That's fantastic. So, Tracy, you gave us the Give to Lincoln Day website, but I'm curious anybody who wants to go online and find out more about this Prosper Lincoln event that's coming up on April 23rd, or just anything else that we've talked about what's the best way for them to find more information?

**Tracy Edgerton:** 20:15

Sure, we certainly have our own platform from which we share information at lcf.org, and there you'll find more about our work in the Prosper Lincoln area, but certainly beyond that. We continue to partner with folks in our community to accomplish their own personal charitable goals, find out what their passions are and help them explore how to make the most of the money that's in a way that's meaningful to them.

And we also are continuing to conduct informed and transformational grant making you know supporting the resources that have been entrusted to us and making sure that they're being used in a judicious manner. So all of that work is described more accurately on our website.

**Lyn Wineman:** 21:04

I love that LCF.org, and we'll get both of those websites in the show notes on the KidGlov website as well. All right, Tracy, I want to ask you my favorite question next and I think I mentioned to you, your two predecessors, Barbara Bartle and Alec Gorynski, were on the podcast, so I'm so excited to have you on the podcast, but I am inspired by motivational quotes and I would like a Tracy Edgerton original quote to inspire our listeners.

**Tracy Edgerton:** 21:38

Well, my, the folks, my colleagues, would laugh that I mentioned a particular quote, because I've always said it with just a touch of I don't know if sarcasm is the right word, but I do think that we get caught up in the wheel of busyness sometimes, and so every once in a while, I will just throw out in a meeting there are no philanthropic emergencies, and so we need to slow down, we need to listen and we need to connect.

**Lyn Wineman: 22:13**

Wow, there are no philanthropic emergencies, so we need to slow down, listen and connect. That is, I think, that's great advice for everyone, right? It is so easy to get your calendar filled up, your to-do list filled up, your everything filled up, and sometimes just taking that moment to breathe and listen and realize what's going on, I think that's such great advice. Thank you for that. Tracy, as we wrap up this great conversation, I'd like to end with one more question, and that is what is the most important thing you would like our listeners to remember about the work that you're doing.

**Tracy Edgerton: 23:02**

Well, despite the challenges of the moment, I do think that Lincoln Community Foundation really wants to stand for the idea that we can all come together. We can work together to make our communities stronger, more resilient and more supportive of one another.

I mean we are here as a trusted community partner facilitating positive change for the common good. I mean that's bottom line what we do every day and it's easy to get caught up in the rhetoric of the moment, but we really just want to work with other people, other folks who care about this place, to build a community where everyone has opportunity, where everyone is thriving and everyone can be part of the solution.

**Lyn Wineman: 23:52**

Tracy, that's just beautiful, and I even love the way that you said facilitating change for common good. I think you're right. It's so easy, just like it's easy to get caught up in the wheel of busyness. Sometimes it's easy to get caught up in the pit of despair, right, and it's hard to do good work from the pit of despair, and so really focusing on the common good and helping people thrive, I think, is such a great focus. So thank you for that. Tracy, I just want to say I fully believe the world needs more people like you, more organizations like Lincoln Community Foundation. Thank you for joining us today on the podcast.

**Tracy Edgerton: 24:35**

Really been a pleasure. Thank you, Lyn.

**Announcer: 24:39**

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