

# The *Ripple* Effect

*How do you affect real change?  
Visionary Lynn Price fuels a need  
and ignites a bonfire*

BY BARBARA MCNICHOL

**W**hen Lynn Price was eight, she learned her parents were really her foster parents. The news created an unending and sometimes confusing series of changes, getting to know her birth parents and the older sister she never knew existed. That profound childhood experience also sparked a lifelong commitment from Lynn to improve the lives of kids in foster care.

Today, she draws from her career in the burgeoning cable TV industry, a consulting business and a non-profit organization called Camp To Belong to inspire others to set a bonfire for change. Not just change for change's sake but, by example, to envision, provoke, promote and accomplish *real* change that makes an immediate and long-term difference in others' lives.

## **The Camp To Belong Spark**

Like rubbing together two sticks at a campfire, two incidents fueled Lynn's desire to ignite change. In 1995, she often volunteered at Child Haven—a place for young kids waiting for placements into foster homes or back into their own homes when deemed safe. During a break one day, she sat down near a shy little girl at an outdoor table.

"Hello, sweetheart," Lynn said, trying to spark a conversation with her. No response. Instead, the girl stared silently across the courtyard at a slightly older boy. Curious, Lynn asked, "Who is he?" "My big brother," the little girl whispered back.

Reflexively, Lynn wanted to bring him to his sister but couldn't because Child Haven required its residents to stay at their own cottages.

"That's exactly when I relived the pain of being apart from my sister, Andi, during our childhood. I knew I had to do something so this sister and brother didn't have to be separated like we were for our entire childhood," Lynn explains.

Shortly after, Lynn overheard two women talk about Camp Care-A-Lot, two camps in Central Illinois for kids from low-income families. "That's it! Camp To Belong—a camp that brings together siblings who get separated through foster care."

After identifying a need for change, then envisioning a solution, Lynn exploded into action. Only three months later, she and 20 passionate volunteers welcomed 32 siblings from foster homes to the first Camp To Belong at the University of Las Vegas. They were eager to give these young boys and girls in foster care memories of a lifetime—if only for one week.



***“Speakers already own ripples of influence that can extend well beyond their current marketplace into the world at large.”***

Photography by Eric Weber

## FUEL A VISION

**H**ow can you create your own vision for change? “Don’t take the back seat; grab the wheel,” Lynn says. She also offers this advice:

- **Don’t start with a big plan** for changing the whole world; start with what’s important to you right now. For me, I didn’t want kids to miss sharing their childhoods with their siblings like my sister Andi and I did.
- **Identify your “cringe” factors** to pinpoint where change is seriously needed. Ask, “What’s happening in my world arena that makes me cringe?” For me, keeping siblings apart made my heart bleed.
- **Don’t get hung up on research** and analysis. Instead of thinking through and measuring everything before taking action, go out and demonstrate your idea. Receiving feedback for something tangible is more meaningful than words on paper.
- **Find out what you’re best at**, especially if you have a window of opportunity to experiment with various options. Try several ideas and notice how you feel about continuing them. Trust your intuition.
- **By taking action, you’ll meet people** you can learn from and collaborate with. What do you ever gain by not including others in your vision? That’s how you’ll enlarge your territory of contacts and influence. Then watch serendipity kick in as it did for Camp To Belong.
- **When you act on your vision**, you activate the law of reciprocity, which ties in with the joy of giving. You’ll see! You’ll get back much more than you’ll give.
- **As a speaker, mentor and coach**, you can say or do just one thing that can catapult others into action. Years ago, a colleague of mine told me, “Lynn, you are small but powerful.” His words catalyzed me to walk taller and live bigger.
- **Use change to serve you** and move you in the direction of your vision. If you feel uncomfortable—great! That means a transformation and something important is happening.

## CAMP TO BELONG

Almost 600,000 youth live in foster care in the United States, with 75 percent separated from at least one sibling when placed in care. Camp To Belong ([www.camptobelong.org](http://www.camptobelong.org)) reunites brothers and sisters who have been placed in separate foster or adoptive homes through its Summer Camp Programs and Sibling Connection Initiative, which gives them opportunities to share childhood memories and provides a sense of belonging as individuals and as siblings.

In the recent blockbuster *Ocean’s Thirteen*, Camp To Belong is featured in one of the last scenes in which George Clooney turns to Andy Garcia and announces he can’t return the (fictional) \$72 million he owes him; he’s given it to a charity called Camp To Belong.

To benefit from this serendipitous publicity, Camp To Belong will host a star-studded fundraiser when the *Ocean’s Thirteen* DVD launches in November 2007. Call 1-888-7BELONG or 1-888-723-5664 for full details.



Photo: Ed Andrieski

## The Power of the Ripple

Thirteen years and 2,500 campers later, the result of Lynn’s vision and Camp To Belongs’ success is a remarkable story—and extraordinary example of how one person’s idea for change can set in motion the power of the ripple.

“I knew that if I took time to research my idea and get feedback, obstacles would arise. So I demonstrated my vision by doing it. It’s become the genesis of the philosophy I share as a speaker, mentor and coach. And along the way, adventurous people who see possibilities, not obstacles, join in. They, too, want to make life-changing differences in this world,” Lynn says. “For every person you touch, you actually touch dozens more—as a mentor, a teacher, a friend.”

The conscious and effective effort of many has taken Camp To Belong from its first urban-based camp in Las Vegas to the mountains of Colorado for 12 years running. Today, similar CTB-related camps are held in Nevada, Maine, Massachusetts, the Pacific Northwest, California and Canada. And Lynn has received requests to help start camps in Georgia, Arizona, Washington, DC, even Australia and the United Kingdom.

More than that, Lynn’s vision for Camp To Belong has influenced hundreds of counselors and volunteers to change their lives. Some have become foster or adoptive parents. Others have earned master’s degrees in social work to contribute to the field of foster care. And almost everyone in the CTB circle has made connecting with their own siblings a high priority.

The power of the ripple also captured Oprah Winfrey’s attention. In 2000, she presented Lynn with her Use Your Life Award, named her to Oprah’s Angel Network and gave CTB a \$50,000 donation. In 1998, Lynn was honored to receive the Points of Light President’s Service Award. As he shook her hand, President Bill Clinton genuinely said to her, “Thank you, Lynn, for what you have done for our country.”

Beyond providing fun experiences at camp, the power of the ripple has extended to changing foster care laws in Colorado, Lynn's home state. In her new book *Vision for a Change*, Lynn tells her compelling story of giving two heartfelt speeches to lawmakers in the Colorado House of Representatives and Senate. She built an impassioned—and successful—argument for changing the child welfare system to prioritize placing siblings together in foster care. Shortly after, Lynn lobbied to get the United States Senate to declare March 1 as National Sibling Connection Day, which became effective March 1, 2006.

For her success in affecting change, Lynn has been named as an Ashoka Fellow, a global association of social entrepreneurs who've created system-changing solutions in the world. Only 2,000 fellows from 60 countries have been invited into its fold. Ashoka fellows do more than initiate wide-scale

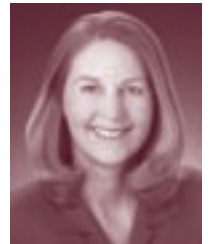
change; they influence the status quo, spread innovative solutions and inspire others to take leaps themselves. As both visionaries and realists, they turn vision into action. "This discipline especially applies to professional speakers. We are all agents for doing good by doing well in this world," Lynn says.

### Building Bigger Bonfires

Lynn has stepped into this social entrepreneurial arena with confidence and experience in coaching, mentoring and inspiring leaders to implement their own visions for change. "I know playing on a bigger stage and building bigger fires is where I belong—among the big thinkers and doers who collaborate to orchestrate social breakthroughs," she says. Members of NSA will witness her passion on stage at the San Francisco Winter Workshop, where Lynn will inspire others to ignite their own power for change.

"Speakers already own ripples of influence that can extend well beyond their current marketplace into the world at large," Lynn says. "So many people believe they don't have time to do more based on their to-do lists. But ultimately what's more important—working on your list or making a change that will leave a lasting legacy?" **S**

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