



DARYN KAGAN
GOOD NEWS GURU

After spending 12 years covering events for CNN, Daryn Kagan got some news of her own. The network wasn't renewing her contract. Three years later, the 46-year-old has cultivated a growing online space, *DarynKagan.com*, for something we could use more of these days: hopeful news stories. Every day, Kagan tells true stories of real people who *make a difference*. Her latest film, *Solar Town USA*, airing on PBS, explores a small town plagued by floods that became America's first solar-powered village.

+ How did you turn an unexpected career roadblock into a defining moment?

The fact that CNN didn't renew my contract became a blessing, as it gave me the chance to reinvent myself. I realized that I could do what excites me the most: the hopeful, humanistic stories that made my heart "go zing." Though I loved my years reporting traditional news, there's not one morning I've woken up and missed it.

+ What do you ultimately want your audience to gain from the stories you report?

I want to show the world what's possible. I call what I do now "hopeful" news, not happy news. Every day, ordinary people do extraordinary things. Lots of people have ideas or dreams, but they listen to the tape inside their heads that says, "I can't." I can't because I'm too old, I don't know how, I'm not well, I have no money.

My subjects listen to an entirely different tape, one that says, "I can, and I will." Take Bill Montgomery, for example. He's a 91-year-old blind sculptor who began creating art in his seventies, only after losing his sight. While most of us won't go blind, we

all end up facing some obstacle. Bill literally decided to see in a different way. If you simply view things from another perspective, new possibilities emerge.

+ What important lessons have you learned along the way?

Inspiration isn't something you can order out of a catalog. It comes in pieces and, more often than not, at the most surprising times. The concept for a feel-good news Web site came to me while watching CNN and Yahoo correspondent Kevin Sites's "Hot Zone," a series of news segments from war-torn areas around the world. I thought, if this reporter can go to the most devastating places on earth, why can't I go to the most inspiring places?

+ Has dwelling on the positive changed your life? Does optimism attract optimism?

It can't help but do that. What you focus on, you attract. When you find your purpose, and it has to do with putting good out into the world, that good will reflect in your own life. Everything you want and everything you need starts to suddenly show up. Surround yourself with great peo-

ple doing amazing things, and great amazing things come your way.

+ *Solar Town USA* tells the story of Soldiers Grove, Wisconsin residents who used a disastrous situation to inspire positive change. What can we learn from their accomplishments?

The documentary presents what I call an inside-out story. A small town devastated by a flooding river year after year appears to be a bad thing. But the residents turned the situation inside out, banding together to solve a century-old problem through incorporating creative alternatives that would help their community—and ultimately, other communities—find clean energy solutions. They saw a challenge as an opportunity to get creative, and try something new.

—Interviewed by Jill Russell

>> For more information on Daryn Kagan, visit DarynKagan.com.