

# Transcript

Wynne Leon

Welcome to the sharing the heart of the Matter podcast, where we celebrate the Storyteller in us all. I'm Wynne Leon and in this episode Vicki Atkinson and I are with the delightful author and Blogger Darlene Foster. Darlene shares how she started writing her young adult series featuring Amanda Ross. It is such a great story that captures so well the struggle for tone and perspective. And how once that key is unlocked, we can keep on building? She brings us the magic, the mystery and discovery that come with travel and tweens. The delight of being unencumbered enough to not be afraid, to see where things lead. Darlene, does such a beautiful job of writing about travel and adventure because she lives a life of travel and adventure. She tells us what it's like to be Bi Continental and why money should not be the limiting factor. She is so inspirational. I know you'll agree as you listen to how she reminds us to make our dreams come true. Darlene's story is so inspiring. She beautifully shows us how to attach to goals and just keep moving. We're confident you'll love this scenic and beautiful places we explore as we talk about dreams, travel and adventure. We know you'll love it.

Hi, Darlene!

Darlene Foster

Hi there.

Wynne Leon

Vicki and I are so excited to be able to talk to you.

Darlene Foster

Well, thank you for having me. I'm excited to talk as well.

Wynne Leon

That's great.

Vicki Atkinson

Our pleasure.

Wynne Leon

So we were just talking about your series of books, young adult fiction that you've written featuring a 12 year old girl named Amanda Ross. Can you tell us about that series and how you started writing it?

Darlene Foster

Certainly, I'd be happy to. So the the series is about a young a 12 year old Canadian girl called Amanda Jane Ross, and she has a a nice life. She's an only child. Her parents are both accountants,

and they work really long hours. So she has to be quite, quite self reliant. She likes to cook. Reads a lot. She often cooks for her parents because they come in late. But she thinks her life is really boring. And for her 12th birthday, she makes a wish before she blows out the candles and she wishes for travel and adventure. And the very next day she gets tickets to go to the United Arab Emirates to visit her aunt and uncle, who live and work there. The adventure starts while she's. She meets a British girl named Leah. They get into well, not particularly trouble, but you know they have an. They try to help out a young girl who's involved in an arranged marriage and she doesn't want to marry this older man. All kinds of things. They get lost in a desert storm, a dust storm in the desert and at the end of all it all, Amanda decides she wants to travel some. She loves travel. So then she.

Wynne Leon

But if I remember 'cause, I just read this.

Speaker

Just.

Wynne Leon

I remember right as soon as she gets, you know, there were at some points on the adventure where she was like well. Be careful what you wish for.

Darlene Foster

Exactly. Oh yeah, she gets kidnapped. Kinds of things. And so then, you know, she goes to visit Leah in in England and they try to find a missing vintage book. Leah and her parents invite her to Spain. Because they have a timeshare there, a holiday home there and they help a little girl try and find her pony that's been kidnapped. So all kinds of things happen. And she just. She's happy that she made this wish and that it came true. You know. I started writing these books. I couldn't stop. You wanted to know how I. Well, this is kind of an interesting story because.

Wynne Leon

Yeah.

Darlene Foster

I also had a very nice life as a child, but felt it was. Bit boring and really wanted to. I mean, people read when kids read a. A lot of the books take place in other countries, and I remember as a child I really want to go there. I read. Handspringer and the silver skates. And I wanted to go to Holland, you know, so that kind of stuff. And so I had a friend who. Working in the United Arab Emirates. And she invited. Me to come and visit her. So I hopped. A plane flew halfway around the world and had a fabulous time went on my own. And had such a good time and everything I saw it was different. So. The culture of the architecture, the geography, everything was different. And I'd say to my girlfriend all the time. Oh my God, this is great. This is wonderful. At one point, she turned to me and she. You're acting like a 12 year old. And. Anyway, but you know, I I kind of was.

Speaker

This.

Darlene Foster

So I came home from that trip and I thought I. Write about. I really should. I was writing it from a. An adult perspective, but the excitement I felt while I was there was not coming through. And then all of a sudden I thought, you know what, I should try writing this from the point of view of a. Year old. Which I did and Amanda in Arabia was born. The whole series was born from that. So so there you. That's how you can get your ideas.

Vicki Atkinson

Well, and I I love it when and I were comparing because we didn't plan.

Wynne Leon

Awesome.

Vicki Atkinson

She happened to read the first in the series and I just read, you know, Amanda in Scotland and the Standing stones and and I mean we we were talking before. We we had you join us about how much we enjoy them. But I think you bring all of that, the childhood zeal for discovery, for cultural immersion. It's. Darlene was such a beautiful touch because there there is an educational element. But it's not really heavy and you bring in, you know, from what I've read. But I'm eager to read the rest of the Amanda series. You know, these beautiful characters that. You know, never was there a time in my life when it was more important to have respect for differences and to see that we're all the same, you know, with these fun little twists and, you know, amandae adventures. It's so fun to hear that there's a part of. That's in you. You know, as your writing and vice versa. That true to you? You think?

Darlene Foster

I think. I do, somebody said. Was Amanda like me and not? Amanda is the 12 year old I would have. To have been.

Vicki Atkinson

Wow.

Wynne Leon

Right. Right now. Thank you.

Darlene Foster

For saying that, Vicky, because that was the idea when I started writing these books, I wanted them to be somewhat educational. A few little facts in them.

Wynne Leon

Yeah.

Darlene Foster

But but I wanted them to be entertaining more than than. But having said that, there are some schools that do use my books as part of their reading program so that the kids can learn about different cultures.

Vicki Atkinson

Yes, right.

Wynne Leon

Yeah, right.

Vicki Atkinson

Yeah, and I appreciated that.

Darlene Foster

Which which ones please?

Vicki Atkinson

Yes, and and I appreciated like the contemporary references too, because as I was reading, you know, Aunt Jenny, one of the characters, you know, talks about sort of the magic of the stones and any, you know, adult. Who's a fan of the Outlander series? Know will understand. The appeal of all of that. But that, like contextualizing and you know, for the adult readers, I know that they're young adult, but I've found every bit of it enjoyable for, you know, this 60 something gal who's reading, right, just very enjoyable.

Darlene Foster

And that's great. And and I love it that adults like them as well. That does make me very, very happy.

Wynne Leon

Yeah.

Darlene Foster

That adults do enjoy them.

Wynne Leon

Set note of of you know in especially that age group. That willingness to believe and the flexibility you know, so that it just really is right for adventure.

Speaker

Yeah.

Vicki Atkinson

Yeah.

Darlene Foster

I love writing for that age. You know, they approximately 8:00 to 12:00 because they're no longer little kids. A picture book, kids, but they're not teenagers with all the teenage angst either. It's just in that really nice little. What we call it tweens, right? Because they're in between and and and they have their frustrations and things as. Of. But I I just love that age and they're like sponges.

Speaker

Yeah.

Darlene Foster

Things up, when I go to school. And and we, which is my favorite part by the way of being. Author is going. The schools and meeting the. I just love kids and and then the questions they ask me at the end it it's just, I just see their eyes light up, you know as. Read a little. Section of it. Then. It's like, oh, please, please read some more. I. Oh, that's so fun.

Vicki Atkinson

But it's that hint of magic and mystery and. And I think maybe for young girls, you know, being a mom of a girl, that empowerment too, you know, to follow the trail, let your curiosity lead you.

Wynne Leon

Right.

Vicki Atkinson

You know, to not be afraid, but to keep your eyes open.

Darlene Foster

Be. That's the big one.

Vicki Atkinson

Yeah, I totally get. Your intention comes through, gives me chills, even thinking about it because it's it's a good thing, you know, for kids like you said in that age range, but especially the soft spot for the girls.

Wynne Leon

Right.

Vicki Atkinson

Yeah.

Wynne Leon

But you know.

Darlene Foster

Although I've lots of boys read them too. I'm like and I make sure there's a boy in. One of the books.

Wynne Leon

Yes. Yeah, it's good.

Darlene Foster

And usually an animal.

Wynne Leon

Also also a great character.

Darlene Foster

Yes, of camels.

Vicki Atkinson

Yeah, absolutely.

Darlene Foster

The. Everybody's favorite character, and of course the the dog that I've got in the border, collie, which is based on my friends Border collie.

Wynne Leon

Oh yeah.

Vicki Atkinson

So good.

Wynne Leon

Clearly, Amanda's not the only one that likes to travel. Since you, you know, divide your time between two continents. You're from Canada, but you live in Spain. Spend most of your time there.

Vicki Atkinson

And that's where you are right now, yeah.

Darlene Foster

And that's where I am right now.

Wynne Leon

What's your favorite part about, you know, being BI Continental?

Darlene Foster

Well that. Yeah, that's a good question. I think I think my favorite part is that it means I have friends on two different continents. I've got friends.

Speaker

No.

Darlene Foster

Wherever I. Basically, and my daughter always comments on that, she says. You've got friends. All over the world, she. Because of your travels and because you live in Spain and I'm in Europe, so we we travel within Europe and my husband's from England. I think that's what I like the most and also to be subjected to other cultures. I think that's really healthy. Yeah. To to learn how other people live. And you know. You. It's a bit of a. Shock when? When you move to another country, and especially when you move to another country, that is. Across an ocean. Quite something, but it's it's it's really good to. To force yourself to to adapt. I think that's the word I'm trying to think. Yeah. So I'm quite pleased that I adapted quite quite nicely at the end of the day.

Wynne Leon

Yeah. Learning to shop, learning to drive learning, I mean everything, right.

Darlene Foster

Everything, there's so many things and the whole difference in the lifestyle. I mean for me and and again it's a nice balance for me as a North American, I was a typical North American. Was. Busy it. Go, go, go. All day long. We're in Spain, my husband and we are retired as well. But my husband and I, we we kind of do one thing a day and that might be buying groceries.

Wynne Leon

Yeah.

Darlene Foster

So occasionally we. Do 2-3 is a bit of a stretch. Where's?

Vicki Atkinson

I love that.

Darlene Foster

You know, I would have done that by 10:00 in the morning in Canada. And when I when I go back home, this is quite interesting. When I go back to Canada. I am so one of the reasons my husband doesn't come with me because I am so busy when I get there. I have, you know, I'm having breakfast with a friend. I'm having coffee with another friend. I'm having lunch with my publisher. I'm I'm at a bookstore doing signings and then I'm meeting someone else for coffee and then I'm having dinner with some friends I haven't seen for a while. And then and then I go and read bedtime stories to my grandchildren. So it's go go.

Vicki Atkinson

Yeah.

Darlene Foster

Go to, get right back into it and I'm not trying to do anything.

Wynne Leon

Yeah. Does it take any transition time? I mean, do you have to like?

Darlene Foster

No, not really. I hit the ground running really.

Vicki Atkinson

Sounds almost immediate. Yeah, but you click in. Yeah, yeah.

Darlene Foster

Yeah. Oh, I mean, I got to my granddaughter's place the last time. And she said grandma. There's someone going to be calling you in a few minutes to interview you for the local newspaper. OK, let me put my suitcases in my room. I just landed. Yeah, it's great.

Vicki Atkinson

And maybe for your dear husband because he's from, you know, the.

Darlene Foster

But.

Vicki Atkinson

You know, maybe the fact that you have that kind of in your DNA, that experience of being the, you know, go, go, go. You click into it, but he sounds like a very wise man I.

Darlene Foster

Oh, yes, yes. And he's a Ying to my Yang, of course, because he's the one who said I think you should stop and have a cup of tea, you know?

Wynne Leon

Would say.

Speaker

Oh.

Darlene Foster

But but and I do not while I'm there and I never get tired or anything, because as an extrovert I do kind of. I'm energized by activity, but when I come back to Spain, I'm just.

Wynne Leon

Yeah.



Darlene Foster

I. I just want. Go and sit on the beach for an hour or two.

Vicki Atkinson

Yeah, but maybe you need that. You know, just sort of recalibrate.

Darlene Foster

You know, you really, you really do.

Speaker

Yeah.

Darlene Foster

And I like that. That's another favorite thing is that I've got this nice balance.

Vicki Atkinson

Yeah. Can I ask you about that?

Speaker

That.

Wynne Leon

Was rice.

Vicki Atkinson

When you're like back, you know in Spain, is that where some of the inspiration strikes them when you have the time to kind of decompress a little bit? Is that when ideas begin to flow okay?

Darlene Foster

That you are right. That's and that was one of there were a number of reasons why we made this move, but that was one of them was, so I could have some quiet time relaxing time. The creativity could come out. I did write. I wrote the first four books while we lived in Canada and I was still working full time. Time and I managed, but it's been I guess, more enjoyable to be able to take my time.

Vicki Atkinson

Yes. Oh my goodness. Wow.

Wynne Leon

Amazing.

Vicki Atkinson

Is that something that you would say is is a tip for other writers, you know, to figure out because there's so much advice out there when and I hear a lot of things. But is that something that you would recommend that people need to find their own way?

Darlene Foster

And and different things work. Different people, of course. You. To find a quiet space, and even in the hustle and bustle of a large urban setting in North America. You need to find a quiet space. For yourself so that you can process and so that you can work things out.

Wynne Leon

Yeah.

Darlene Foster

Yes, I mean Virginia wolf. You need a room of your own and and that's basically what she was saying. Need a. You need some space of your own. To work with the crowd, some some people. I'm sorry. Some people will will want a cabin in the woods or on an island or something and go away for a month just to.

Vicki Atkinson

Well, and we were. Oh no.

Wynne Leon

Yeah.

Darlene Foster

Able to.

Vicki Atkinson

Yeah.

Darlene Foster

Without interruptions and stuff, which is kind of a nice idea too.

Wynne Leon

Mm.

Darlene Foster

I did something. I bought a house in Spain.

Vicki Atkinson

And forgive me for for interrupting you, but I love the Virginia wolf. But before, when hit record, we were taking a little tour of the space that you're in and and next time we visit with you, we're going to just get really demanding and ask to see more about your travel adventures. You know, in the the

mementos that you have around you because we'll save that for next time. But Oh my goodness, you've got stories to tell about some of those beautiful objects behind you. Mm. Making the space your own right.

Wynne Leon

Exactly. Exactly.

Darlene Foster

And that's what you. When you surround yourself with with that, yeah. And that helps with that. Helps with the creative.

Wynne Leon

Yeah.

Darlene Foster

Mind as well, yeah.

Wynne Leon

Right, right. Well, and that's the perfect segue into you know you've you've sort of boldly stated that you believe everybody can make their dreams come true. And and maybe that's part of how you've done that?

Speaker

More.

Darlene Foster

Yeah. So I and I do do believe. People can make their dreams come true, and I think at what's a mindset. First of all, you can't. You know what they say is what you think is what will happen, right? You know, and if you can keep telling yourself it's not going to happen, well, then it won't.

Wynne Leon

Mm.

Darlene Foster

But if you keep telling yourself that it is. You know it may. Happen the way you thought it would.

Wynne Leon

Ready.

Darlene Foster

It may take a lot longer than you thought it was. But if you. It out there it comes back and and and I've seen that happen so many times. Mean I I was a really young mom. I mean I. Have two kids, 4 grandkids and two great grandchildren, so.

Vicki Atkinson

Right. My goodness.

Darlene Foster

There's a lot of people in life. And. And so I. I wasn't able to finish high school and so basically I guess you would call me a high school dropout, but I didn't let that stop me. I took courses by correspondence and then I started taking college courses by correspondence. Then I would take continuing education courses and eventually. I got, you know, the education that I wanted. So you just can't let barriers stop you, you know.

Wynne Leon

Yeah, right.

Darlene Foster

And so. What I tanna I tell the kids. The schools you know and and some people will say, well, I can't travel because I don't have money. I've never had much money. But I've traveled because we just decided not to go out to eat.

Wynne Leon

Mm.

Darlene Foster

You know, we'll just stay in and put that money we would have spent to go out in the travel pot. Yeah. You know, sometimes I pick up extra extra jobs at night to make a little extra money to go traveling. Mean you? Yeah, people, I think often build in barriers.

Wynne Leon

Yeah.

Vicki Atkinson

Yeah, but I often think you know, when people have the pleasure, like when. And I do of spending time with Someone Like You, who's had so much success, I think. This tendency, whether it's generational or not, I'll put that aside. But I think there is this tendency to to seek a straight line towards success. And I think what you just described is that you, you have to let the road meander a little bit and yes, make some sacrifices and and, you know, think about priorities. But hold fast to what your intentions are, and if there's one thing that I've shared more often, probably in in my career. With the younger it, it's been a version of what you just said that I love so much, you know, don't give up, but keep moving. Yeah, that's so beautiful. Yeah.

Darlene Foster

Exactly. And. And you may take, you know, 2 steps forward and one step back or one step forward and two steps back sometimes. But as long as you. Yeah, I'm very goal oriented and I think you know that that that helps obviously.

Speaker

Mm.

Vicki Atkinson

Charlene, would you also say that while you're doing that? Some of your advice would be to be choosy about who you allow kind of into your. Because sometimes when you hit those speed bumps, there are people are like, yeah, I knew that was going to happen or. Could have told you. Is that something that you've experienced too about being selective about? Who you let in?

Darlene Foster

Point now I'm really lucky because I have a huge family and they're all very supportive. Friends are very supportive. And maybe I just naturally attract people that are supportive because I haven't had a lot of people. That that have been negative around me and you know what? I have met some negative people, but I've I've been able rather than shut them out, I've been able to turn them around. Oh, not all the time, but I have.

Vicki Atkinson

I can see that, yeah.

Darlene Foster

Have actually, yes.

Vicki Atkinson

Yeah, I love that. And I can imagine mm hmm. Yes. Oh my gosh, so good.

Wynne Leon

We've heard that before from, you know, from that's a common thread which is. You know, you ask somebody who's had great success and we, as we have, just like Vicky did with you, Darlene, and it's pretty common that people go, wow, I can't think of any negative people. You know that they they really has that that choose to eat, whether it's being choosy, whether it's turning people around. You know there is a a force field.

Vicki Atkinson

Hmm.

Wynne Leon

Just to people that pulls in that positivity. Yeah, yeah, yeah.

Darlene Foster

I think so, I think, yeah.

Vicki Atkinson

And you just ooze it, Darlene, even through the technology. I can't imagine what it's like for.

Speaker

Yes.

Vicki Atkinson

And you know the younger ones that are around you in person because it is, there's an infectious, you know, kind of positivity about, you know, discover the world. Be inspired.

Darlene Foster

We can always keep that, keep that 12 year old inside you. Yeah, it's always there.

Wynne Leon

Right. Oh, I love that.

Vicki Atkinson

My gosh.

Wynne Leon

Keep the 12 year old inside us. That's awesome. So what's next on your?

Darlene Foster

Dreamscape well, and it's just about always book oriented. I am working on Amanda in Ireland. Hmm. The body in the bog.

Vicki Atkinson

You did say body in the bug.

Darlene Foster

Yes, the body in the fog.

Wynne Leon

OK.

Darlene Foster

So and I'm about 2/3 finish the first draft. In fact I. Polished up Chapter 14 today and. And there's usually about 20 chapters in each. So yeah, and I'm having fun writing that one, and I went to Ireland. Three, it'll be three years. June that I went to Ireland, yes. See, there's an example right there. Always wanted to go to. And we have neighbors that have a holiday home really close to us and we were having coffee with them and they were telling me a few stories about Ireland and they turned to me. And you should come to Ireland.

Vicki Atkinson

Mm.

Darlene Foster

Have a great setting. One of your books, and I said oh. Always wanted to go to. I don't know if I can swing it, but. And they said. Come. Please come. You can stay with us. We can drive you. There's lots of interesting sites right near us, including a bog and. And there's. There's a train that goes into Dublin every day. Like about a 40 minute ride and. Know. Come on, we'd love to have you. Then I got to go to Ireland and now I'm writing a book about it. Yeah.

Wynne Leon

Yes.

Vicki Atkinson

I love that because it's an unfolding right and it's, you know, I'm sure you probably had intentions that you wanted to set a story in Ireland, but the unfolding of it and then, you know, being invited from, you know, natives.

Darlene Foster

I always do. Yeah, exactly.

Vicki Atkinson

Right to come, you get a whole different experience than if you were a tourist during the tourist experience.

Darlene Foster

Oh, much difference.

Vicki Atkinson

Enrich in your writing.

Wynne Leon

Yeah. And do you take notes then while you're there or do you just let it?

Darlene Foster

Oh I. I. I think tons of pictures and I take. Of. Yeah, I. A journal. But I also do other other notes as well.

Speaker

Yes.

Darlene Foster

And I refer back to them when I'm writing writing.

Vicki Atkinson

Yeah, well, you have like built in consultants then? In case you got anything wrong, you're gonna wait a minute, right?

Darlene Foster

Oh yes. Oh, yes. No, I I contacted them a couple times.

Speaker

Am I saying that?

Darlene Foster

Both times and said, you know, and the speech too, would you say this?

Vicki Atkinson

Yeah, yeah, yeah.

Darlene Foster

Would say. You know the way you would say it.

Vicki Atkinson

Yeah. Yeah, which I think I said this before he started. It was one of the things that really hopped out at me about, you know, Amanda and Scotland, just the care that you took, you know, for the characters that were, you know, in place, you know, you immediately knew who was native and who wasn't. A subtlety about the dialogue that wasn't. Wasn't at all over. It was beautiful and pleasant and.

Darlene Foster

I always. I always liked to tuck that in and and I have some. Good studies. So I was.

Vicki Atkinson

Yeah.

Darlene Foster

To confer with them and make sure I got that right, yes.

Vicki Atkinson

Yeah, yeah. And I learned a few new words, which is always good.

Darlene Foster

It's always good. I went to a school to do a reading and afterwards 1 little girl came up to me and she said I like that you use some big words in your books because I underline them and after I go and look them up.

Vicki Atkinson



I.

Speaker

Oh.

Darlene Foster

Know because.

Speaker

Sweet.

Darlene Foster

I'm thinking I don't want to. Them too difficult for them to even though scare scare scare them.

Vicki Atkinson

Yeah.

Darlene Foster

But you do want to include a few because that's how they build their vocabulary, right?

Vicki Atkinson

Yeah, right.

Darlene Foster

I was so sweet that she told me. Yeah. Oh.

Vicki Atkinson

Right. Because you want it to be a little bit of a reach. Just a little, yeah.

Wynne Leon

That, I gotta say, we just my daughter and I just read a young adult book and there were a lot of pies in it.

Speaker

Oh.

Wynne Leon

And so she's like, let's make. And it's so that age is so. And she's 9. So she that age is so fun for picking up, you know, an idea.

Darlene Foster

I know. Yes. Yeah.

Wynne Leon

They're just ready to run with it.

Vicki Atkinson

Yeah. Oh my gosh, this was a delight. Oh my goodness.

Wynne Leon

I think like.

Darlene Foster

This was. It really. Really.

Wynne Leon

Really was.

Darlene Foster

Thank you so much for inviting me. I love your podcasts and just being honest and honour.

Wynne Leon

Oh, thank you so much. We love meeting you.

Vicki Atkinson

We did till next time.

Darlene Foster

Meet likewise. See.

Wynne Leon

Thank you for listening. Our music is composed for sharing the heart of the matter by the exquisitely talented duo of Jack Canfora and Rob Koenig for show notes and more great inspiration, please visit our site at [sharingtheheartofthematter.com](http://sharingtheheartofthematter.com).