



OUR SUCCESS STORIES

KEN

Ken was born in Boston but never left Colorado after getting his degree at the University of Colorado. He went into mining, but was laid off in the recession of the 1980s. Not to be deterred, Ken completed his master's degree. With degrees in geology and business, Ken thought a successful career was a sure thing. And it was for 20 years with the same company. As the branch manager of a large industrial services company, Ken won the best branch award four years straight and they were 7th in Colorado in sales and profit in the industry.



Despite being HIV+ since 1988 and receiving an AIDS diagnosis in 1997, Ken maintained his health through sheer stubbornness (his own words) and a rejection of drugs, alcohol and tobacco. He made a good salary and was able to save prudently. But his life took a major about face when he was laid off in 2009.

Without a job, there was no insurance coverage – health or dental. While age and health should not be a factor in gaining employment, one look at Ken's white hair (a true give-away) and the bruises on his arms and hands (due to a clotting disorder) and potentials employers shied away from offering Ken a job. With his savings gone and his health failing, much to his disappointment, Ken applied for disability insurance .

Ken was disappointed in this unfortunate lifestyle change, but realized that without attending to his health, nothing else could be accomplished. Through the case manager at his doctor's office, Ken learned about Howard Dental Center. He had not seen a dentist in three years and looks forward to his first appointment.

To hear Ken tell it, "Oral health is so important for people with HIV. You don't want to get gum disease and have it travel around in your whole body...I know I would be welcome (at HDC) and it is affordable."



DAVE

In so many ways, Dave is just like all the other Colorado transplants. He came here on vacation 32 years ago, fell in love with the state, and never left. And, in so many ways, Dave is like our other patients whose lives were turned upside down with an HIV diagnosis.

Dave found meaningful work as soon as he moved to Colorado from Iowa. Because of his love of flowers, he found a job managing a flower shop in Fort Collins. Then, he moved to Denver and worked in the printing business for 15 years. Following that career, he went to work as a custodian for a local school district. Dave loved his job – the interaction with the kids and the pride he took in his work.

All that changed 10 years ago when he got extremely sick and could not figure out what it was. His friends worried as he was wasting away. He went from 180 pounds to 140. It took six months, but finally HIV testing was suggested. Because he was positive, he was referred to a HIV specialist, and prescribed medication. Within four weeks, Dave was a new man. His response to the medication was nothing short of miraculous.



Dave's return to better health was complete when he found Howard Dental Center in March of 2011. He had not seen a dentist in years. Like so many other patients, he was terrified of what the dentist might find. However, his fear was eased when he was placed in the capable hands of our Medical Case Manager, Hazel to educate him on the HDC process.

With his new dentures, Dave says his self confidence has increased *and* he ate an apple for the first time in years. He gives credit to Hazel for such a positive first impression of HDC. ***To hear Dave tell it, "There's nobody like Hazel. She lifts your spirits when you first walk in...she makes us all feel so comfortable."***



JONATHAN

"My patient experience at HDC has always been amazing. I never once felt any discrimination by the dentists or staff at HDC, like I have experienced in the past before coming to HDC. I've also made some good friendships over the years with people at HDC. While serving on the HDC Board of Directors and committees, I have had nothing but great experiences with HDC."



Since Jonathan has been a patient at Howard Dental Center for over 14 years, he knows well the role of the dentists and clinic staff in helping him to maintain his oral health. However, since he has served in other roles, he also knows the importance of volunteers (both in the office and on the board) and donors in the success and sustainability of HDC.

When Jonathan gave up his corporate job as a result of disabling complications from HIV over 18 years ago, he turned to his passion: art. And he has used his art to give back ever since.

Jonathan contributes his art work to 6 – 8 charity events each year to help raise funds. (This year two of his works were sold at Bingo Ball and raised over \$350.) In his own words, "I truly believe in this great organization 110% and will do whatever I can to help HDC become an even more successful place..."

And he knows what it takes to make the organization succeed. Jonathan was one of the first members of the board of directors (as a consumer advocate) and served as both president and vice president. In addition, he served on an early strategic planning committee and is currently serving on the new Consumer Advisory Board (CAB).

To hear Jonathan tell it, "I personally want to thank the HDC doctors and staff. I also want to thank HDC for all the great services they provide and all the people's lives they have made brighter; I can personally attest to being one of those people."



ANTONIO



Antonio certainly knows how to *pay it forward*. He has had many struggles throughout his life from illiteracy to AIDS. As a result, when he saw the forlorn face of a young man – one of HDC’s new patients - in waiting room, Antonio’s heart went out to him. “I know how hard my AIDS diagnosis was to handle, I can’t imagine being his age. I wanted him to know someone was there for him,” stated Antonio.

Growing up in a family of 24 children in southern Colorado was not Antonio’s toughest challenge. He was constantly harassed and bullied in school. He couldn’t learn because he was putting too much energy into avoiding his tormentors. So, he left school in 6th grade without knowing how to read or write. The following years were very harsh.

Antonio always wanted to be a writer, but was illiterate. He taught himself the meaning and spelling of words by studying the dictionary, and then the thesaurus. In 1968, when he decided to go into the hair industry, it took Antonio four years to get his cosmetology license when it usually takes only nine months.

But he persevered and finally felt confident enough to begin writing at age 30. He wrote, and he wrote, and he wrote... waiting to be published. When a back injury and three surgeries forced Antonio to give up the hair industry, he wrote more... waiting to be published.

During that time, not only was he unable to go back to his previous work, in 1999, Antonio was hospitalized for two weeks with pneumonia. He clung to life. The reason the infection hit him especially hard because, as he found out while in the hospital, Antonio also had AIDS. With a new life-threatening diagnosis, Antonio began to see things differently. As he said, “A terminal or chronic illness has a way of awakening awareness in you.” Antonio realized he had not taken care of his body, including his teeth. He was referred to Howard Dental Center, where he learned that oral health impacts overall health significantly. Antonio has been religious about his appointments ever since.

It was at one of his appointments recently that Antonio happened to be sitting in the waiting room with the young man he had seen so many months before. It was then he decided how he could show his support. He would pay his recent good fortune forward...

Antonio has just been published! Not just one book, but five of his novels are now available online. (You can review and purchase various eBook formats at clublighthousepublishing.com. He writes under the name by Theodore Marquez.) And he’s decided to give a gift to Howard Dental Center.

So as not to overstep the rules of privacy, Antonio chose a way to show his support of the young patient *and* HDC. He signed up for our sustaining gift club, *Tooth Fairies*. Each month Antonio honors that young man with a gift to Howard Dental Center. And he knows that his gift is important in helping HDC continue to repair healthy smiles. ***To hear Antonio tell it, “I merely want to help him and others like him, along with HDC in their struggle to provide services for them and myself. Services I totally appreciate and do not take for granted at any time.”***





STEPHANIE

Achievement, accomplishment and triumph are all synonyms for *success*. And all of them aptly describe Stephanie. In (almost) 50 years of living, she once had all the *things* that money can buy, but now treasures all she has, that money *cannot* buy.



Feeling unwanted and unappreciated, Stephanie ran away from home at the age of 13 – never even completing middle school. Without any means of support, she was drawn into prostitution.

By age 18, Stephanie was tired of her life and wanted to straighten it out by joining the Air Force. She was turned down because of a physical impairment. Heartbroken, she knew no other way to support herself. She went back to prostitution *and* added drug dealing. Though she never took the drugs, the income afforded Stephanie a very nice life: fancy homes, cars, furs, jewels, and travel to exotic places...until she was convicted and sentenced to prison.

Soon after arriving, a prison guard came into Stephanie's cell, announced, "You have AIDS," (based on a required blood test), and walked out. Stephanie was at first stunned, then disbelieving and finally, furious – at herself, God, *everyone*. After two years, Stephanie got out of prison and decided she had nothing more to lose. She became "her own best customer."

Crack cocaine was Stephanie's new best friend. She lived a life of hell for two years. When her mother died, Stephanie realized her own mortality and decided to go back to her spiritual roots to look for a way out. She prayed to find a new approach to life and heard a little voice say, "You can do it. I'll never leave you." And she did!

The last nine years have not been easy, but Stephanie has had support *and* successes to keep her motivated. Through *Empowerment*,* which offers a support group for former women inmates who are HIV+, Stephanie learned to change her view of herself - how to feel valued without all the material goods. She also learned she could live with HIV and didn't have to die with it. Stephanie found safety and comfort; she felt safe enough to declare out loud that she was HIV+. "It changed my life and I never looked back. You cannot buy the peace I have found," says Stephanie.

Through Empowerment, Stephanie also found HDC. She had not seen a dentist in many years; her teeth had deteriorated from the HIV medications; and her love of candy resulted in many cavities. Unfortunately, all her teeth had to be extracted. As a result, Stephanie was too embarrassed to smile until she received her new teeth. ***To hear Stephanie tell it, "Thank God for Howard Dental. I got my smile back."***

Today Stephanie is facing another challenge – one she has gladly chosen. She is working on a college degree. Having only finished 7th grade and barely getting a GED while in prison, Stephanie spent the first three years in remedial classes. However, today she is a sophomore and planning to graduate in 2014 with a degree in human services as an HIV/AIDS educator. Her goal is to help empower other women of color.



There is no doubt that Stephanie has achieved her aim of a finding new way of life, accomplished her goal of getting an education, and triumphed over incredible odds – truly a success story!

* *Learn more about Empowerment at www.empowermentprogram.org*



SAM

For the most part, Sam’s is your typical, all-American story. He grew up on a farm in a small Colorado town – small enough that grade school, middle school and high school were all in one building. Sam married his high school sweetheart and they have celebrated 50 years together. They raised four successful children. Yes, his story is pretty typical except that he is HIV+ and contracted it through a blood transfusion in

1990.

Sam worked hard making a good life for his family. He went where the jobs took him: from Greeley to California, and New Mexico. Sam tried his hand at many jobs. He was a hospital orderly when he married, then took on a second job when his first child arrived. When an opportunity arose in a manufacturing plant, Sam began making camper shells and eventually became the manager of the production line in Albuquerque. They longed to return to Colorado, so he took a job with Amoco Oil where he was able to take early retirement after 14 years with the company. Sunny Arizona seemed the place to be in retirement, so Sam and his wife moved again. However, in 1988, Sam’s in-laws became very ill and they returned to Colorado to be near them.

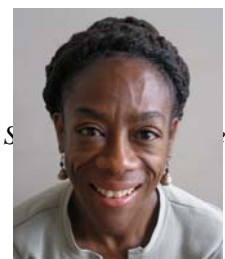
After they returned, Sam found himself constantly tired. When his doctor had ruled everything else out, he asked Sam to take a test for HIV. What they discovered was a surprise and a shock.

Although the US had screened blood donations for HIV/AIDS since 1985, it was for the HIV-1 strain. The screening for HIV-2 didn’t begin until 1992. Sam had two surgeries that required blood transfusion prior to 1992. He had contracted the unscreened strain.

Fast forward to 2011. You would never know Sam is HIV+. Even in his 70s, he can keep up with his 10 grandchildren and two great-grand children. After his diagnosis, Sam found a doctor he trusts who referred him to Howard Dental Center in 2000. He thinks HDC is “super-duper” in the care he has received. *To hear Sam tell it, “They have treated me wonderful. Thanks to all who go and raise money for Howard Dental. I appreciate it very much.”*



PENNY





In just two short years, Penny met, married and buried her husband. She was only 23 years old.

Her journey began almost 25 years ago. She was married to a wonderful man. Together, they were completing graduate school in Greeley and making plans for the future. Suddenly her husband, Billy began to contract strange illnesses. He tried to ignore them.

That changed when, one night, he was driving home from Denver, lost consciousness, totaled the car, and landed in the hospital. Once Penny got over her shock, she realized it was definitely time to have a serious discussion about Billy's health issues.

Billy went to the east coast to see the family doctor. When he returned with an AIDS diagnosis, only then did Penny learn that Billy was a recovered heroin addict. He contracted AIDS from shared needles. She also learned that, because of the diagnosis, he had given up on living and relapsed.

It was a painful decision, but when Billy lost his sight to CMV (a complication of AIDS), Penny knew she could not continue to work and care for him. He moved back east to his parent's home. Before he died in July of 1986, Penny learned that she too, was HIV⁺. Penny thought she had survived the most painful journey one could endure – the loss of a spouse, only to learn that she was embarking on a new journey...

Was Billy's fate going to be hers, as well? Penny had no idea what a HIV⁺ diagnosis would mean for her. It was 1986 and all she knew were the stigmatizing images in the media. Who should/could she tell that she was HIV⁺? Would her family and friends accept or reject her? Her father and her best friend accepted and assured her that she was *not* going to die from this. But her brother and his wife had a new baby and a lack of knowledge about HIV and AIDS made them fearful – they rejected her.

Penny disclosed to very few others, even her doctor. She felt totally isolated with little support. When a friend "outed" her to their social community, she was further ostracized and the social isolation increased. *It* was killing her!

One day, Penny heard a voice. It told her that it was time to come home to her spiritual community. Penny realized that her faith has always been her rock and found a church that welcomed her. One day, in 1991, the pastor's wife asked Penny to tell her story at a women's retreat. To agree to stand up in front of 100 women and state that she was HIV⁺ was a difficult decision to make. After all, the response in the past had been devastating.

Penny agreed and the resulting outpouring of love from the women helped her realize that her story was her gift to share. Afterward, one woman came up to Penny and told her that her story had saved the woman's life. The woman had contemplated suicide and changed her mind when she heard Penny's story. This convinced Penny to embark on a third journey...

If telling her story can save a life, Penny decided to do it, regardless of how she was perceived. With her faith and her resolve, she became an urban missionary: encouraging women to accept their diagnosis and move forward. Today, Penny continues, as a HIV/AIDS certified trainer to "equip others through education and advocacy" via her own nonprofit, The Issue of Blood.



You may wonder how all this relates to Howard Dental Center. It relates in that, since Penny found HDC and became a patient in 2005, we have had the benefit of knowing a wonderful, caring, giving soul. And she feels the same about us. **To hear Penny tell it, “Howard Dental Center is a caring place. I am able to share my life and the staff listens.”**



JEFFREY

Jeffrey is reluctant to be called a “success” because he believes he is doing what he is supposed to do – live the best life possible.

Not long after moving to Colorado from Arkansas in 1988, Jeffrey was diagnosed with HIV, then AIDS in 1993. The complications of the disease and side-effects of medications were so debilitating that he was unable to work and forced to go on disability to survive. *But Jeffrey is not one to take handouts.* By 2000, he had completed a back-to-work program and was gainfully employed again.

In addition, Jeffrey realized that to maintain his wellbeing, he needed healthy habits. He took up cycling. (And we’re not talking about cruising through the park – we’re talking speed and hill training for bike races!) It’s a win-win: cycling keeps Jeffrey fit and that helps all other health matters make sense. That includes his oral health. After all, Jeffrey can confirm that a healthy mouth and strong teeth results in good, nutritional eating.

Jeffrey found HDC in 1996 and, realizing the benefit of maintaining dental health, has been a patient ever since. That same year, because of his belief in giving back, he began donating to the clinic.

Jeffrey has learned (and is well known in the healthcare debate) that full-time employment may come with health benefits, but that does not necessarily leave one with discretionary income. He pays a substantial deductible to make his fifty percent portion of the premiums affordable. That doesn’t include dental insurance. Because of HDC’s sliding payment scale and Jeffrey’s full-time employment, he pays for *all* the services he receives.

But he wouldn’t have it any other way. Asked if he considered going to another dental clinic, Jeffrey said he always feels welcome at HDC (unlike another clinic in which he was asked not to return when he disclosed his HIV status). He also appreciates the holistic approach that HDC takes toward oral health and overall health – a principle he shares.

However, Jeffrey sees HDC struggling with too many patients with too many long-ignored oral health issues, a result of the lack of access to affordable healthcare. He believes his, and all, contributions, no matter how large or small can make a difference in moving a patient from emergency care to preventive care and maintenance. He is proud to be able to help.

To hear Jeffrey tell it, “The care at Howard Dental Center has helped my overall health.”



JEFF

Jeff grew up as a happy-go-lucky kid in Southern California. Because of his home's proximity to Disneyland, he worked there for seven years. Jeff played all the Disney characters for the visitors. (His favorite was Goofy.) But the wholesome atmosphere of Disneyland didn't prevent him from picking up a bad habit that lasted 31 years: chewing tobacco.



Jeff knew that no matter what you call it — smokeless tobacco, spit tobacco, chew, snuff, pinch or dip — chewing tobacco isn't safer than cigarettes; it can cause serious health problems; and it is addictive. He had heard it all before: from his parents when he was growing up and then from his partner of 21 years, Doug.

Finally, Doug convinced Jeff to go to the dentist since he had not been in years. Through Doug, Jeff found Howard Dental Center. The hygienist learned of his habit through our SBIRT program which screens for tobacco use and substance abuse. Over time, Jeff learned the multitude of health-related problems *chew* could cause: **cancer** (esophageal, mouth, throat, cheek, gums, lips and tongue), **cavities** (Chewing tobacco contains high amounts of sugar and coarse particles that can irritate gums and scratch away at the enamel on teeth.), **gum disease** (gingivitis can lead to periodontitis and tooth loss), **heart disease** (increases heart rate and blood pressure), **precancerous mouth lesions** (white patches called leukoplakia inside the mouth where chew is placed), not to mention stained teeth and bad breath. In addition, the above risks were compounded by the fact that he was also HIV positive.

Jeff had tried to quit many times without long-term success. The turning point came when David, his hygienist at HDC recommended a new product: *mint chew*. That, plus the support of the other hygienist, Luann, did the trick. Jeff says he takes it one day at a time, but he's not had real chew for four months! "If it had not been for Howard Dental, I would have lost *all* my teeth rather than just the few I did lose because of the habit," says Jeff.

For anyone who smokes or chews, it is not easy to quit, as Jeff can attest. It takes a lot of willpower and support. He acknowledges there are setbacks, but encourages anyone trying to quit, not to give up because a health mouth is worth it. **To hear Jeff tell it, "Howard Dental encouraged me as far as quitting my habit, and they have never been judgmental about that or my HIV status."**



DANIEL

In 1981, the term AIDS (Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome) was officially given to a mysterious killer disease. Little was known about who was at risk and how it was spread even eight years later. So, in 1989, when Daniel suspected he might be infected



and went for testing, he couldn't get a straight answer. He was told he had "it;" he was told he didn't; and he was told it was just a myth.

Whether because of denial or fear of the unknown, Daniel chose to ignore *any* health issues - until he went to the doctor for what he thought was bronchitis. One look at his face and the doctor told Daniel he couldn't treat him because he looked like he had AIDS.

That encounter left Daniel with a deep distrust of the medical profession and an acute awareness of the stigma surrounding the disease. Again, he chose to ignore the signs for many years until he was formally diagnosed 1996. The medications available at that time were not much better than the effects of the disease. Daniel reacted badly to them and was left with permanent nerve damage. Fear, bad experiences and ill health forced him to re-think his whole life.

That was nine years ago. Today, Daniel is one of the happiest people alive. He found a doctor who told Daniel what he needed to hear: his health outcomes are up to him. And he found HDC, where he learned that it's all connected: your oral health and your overall health. More importantly, he learned that you can't feel sorry for yourself; you have to be proactive – you'll be happier and healthier.

He loves to hear the staff at HDC tell him that they can help him, but he has to help himself. ***To hear Daniel tell it, "I don't feel like I'm taking free care, I'm working with you for better health. I haven't found that kind of care anywhere. I want to support something like that!"***

And Daniel does – he is a member of our sustaining gift club, Tooth Fairies, by giving what he can as a monthly gift.



RANDY

Randy left full-time work last fall to care for his partner of 11 years. Thomas was dying of complications from AIDS. Despite his best efforts, his partner passed away in November of 2010 and Randy was left to redefine his life and its purpose. But his philosophy on life *and dying* gave Randy the strength to carry him through his grief.



Randy knew grief and desolation. His father died in 1986. Randy's sorrow was compounded when he learned after his father's death that he was HIV+. Randy's father had generously left a life insurance policy for each of his five children. To claim it, Randy had to take a blood test. It came back positive for HIV and he began a long journey of uncertainty of his future, apprehension of what that meant for his health, and fear of premature death.

That was then...today Randy has gone back to work part-time, and seeking full-time work in gardening or landscaping – his passion. The loss of his partner is lessened somewhat by the company of his four dogs, which includes a Golden Retriever named Chance. (Chance got his name because he was found by a friend of Randy's in a dumpster when Chance was just a three-day-old puppy.)



Randy has also been buoyed by the care he has received at Howard Dental Center since 2000. Randy disliked going to the dentist intensely, but has learned that if you don't take care of your teeth, you are losing an argument with time.

To hear Randy tell it, "I am extremely grateful that HDC is in existence...whether we want to admit it or not, our oral health and hygiene is the window to our overall health."



DE'VALLION

A HIV diagnosis when you are only 18 (and living on your own since you were a teenager) is tough to digest. De'Vallion felt shocked, alone, and ashamed.

De'Vallion left home at age 16. Without boundaries, he admits to making some pretty damaging choices. When he got the news that he was HIV+, De'Vallion was just completing his senior year at an alternative high school and working with the Cleo Parker Robinson dance ensemble. But he dropped out – from both. He was a mess, both physically and psychologically.

Then he discovered Howard Dental Center, Children's Hospital infectious disease clinic, and Brother Jeff's Community Health Initiative, but not quite in that order. While getting his physical health on track at Children's, De'Vallion worked on his mental health by giving back. He handed out informational flyers at Brother Jeff's to help people of color living with HIV know about the resources in the community. One of those flyers was for Howard Dental Center. Then a social worker asked why he didn't take care of his teeth? His doctor reinforced the need to see a dentist. De'Vallion finally got the courage to make the appointment, but on the bus ride to the clinic, he got scared and couldn't get off the bus.

That was 2007. Finally, in 2010, De'Vallion realized that taking care of his oral health was the last thing he needed to do for his health. He was welcomed to HDC by our medical case manager, Hazel with, "Look who just walked into my heart." De'Vallion has never felt so welcomed.

To hear De'Vallion tell it, "I never thought seeing the dentist would make me feel so much better about myself. Nobody is going to make someone feel as comfortable in the chair as Howard Dental."

Epilogue: De'Vallion is applying for financial aid to attend college. He wants to start his own nonprofit to help people with disabilities.



BOB

Given his story, it's hard to image Bob as the happy person as he is now. It took 48 years of living to feel that his "life seems to have just started" Having survived medical issues and depression, he recently met the person who makes him laugh on a daily basis. Bob says he has his best years ahead of him – he gets to do all the things he couldn't do when he was younger.

He would like to forget most of those younger years because they included insecurity, fear and a few irreversible decisions. Bob grew up as an "army brat" – born in Germany and raised in



Succe



Texas. He wanted to be a band director, but his adoptive mother rejected that idea. Disappointed in her lack of approval, he joined the Air Force to get away and see the world. That four-year stint whetted his appetite for more career exploration. Bob has worked in a dental lab, telecom, food services and retail management, and acted in the theater.

Bob was diagnosed with AIDS 18 years ago. With the diagnosis came the news that he had six months to live. Not content to accept that news, he survived all the treatments and their side effects only to fear growing old alone. After all, who would want to be with a person with AIDS? That's when Bob met Rob and they have been laughing together ever since. They share their love of the theater - and their appreciation for Howard Dental Center...

To hear Bob tell it, "I'm glad there is a place like this. There are too many in the medical profession that won't treat someone like me. I can come here, be myself and don't get looked down upon."



DARRELL (in his own words)



“

I am a grateful patient of Howard Dental, and I am very fortunate that I can count on them to help me achieve and maintain good dental health. I am a long-term survivor of HIV and AIDS. I'm pretty sure I can trace my infection to some risky behavior back in 1983, but my unmistakable diagnosis came in 1990 when I contracted Kaposi Sarcoma, a skin cancer unique to AIDS patients. I had been living in NYC since 1981, and everything I knew from what was happening all around me to all of my friends and to all of their friends was that I had received my death sentence and I should prepare to die. The only problem with that was that I didn't

feel like I was dying, and deep down inside I had the feeling I might actually survive this thing.

I moved back home to Denver in 1995, and some of my friends in NYC wondered if I was going home to die. I had the funny feeling I was going home to live. My hunch was correct and my good fortune has continued and flourished. Since coming home I have found a much greater purpose and many new challenges. I am a board member and Resident Manager of Chesney-Kleinjohn Apartments. Our mission for the last fifteen years has been to provide low-cost community oriented independent residences for people living with AIDS. The blessing it has been in my life may explain why I'm still here. Helping to provide long-term care for people who are living with this disease is a great honor, but also one of the biggest challenges.

That is where Howard Dental comes in. They provide long-term dental care to people who would otherwise not be able to find it. Many people who receive an HIV or AIDS diagnosis are understandably overwhelmed by the many challenges they face. Many succumb to self-destructive behaviors that put their dental health at greater risk. Many others don't have the insurance they need to maintain any sort of regular dental health routine, and good dental health is essential to overall good health.

If you're fortunate enough to be a long-term survivor like me, there are many detrimental side effects to all the drugs and the other opportunistic conditions that inevitably come with surviving. And Medicaid does not offer many choices. Howard Dental has always treated me like a partner in my dental care plan. All of the many procedures they have performed have been consistently professional and successful. Their staff is always courteous and helpful. But this top-quality care does not come free and the need never seems to end. Despite continued efforts to shorten or eliminate it, they still have a waiting list.



Thank You for your support of Howard Dental. It makes it possible for them to continue to take care of me and their many grateful and fortunate patients.”



ROB

It’s the holiday season and what better patient success story than one of a truly positive person. Rob is a new patient at Howard Dental Center. Interviewing him was such a treat: an upbeat attitude, a winning smile and contagious laughter!



When Rob was diagnosed with HIV in 2007, he was “embarrassed and mortified.” Embarrassed that he had become a statistic and mortified at how he would be treated. *And* he was scared – what did his future hold? Rob feels lucky that he worked with a very empathetic colleague at the time. He felt she would understand his fears. After all, she was a breast cancer survivor.

Rob shared his devastating news and she gave him a suggestion that changed his attitude: “Live with it or die from it.” That advice made such a difference to Rob that he always shares it with others he meets who have been recently diagnosed with HIV. He knows HIV did, and will continue to change his life, but as Rob says, “...so will aging, moving or anything as time goes by.”

What keeps Rob positive, is knowing that he has resources to stay healthy – Howard Dental Center among them. He was thrilled to learn of HDC and what we do. He understands the importance of good oral health and wants to maintain his even though finances are tough.

Also, Rob has a wonderful, caring partner and a career he adores. He is an actor and lives to be on stage. (Currently, he is playing in A Christmas Carol at the Arvada Center – notice the mutton chops in his photo.) Acting has been his passion since he was young. **When asked what makes him a success story, Rob said with a laugh, “I may never be a millionaire, but I am very happy because I get to do what I love and laugh a lot.”**



DIANE



Having been diagnosed with Type I diabetes at the age two, Diane knows the value of taking care of her health. She has done that *and more* successfully. Diane moved from Chicago to Colorado 20 years ago, married 10 years ago, raised two boys (one currently in high school and the other in college), while managing her diabetes. It wasn’t until she was diagnosed with HIV in 2000 that she began to think about how this new diagnosis might change her life and what she *needed to do*.

What Diane needed to do was to learn all she could about the disease to stay as healthy as possible. That education led Diane to Howard Dental Center. When she arrived, she was unaware that her mouth was full of cavities and many teeth needed to come out. Despite her fear (she



briefly thought maybe ignorance was bliss and she wouldn't return to the clinic), Diane followed the dentist's recommendation. Today, with a healthy mouth and a stable immune system, she is the first one to tell a new patient to *hang in there* because she knows first-hand the importance of good oral health. Diane accomplished what she needed to do and that helped her begin to define what she *wanted to do*.

What Diane wanted to do was help other HIV+ women and start her own organization called Positive Women in Action (PWA). That led Diane in 2008, to the Campaign to End AIDS (C2EA) where she gained leadership skills through monthly phone conferences. She didn't stop there...

Diane saw the benefit of attending the C2EA Women's Advocacy in Leadership Summit in Reno, NV. The summit's purpose "...is to bring together women, HIV positive and HIV negative, to develop leadership and advocacy strategies to effectively address the HIV & AIDS related issues that affect women, girls, and transgender women across the country". But how to get there with no funds?

With the help of Hazel, HDC's medical case manager and others, Diane applied for and received a scholarship for conference fees and housing, and funding for transportation. Dianne's dream is to enhance her own skills so that she can speak to girls and women locally and share her new-found knowledge. Now that's a success story!

To hear Diane tell it, "The HDC staff is great – excellent all around care. And, you can open up and talk to the staff about anything [*including your goals and aspirations*]."



TONY

Tony is the kind of person you want to get to know. He was raised in Brazil and Peru, is fluent in four languages, and spent most of his young life traveling the world. Tony continued his travels by joining the Merchant Marines, then working for KLM airlines for 14 years. And has he got stories to tell!



That *c'est la vie* attitude changed when Tony was diagnosed in 1994 with HIV. That's when he realized that, if he was going to survive this, he was going to have to completely change his way of thinking – adopt a more spiritual outlook. He learned that a positive attitude resulted in a positive outcome – maybe not the one he expected, but positive nonetheless.

Tony moved to Maui and became a teacher. He wanted to give back. For 10 years, Tony contributed to the education of the high school students he taught (including sharing his life-learned skills).

With the disease stabilized, Tony began to get the travel bug again. He saw his true calling in life as "a crew member on something going somewhere – a traveler looking after fellow travelers." So, Tony returned to the skies. He transferred to Denver in 2003 to work for the airlines again.

Looking for medical resources as a newcomer to Denver, Tony learned of Howard Dental Center. He remembers his first visit as that of "entering a sanctuary – a place to be myself and talk about HIV and AIDS out loud." He looked forward to his visits to that "family atmosphere."



Because we see all our patients as family, the dentist was concerned when Tony seemed listless and overly tired. A check with his medical doctor in April of this year confirmed what Tony half expected to hear: *lymphoma*.

Tony got a new life-threatening diagnosis, but nothing he can't handle. His spirit is undaunted – after all he has fellow travelers to take care of and friends and “family” to visit in the HDC waiting room!

To hear Tony tell it, “Howard Dental is a place of sanity, kindness and compassion in this crazy world we live in with respectful and skillful doctors. Aloha (breath of life).”



JAC



Sometimes we get overwhelmed by all the news of tragic events, individual's misfortune, and corporate shenanigans. With so much sensationalism, emotional fatigue sets in. How about some good news for a change? How about a heartening story about one of our patients whose outstanding accomplishment is to be alive? And it is indeed an accomplishment given that Jac was diagnosed at the height of the AIDS epidemic when there was no treatment, no cure. It was a death sentence.

But Jac is a Vietnam Veteran and “a mean old cuss,” so death was not an option.

As early as 1981, the first cases of AIDS were identified among gay men in the United States. With the cause and transmission of the disease unknown, it was originally identified with the gay community and acquired the designation, GRID (Gay-Related Immune Deficiency). Later, the condition began to be referred to as AIDS (Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome).

In 1985, Jac was working in a bar in Houston when a doctor with MD Anderson Cancer Center asked a group of gay bartenders to volunteer to be tested. After Jac received the devastating news that he had tested positive, he became a pioneer in promoting testing to curb the spread of the infection. It inspired him to help establish the first testing clinic in Houston.

Taking care of his health has been a priority for Jac. After moving to Denver in 1999, finding a dentist was as important as other healthcare professionals. Says Jac, “It's not just oral health – an oral infection will go right to your heart.” He found Howard Dental Center and could not be more thankful. In addition to quality dental care, Jac appreciates that Dr. Giurgiu showed him how to massage his mouth and jaw to alleviate excruciating pain associated with TMJ (Temporomandibular Joint Syndrome).

To hear Jac tell it, “If you are HIV+ and medically indigent, Howard Dental Center is a godsend – altruism at its best.”



LEANDREW





In January, Howard Dental Center initiated an emergency care program. It is open to all HIV+ people with dental emergencies whether or not they are currently HDC patients and/or on the waiting list. Following is the story of one of those emergencies.

Neglecting your teeth for many years does not constitute an emergency. However, rampant infection and debilitating pain does. LeAndrew came to Howard Dental Center recently with all his options exhausted. He could no longer sleep or eat because of the pain. The infection was wreaking havoc with his already-compromised immune system.

But LeAndrew will be the first to tell you *emphatically* that he made some very poor choices (smoking and lack of dental care included) over the last 15 years and he has no one to blame but himself for letting his oral health reach an emergency state. In the same breath, he will also tell you, he has a new outlook on life with goals for becoming a contributing member of society again.

LeAndrew grew up in a sheltered environment, never having to take care of himself. When he left home, he ended up on the streets, homeless. With more pressing issues to deal with (survival), dental care fell to the bottom of his priority list. Then five years ago, he contracted HIV and felt no dentist would treat him. In addition, having let his teeth totally decay, he admitted pride got in the way of seeking treatment because he knew it would include dentures. *He felt he was too young for dentures!*

When his doctor told him the decay could be fatal by poisoning his blood system if left untreated, LeAndrew knew he was left with no option, but to have all top teeth pulled. Having survived the extractions, *he is so grateful* – the pain is gone and he is on the list for new teeth. He’s looking at the long-term picture: he’ll be able to smile again!

To hear LeAndrew tell it, “[Howard Dental Center] is a great program for helping people in need...and may be responsible for saving my life. It’s a miracle I got in when I did.”

Back story: LeAndrew initially was too embarrassed to be photographed. Then he thought about it and said, “If it helps raise money for other patients, I want to do whatever I can.”



KARI



While Kari doesn’t think her story falls into the “success” category, we at Howard Dental Center disagree. Hers is a story of how to accept devastating news and move forward without allowing it to destroy your life and your goals.

While in a long-term relationship, Kari got very sick. For three weeks she endured what seemed like the worst flu she had ever had. The doctors could not figure it out. They ruled out everything *except HIV*. Here was a heterosexual female who did not inject drugs, was in a committed relationship, and was not involved in “high-risk” behavior, so the thought to test for HIV never crossed the doctors’ minds.



Finally, she decided to go into the doctor before her insurance coverage ended and have the works run on her, including an HIV test. In March 2005, Kari received the shocking news that she was HIV+.

Many, hearing those words, sink into depression thinking life is over: they are going to die or be permanently disabled. Kari is **not** one of those people. She accepted the news with grace, “That really sucks,” she said and continued with her intention of getting a college degree, although there have been many bumps along the way.

Kari firmly believes that *attitude is everything*: if you believe it, you make it happen, whether it’s positive or negative. And her lifestyle supports a positive attitude. Besides working on her degree, Kari is raising her daughter, Liana (who is not HIV+). In addition, she is working at Children’s Hospital as a client advocate and referral specialist making sure that pregnant HIV+ women and youth receive the education and care they need to maintain a healthy life avoid passing the virus to their newborn babies or partners. She also works with families of perinatally infected children (those infected at birth) to navigate the system and provide support in dealing with the disease. She is a member of the Denver HIV Resources Planning Council and of the Howard Dental Center Board of Directors.

Since she is not one to just give up, Kari made three significant changes in her life.

- 1) She switched her major to counseling. Through her research and experience with the disease, Kari realized the heterosexual female population with HIV+ is extremely overlooked. There are very few resources for these women and she intends to fill that gap.
- 2) She became a patient at Howard Dental Center. Kari was a regular at her dentist’s office before she contracted HIV. However, after her diagnosis, her teeth started falling apart. Gum disease was rampant and she didn’t know why. Kari found Howard Dental Center and learned that the disease was the culprit and the necessary protocol was four cleaning per year to maintain a healthy mouth.
- 3) Kari joined our board of directors. She got involved because she feels that HIV is a complex issue and *oral health* is often overlooked when considering good *overall health* for people who are HIV+, as well as those who are not.

To hear Kari tell it, “Because of its importance to the HIV/AIDS community, I hope to bring a level of advocacy and help to grow and strengthen Howard Dental Center.”



OTTO

In the 1990s, an AIDS diagnosis meant certain death – it was just a matter of when. Otto was diagnosed in 1992. He was given six months to live and told he had better get his affairs in order. But he was only 23 years old!

Otto *had* been a top-ranked Taekwondo master and a 1988 Olympic hopeful. He was competitive and not willing to give up that easily. He took a hard look at himself: much had changed. He was an alcoholic, had AIDS, and a devastating virus attacking his brain (a suppressed immune system caused by AIDS makes the body vulnerable to “opportunistic infections”).





It didn't happen overnight, but a conscious decision to reverse the downward spiral by changing his lifestyle and getting educated about his disease *began with a visit to Howard Dental Center.*

Otto arrived for his first appointment in a wheelchair. He was greeted by Cathy at the front desk. After telling his story, she handed him a copy of a book that changed his life. By implementing the concepts in the book (life affirming attitude = strengthened immune system), giving up drinking, and taking medication, Otto's health improved almost immediately and he put his wheelchair away.

For the next several years, through his own choices, Otto learned how much control he actually did have over his life. He also realized how lucky he was to have a second chance to make something of it. That's when he met the man who would motivate him to learn how to document the inspirational lives of people with disabilities and life-threatening illnesses. However, Otto's education was cut short, when his partner passed away of lymphoma after being diagnosed only nine months earlier. As a memorial, Otto continued the Public Access TV show his partner had started...until he, too was diagnosed with lymphoma.

At age 18, Otto's attitude was "all about me." Today, at 40 and having faced death twice (he's in remission), he has an enormous amount of compassion for others. Now, his attitude is to realize what others have given him and give back what and where he can.

And it all began with a book given to him at his dental office. ***To hear Otto tell it, Howard Dental Center saved my life. There is more to them than just working on teeth.***



DAWN

As a Hispanic woman, Dawn realized too late she was married to the cultural stereotype: a man who thought she was his property. It took surviving his attempt to murder her and turning to faith to understand she *did* have value. Only then did she start to turn her life around. And turn it around, she did!

Her downhill slide began when Dawn ran away from home as a teen. Living on the streets, perpetually drunk, and eating out of dumpsters diminished what little self-worth she had.

Dawn succeeded in mastering the self-fulfilling prophecy by marrying an abusive man. His attempt to do away with Dawn, left her in a coma for six months and an HIV diagnosis.

Although she steadily got stronger, her tragedy was not over. In 2007, Dawn gave birth to a beautiful daughter, Destiny. A miracle she thought, not only because the baby weighed only 1 lb-6 oz. at birth and lived, but because Destiny was *not* HIV+. Dawn's joy was short-lived. Destiny died of heart failure at six months.

But the multiple tragedies gave Dawn a new faith that she could overcome anything. She realized she had survived for a reason – to get educated and to educate others. Currently, Dawn makes presentations around the metro area to other HIV+ women. In May, she will start to work on her GED. In speaking to women in a similar situation, she tells her audiences that she is a survivor, and that she has HIV, but *it does not have her.*

Dawn came to Howard Dental Center because she realized, with her new-found faith, she was not treating her body in the way it was intended. Top to bottom she was a mess and her teeth were falling out. Her admiration for HDC is not only because of the dental services she received, but because the staff goes over and above to enhance the patients' overall health.

Dawn had started on a new HIV medication. When she came in for her appointment, Mercy, the dental assistant, noticed her face was very swollen. After some research on the drug, Mercy discovered it contained steroids. They were attacking Dawn’s immune system. A quick call to her doctor and the medications were stopped. ***To hear Dawn tell it, “If it wasn’t for Howard Dental, I wouldn’t be alive today.”***



DAN

What a survivor! Dan was diagnosed with AIDS in 1991 and along with his health, began losing his eyesight. Today, with the help of his best friend, Scout, Dan’s health has improved immeasurably, including his dental health, so much so that he now volunteers with us.



Although Dan loved his job as a financial analyst for production with US West Dex, he was unable to continue working after 1994. With a T-cell count hovering around 0, other opportunistic infections began to invade his body. (T-cells are the white blood cells that play major role in keeping your immune system healthy – the higher the count, the better). His overall health, including his lungs, eyesight and teeth started a downhill slide.

With the loss of sight in his right eye in 1998 and his left in 2001, Dan entered vocational rehabilitation and was taught the skills necessary to prepare his meals and move about with a cane. Because he became so attached to his first dog (a puppy that passed away at age nine), Dan decided to get a guide dog in 2007. He and Scout are now inseparable.

Dan was suffering acute oral pain when he found us in 1995. Because of the dental care he received and the respect with which he was treated, he has become a model patient, taking care of his oral health so that his overall health remains good.

To hear Dan tell it, ***“Due to a facial disfiguring opportunistic infection (molluscum), had the staff not been so warm and welcoming, I would probably never have gone to the dentist in the first place. It was their kindness and unflinching attitude which made me feel so comfortable and welcome, when others as well as myself, viewed me as such an outcast and grotesque...I think all AIDS sufferers sometimes feel as outcasts, but when you look like the elephant man to boot, that is a harsh reality to bear.”***



DON

It’s been 20 years since Don was diagnosed with HIV. He will be the first to tell you that he didn’t do well the first 10 years after the diagnosis – he was planning to die. Obviously he didn’t, but he sank into depression and found comfort in drugs. The resulting lack of medical and dental care took a toll on his body.

Don arrived at Howard Dental Center over 11 years ago with his mouth and his overall health in shambles. Cocaine and methamphetamine use, combined with the ravages of AIDS had finally destroyed his teeth. Now all that has changed since Don committed to maintaining a healthy lifestyle. Don says the credit goes to the staff at HDC where they understood his needs from the beginning. Also, the continuity of care and stability of the staff was important to his commitment to health.



Since receiving new teeth, he realizes the benefit of being able to eat a variety of healthy foods. As a result, his weight has stabilized, his T-cell count is up (meaning his body can fight illness more effectively), and he's healthier all the way around. ***To hear Don tell it, "My new teeth have added to my sense of confidence. I feel better because I look better and it has made a difference in the way people perceive me." And he's going back to school!***



GERALD

Without a doubt, Gerald is *paying it forward* today, although his story would suggest otherwise.

Gerald grew up in a poor area of Washington DC without many options. While he chose to get involved with drugs before his stint in Vietnam, his IV drug use escalated upon his return. He was shooting up heroin, but naive about the transmission of HIV through needle sharing; It was 1985 and he thought only gay white males got the disease. But, then *his* HIV test came back positive. Gerald was told he only had six months to live, so he thought that was a good excuse to forgo any HIV medications, and instead *go for broke*.



That decision led to many overnights in the county jail, then federal prison, culminating in a court-ordered trip to Denver in 1989 for a three-year drug treatment program. While he got clean during the program, he relapsed upon his release and spent 1991-1999 in and out of jail, homeless, and without medical treatment for what had converted to an AIDS diagnosis.

Fast forward to 2002, Gerald met two people who would inspire him to face his diagnosis and seek treatment, both for the drug addiction and AIDS. He began to see positive change in his life and his health problems stabilized. He wanted to give back and started volunteering. In 2007, Gerald faced another setback in his attempt to improve his and others' lives in the African American community – he was diagnosed with lymphoma.

Gerald didn't give up. After a year of chemo, he is in remission and continues his chosen work: to help stop the spread of HIV & AIDS in the black community - where it is growing disproportionately. And he continues to work on improving his own health, including his oral health. After receiving new dentures at Howard Dental Center, Gerald comes regularly for his hygiene appointments. But that's not all, because of his commitment to the community; Gerald was invited to join the board of HDC and is our spokesperson on the importance of good oral health care and its connection to overall health. He's walking the talk!

To hear him tell it, "I have nothing but good things to say about Howard Dental. I've gotten care there I don't think I could get anywhere else. They are specialists and they care."



SANTIAGO

Santiago has the most wonderful smile now and we love to see it. But that wasn't always the case. Santiago came to the United States to marry his childhood sweetheart. As part of the immigration process, he had to update his medical records with a check-up. That's when he discovered he was HIV+. He realizes now he could have died if not for that discovery because he might not have gotten treatment.



Santiago was referred to Howard Dental Center by his doctor and he is so glad for that referral. When he arrived, he was missing several teeth because of lack of care. In Mexico, teeth are pulled rather than restored. So, we set about to give Santiago a new set of teeth and a new smile.

But, his biggest thrill is that he can eat his favorite foods again. ***To hear Santiago say it, "Thanks to the great staff at Howard Dental, I am now able to eat healthy foods and nourish my body so I can stay healthy."***



Despite his fear that his new wife would leave him as a result of his HIV+ diagnosis, they are still happily together.



FALON

"If fate hands you a lemon, make lemonade." Dale Carnegie

Our patient, Falon chose to do just that, *eventually*. While her life growing up was anything but ideal and many of her choices got her into trouble, at age 24 she has turned her life around. Many of our female patients become infected with HIV by boyfriends or husbands who either don't tell their partners they are positive or don't know themselves. At 17, that's what happened to Falon. Combined with a crack-cocaine habit and a criminal record, it looked like she was doomed to a life of bad choices.

Then Falon chose to turn her life around. When she found out she was pregnant, she stopped the drugs and started taking care of herself and her unborn baby. She came to Howard Dental Center last fall in severe pain with a mouthful of decayed teeth. Under the expert care of Dr. Preston, Falon endured seven root canals. Now she has a healthy mouth and a beautiful smile again. ***"Dr. Preston has been really great...I'm very thankful to her and thanks to Margaret [HDC case manager] who helped me get in [to Howard Dental Center]."***

And now for the rest of the story... Falon enrolled at Community College of Denver, got her GED and plans to enroll at Metro State College to get her undergraduate degree. She had a healthy baby in February who is *not* HIV+. She chose to put the baby up for adoption and was able to choose the adoptive parents. Everyone is thriving!



SEAN

Sean is a tall good-looking young man - too young to have lost most of his teeth. He didn't lose them to a terrible accident; Sean lost them to a six-year methamphetamine addiction.

We first saw Sean in August of 2008. He arrived at the clinic in crippling pain from oral infections. Sean



remembers the compassion with which the staff told him what needed to be done. However, his dentist at Howard Dental, Dr. Last, also told him she would do her part, but he must do his - *he had to get off the meth.*

Though the drug had been a part of his life for a long time, Sean gave it up in October. Through improvements in his oral health, his overall health, and new teeth, Sean began to see the benefits of being clean. He had a new sense of reality, stability and *real* friends. Some of his real friends are the staff at Howard Dental, where he knows everyone by first name *and* he knows they care.



To hear Sean tell it, "*These people really care about what they do. They helped me look in the mirror and be OK with what I see.*"



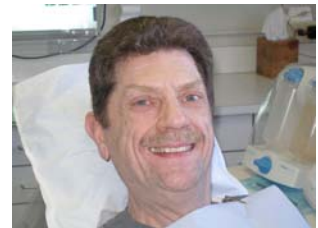
KEVIN (in his own words)

“My name is Kevin. I am a patient at Howard Dental Center. When I came to HDC, I had only 5 teeth left because of years of drug abuse. The meth turned my enamel into mush. I am going on 3 years clean & sober now and I am given a new life. I look forward to being able to smile again and eat foods that I haven’t been able to for a long time. My favorites are steak, ribs (I’m from L.A.) and salad (lettuce and carrots are a problem without teeth). Howard Dental Center has also given me the confidence to go to a job interview or interact with people again, things I would never have had to think about if I had good teeth. I will always be grateful to the people of Howard Dental for my new teeth and my new look.”



JOE

Joe is a HIV survivor since 1989 and one of our favorite patients. After the dedicated staff at Howard Dental, brought Joe's teeth back to a healthy condition, he has been a regular, committed to maintaining his good oral health.



In the fall of 2007, Joe came in for his routine check-up. However, this particular check-up was *anything but routine*. David Zamboni, our dental hygienist found suspicious white spots on Joe's tongue. After consultation with Dr. Sally Preston, one of our dentists, a biopsy was advised. The biopsy confirmed a diagnosis that could be deadly: *squamous cell carcinoma*.

The cancerous cells were removed at a specialty clinic and Joe continued his normal cleaning routine at Howard Dental. All was good... Then, in July of 2008, our dental hygienist found new white spots. The subsequent biopsy revealed the cancer had returned. This time Joe had more extensive surgery to make sure they "got it all." We're happy to report they did!

Because of the thoroughness of Howard Dental Center's staff *and* Joe's trust in us, he followed the staff's recommendations and sought treatment. Otherwise, Joe might not be with us today.

As Joe tells it, "Dave and Sally pay particular attention to things other than just teeth. This clinic has saved my life more than once!"





TERRY

And as one of our patients discovered, it's more than appearance. As a child, Terry never went to the dentist. He had missing teeth (lost to decay), teeth that needed fillings, and gobs of plaque. Terry was self-conscious and embarrassed to smile *or even look at people*. He quickly realized they didn't look at him and certainly didn't smile at him.

Terry was referred to Howard Dental Center through the Colorado AIDS Project. He has been one of our favorite patients for almost five years. A favorite because Terry never stops smiling now. Through the expert care AND compassion of his dentist, Dr. Preston, he learned the importance of taking care of his teeth, his gums, *his entire mouth*. Now, with new, gleaming teeth and a bright smile, Terry has learned that people are more apt to make conversation with him. It has opened up a whole new life for him.

To hear Terry tell it, "With a smile, people really communicate more."

