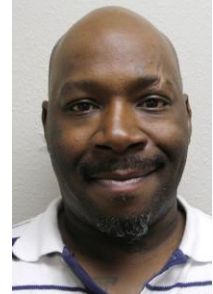




OUR SUCCESS STORIES

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. Her’s 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.

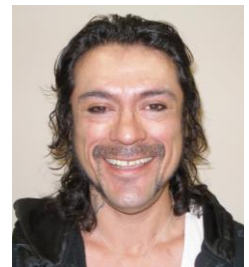
- 1) She switched her major to counseling. Through her research and experience with the disease, Kari realized the heterosexual female population with HIV+ is extremely overlooked. There are very few resources for these women and she intends to fill that gap.
- 2) She became a patient at Howard Dental 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 here 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*.

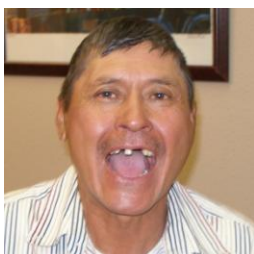


That decision led to many overnights in the county jail, then federal prison, culminating in a court-ordered trip to Denver in 1989 for a three-year drug treatment program. While he got clean during the program, he relapsed upon his release and spent 1991-1999 in and out of jail, homeless, and without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



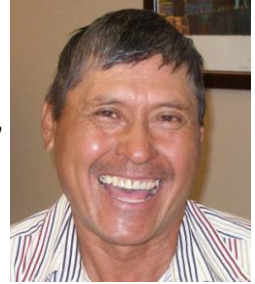
SANTIAGO

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

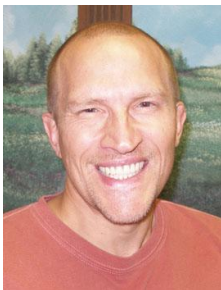
Sean is a tall good-looking young man - too young to have lost most of his teeth. He didn't lose them to a terrible accident; Sean lost them to a six-year methamphetamine addiction.

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.*"



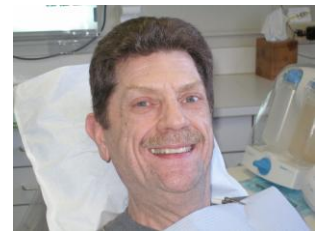
KEVIN (in his own words)

“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."

