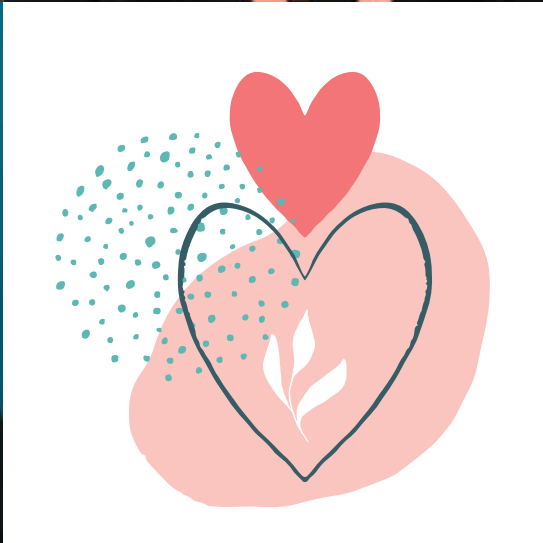


# THIS IS US: TOUCHING HEARTS, SAVING LIVES

A book of patient and provider stories



# A Community Where Everyone is Healthy and Happy

As a non-profit 501(c)(3) community health organization, Neighborhood served over 370,000 medical, dental, and behavioral health visits in 2020. Each was in pursuit of our mission:

To improve the health and happiness of the communities we serve by providing quality care to all, regardless of situation or circumstance.



## better together

**To our patients:** Thank you for entrusting us with your care. Regardless of situation or circumstance, we are motivated by a life of service for the benefit of our communities. We feel it is our responsibility to remove barriers to high-quality healthcare to ensure you receive the care you need during each of life's chapters. Neighborhood's mission remains unchanged: we live to improve the health and happiness of each patient.

**To our donors and community partners:** From medical to behavioral health, from telehealth to mobile services, from Pediatrics to Programs of All Inclusive Care for the Elderly, from crisis to building services for the future, thank you for helping us set the standard for health center quality and innovation. We are so grateful for your unwavering support.

**To our providers:** Thank you for dedicating your lives to serving others. You have the unique ability to save lives, empowering and supporting patients during their most vulnerable moments. You make our communities and our world a healthier and happier place to live in. During these times, when the need for healthcare is greater than ever, thank you for serving so many.

We are better together.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Rakesh Patel".

Rakesh Patel, MD, MBA, FAFP, CPE

Chief Executive Officer



# 571 Appointments and 10 out of 10!

With a promise of a job, a place to live, and a company car, Mark moved from Orange County to San Diego at a moment's notice. Unfortunately, after three months, no promises had been fulfilled and Mark found himself without a job, a home, or means of transportation. This, among other circumstances, as Mark recalled, "had me feeling hopeless, homeless, and I tried to commit suicide." Shortly after his suicide attempt, Mark found Neighborhood. Or, as Mark likes to say, "Neighborhood met me where I was at and found me, too."

Mark shared, "I was in the hospital for seven days and they had a printout that listed rehab homes and I saw Neighborhood Healthcare. I transitioned to one of Neighborhood's community partners, The Fellowship Center, and continued going to rehab for almost a year. Thankfully, Neighborhood had other services that I utilized because I was a complicated patient. I had a bad head injury, a hip transplant, Acute Myeloid Leukemia, and a slew of other ailments."

After sixteen years and 571 appointments, Mark was asked about his relationship with Neighborhood. Without hesitation, he gushes, "As far as I'm concerned, it's the best in the world. You have the best internal medicine! On a scale from 1-10, Neighborhood is a 10!"

Mark continued, "Neighborhood Healthcare over the years has been extremely helpful. Not only the providers, but the staff. They are very, very great, cheerful people. People that work at Neighborhood make it possible for us to come back home safe. Whether it's my primary doctor, Dr. Schiff, or my psychiatrist, Dr. Ede, all of them are wonderful. When dealing with cancer, your attitude is the most important thing. When providers are positive and have a great attitude, too, it's the difference between getting better or dying."

When thanking 16-year-patient, Mark, for choosing Neighborhood Healthcare, knowing he has many healthcare providers to choose from, he exclaimed, "Of course! I wouldn't want to go anywhere else in the entire world!"



# Neighborhood Patient Turned Neighborhood Leadership



More than six years ago, Chasity received devastating news that she had an 8-inch tumor. And with that bad news came more bad news: the tumor and the surrounding tissue needed to be removed immediately. With emergency surgery looming, Chasity realized that she had another problem on her hands: no insurance. At the time, she did not qualify for Medi-Cal and the type of insurance needed for her tumor surgery was not within reach. Chasity waited, without receiving the necessary tumor removal surgery, for one week before realizing that she needed to pursue a different healthcare option.

Overwhelmed with concerns and questions, Chasity contacted Neighborhood. Within two days, Chasity saw Dr. Ede, who expressed deep concern and connection. Shortly following that appointment, he provided her with an emergency referral to University of California San Diego (UCSD). She said that she will never forget that day when she sat across from Dr. Ede and felt reassurance wash over her because she knew that what Dr. Ede was saying was true. "An open, honest doctor," she said.

Following the referral, Chasity went to UCSD where she underwent the multi-hour tumor removal surgery. Chasity said that there were complications and she almost did not make it out of anesthesia. Now, having made it to the other side, Chasity shared a life motto that she refers to often: "But without the pain, there would be no rainbow."

*“My first day on the job, I was intimidated and scared. But after I started speaking with the patients, I knew this is what I always wanted to do.”*

The moment she left Dr. Ede's office, she had her heart set on working for Neighborhood. Even though her health concerns had taken priority, Chasity never lost sight of Neighborhood. She shared, "Four years later, and after applying for multiple positions within Neighborhood, I finally received a call back. I was offered a job in the Call Center. When accepting the position over the phone, I told the recruiter that I could do a backflip because I was so excited!" Later, Chasity recalled, "My first day on the job, I was intimidated and scared. But after I started speaking with the patients, I knew this is what I always wanted to do."

Chasity says that throughout her childhood and early adulthood, she fell on hard times. She recounted, "I know what it feels like to feel worthless and when I started working in the Call Center, I realized that patients who called in seemed to struggle with their sense of worth, too." She continued, "It is my personal mission to make sure every patient I talk to feels important. Since I cannot pay Neighborhood back with money, I feel like I can give back by treating everyone like they are someone. It makes me feel so good that a patient or coworker can hold their head up a little higher after talking with me."

After an emotional interview, Chasity concluded by saying, "I feel like this is where I belong. I just love talking to our patients. I want to treat everyone like a superstar. I know that treating them like they belong on the red carpet will attract more people to Neighborhood. I tell patients every step of the way what I am doing. That way, they feel respected and taken care of. We are a community and we need each other. My life has changed completely, both as a patient and as an employee."

# A Second Chance at Life

In 2020, we all experienced loss. Although it may have been in varied spaces and forms, we've all had something stop existing in the way it did before.



For Joe, COVID-19 brought about unexpected, unimagined, and unfortunate circumstances that impacted his health, home, and everything in between. Joe, a local senior, was homeless and living in his car for nearly a decade when the pandemic began. And because Joe has Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease (COPD), he often struggles with long-winded conversation or traveling by foot, limiting most of his day-to-day activities. Even more so, his obstructed airflow from his lungs, due to COPD, renders him oxygen dependent and among the most at-risk for COVID-19.

When Joe began experiencing economic hardship due to COVID-19, he stopped using his oxygen. Devastatingly, Joe was hospitalized. While hospitalized, his home (vehicle) was impounded and on the same day, his Social Security Income (SSI) was terminated.

Nearly every aspect of Joe's life had seen loss and nearly every aspect of his life, within a few days, stopped existing in the way it did before.

Joe turned to Neighborhood's Late Life Depression Program, a collaborative care program for seniors, in partnership with Interfaith Community services. The same day that Joe sought assistance, Neighborhood was able to contact the following local programs on his behalf: San Diego 211, Legal Aid, Access to Independence, and Interfaith connected Joe to their Homeless Court and Rental Assistance Programs.

Because Joe has shortness of breath, he cannot speak for long periods of time. Neighborhood served both as his mouthpiece and more importantly, his advocate.

Neighborhood was able to coordinate with community care partners to reinstate Joe's SSI benefit with a retroactive payment that allowed him to purchase a new car and to receive a higher monthly SSI benefit. In addition, Interfaith was able to extinguish \$2,500 worth of impound-related fines that accrued each day while he was in the hospital. Interfaith was also able to provide a deposit and rental assistance for Joe so he could experience the everyday luxuries of running water and electricity, alongside a bedroom and bathroom.

For the first time in ten years, Joe was able to stretch his legs fully and sleep vertically in a bed rather than in the backseat of a crowded vehicle. And for the first time in a long time, he was able to use a stove to cook his meal rather than relying on fast food...or no food at all.

Joe, although initially experiencing loss of incomprehensible gravity, is now living a drastically different life than before. "A much more fulfilled life than before," says Joe.

With the help of Neighborhood and its relationships with valued community partners, Joe was given a second chance. Joe's story is more than one of situation or circumstance, it's one of unwavering support during life's most difficult chapters.



# A Renewed Relationship with Health and Healthcare



"I never, ever, went to regular doctors' appointments. I only ever went to emergency rooms" replied Hadra. "Because every time I went to an appointment, the doctor would rush in and be rushed and I would always get glossed over. I remember in my younger years going to the doctors because of stomach pains and high blood pressure only to be told that I needed to lose weight and continue taking my medication – it was always cold and short."

After relocating to Menifee, Hadra's daughter recommended she find a new doctor in the area, one closer to home. Hadra's daughter strongly recommended she establish care with a new Primary Care Physician, to give her health a fighting chance. Her daughter promised that this time would be different and reluctantly, Hadra agreed. The next week, Hadra had her first appointment with Dr. Sandhu. She's never looked back.

Years later, and with a happier and healthier self, Hadra grinned from ear-to-ear as she reminisced on her first appointment with Neighborhood:

"From the moment I walked into Dr. Sandhu's office, he just listened! He introduced himself and asked how he could help me. He really looked into my eyes and waited for me to respond. He really listened! He didn't have a tablet in his hands, he was solely focused on me in that moment." Smiling even more so, she continued, "I was taken by surprise. Almost speechless. Eventually, I said that I've never had a doctor listen to me. That was five years ago, and I'm still smiling about that experience."

Hadra decided, immediately following her first appointment with Dr. Sandhu, that she was going to lose weight – once and for all. She recalls, "That day, I made a 30-year change in my health. I started eating healthy based on the recommendations Dr. Sandhu gave me. Then, my headaches disappeared. Then, my blood pressure began to drop. To date, I've lost 60 pounds."

Dr. Sandhu, as said best by Hadra, "[he] remembers everything about you – even the small details, like my family member's names and where I went for vacation. He comes to you as a person and I sincerely believe that I'm his family, not his patient. And he's part of my family, too."

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*"From the moment I walked into Dr. Sandhu's office, he just listened!"*

With a renewed sense of self and an improved relationship with healthcare, Hadra became her own patient advocate. Not only for herself, but for her family too. Hadra began suggesting Dr. Sandhu to everyone she knew. Hadra's daughter, the one who made the first appointment on her mother's behalf, is now Dr. Sandhu's patient. Even her daughter's boyfriend has established care with Neighborhood and is currently receiving care from Dr. Sandhu! It didn't take long for all members of Hadra's immediate family and extended family to begin receiving high-quality care from health professionals who care — all of them continue to see Dr. Sandhu.

Hadra recounted her significant life changes with pride, explaining that it was because someone believed in her that she started to believe in herself. She said, "Dr. Sandhu set realistic goals for me and encouraged me all the meanwhile." And when asked about the care her daughter and her daughter's boyfriend have received with Neighborhood, she commented, "Great! Both great. And I don't know what Dr. Sandhu said to my daughter's boyfriend, but he quit smoking cigarettes!"

She continued, "For so long, I felt ugly. I was rotten. I thought to myself if I die then I die, but after seeing Dr. Sandhu and beginning to change my life around, I want to live and be healthy. I want to feel and look good. I used to be an overgrown, bruised tomato. Now I'm a young, fresh, ripe tomato. And I plan to keep it that way."

# Quality over Quantity

**Sometimes, a person may be reluctant to receive medical care, seeking medical attention only when the circumstances are dire. Jenna is one of those people. She was not fond of the doctor or the doctor's office, staying as far away as she could and for as long as she could.**

So much so, that we only began caring for Jenna by happenstance, after she called us in need of an urgent cyst draining and a subsequent dressing change. When she arrived, she met Dr. McFarland who, after a series of questions realized Jenna did not have a primary care doctor, nor had she established care with any healthcare clinic. Quite casually, Jenna admitted that she was nearing her 62nd birthday and had never seen a doctor consistently, not in her entire life.

Dr. McFarland encouraged Jenna and worked alongside her to schedule three quality-based screenings based on her age and gender: colon cancer screening, cervical cancer screening, and breast cancer screening.

Regrettably, after interpreting the results of each screening, Dr. McFarland notified Jenna that all three screenings had uncovered abnormalities. Devastatingly, each pre-screening had identified either a pre-cancer or cancer.

In the trying days and months that followed, Jenna was referred to various specialists, including gastroenterologists, gynecologists, oncologists, and many more. Although Jenna's situation continued to be dire, the relationships made with Neighborhood doctors, each as compassionate as the next, proved to be warm and helpful. Throughout the many months and years of Jenna's care, she's worked with Dr. McFarland, Dr. Zampello, and so many others.

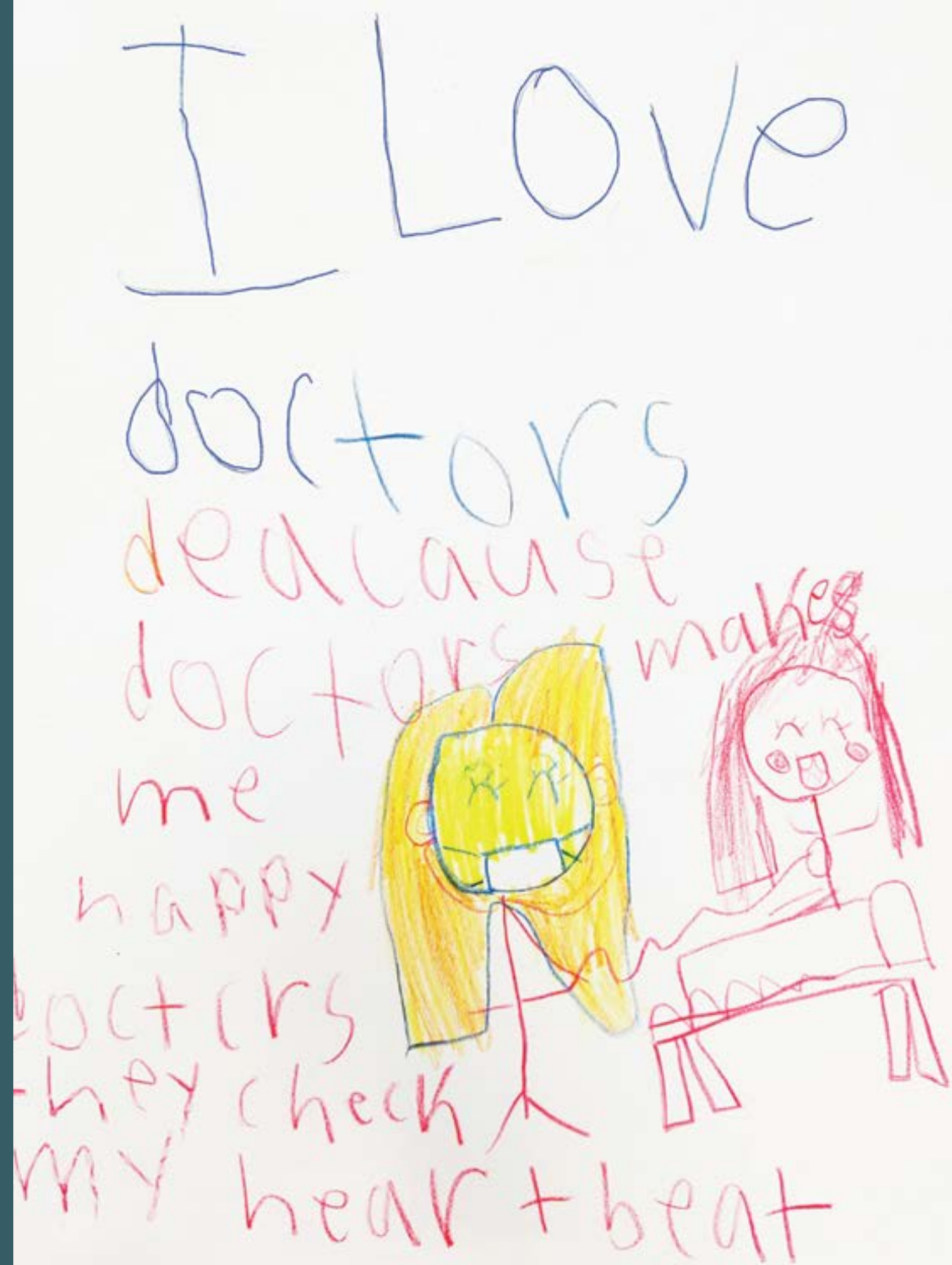
Jenna not only established care with Neighborhood, but she now prioritizes her appointments. Jenna now sees her doctors consistently, advocating for herself and her healthcare. And perhaps most importantly, seeking medical attention only when the circumstances become dire is a thing of the past, noting that consistent appointments are her new normal.

It has been nearly two years since Neighborhood began caring for Jenna. Since, she has received a colonoscopy where a carcinoid tumor was fully removed with her most recent FIT test revealing no abnormalities. Her high-grade cervix dysplasia was removed with follow-up screenings proving her cervix to be normal and healthy. And finally, after undergoing surgery, radiation, and hormone treatment, it seems that Jenna will, for the third time, emerge cancer-free.

Although her road to recovery has been one of high peaks and low valleys, her thoroughfare is flattening, with fewer road bumps and detours, as she arrives to her final destination: health and happiness.

Thank you, Dr. McFarland, Dr. Zampello, and so many others who provide quality-based best practices that are lifesaving, helping Jenna to live a fuller life before cancer had time to run its inevitable course.

Jenna may have found Neighborhood by chance although the care that she received was anything but.



# Your Health and Wellbeing are Our Priority

## Healthcare is not a one size fits all

Through our Health Homes Program (HHP), we are able to serve the whole, unique person, regardless of situation or circumstance. Through HHP, Neighborhood is able to meet patients where they are, providing care for Medi-Cal beneficiaries with complex medical needs and chronic conditions who may benefit from enhanced care management and coordination. Through the HHP, Neighborhood coordinates the full range of physical health, behavioral health, and community-based long-term services of more than 400 patients in San Diego and Riverside counties.

The HHP and Neighborhood's dedicated HHP Team serve as patient advocates for nearly 400 patients who qualify for individualized, high-quality healthcare and who might also benefit from one of the following services:

- Comprehensive care management
- Care coordination (physical health, behavioral health, community-based care)
- Health promotion
- Comprehensive transitional care
- Individual and family support
- Referral to community and social support services

The HHP allows our healthcare professionals to interact weekly, and sometimes daily, with one of the most vulnerable patient populations in the state of California. In addition, before Neighborhood employees begin interacting with HHP patients, they must undergo training specific to this patient population, including trauma-informed care and community and social service-based care.

The HHP saves those who may have fallen through the cracks had they not been given the hands-on care provided by Neighborhood.

To hear directly from HHP patients, visit Hadra, Ana, Richard and Tawnie, and Timothy.



# The One Phone Call that Changed Two Lives Forever

**Richard and his wife, Tawnie, heard about Neighborhood Healthcare from a lifelong friend they shared. This friend of theirs was so adamant they become patients of Neighborhood, she convinced them to call the next day and speak with an enrollment counselor.**

Long before Richard joined Neighborhood, he was diagnosed with Chronic Kidney Disease (CKD). As a result of damaged kidneys, Richard struggled with high blood pressure and diabetes as well as heart disease. Richard, having been passed around other healthcare systems, continued to struggle with his health for decades. With CKD adversely impacting most, if not all, of Richard's day-to-day activities, he had also been diagnosed with depression – it is common that when suffering from CKD, depression appears three times more often than that of the general population.

Fortunately, Richard was told he qualified for the Health Homes Program: a community-based care management and coordination program, caring for those who have complex and chronic medical conditions. Within days, he began to receive the individualized care that he needed all along. And within the first 90 days at Neighborhood, Richard and his Health Homes Program Nurse spoke every day.

Tawnie, Richard's soulmate and caregiver, witnessed the high-quality care he received from Neighborhood and decided to call and see if she, too, could enroll in Neighborhood's Health Homes Program. In a single day, Tawnie was able to connect with the enrollment counselor and register for the same program that brought her husband back to life. Her husband's healthcare provider and favorite nurse, then, became hers too.

Tawnie suffers from Hashimoto's disease, an incurable autoimmune disorder affecting her thyroid, as well as high cholesterol and depression. Much like her husband, the individualized care provided was, quite



literally, lifesaving. Tawnie shared, "Neighborhood takes the time to listen. Instead of dismissing me, I know that I will be heard and taken care of. Recently, they decided to run tests on me and I have full confidence that once my tests are complete, I will be able to sit down with someone for as long as I need to receive all the answers. I know that I can call our nurse, Robin, any time of the day and she will get back to me."

As for Richard, the Health Homes Program was able to provide him a small, discreet wearable device for his diabetes that sends glucose readings to his smartphone. For the first time in over a decade, Richard said goodbye to fingersticks. Now, he monitors his glucose levels

throughout the day and night, with the Dexcom device alerting him if his levels get too high or too low. In an effort to lower A1C, Richard monitors his glucose religiously and even shares his Dexcom data with Tawnie. According to the Health Homes Nurse assigned to Richard and Tawnie, "The power is giving them the information and education needed to be advocates for their own health. And they are doing just that!"

Tawnie, before handing the phone to Richard, stated, "For many other reasons, Neighborhood has thought outside of the box to help heal us. For example, Richard had been in a car accident and after the surgery had continued issues with his clavicle. Before we came to Neighborhood, a doctor had put him on a lot of antibiotics to clear the infection. The antibiotics never helped.

It wasn't until we came to Neighborhood that someone took the time to look beyond the surface, discovering that the hardware from his car accident surgery, used to fuse two bones together, was causing the recurring infection. Without Neighborhood, he would have been in discomfort the rest of his life."

Tawnie, having finished her storytelling, hands the phone back to Richard, but prompts him to "share the story he always does."

Richard shared, "I am 64 years old and of all the doctors I've ever had, Neighborhood's clinic and set of doctors are the best I've ever been with. They have changed my life and not only did it help me, but it helped my wife too. Thank you for being such a resource for us both. How do we ever thank you?"



# Putting Your Heart on the Line

**Katherine was at the lowest point in her life. When she arrived at Neighborhood's Date clinic, she had, only days earlier, tried to commit suicide. Katherine first spoke to one of our Certified Enrollment Counselors (CECs), and within minutes began weeping, speaking only in half-sentences. As Katherine whispered the details of her most recent and most pained life experiences, the CEC began to understand the severity of Katherine's situation. Through each tearful sentence, Katherine's immediate needs were identified and her medical and behavioral care expedited.**

Katherine's husband had been diagnosed with Amyotrophic Lateral Sclerosis (ALS) with only a few months to live – the doctor estimating less than a year. At the time, both she and her husband were without health insurance. This was a rarity for Katherine because both she and her husband had maintained full time employment, choosing from various health care plans throughout the years. Only until recently, did she find her and her husband without it.

Katherine decided to stay by her husband's side, as a caregiver and confidant, until his untimely passing in 2020. Katherine was devastated and even more so when she was told there could be no funeral for her husband due to COVID-19. Teary eyed, she said, "I grieved. Grieving in a COVID world is difficult, but Neighborhood makes all the difference with virtual appointments in Behavioral Health. Thankfully, I was introduced to Dr. Ross. I look forward to my bi-weekly calls with her. I've experienced other healthcare centers, but none like Neighborhood. Each person I've come into contact with at Neighborhood is full of genuineness. Other healthcare centers hurry you through appointments. Neighborhood doesn't do that. Neighborhood is such a huge support for me."

After neglecting health issues of her own while aiding her husband, she later found herself hospitalized. Through the heartache and because of her own diminishing health, Katherine was introduced to Dr. Bishop. After her first appointment with Dr. Bishop, Katherine shared, "I've never met somebody who has so much empathy and truly cares. She has such a positive attitude and so much empathy. She's incredible...there are no words, actually, to explain how much she's helped me."

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***I went through the worst and coping with the pandemic, losing everything. But Neighborhood was there. They gave me heart and hope.***”

Nearly a year later, with Katherine well on her way to emotional and physical recovery, she shared, "There seems to be a relationship that Neighborhood builds with their patients. I had put my heart out on the line with Dr. Ross, Dr. Bishop, all of them. They helped me to recover. I finally felt that someone was holding me up with genuine empathy, genuine passion. I went through the worst and coping with the pandemic, losing everything. But Neighborhood was there. They gave me heart and hope."





# A Shining Light in Healthcare

**David, long-time Neighborhood patient and Patient and Family Advisory Council (PFAC) member, praises Dr. Schultz every chance he gets.**

In between praises, he shared about his healthcare experiences before arriving at Neighborhood, "I wasn't feeling well for months and those months turned into years. For years, I had been asking doctors to find the problem. And after so many blood tests and scans and appointments, I had just about given up. Until I arrived at Neighborhood. It feels different. The doctors are different."

After arriving at Neighborhood, David was introduced to Dr. Schultz. David explained his symptoms which included rapid weight loss, fever, night sweats, and swollen lymph nodes. Because these symptoms are somewhat common, particularly during flu season, most doctors, according to David, provided him with an unsatisfactory answer and sent him on his way, hopeful the problem would resolve itself before the next visit.

Dr. Schultz, however, noticed abnormal proteins in David's bloodwork. After careful consideration, additional blood testing, and collaboration with University of California San Diego's leading cancer care doctors, Dr. Schultz discovered that David had Waldenstrom Macroglobulinemia (WM). A type of lymphoplasmacytic lymphoma, the cancer had already begun to spread, causing David chronic abdominal pain and organ swelling, too.

David was diagnosed with an incredibly rare form of cancer, a cancer with an incidence rate of approximately three cases per million people per year in the United States. The year David was diagnosed, he was one of 1,500 people who would be diagnosed with WM.

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*I had just about given up until I arrived at Neighborhood. It feels different. The doctors are different.*



Although an incredibly rare form of cancer was not the news he had been hoping for, David had an answer, a long-awaited result.

David reminisced, "Dr. Schultz is an amazing man and an amazing doctor. I'm blessed to have met Dr. Schultz. What he's done for me and Neighborhood is a shining light in healthcare. I don't know how he does it, but he does it."

During his five years as a Neighborhood patient, David explained, "I've never met one person at Neighborhood Healthcare that hasn't been professional, knowledgeable, no matter the position and how I come into contact with them. Even during COVID, the quality of care hasn't diminished. I am honored to be on the PFAC and I now get to work alongside Neighborhood – the people who extended my life."

After one last comment applauding Dr. Schultz for saving his life, David leaves with a final farewell and thank you: "I marvel at Neighborhood. I recommend everybody go here. Neighborhood is top-notch, we'd be a lot better off if all healthcare were like Neighborhood's..."

"...I'll come here forever."

# Listening as an Art

**Monty arrived at Neighborhood because of his high cholesterol. He'd been struggling with it all his life and he knew that he needed to reprioritize his health. He said, "If you have a car and you haven't changed its oil in 100,000 miles, you'd be concerned. And that's how I felt about my heart."**

When Monty met Dr. Sauriol, he knew that he'd found his forever doctor. He recalled, "So many people get looked over in healthcare. But I've always felt that I've been treated like a priority. Even if it's busy, I never feel rushed. So many medical facilities are focused on the wrong things. Neighborhood has their priorities right. It's the small things, like listening, that make a difference. And all three facilities that I've been to have always been so clean and tidy. I'm looking and watching...always...because I've worked in healthcare before so I'm more aware than most patients."

Dr. Sauriol, after addressing Monty's health concerns related to his high cholesterol, referred him to a cardiologist as soon as possible.

The first referral proved "mildly unsuccessful" according to Monty. He said the cardiologist recommended he take aspirin and dismissed all other concerns voiced by Monty. After he shared this with Dr. Sauriol, she immediately referred Monty to a second cardiologist, assuring him that this experience would be better, more productive. Monty said, "I felt comfortable advocating for my own health and having her advocate for my health, too. So many doctors would have been offended that I asked for a different cardiologist and any other doctor would have told me I was wrong. Dr. Sauriol listened."

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*I'm glad my doctor never gave up on me and continued to offer me excellent patient care.*



The second cardiologist recommended a coronary angiogram, a procedure using X-ray imaging to see a heart's blood vessels. On the next day, December 31, they called Monty and requested he come in right away. The urgency of the call scared Monty, later proving that he was right and that his intuition proved true. He had 95% blockage in one of his arteries. He was admitted for emergency heart surgery.

Monty underwent emergency heart surgery and received three stents. And although Dr. Sauriol did not perform the heart surgery, Monty is grateful for her and the attention she's afforded him throughout the years.

"Looking back," he said, "If I would not have felt comfortable enough and if I had not thought that Dr. Sauriol was going to listen and help me, there's a large chance that I wouldn't have lived to see another day. I'm so glad that I felt comfortable enough to say something because it was a life or death decision. I'm glad my doctor never gave up on me and continued to offer me excellent patient care."

Dr. Sauriol, like so many others, treated the whole person. This is humanism in healthcare, the calling to treat one another – first and foremost – as a human being. Humanistic healthcare and healthcare professionals care about their patients as much as they care for them. After all, compassion is one of the most powerful catalysts for healing.

And as said best by Monty following his most recent heart surgery, "I received unusually great care. And if you do it for me, you do it for someone else, and then the cycle continues. Isn't that beautiful?"



David




## Stranded, but not without Resources

### Ana was stranded in Nicaragua.


When trying to leave the country, she had been alerted by the Nicaraguan government that borders were closed and international flights suspended. Ana tried to be resourceful, trying to access alternate travel beyond airplane – land, sea, and river – but all were shut down. Ana, accompanied by her two parents who she provides full time care for, tried to contact local authorities and even the U.S. Embassy in hopes of returning to the United States.

Beginning in March 2020 and spanning over many months, Ana called and recalled busy phone lines and overburdened government systems while trying to navigate her return home. And being 3,123 miles away from home and accompanied by two senior citizens who were considered high risk for contracting COVID made for a challenging situation.

Ana, too, was considered high risk due to diabetes and hypertension, placing additional pressure on her to find solutions for both her and her parents. But with the continued border closures, the various United States stay-at-home orders, and perpetual fear of COVID-19 on the rise, Ana felt overwhelmed. Ana decided to call Neighborhood – she needed resources and she needed them quickly.

Through international telehealth visits, Ana was able to receive her medication refills while marooned in Nicaragua. Neighborhood Healthcare continued to coordinate and collaborate with our internal pharmacy services and specialty providers, ensuring various medications could be obtained by members of Ana's family. The family, located in the United States, would then ship them to Nicaragua. While in Nicaragua, Ana said, "I couldn't go to the store, let alone the local pharmacy, in the nearest Nicaraguan city because

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*Neighborhood was able to coordinate my care from thousands of miles away and even able to suggest food that I'd be able to buy locally to help me maintain my sugar levels and stay healthy.*”



the pandemic was too contagious. Neighborhood was able to coordinate my care from thousands of miles away and even able to suggest food that I'd be able to buy locally to help me maintain my sugar levels and stay healthy” and she continued, “the telehealth visits were the only thing that helped. I needed constant contact with my provider because there was so much uncertainty happening around me, I wanted to be reassured and given resources as to what I could do for my health even though I wasn't physically in the United States.”

Later, Ana was provided with access to behavioral telehealth appointments in addition to her primary care.

Eight months later, in November of 2020, we welcomed Ana back to the United States. Within a week of returning to her home in Menifee, she was able to resume in person visits at Neighborhood's Menifee Clinic. And for the first time in nearly a year, she was finally able to tell the providers “thank you” in-person.

# Real Change, Real People, Real Healthcare

**To be a part of real change and to see hope become a reality, Neighborhood recently partnered with Ssubi.**

Ssubi is a local nonprofit organization, inspired by generating social good through improved access to healthcare. Part of Ssubi's mission reimagines a brighter, healthier tomorrow and operates on the belief that where you are born or where you live should not determine whether you live or die.

At Neighborhood, we also believe that in an increasingly connected world, what happens around the globe affects us all. And in the developing countries of the world, the challenges of poverty and disease can only be met if each of us recognizes our individual responsibility as a global citizen. We must then take bold steps forward to truly make a difference.

It made perfect sense, then, to partner with Ssubi when we began to relocate one of our clinics. Ssubi, with our global community in mind, opened healthcare clinics in Mexico, particularly in the indigenous and rural areas. So, when relocating our Pauma Valley clinic, we donated our extra exam tables, dental chairs, and various other medical equipment to improve access to healthcare. It is so often that when relocating, healthcare organizations dismantle and discard their equipment – equipment that could be repurposed someplace else.

We also donated office supplies, furniture, and other miscellaneous items that would support Mexico's local officials in creating healthcare clinics, particularly healthcare clinics for a pediatric population.

Neighborhood's mission extends beyond our local communities. Neighborhood makes a conscious effort to carry our mission forward into the global community, ensuring health and happiness for all.

Zulma Curet, MD

# A Renewed Sense of Hope, Health, and Happiness

**“You have three months to live” was all Timothy could remember from his call with the gastroenterologist.**

Head in hands, he wondered how intractable hiccups could have led to something so severe – something so life-altering. What Timothy couldn't remember, but was later notified of, was that his most recent gastroenterology appointment had revealed late-stage esophageal cancer and late-stage liver cancer – the latter with countless lesions. Shortly after the phone call ended, he was hospitalized due to weakness resulting from weight loss, needing a peg tube for feeding. As a complex patient with a history of hypertension, congestive heart failure, and a recent heart attack, he felt overwhelmed by the compounding health issues. And with such devastating news and few resources, Timothy was not just running out of time, he was running out of options.

Concurrently, Neighborhood's Health Homes Program had conducted a systematic caseload review. Comprised of Dr. Sandhu, Rachelle “Robin” Grassmeier, RN, and two Care Coordinators, they agreed that Timothy was the right candidate for this program. During the review, Dr. Sandhu looked up from his computer, glanced at Robin, and asked her to officially add Timothy to the Health Homes Program caseload. He needed our help.

Robin Grassmeier, RN, reached out to Timothy immediately. She described our Health Homes Program and how we could assist. And after a few conversations and some wholehearted convincing, Timothy agreed to see an oncologist and begin chemo to treat the two different, but equally complicated, late-stage cancers. Although accepting treatment is part of the battle, what follows is another: learning to live with illness.



Following chemo treatment, Timothy was unable to sleep, often felt anxious, and was losing feeling in his feet. Thankfully, he called Robin. Within a week, Robin was able to provide Timothy a hospital bed downstairs. And because he was often too tired to climb the stairs after treatment and didn't feel secure in his footing, he wasn't always able to access certain areas of his home. Robin was also able to get Timothy access to other assistive devices and as for his anxiousness and foot numbness, Robin and her team were able to change his medication. Weeks later, he was walking confidently around his home, anxiety-free, and could feel the carpet beneath his feet.

Once Timothy became enrolled in the Health Homes Program, he and Robin talked nearly every day. When asking Robin how it's been working with Timothy, she said, “I'm a 17-year veteran trauma nurse and Timothy was able to teach me something new every day. He's needed many things from me and this program and it's been a pleasure learning from him. If it wasn't for our Health Homes Program, he would have fallen through the cracks of our healthcare system.”

To date, Timothy has been enrolled in our Health Homes Program for two years. Now, he does not dread phone calls with healthcare professionals.

On the contrary, he prefers them. Having survived long after the three months he was promised by his gastroenterologist, Timothy is showing normal carcinoembryonic antigen (CEA) levels, signifying the two cancers are under control. His most recent pet scan revealed the lesions on his liver have significantly decreased and his tumor has shrunk considerably. Timothy was recently notified by his oncologist that he may make a full recovery.

With the Health Homes Program and the Neighborhood employees that make it so, Timothy has a renewed sense of hope, health, and happiness.



# It's Okay to not be Okay

**"I was in and out of the foster care system as a child" Christina shared, and bravely continued, "With 30 years of abuse and dysfunctional parents, you begin to realize that just because dysfunction is normal for your family, doesn't mean it's right."**



***For the first time,  
I have felt validated in  
a healthy way.***

35-year-old Christina, afraid to seek treatment, lived in fear that she would be seen as an unfit mother and that her kids would be taken away if she sought help. Having been separated from her biological parents at 13 and placed into the foster care system, Christina explained her younger years as, "strained, unstable, with lots of moving in and out of stranger's [foster] homes." And for many years, before arriving at Neighborhood Healthcare, she dealt with her trauma the only way she knew how: alone.

Christina had visited Neighborhood for a routine visit and while in the waiting room, she was given a depression pre-screening. When recollecting this moment, she shared, "Something deep within my spirit told me to tell the truth. I had this epiphany: when I keep quiet, stigma wins – and I cannot continue to let that happen."

Now, Christina and Dr. Woodworth meet every Tuesday. To Christina, these appointments are a lifeline to sustaining and improving her mental health. She commented, "I wouldn't miss it for the world. I don't schedule anything that would interfere with my Tuesday appointments. I refuse to miss it. There was one time when I had joint pain, headaches and migraines, and I almost missed my appointment. I told Dr. Woodworth about it,

and my desire for holistic healthcare, and she suggested I visit Neighborhood's acupuncture and chiropractic services. I didn't even know those services existed. And, after my acupuncture appointment, she reached out the next day to ask how it went. She told me that she was proud of me for making my medical and mental health a priority...but the fact that she called the next day...I don't have the right words to describe how nice that was."

Because of her appointments with Dr. Woodworth, Tuesday is now Christina's favorite day of the week. Christina admitted that without proper treatment, depression can get worse and last longer – and, because of this fact, she plans to do therapy for the rest of her life.

She shared, "Dr. Woodworth always reminds me that I'm the one doing the work. For the first time, I have felt validated in a healthy way. I don't know how I got so blessed to have a doctor that truly cares about me."

Having suffered from Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) and depression for as long as she could remember, Christina is relieved to have names for those things that she's been feeling. She continued, "Recovery is a long, tedious one. It's gut wrenching. Seeing how far you've come, though, makes you grateful for your highest highs and your lowest lows. I feel renewed after receiving therapy at Neighborhood Healthcare, and now I want to use my pain for purpose. I want to show others that your pain does not define you."

Christina is well on her way to health and happiness, acknowledging the brain is one of the largest organs in a person's body and that we all need to take good care of it – and that it is ok to not be ok.

Currently, Christina is dreaming of becoming a registered art therapist, using her talents to help foster youth in transition.





# Our Values

## **We Are Compassionate**

We view kindness and empathy as essential to the health of our community.

## **We Have Integrity**

We cultivate trust by treating everyone with dignity and respect.

## **We Are Professional**

We are health experts committed to delivering excellent patient experience.

## **We Are Collaborative**

With patients, colleagues and partners, we work together as a team.

## **We Go Above & Beyond**

When it comes to helping others, we are never satisfied with good enough.

# better together

Community health is about more than just vaccines and checkups. It's about giving people the resources they need to live their best lives. At Neighborhood, this is our vision. A community where everyone is healthy and happy. In working to make this vision a reality, we're never satisfied with good enough. We give you access to better care regardless of your situation or circumstance. Better because compassion and empathy are at the heart of what we do. Better because we live here, too, and we're dedicated to improving our community. But most of all, better because we're in this together. We're with you every step of the way, with the care you need for each of life's chapters. At Neighborhood, we are Better Together.

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