



# interfaith dental

A smile changes everything.

## Smiles for Life

At Interfaith Dental, the focus on healthy smiles spans across the entire lifespan. From children to older adults, Interfaith's emphasis is on what a healthy smile can offer. For older adults it's increased socialization, the ability to chew and eat healthy food, alleviating pain and infection, and improved physical health.

The care provided for older adults at Interfaith addresses the vast need for affordable dental care for those who are low-income. The state of Tennessee is in a crisis when it comes to senior oral health care. We boast (not proudly) a composite score of 4 in a report released by Oral Health America on the state of older Americans' oral health. A score in the range of 0-49 is considered poor. There is no free dental benefit in Medicare and a very limited number of dental providers accept Medicare Advantage, which can be unaffordable for some and very limited in coverage.

With funding through The West End Home Foundation and volunteers always willing to lend a hand, Interfaith is able to take steps to ensure seniors have access to the care they deserve, and at a price they can afford. Stories like the one shared below show the impact dental care can bring when it is made a priority and when older adults feel worthy enough to receive the care. It shows that a smile can change everything!





## Rick's Story

Rick grew up going to the dentist only if he was in pain. Even as a Marine he only went when he needed some teeth extracted. After recently receiving a new heart valve and having many teeth removed, Rick realized he needed to get some help. Rick found it difficult to eat and wanted to improve his smile. In his profession as a food demonstrator, Rick says, *"When you're trying to do a job in front of people and hold your hand in front of your face so people don't see you're missing teeth, it is stressful. I had no idea how I was going to be able to take care of my teeth. Then someone shared Interfaith's information with me - which was a blessing."*

Along with receiving his new smile, Rick also learned how his oral health relates to his whole health. *"I didn't take care of myself. I am diabetic, but I didn't realize my oral and overall health were connected. I just wish I could go back 30 years, because with the knowledge I have now I would have taken better care of myself."*

*"It is nice to know that when you come to Interfaith, you're with people who care and take the time to do everything you need. I would describe Interfaith Dental Clinic in one big word: CARING. People here take time to care about you and how you feel. And I even had a few chances to laugh along the way!"*

Patients like Rick come through Interfaith's doors everyday seeking care they often thought not possible. Last year the clinic served nearly 700 older adults, relieving them from pain, giving them adequate oral function so proper nutrition was possible and giving them smiles they can be proud of. The Interfaith tag line is "A Smile Changes Everything". They stand behind it and give every patient an opportunity to find their "everything!"

Older adults can often be forgotten in the scheme of affordable oral healthcare, but Interfaith continues to be an advocate. Thanks to volunteers, partners and fellow advocates like The West End Home Foundation, Interfaith continues to bring more smiles to older adults in Middle Tennessee and ensures they'll be healthy Smiles for Life!