



**NORTH DAKOTA**  
DEPARTMENT *of* HEALTH

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## NEWS RELEASE

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### ***Healthy North Dakota Debuts Story Well Project*** ***North Dakotans Share Stories About Their Health Challenges and Successes***

BISMARCK, N.D. – *Healthy North Dakota* today launched the Story Well Project with the debut of video interviews with 12 North Dakota residents living with or overcoming challenges to their health, according to Melissa Olson, *Healthy North Dakota* director.

The purpose of the Story Well Project is to inspire all North Dakotans to make healthy lifestyle changes in order to reduce and prevent illness. The interviews can be viewed on the *Healthy North Dakota* website at [www.healthynd.org](http://www.healthynd.org).

“Whether living with diabetes, surviving a heart attack or stroke, or living day to day as cancer survivors, Story Well storytellers have overcome challenges, often arriving in the place they’re at as changed people,” said State Health Officer Terry Dwelle, M.D. “By sharing their stories, the storytellers reach out and move us to action – to take care of ourselves better, to get that health screening test, to let others help us along the way.”

Story Well storytellers share their experiences with heart disease, diabetes, cancer and arthritis, which are four of the most prevalent illnesses in North Dakota, according to the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Other topics covered in the interviews include tobacco addiction, seat belt use and domestic violence.

*Healthy North Dakota* Story Well Project participants include:

- 1) **Marsha Blueshield: Heart Attack.** Marsha describes what happened when she had a heart attack and what she learned from the experience. Interviewer: Friend and colleague, Barb Haugland.
- 2) **Claudia Pratt: Breast/Lung Cancer.** Claudia took a creative approach to her illness, with a hat project that gave her emotional support she needed. Interviewer: Friend, Meg Luther Lindholm.

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Visit the health department home page at [www.ndhealth.gov](http://www.ndhealth.gov).

- 3) **Bonnie Riely: Smoking Addiction.** Bonnie describes what helped her kick the habit she had for more than 30 years. Interviewer: Friend and colleague, Renae Byre.
- 4) **Art Fode: Arthritis.** Art talks about his life-long struggle with arthritis. He emphasizes the role of exercise and diet in increasing flexibility and reducing joint pain. Interviewer: Friend, Patty Fillion.
- 5) **Shelly Simburger: Domestic Violence.** Shelly lived in an abusive marriage for 23 years. She explains why she stayed for so long and offers advice to people in abusive relationships. Interviewer: Friend, Mary Wagar
- 6) **Barb Haugland: Heart Disease.** Barb describes her heart attack and how she did not recognize the symptoms. She describes her lifestyle before and after experiencing her heart attack. Interviewer: Friend and colleague, Marsha Blueshield.
- 7) **Ashley Johnson: Melanoma.** Ashley was young and healthy when melanoma was discovered in a mole she had removed. She describes the four steps everyone should take to avoid this form of cancer. Interviewer: Mother, Gail Severinson.
- 8) **Hazel Heart: Diabetes.** Hazel is a member of the Arikara nation who was diagnosed with diabetes eight years ago. She talks about how she was inspired to change her diet and start exercising. Interviewer: Sister, Martha Hunter.
- 9) **Larry Jahnke: Stroke.** Larry talks about the physical and emotional impact of his severe stroke and how he has made almost a full recovery. Interviewer: Friend, Kevin Cramer.
- 10) **Chelsea Bornemann: Seat Belt Safety/Texting.** Chelsea describes a car accident that could have been fatal if she hadn't been wearing a seat belt. She also talks about why teens shouldn't text and drive. Interviewer: Friend, Danni Askew.
- 11) **Tom Jensen: Heart Attack.** Tom describes his heart attack and the lifestyle changes he has made to improve his health. Interviewer: Friend and colleague, Scott Peterson.
- 12) **Howard Barlow: Employee Wellness Program.** Howard, participating in Bremer Bank's Employee Wellness Program, made some changes in his life, feels better, and lost weight. Interviewer: Mona Tedford.

For more information about the Story Well Project or to suggest someone willing to share his or her story with others, please contact Melissa Olson at 701.328.2372. More information also is available at [www.healthynd.org](http://www.healthynd.org).

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