



In the Home

Derek E. Faison
Former President and CEO
Faison Office Products Company
Denver, Colorado

Jo Ann Pegues
Project Manager
Focus on Diabetes Program
The Center for African American Health
Denver, Colorado

“Knowledge is power. ... I didn’t know I was sick, but I do now; and I’m a man on a mission.”

— Derek E. Faison

When Derek Faison learned he had diabetes, he was shocked and confused.

“I knew my father had it, and that it was related to blood sugar and some kind of imbalance,” says Faison. “When I learned what my blood sugar was, my immediate question was, ‘What should it be?’ I’m a well-educated man, but I was uninformed.”

Before discovering he had diabetes, Faison experienced multiple symptoms: trouble thinking clearly; frequent thirst; and blurred vision, which led to a car accident. Soon after the accident, he began wearing reading glasses for the first time.

“I had so many symptoms, but I just wasn’t connecting the dots,” said Faison.

In February 2007, while at The Center for African American Health’s annual health fair, Faison learned

he had diabetes. Nurses checked his blood sugar level; it was 374 (100 is normal).

Faison’s doctor explained that diabetes can be managed and even reversed when patients choose to take the right health steps. So he enrolled in The Center for African American Health’s six-week Diabetes Self-Management class series, part of its Focus on Diabetes program.

“We increase people’s health literacy by giving them knowledge and understanding of diabetes and health in general — what different terms mean, what questions they should ask their doctors and how to ask them,” says Jo Ann Pegues, the Focus on Diabetes project manager and a dietitian at the center, located in Denver, Colorado.

“Seventy-five percent of patients say that when they were first diagnosed, they were only told their sugar levels were high; and they needed to watch what they ate and take medication,” adds Pegues.

The program’s teachers use various methods to ensure people of all health literacy levels understand the information. Participants receive a list of suggested questions to ask their doctors. They meet with a pharmacist to learn how their medications work and watch demonstrations by a dental hygienist on proper oral health. Nurses show them how to examine their feet with mirrors and provide pictures of the body’s system of blood vessels, so they understand how diabetes is linked to the body.

“At the center, they explained, ‘If diabetes affects your blood, it goes everywhere your blood goes in the body,’” says Faison.

He also learned that walking 10,000 steps a day could help him manage his blood glucose, and that fruits and vegetables should comprise 75 percent of his meals. Faison began walking or bicycling three to five miles per day and tracked his steps with a pedometer provided by the center.

Both Faison and his wife attended the program’s hands-on healthful cooking classes, which include label-reading demonstrations and portion-size models. Students also learn about the Idaho Plate Method, used for diabetes meal planning, and are asked to draw on a paper plate a meal that reflects this method.

Now almost 20 pounds lighter, Faison has regulated his blood sugar levels. He is on the lowest dosage of diabetes medication, and his vision has improved.

At the center and in his community work, he shares his story as often as he can.

“Knowledge is power,” says Faison. “If people know they have a disease, they can do something about it. I didn’t know I was sick, but I do now; and I’m a man on a mission.”

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
		1 New Year’s Day 1863: Abraham Lincoln issues Emancipation Proclamation. 2005: Former U.S. Rep. Shirley Chisholm, first black woman elected to Congress, dies.	2 1965: Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. calls for nonviolent protests if Alabama blacks are not allowed to register and vote.	3 1624: William Tucker, first African child born in America.	4 1920: Andrew “Rube” Foster organizes first black baseball league, the Negro National League. 1971: The Congressional Black Caucus organized.	5 1942: George Washington Carver, agricultural scientist, dies.
6 1831: The World Anti-Slavery Convention opens in London.	7 1898: William B. Purvis patents fountain pen. 1955: Marian Anderson debuts as first black to perform at Metropolitan Opera.	8 1811: Charles Deslondes leads slave revolt in Louisiana.	9 1866: Fisk University founded in Nashville, Tennessee.	10 1864: George Washington Carver, agricultural scientist and inventor, born.	11 1940: Benjamin O. Davis Sr. becomes U.S. Army’s first black general.	12 1948: Supreme Court rules blacks have right to study law at state institutions.
13 1990: L. Douglas Wilder inaugurated as first African American governor (Virginia) since Reconstruction.	14 1975: William T. Coleman named secretary of transportation.	15 1929: Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., a major voice for civil rights in the 20th century, born.	16 1978: NASA names African American astronaut Maj. Frederick D. Gregory, Maj. Guion S. Bluford Jr. and Dr. Ronald E. McNair.	17 1942: Three-time heavyweight boxing champion Muhammad Ali (Cassius Clay) born.	18 1856: Dr. Daniel Hale Williams, pioneer heart surgeon, born.	19 1918: John H. Johnson, editor and publisher of <i>Ebony</i> and <i>Jet</i> magazines, born.
20 1993: Maya Angelou, a great voice of contemporary literature, delivers <i>On the Pulse of Morning</i> at the presidential inauguration. 2001: Colin Powell sworn in as first black secretary of state.	21 Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.’s Birthday Observed 1870: Hiram Revels elected first black U.S. senator, replacing Jefferson Davis for the Mississippi seat.	22 1949: James Robert Gladden becomes first black certified in orthopedic surgery.	23 1891: Dr. Daniel Hale Williams founds Provident Hospital in Chicago, the first training hospital for black doctors and nurses in the U.S.	24 1865: Congress passes 13th Amendment, which, on ratification, abolishes slavery.	25 1851: Sojourner Truth addresses first Black Women’s Rights Convention, Akron, Ohio.	26 1954: Dr. Theodore K. Lawless, dermatologist, awarded the Spingarn Medal for research in skin-related diseases.
27 1961: Leontyne Price, world-renowned opera singer, makes her Metropolitan Opera debut.	28 1998: Sarah “Madam C.J.” Walker, first black female millionaire, honored on U.S. postage stamp.	29 1926: Violet Neatly Anderson becomes first black woman lawyer to argue a case before the Supreme Court. 1954: Oprah Winfrey, first African American woman television host, born.	30 1844: Richard Theodore Greener, first black to graduate from Harvard, born.	31 1919: Jackie Robinson, first black to play in major league baseball, born. 2006: Coretta Scott King, widow of Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., who enshrined his legacy of human rights and equality, dies.	Fact Number 1 Nearly half of all American adults — 90 million people — have difficulty understanding and acting upon health information.	