

How this Nashville financial exec found purpose in fighting a chronic health condition

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After losing a friend at too young an age due to complications from diabetes, experienced financial and operations executive [Tom Milam](#) decided he had to do something to help fight the disease.

At the time, Milam, who'd served primarily in financial roles, including as CFO at The Southwestern Company, knew very little about diabetes. He didn't understand why his friend's kidneys had failed. But a decade later he's built a business around that experience in the form of Brentwood-based TrueLifeCare.



Tom Milam, president of TrueLifeCare

A little more than three years into its life, TLC has worked with just under 10 clients, ranging from large blue-collar employers to governmental bodies, to help employees with diabetes better manage their health. TLC pairs registered nurse health coaches with people suffering from diabetes, who support them through phone calls and so-called "motivational interviewing" to help them adjust their lifestyles as needed.

While insurance carriers and businesses have some existing plans to assist people coping with diabetes, Milam said, its clear those efforts alone aren't enough. That's why TLC provides an "additive" service that provides support and motivation to employees with the disease.

"This is what our health care system ... is failing to do," Milam wrote in an email describing the business' goals. "A person is diagnosed with diabetes and then pretty much left on their own to 'lose some weight, get more exercise,' etc. No intellectual or emotional support to adjust successfully to their life with diabetes."

Thus far, TLC points to a 22 percent reduction in annual emergency room visits and a 31 percent reduction in annual hospital days at one of its clients — plus \$250,000 saved in claims to its self-funded health plan — as proof its model works.

But Milam recalls more personal examples, like the way patients changed their conversations with coaches from, "I'll think about exercising" at the start of the year to more definitive statements of improved health at the end as evidence that its support model works.

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