A History of Firsts

"I like to say I'm the longest-serving PULSE student on record," says Jonathan Scott. The hallmark Boston College service learning program placed Scott in Victory House, a South End shelter for homeless men. He was Victory House's first volunteer. Scott describes that volunteer job as "human breathalyzer," checking to see if residents were sober enough to enter. Four decades later, he's still there—but now, as president and CEO of Victory Programs, he operates 18 health and housing programs in Greater Boston, serving more than 2,300 men, women, and children annually.

When Scott first entered Victory House, its clientele were men struggling with drug and alcohol addiction. Over the next few years, HIV/AIDS would radically change the landscape for social service agencies. When Scott became executive director of Victory Programs in 1984, the crisis was at its height. Victory House became one of the first programs in the state to admit residents living with HIV and AIDS.

"Since the beginning, we have been committed to helping anyone in need," says Scott. "We have a history of firsts: the first to take risks in new areas of health and housing; the first to admit those in residential treatment on medication management; the first to provide housing for those living with HIV/AIDS and addiction; the first to welcome those who are gay or trans-identified—among others."

Today, Victory Programs helps its clients find pathways to stable housing and recovery from addiction, and advocates for public policy changes that will improve the lives of those it serves. This year, it celebrated its 40th anniversary.