

## Don't Think About It...Do It!

### MOVE!<sup>®</sup> HELPS VETERAN DONALD CONTOIS EXCEED HIS WEIGHT LOSS GOAL

Sixty-four-year-old Veteran Donald Contois had struggled with his weight since age 30. "I often gained and lost a few pounds, but was usually able to stay between 190 and 200 pounds," he explains. "But 4 years ago, I retired, quit smoking, and gained 30 pounds. By October of 2009, I was up to 220 pounds!"

The pivotal moment occurred when his primary care provider told him that he had diabetes. "It was life changing because I started to think about what it would be like to live with diabetes—taking medications, regularly testing my blood sugar, and dealing with the complications," says Donald. However, his physician also said that he could successfully control the disease if he lost weight and exercised regularly. Donald didn't want to live with diabetes, so he took his provider's suggestion and joined the MOVE!<sup>®</sup> program at the Brockton campus of the VA Boston Healthcare System.



*"I didn't want to live with diabetes...so I joined MOVE!<sup>®</sup>."*

#### Accountable

In February 2010, Donald started attending weekly MOVE!<sup>®</sup> sessions, and by May 2010, he had already lost almost 29 pounds. "After that, I thought that I didn't need the support and could lose weight on my own," he says. "It was summer and I was traveling, going to cookouts, and enjoying my new life—so I stopped doing MOVE!<sup>®</sup>." But before he knew it, he had gained back 10 pounds. He realized at that point that he had to return to MOVE!<sup>®</sup>.

To successfully lose weight, Donald knew that he needed to be more accountable—regularly attend MOVE!<sup>®</sup> meetings, track what he ate, and listen to other Veterans' stories. So in 2012, he re-started his journey by attending bi-weekly MOVE!<sup>®</sup> alumni meetings. Motivated to work hard by his wife, nieces, and the MOVE!<sup>®</sup> staff—and by the

fear of having to live with diabetes—Donald re-dedicated himself to healthy change. It worked, and by June 2012, he was down to 178.2 pounds. “I’ve reduced my BMI to just under 28 and exceeded my weight goal of 180 pounds,” Donald says. “Although I met this goal, I still plan to lose more weight.”

### **Free of pain**

Donald says that he used to be miserable, always in pain, and unable to enjoy anything in life. Through weight loss and a healthier lifestyle, he is now much happier, more active, and pain free. Donald says that a typical breakfast consists of water, yogurt, coffee, and some dry cereal. Lunch is fruit and yogurt; dinner during the week is salad and grilled chicken. “I now know what I need to do to help maintain my weight loss,” he says, “so on weekends, I can splurge a bit on food.” Each week, he golfs on 3 days and walks about 24 miles—so if he splurges too much, he does a little more exercise to burn off the extra calories.

*“Today I’m much happier, more active, and pain free!”*

### **New Hobby**

In addition to an active, healthy life, MOVE!® has provided Donald with an enjoyable new hobby: making birdhouses that honor Veterans. “I like to hang the birdhouses in the park where I walk, at each golf course I play, and in places around the country that I’ve visited,” he says. “Each birdhouse has an American flag and an inscription on it, and to date, I’ve hung them in 34 states around the country!”

