

“MOVE![®] Has Saved My Life”: VIETNAM VETERAN LOSES OVER 150 POUNDS THROUGH MOVE![®] PROGRAM AND BARIATRIC SURGERY



“I always felt like the ‘fat kid,’” says Vietnam Veteran Steven Boigon. “And even though it’s not fair, people discriminate against you if you’re overweight.”

In fact, the 4 years Steven served in the U.S. Air Force had been the only period of time when he *didn’t* struggle with his weight and people’s perceptions of him. Controlling his weight with intense physical activity was easy during his time as a ground radio repairman in the military. But when Steven separated

from the service, he began a new civilian career—and an upward spiral in weight gain.

A walking time bomb

Over the years, he steadily accumulated weight, along with a litany of health problems: diabetes, high blood pressure, congestive heart failure, and sleep apnea. As his career as a florist and designer wound down, he prepared to retire and spend more time with his grandchildren. But Steven was fearful about the future. “I was taking 25 different pills each day,” he reports, “and I had gotten up to 335 pounds!” In 2009, the 64-year-old’s diabetes had progressed, and he was prescribed a daily abdominal insulin injection.

It was the “trigger” that made him realize that he needed to change before it was too late. He had become, in his own words, “a walking time bomb.”

A last chance, and success

Encouraged by his wife, Steven went to the VA San Diego Healthcare System and received a thorough medical evaluation. His medical team recommended him for bariatric surgery—but only after he addressed his weight problem by enrolling in the MOVE![®] Weight Management Program.

MOVE!® was part of Steven’s “last chance” at getting healthy, and it worked. By gradually increasing his physical activity and changing his diet, he lost a total of 38 pounds, which exceeded his initial goal of a 5-percent weight loss. With his BMI reduced from 51 to 45, Steven felt much better. But his weight-related medical problems did not resolve, so it was time for him to take the next step and undergo bariatric surgery. Steven and his surgical team considered all the options and decided that a *vertical sleeve gastrectomy* would be the best next step for him.

A 180-degree turn

The surgical procedure—which left Steven with a stomach the size of a hard-boiled egg, big enough for about 6 ounces of food—was just what he needed: an “extra” hunger management tool to complement his improving exercise and eating.

Now, just 2 years into his weight management program, the 66-year-old has reduced his BMI to 28 and lost a total of 150 pounds! “I don’t feel like the fat kid anymore,” Steven says. “When I walk down the street now, people don’t stare - instead they look at me, smile, and say ‘hello’.” His health has taken a 180-degree turn for the better: his diabetes, hypertension, sleep apnea, and congestive heart failure are gone, and he only takes one pill a day—a multi-vitamin. Steven weighs 187 pounds and is nearing his ultimate weight loss goal with the continued support of his wife (who’s also lost weight).

Things have changed for the better in Steven’s life. “I walk every day now,” he says, “and if I don’t get that activity, I miss it.” The combination of exercise and a better diet has yielded another surprising result for Steven: he is saving money. Both his grocery bills and his clothing sizes are shrinking. “My pants went from 56 to 36 inches,” he reports, “so I no longer shop at the big-and-tall store, where I used to spend as much as four times the normal price for clothes!”

“I always felt like the ‘fat kid’...but I don’t feel that way anymore. I feel energetic, and I will live to see my grandchildren get married.”

Pearls of wisdom

Steven offers fellow Veterans the following tips for ensuring that they succeed in meeting their weight management targets with MOVE!®:

- *Go to all the MOVE!® meetings.* “It’s so important to attend because you get to talk to people who are having problems just like you, and you can use them as a resource, as well as a source of positive feedback.”

- *Give yourself time to make gradual changes.* “It can take months to ‘un-indoctrinate’ yourself from old, bad habits involving diet and activity.”
- *Follow the guidance and direction of your MOVE!® weight management team.* “They will guide you, and they will probably prod and push you. They will do whatever it takes to keep you motivated, so stick with them.”
- *Follow the instructions of the MOVE!® program.* “It’s a wonderful tool to help you succeed in losing weight.”



Life-saver

With his sights set on reaching 175 pounds, Steven has a new lease on life. He’s excited about a future that, until recently, looked bleak. “I feel energetic, and I’m confident that I will live to see my grandchildren get married,” he says. “I believe that the MOVE!® Program has saved my life!”

“I had gotten up to 335 pounds and I was a walking time bomb...The MOVE!® Program has saved my life!”