

170 Pounds Lighter: **WITH THE SUPPORT OF MOVE![®] AND HER DAD,** **VETERAN DIANA OWENS TAKES CONTROL OF HER WEIGHT**

Veteran Diana Owens became overweight after leaving the military, and by April of 2006, had reached her heaviest weight while living in Illinois. “I weighed 360 pounds and my doctor put me on metformin and insulin to control my diabetes,” she recalls. “That got me motivated to lose weight. I just wanted to control my diabetes and blood sugar.”

The Hardest Part

In 2008, Diana decided it was time. At the suggestion of her VA provider, she enrolled in the MOVE! Program at the Iowa City VAMC. “The hardest part was getting started,” she says.



While in the Iowa City program, Diana mainly focused on controlling her portion sizes, and was able to drop 75 pounds. She was even able to lose weight when she traveled. “In 2013, while visiting my father in Louisiana, I lost an additional 20 pounds with his encouragement,” she explains. “But when I returned home, I began to gain the weight back. So I decided to move to Louisiana for good.”

Fresh Start

Diana arrived in Shreveport in May 2014 and transferred her health care to the Overton Brooks VAMC. Hoping to continue her weight loss journey, she also requested enrollment in the MOVE! Program there. “In June, I started MOVE again, weighing about 284 pounds,” she recalls. “I brought every nutrition handout I’d gotten in Iowa City and was really eager to learn.”

This time, in addition to participating in the diet, exercise, and behavioral components of MOVE!, she enrolled in community-based weight-loss program. She kept a food diary, and teamed with her father to “revamp” some favorite recipes to make them healthier. He also helped her track her food portions and encouraged her to exercise.

“My dad’s been my biggest motivator,” Diana explains. “But at first I struggled with his suggestions on health and exercise. I had to stop eating some of my favorite comfort foods—like noodles and rice with butter and soy sauce.” However, the healthy changes paid off. In one year, she lost an additional 95.5 pounds and is down to her lowest weight so far—188 pounds.



Sticking To It

Diana’s proud of her results so far. “With the help of two MOVE! Programs, I’ve lost 170 pounds and no longer require insulin,” she says. “My most recent A1C was 5.2%—a normal value and a drastic improvement from 9.0% in 2006.” Diana’s also been exercising more. This past year, she did the VA2K and PACE Challenge, and is now enjoying gardening, being outside, walking her dog, and spending time with her dad.

Diana is still attending MOVE, and sticking to what she’s learned. She exercises at a local gym with a group of friends, and monitors her portions with a food diary. “I’m still working towards my goal weight of 175 pounds. I continue to work towards a healthy lifestyle and I’m now looking to become more involved in the community,” she says. “I plan to contact a non-profit organization that helps Veterans connect to their communities through physical and social activity. I’m also looking into volunteering at the VAMC.”

Always Improving

When asked what she would say to another Veteran who wants to lose weight, but is struggling to start, she doesn’t hesitate to endorse MOVE!. “It’s been the best for me—it’s a tremendous program and always improving,” Diana says. “In VA, Veterans have so many options for weight management—my dad used a dietitian for individual counseling, I used MOVE!.” She says she encourages Veterans to talk with their doctors about the program, give it a try, and just do it.

“Check into the program and just start,” Diana says. “Start walking. You don’t have to walk a mile, you just need to get more active.”