

## **Working At It Every Day: WITH MOVE!<sup>®</sup>, VETERAN GEORGE SIMS TAKES A SUCCESSFUL ‘JOURNEY’ TO BETTER HEALTH**

Veteran George Sims grew up on a farm and learned about hard work at an early age. “Before going off to school, I had to finish all of my chores,” he says. “And as I got older, I was always able to find time to play sports. So weight was never a problem for me growing up.” When he later joined the U.S. Army, he was a fit, healthy 130-pound man. He loved doing Physical Training (PT) in the service—“the tougher, the better” was his motto. When he was discharged from Army, he was solid and muscular, weighing in at 180 pounds. For a time, he continued to live an active lifestyle, but he never really gave much thought to portion size or meal planning.

### **Unhealthy Changes**

George later worked for an oil company, driving trucks and making service calls. And his activity level began to decrease. “During the cold months, it wasn’t unusual for me to be on the road for days. And while out there, I’d eat at fast food restaurants, snack on junk food, and skip meals,” he recounts. “Then when I got home, I’d eat home-cooked dinners.” As the years went by, George’s weight slowly increased.

Between 2006 and 2007, he had both knees replaced, which further limited his mobility. “I developed diabetes, and was testing my blood four times a day,” he explains. “And I also had hypertension and hyperlipidemia, which required me to take medications.”

### **Making The Call**

George first came to the VA Boston HCS in 2009 and was teamed with a primary care provider. For a while, he only did annual check-ups, but every time he came in, he was advised to lose weight. “My weight had slowly crept up to 236 pounds, and although I was still active, I was limited in what I could do,” he says. “Finally, in May 2012, after a third doctor told me to lose weight, I made the phone call.” George was connected with



nurses Linda Costello and Suzanne Spera, who began to do monthly, individual meetings with him at the Framingham Outpatient Clinic.

He began to see that making changes in his lifestyle, especially in his diet, was possible. During his first few MOVE!® classes, he learned about better food choices, menu planning, keeping a food diary, and physical activity. “Since I already knew about hard work and discipline, I was able to stay focused month after month,” George explains. “I’d log everything I ate, then review my food diary with Linda and Suzanne each month.”

### **Finding A Way**

George focused on controlling his portions and making healthy food substitutions. Instead of eating a half-gallon of ice cream in three sittings, for example, he learned to make that ice cream last a month and a half. Rather than eating two very large bowls of pasta—which he absolutely loves—he now only has a small bowl. “I’ve also replaced soda with water, cut back on bread, and changed from whole milk to 1-percent milk, which wasn’t easy for this farm boy,” he says. “Leftovers were a temptation, so my wife started to cook less than she did in the past.” Despite diminished mobility and strength, George was still able to find ways to keep active by working in the yard and walking. He started out walking 1 mile on the treadmill; now, he’s increased to walking 4 miles a day!



### **Journey**

Overall, George lost 54 pounds during his “weight journey” and now weighs 182 pounds. “I wore a size-42 pants and recently had to buy new jeans,” he recounts. “When I tried on a size 38, they were too big! But I was able to comfortably fit into a size 36.” Although George still wants to lose a few more pounds, he’s happy with his success to date.

“My advice to others is to remember that this is a journey—you need to decide to take it on your own and you must be prepared to work. It took 3 years and 3 doctors before I was ready to take action and, more importantly, make ongoing, permanent changes in my life,” George says. “I highly suggest that other Veterans give the MOVE!® Program a chance...but only if they’re committed and set their minds to work at it every day. MOVE!® is only as effective as the work you put into it!”