

Feeling Awesome: VETERAN JOHN THOMAS, JR. USES MOVE![®] TO GET HEALTHY...AND OFF MEDICATIONS

U.S. Navy Veteran John Thomas, Jr. says his quest for better health started simply: he just wanted to stop taking medications.

In the summer of 2012, John went to the Jesse Brown VAMC and got some disappointing news from his doctor: after years of being pre-diabetic, it was time to start taking medication. “She’d been telling me for years that I was nearing diabetes,” he explains. “This time, she said I needed to lose weight and start medicine for high blood pressure.” In November 2012, John learned he had progressed to diabetes, and later, high cholesterol. By December, he was taking three different medicines—something he didn’t want to do.

Going Up?

“I read somewhere that losing weight could get you off these medications,” John says. “So I told my doctor I wanted to try again to lose weight. She recommended the MOVE![®] Program, which I thought was perfect for me.” After some preparation, he started attending MOVE![®] classes in January 2013, weighing in at about 258 pounds. But 2 weeks in, John was frustrated. “I had actually *gone up* in weight, to 263 pounds,” he says, “I thought about it, then it all made sense. I realized that I wasn’t really using the information they’d given me.”

Faith, Commitment

A lesson at church convinced John to take MOVE![®] more seriously. “I prayed about it and just started doing it—I put the program to use,” he explains. “I began eating right and exercising more, and the Lord helped me.” With this new-found commitment, it didn’t take John long to see results. “At the end of the first 11 weeks of MOVE![®], I’d not



only started losing weight, I was the ‘biggest loser’ in my class!,” he says. “By March, I was already down 33 pounds!”

John decided to enroll again in another 11 weeks of the program, then joined a support group with Veterans who had been coming for years. All of this support helped John drop another 20 pounds—again more weight than anybody else! “I was down 53 ½ pounds,” he recalls. “I noticed that my clothes didn’t fit anymore, and everyone else was noticing my weight loss, too.”

Regular physical activity became an important part of John’s new lifestyle. “I took out my old exercise equipment—covered with hanging clothes—cleaned it off, and started using it,” he says. “It’s cold in Chicago, so I had to get creative with exercise. I worked out in my basement, even jogged and walked down there.”

Blessings

At the end of June, John went back to his VA doctor and got a “blessing.” “I didn’t have high blood pressure or cholesterol anymore, and didn’t need to go on diabetes medicine,” he says proudly. “In fact, I didn’t need medicine for anything!” Through the summer, John continued doing the support group and set his sights on losing a total of 70 pounds. By the end of August 2013, John had exceeded that goal, so he pushed it to 80. “When September rolled around, I’d lost a total of 81 pounds!,” John exclaims.

Now a fit, healthy 177 pounds, 51-year-old John remains grateful to the MOVE![®] Program and staff such as Dr. Sarah Catanese. “The MOVE![®] Program changed my life. I’m so much healthier, and I’m feeling good now,” he says. “I eat better, exercise every day, and sleep well. And it feels awesome to be off the medications!”