



Success Stories

Healthy Living Matters. Prevention Works.

Two Decades of Weight Loss and Self-Discovery

OVER AN AMAZING 20-YEAR JOURNEY, VETERAN JAMES JOHNSON LOST A STAGGERING 350 POUNDS AND 20 INCHES AROUND HIS WAIST—WITHOUT SURGERY—THROUGH MOVE!

"I'm not going to say my road was easy. It's just like life... life isn't always easy. But I'm confident I can keep the weight off."



What motivated you to choose MOVE!?

"I started with [VA's weight management program, now known as] MOVE! in 1997. I didn't want anything to do with the program in the beginning because, looking back, I was not ready to accept that I was morbidly obese. I was finger pointing and blaming everybody else.

"But I was unhappy with myself and depressed, and I wanted to be a positive influence for others around my life. I think time and the people who supported me and kept me accountable in my primary care team finally caused me to change my mind."

What happened when you started MOVE!?

"While attending MOVE! classes, I started hearing some things that made sense. I was taught a lot about how to listen to my body, which made such an impact. I learned how depression can be linked to weight gain. Eating helped me cope, but eventually it became a destructive behavior without me even realizing it."

What helped you reach your goals?

"I always felt supported while in MOVE! While working one-on-one with a MOVE! dietitian, I learned about ways to cut my calorie intake. I realized that you have to start small. Even if you can't do 2,500 steps in a day, you do what you can. Once you do 2,500 and that gets easy, you can go ahead and do a little bit more. It's like building a brick building one brick at a time."

What have you accomplished through MOVE!?

"I lost 350 pounds. I went from a 56-inch waist to a 34-36. I'm not on depression meds anymore. I'm no longer taking insulin, even after 20+ years with diabetes. I play 2-3 hours of racquetball every day, I lift weights, I walk—and I've got two artificial knees!

"I requested to become a volunteer for MOVE! and to become a speaker because of the difference MOVE! has made in my life."

“ MOVE! is life changing. If you're not happy with the way you are — how you feel about the world and yourself — try it out. What do you have to lose? Just the weight!”

– James Johnson

