



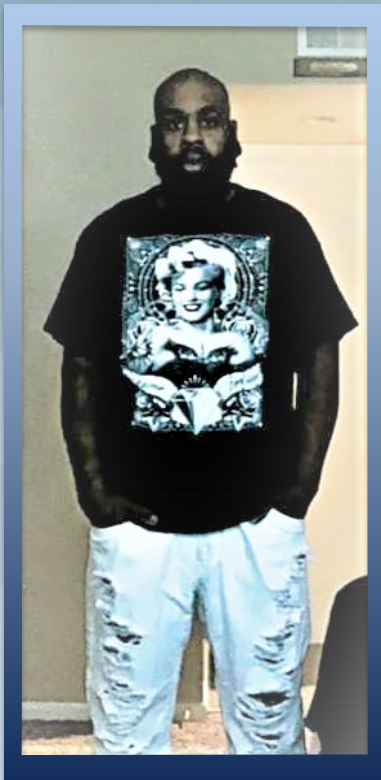
Success Stories

Healthy Living Matters. Prevention Works.

Positive Attitude with Genuine Motivation

THE MOVE! PROGRAM AND BARIATRIC SURGERY CHANGED HIS LIFE!

With the help of the VA Central Iowa Health Care System and the Minneapolis VA Health Care System, Army Veteran Markus Shears took control of his weight and his life.



Transition Was Tough

After discharge from military service, Markus noticed the transition away from a fast-paced lifestyle was quite challenging. "I got extremely lazy after I was discharged and my weight showed that," he says. His weight gain was not a personal concern until he spoke to his primary care nurse, Sharron, during an annual appointment. "My conversation with [Sharron] was a huge wake-up call. I realized I would not be able to live much longer if I continued that lifestyle." Sharron suggested the MOVE! Weight Management Program for Veterans, and although hesitant, Markus agreed to an appointment to discuss it further.

Commitment and Self-Discipline

In 2016, Markus attended his initial MOVE! appointment with dietitian Kylie Harmison. He soon realized that his weight loss journey would require commitment and self-discipline. "I went in with an open mind. I viewed MOVE! as a lifestyle change rather than a diet. That helped me succeed."

Keys to Success

A positive attitude and intrinsic motivation were not his only keys to success. Markus credits his personal and professional support systems too. He recalls that his girlfriend Christine helped him apply nutrition-related knowledge to their day-to-day life while Kylie helped him understand that "food is not the enemy." He says Kylie "gave me all the knowledge I would ever need to be successful on my own."

Determination and Success

After a year and a half in MOVE!, Markus lost approximately 40 pounds. Motivated by his success and desire for more weight loss, he decided to pursue bariatric surgery. On May 1, 2019, he underwent a sleeve gastrectomy through the Minneapolis VA Health Care System. Markus has found continued success by planning out his meals and snacks each day and attending individual MOVE! nutrition appointments. "I have to go about the [lifestyle] changes gradually. There has been a lot of trial and error, but I understand it is not attainable to go full-speed long-term."

Over the course of his journey, Markus has lost a total of 122 pounds, or 35% of his body weight, and is down ten pants sizes!

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– Markus Shears



Results and Advice

The transformation has resulted in increased strength, agility, and self-confidence and fewer daily medications. He also has the energy he needs to play with his beloved eight-year old.

Markus' advice to fellow Veterans is: "Do not be afraid to change. Use your support system and available resources. Stay open-minded and be willing to learn because knowledge is power."