108 Pounds Later:

A Q&A WITH VETERAN AND TELEMOVE! SUCCESS STORY WILLIAM BENEDICT

Veteran William Benedict of the VA Puget Sound (WA) Health Care System explains how he's dropped 34 percent of his body weight through the TeleMOVE! Weight Management Program.

Prior to starting TeleMOVE!, how long did you struggle with your weight?

"I've struggled with weight my entire life, and I never believed that I could be anything but overweight. I had gastric bypass about 25 years ago, achieved a low weight of 240 pounds, and maintained it for about 2 years. But then I started gaining slowly because of boredom—I just ate, watched TV, and never exercised. My highest weight before the surgery was 360 pounds, but I eventually got all the way up to 380 pounds! I was able to lose about 60 pounds before starting TeleMOVE!, but I did this by restricting my diet, not exercising more."

How did you find out about TeleMOVE! and what motivated you to start it?

"I live far from the nearest VAMC—about a 2-hour drive—and therefore had not been able to attend the facility's MOVE!® Groups. So my provider Dr. Arvind Shenoy referred me to TeleMOVE!. Initially, I did not expect it to work, but I was willing to give it a try."

What about TeleMOVE! worked for you?

"It was a combination of the daily reminders from the TeleMOVE! monitor, the constant support from my Care Coordinator, and weighing myself daily. All those things kept me

conscious of my weight. When I started to see results, my mindset changed and I realized that it was possible to be thinner and stay that way.”

How long have you been participating in TeleMOVE! and how has your health improved?

“I started the program on December 5th, 2011, at a starting weight of 317 pounds. As of November 2012, I weighed 209 pounds, which is a loss of 108 pounds and 34 percent of my body weight! I’ve also seen other dramatic health improvements: my cholesterol, hemoglobin A1c, and blood pressure numbers have all improved. I no longer take blood pressure medications, blood sugar medications, or insulin, and my pain medications have greatly decreased. I used to take 10 different medications daily; now, I take 3 daily and 1 as needed. The constant pain I used to have has greatly decreased and is improving daily.”
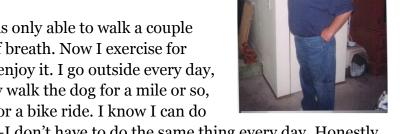
Who’s helped you reach your goals?

“I was successful because I did it with a team and a program. My care coordinator and friends have been very supportive, which is something I didn’t have in past attempts at weight loss. The TeleMOVE! monitor is great—it wakes me up every day at 8 am and doesn’t allow me to forget about my goals.”

How is your life different now?

“I feel like I’m in my 40s, not in my 60s! I am able to do a lot of things that I had stopped doing because of my size, like walking and riding a bike. Now I can do whatever I want, and I have a daily routine. I weigh myself daily and find this very helpful for staying on top of my weight.”

What do you do to stay active now?

“When I started TeleMOVE!, I was only able to walk a couple hundred feet before getting out of breath. Now I exercise for about 2-3 hours daily and I truly enjoy it. I go outside every day, at least to walk my dog. I typically walk the dog for a mile or so, use the rowing machine, and go for a bike ride. I know I can do whatever I want to stay in shape—I don’t have to do the same thing every day. Honestly, I just don’t feel right if I don’t exercise. And this is a big change for me—before TeleMOVE!, my weight loss attempts were solely focused on decreasing my food intake.”

How long have you maintained your weight loss?

"At almost a year into the program, I have not regained any weight! But I'm still working on my goal of getting below 200 pounds."

What would you like other Veterans to know about the program?

"I really wish that I had started at a younger age—I hate to see young people struggle like I did with his weight. So I'd say that if the program can work for a lifelong fat boy like me, it can work for anybody. You have to want it, but the support is there!"