

## **Through Thick and Thin: MOVE!<sup>®</sup> PROGRAM HELPS VETERAN TAKE CARE OF HERSELF AND GET HEALTHIER**

“I was taking care of everyone else,” says Veteran Lourene Meyer, “but I just wasn’t taking care of myself.” She was single-handedly providing health care to both a sick mother and mother-in-law, and it was taking a toll. Overwhelmed with the burden, Lourene was feeding her stress with food.

As her weight ballooned to 334 pounds and her BMI passed 50, she was referred to the MOVE!<sup>®</sup> program at the Iowa City (IA) Healthcare System. Although she had a number of weight-related health problems to address, it was hard for her to really get engaged in the program...until she saw her picture at a family gathering.



*“I was taking care of everyone but myself. I was overwhelmed and I fed the stress with food.”*

### **Wouldn’t be heavy like that**

“I almost couldn’t recognize myself,” she says. “My mom had always been overweight, and I always said that I wouldn’t be heavy like that.” Lourene realized that she had turned into her mom, and she knew she had to do something about it. And that meant first dealing with some issues that were contributing to her weight problem.

### Underlying issue

“I was depressed,” says the 41-year-old, who served 9 years on active duty in the U.S. Navy. During her military career as a hospital corpsman, Lourene was the victim of military sexual trauma, which resulted in posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD). To cope with the trauma, she admits that she gained weight. But the medications that she was taking to manage her PTSD and depression were also contributing to the excess weight on her 5-foot, 7-inch frame.

### Therapy, improvement

Dealing with her mental health issues has been the catalyst for change in Lourene’s life. “I still have PTSD,” she says, “but I’ve learned that I can do something about it—I’ve completed a course of prolonged exposure therapy at VA and I’m making progress.” Lourene reports that her depression is much better. She used to complain a lot about how bad she felt; now, she’s complaining less and going out much more with her husband. Her once-disabling migraines are now much less frequent now that she has reduced her weight. “I am much more active everyday, which makes me happier,” she reports.

### Recipe for success

It started out as contact via telephone conferences, when that didn't seem to be helping, as in holding me responsible for my actions and my weight wasn't going anywhere... My scale at home was old and was off by 15# compared to the MD's and VA's office, we switched to face to face visits. One on one where we had time to talk about what was working for me and what wasn't. We talked about what I was going through emotionally, physically and mentally. This helped a lot because I could see that they weren't just giving me "lip" service when it came to talking to me. They really cared, listened and gave me feedback. As a substitute teacher, Lourene stays very busy and active, and that helps. But she says that there were other keys to her getting healthier and finding success with MOVE!<sup>®</sup>:

- *Get feedback.* “The counseling really helped—it was the key to my success.”
- *Get a team.* “My MOVE!<sup>®</sup> dietitian, physical therapist, husband, and mother-in-law have all been great support for me.”
- *Celebrate the small stuff.* “Every time I reached even a small weight goal, my MOVE!<sup>®</sup> team celebrated with me.”

- *Go smaller.* “I reduce my portions by using a salad plate instead of a large dinner plate.”
- *Lose the junk.* “I got the unhealthy food out of my house, and as I lost more weight, I cut out most of the bread from my diet, too.”
- *Keep moving.* “To maintain my weight, I walk, do Pilates, and work out with my husband using Wii™.”



*“MOVE!® is a great program—my clinical team supported me through thick and thin.”*

### **Celebrating progress**

Even though she has been discharged from the program, Lourene still goes to visit with her MOVE!® team. “I want them to see that I am still on the program and losing weight,” she says, “and I want them to see what a difference they’ve made in my life.”

As of January 2012, Lourene weighs 202 pounds and has reduced her BMI to 31. Her pants size went from a “stretchy” 24 to a 14.

Lourene has met and surpassed her original weight goal of 220 pounds. She started MOVE!® in August of 2010 at over 300 pounds and to date has lost over 100 pounds! “Now that I’ve reached my initial goal, I’ve set a new target of 180 pounds,” she says. “And with the support of MOVE!® and my family, I’m confident that I can reach this new goal, too.”