

# Employee Story: Gerald Bennett, Plastcoat

## ***Taking Control***

Gerald Bennett wasn't sleeping well, suffered from knee and ankle issues, and his blood pressure and blood sugar were borderline high. His doctor warned him that he'd be facing some serious consequences if he didn't make changes to his lifestyle, but Gerald's personal tipping point came during an episode of a show called 'My 600 lb Life'. "How anyone could let themselves spin out of control? Couldn't they see that had to take ownership of their problems?" he wondered. "I then looked at myself in the mirror and realized that I was not much better and needed to do something about it."

Since the 45 year-old set his mind to losing weight, he has shed over 130 pounds and is almost at his goal weight of 190.



**“Exercise is a big part of my routine now, but it wasn't an easy process...”**

Gerald, a Quality Engineer with Plastcoat, began with small steps; changing his printer location to one farther away, finding excuses to walk up and down the stairs, going to someone's desk rather than call. From there he began walking around the block, and eventually joined a weekend hiking group that helped him stay motivated.

The Bowmanville native acquired a Fitbit wrist band to track his steps, his sleeping patterns and his food intake which gave him goals he could track and monitor. He visited his physician every 6 months and joined a support group that met regularly to discuss healthy eating, portion control, how to avoid processed and junk foods, and what traps to avoid. Gerald eats from all the food groups and doesn't rely on gimmicks, pills or elimination diets. He did a lot of reading which helped him understand that he had to leave the 'diet mentality' aside in favor of a life-long change.

## **From 'small steps' to running...**

“For the first couple of months nobody really noticed that I was losing weight,” Gerald explains, but after three or four months, the change in his physical appearance drew comments. “They were all very supportive and gave me positive feedback which I used as fuel to keep on track.”

These days, Gerald walks a minimum of 5 miles per day and does sit ups and push ups before bed. “You don't need a fancy gym membership,” he advises. “Just get moving.” He's even running again, which he hasn't been able to do in 15 years. “I'm even contemplating rejoining my old rugby team. Old boys, of course!”



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**“It’s like a fog has been lifted and I can focus...”**

In addition to an increase in energy, Gerald is sleeping better and his cholesterol, blood pressure and blood sugar are within normal range. “My BMI no longer indicates that I’m morbidly obese,” he says. “Morbid is such a gruesome word, isn’t it?” Gerald looks back with retrospective clarity: “There’s a stigma attached to you when you’re overweight that tends to colour your interactions with everyone and how they react to you. I could see it in my personal life as well as at work. Finding clothes to fit always gave me heartburn. To this day, I avoid plaid as it seems the only pattern available to me when I was at my heaviest.”

Gerald is determined to continue with healthy eating habits and exercise and understands that he’s on a lifelong journey. “I’m starting to think that losing the weight is the easy part. Maintaining will be the real challenge.” One for which Gerald is mentally prepared. “I’ve read articles stating that only 5% of people keep the weight off over 3 years. I use that as motivation to say *to hell with the stats!* I’m going to succeed!”



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