

Member Profile: Rodney Hart



After being diagnosed with diabetes, Rodney Hart adopted a healthier lifestyle and credits his 1199SEIU health benefits with helping keep him on track.

Rodney Hart was determined not to take his diagnosis lightly after he learned at his annual checkup in December 2009 that he had diabetes; he was well aware of the seriousness of the disease.

“I had friends with diabetes,” said Rodney, an 1199SEIU member for 21 years. “One of my best friends – he lost a toe. But I didn’t want it to take me losing a toe to take it seriously.”

Shortly after his checkup, Rodney attended a health fair at Yeshiva University, where he is a lead painter in the Maintenance Department. There he learned about the Fund’s Worksite Wellness Program and was soon paired with a Wellness nurse who taught him how to test his blood sugar, change his diet and take better care of his health. With her help, he changed his eating habits and increased the amount of exercise he got. It wasn’t easy at first, but by cutting back on the junk food in his diet and sticking with an aerobic routine three to five times a week, he lost 30 pounds in eight months.

Rodney says his Wellness nurse provided critical support and education that helped keep him on track with his new regimen. Now he’s working on maintaining the weight loss – something he’d always had trouble doing in the past. Today Rodney is not on a “diet”; instead, he has simply made healthy eating part of his lifestyle and as a result, his blood sugar level routinely registers within a safe range.

“This is a way of life for me now. It was a little hard getting used to at first, but I weighed it against knowing what would happen if I didn’t make changes,” he said. “I stopped eating sugar, cakes and pies and drinking sodas. And I eat mostly whole grains, a little meat, fish and chicken and a lot of vegetables.”

As a 57-year-old who had been overweight for many years, Rodney didn’t realize how much better he would feel once he began making healthy changes. He soon discovered that the benefits of a more nutritious diet and regular exercise go way beyond a low blood sugar level. His mood has improved and so has his relationship.

Not every institution has a Worksite Wellness Program, but everyone can have a health coach! If you would like to get one-on-one support to lose weight or manage your diabetes or heart condition, call the 1199SEIU Health Coaching Service today at (866) 935-1199.

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“It’s given me a more positive outlook. I have a lot more energy now,” he said. “And it has influenced my significant other. She’s lost weight, too, and we walk together a lot.”

His doctors told him that he’s lucky to have caught the onset of diabetes at an early stage, before his blood sugar level was dangerously high and could potentially need to be controlled with insulin injections. The thought of having to administer a daily dose of insulin made him more determined than ever to pursue a healthy lifestyle and abandon what had been lifelong harmful habits.

“I knew I didn’t want to take medicine or stick myself with needles,” he said. “Being diagnosed with diabetes was a great motivator. I know all of what comes with it – heart failure, kidney failure, vision problems – but my doctors said if you make these changes, lose some weight, you’ll be okay.”

Do you have a healthy story to share? We’re always looking for the opportunity to spotlight members who have used their 1199SEIU benefits to help them lose weight, bring a chronic condition under control or just improve their lifestyle in general. If you would like to share your healthy story in an upcoming issue of *For Your Benefit*, please contact the Fund at communications@1199Funds.org.

