



Jerome Biggars

TOPS 2009 Winner of the Men's Greatest Improvement Contest

“The Buddy-System”

—Meg Kelly

A successful dinner party isn't just about the food. It's about friends, stories and laughter. At Take Pounds Off Sensibly (TOPS), a successful diet is about the same things.

Jerome Biggars knows all about determination. When he joined a chapter of TOPS, he weighed a dangerous 493 pounds. Twelve months later he'd lost 293 of them and was declared the 2009 winner of the Men's Greatest Improvement Contest.

Jerome's story is happily familiar to Maggie Lehnert, Wellness Coordinator for TOPS, a non-profit weight-loss support program. "In 2009, TOPS members lost a combined total of 861,192 pounds. We don't just offer a diet or an individualized exercise program—we offer a life-style change that people don't have to make alone."

TOPS members credit their success to the many kinds of support they receive—medical, nutritional and group. While group therapy is common now, it wasn't in 1948 when founder Esther Manz, determined to lose her post-natal weight, put a scale in her purse and met a few like-minded friends in the recreation room at their local community center.

"We were the original social networking group," says Maggie. And like a social network site, Esther's vision mushroomed. It wasn't long before she was taking her scale to chapters all over town. Today, that original chapter of three friends has grown to almost 10,000 chapters and over 170,000 members.

"People know what they have to do to lose weight, but it can be hard to do it alone. We educate our members on how to achieve energy balance and give them the motivation and support to do it."

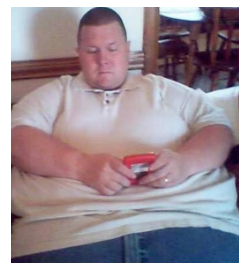
Because TOPS is non-profit that motivation and support is affordable. For an annual fee of \$26 in the states and \$30 in Canada, members work in partnership with their doctors to set an appropriate weight-goal.

Anyone interested is encouraged to join TOPS, or start their own chapter—TOPS provides chapters with professionally prepared educational material to use at meetings.

"All you need is four people," says Maggie, "A chapter can meet at work, church—anywhere with a spare room."

To find a TOPS chapter near you, go to www.TOPs.org.

TOPS is a partner of the Healthy Weight Commitment Foundation.



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