

Kevin Owens

Kevin Owens' Back Pain Disappeared Along With His Extra Weight



We have teamed up with BlueCross® BlueShield® of South Carolina for associates to share their stories of how they live Southeastern Strong. If you want to share your story, email us at seflstrong@sefl.com.

During his senior year of high school, Kevin Owens suffered a serious back injury in a car accident. Over time, he gained about 60 pounds and the lingering back pain from his long-ago accident intensified and occurred more often. Now 34 years old and the manager of SEFL's Sherman, Texas, Service Center, Owens has been pain-free for nearly two years. Losing 45 pounds of fat by improving his diet and embarking on an exercise plan that greatly strengthened his body made all the difference.

For Years, Physical Activity Kept Him Thin

Owens grew up in Temple, a small town in central Texas. Throughout his childhood, he ate the usual Southern diet of fried foods and buttery desserts, and he typically drank two to three soft drinks a day. Luckily, his ambitious lawn-mowing business kept him lean and healthy. With 25 clients, it also made him enough money to pay his way through college.

It was at college, where he studied operations and supply chain management, that Owens met a SEFL recruiter.

He signed on as a manager trainee for SEFL in Dallas while still in school. Later, SEFL promoted him to regional process improvement specialist.

In 2008, he married Beth, a Chicago native he'd first met in college. Beth was a great cook who introduced him to the best lasagna and deep dish-pizzas he'd ever tasted. So, not only was he eating lots of Southern fried foods, but calorie-rich Italian fare, as well.

Weight Gain Lessened His Quality of Life

At the same time, Owens' responsibilities were increasing. He was promoted to operations manager in Sherman. Over the next two years, Owens and his wife welcomed daughters Kaylee and Claire. In 2011, Owens was promoted to service center manager in Sherman.

"It was more of a desk job than I'd ever had before," Owens said. "I went from working all night at a 170-door facility on the inbound shift to a 20-door facility

in Sherman, so my physical activity was significantly reduced." With less physical activity, Owens' weight soon reached 200 pounds. It didn't help that his lunch usually consisted of fast food or, sometimes, a frozen pastry and a soda. His wife started complaining about his snoring, and Owens worried he was developing sleep apnea. He took medicine for acid reflux. Worst of all, his energy waned and his back pain grew worse.

"One of the worst things about my weight gain is that I always carry extra pounds around my chin and in my gut," he said. "So every time I'd look in the mirror I'd notice it ... couldn't escape it. Also, I kept outgrowing my clothes. Meanwhile, his wife stayed in great shape with exercise, even after giving birth to the couple's youngest daughter, Scarlette, in 2014. That year, during the Christmas holidays, Owens reached a turning point.

The Turning Point

"I was at my in-laws' home in Chicago, feeling tired and uncomfortable in my clothes, when someone brought me my usual soda," he said. "It was in that very moment that I decided I would make my first change by giving up soft drinks." But abandoning his three-a-day soda habit was harder than he anticipated. "I was addicted," he said.

"After giving them up, I actually dreamed at night about drinking soda."

At the same time, Owens also purchased an elliptical machine and began exercising on it 20 minutes a day while watching TV. Within one month, he'd lost 10 pounds. His looser clothes kept him motivated to make additional changes.

He began eating a lot of salads. He then bought a gym membership so he could lift weights. Owens had to adjust his diet after realizing that salads alone wouldn't help him build muscles.

"When I first started, I knew very little about nutrition or what I should be eating to get the most out of my workouts," he said. He began making healthy, lean sandwiches at home and taking them to work. Each weekend, he planned a week's worth of lunches and baked four chicken breasts to go on his salads, varying the seasonings so he wouldn't get bored.

Soon, Owens' fellow associates noticed and began asking him how he was losing weight. In time, he ran a 5K with a friend at SEFL, and later completed a seven-mile obstacle course race.



Before: Kevin Owens



After: Kevin Owens

Life Today

Today, Owens' previous size 38 pants and extra-large shirts fall off him. He now wears size 32 pants and medium-sized shirts. He wakes up four days a week at 4:30 a.m. to work out, so he doesn't have to miss any quality time with his wife and daughters. He has far more energy, which he spends camping, riding a bike and roller blading with his kids.

Owens no longer takes acid reflux medication or snores at night. An unexpected bonus: He says his thinking is much clearer, which helps him make wiser decisions in SEFL's fast-paced environment. "Best of all, I'm stronger, my posture is better and my back pain has pretty much disappeared," he said.

Owens said people often make the mistake of thinking that eating healthy or going to a gym is expensive. "Most of the time, I was spending \$10 a day eating fast food for lunch," he said. "The money I've saved by giving that up and no longer needing medication, and doctor and chiropractor visits, has more than outweighed (no pun intended) my \$20-a-month gym membership and the cost of healthier food."

Do you want to lose weight or quit smoking?

SEFL teamed up with BlueCross BlueShield of South Carolina to bring you stories of associates who are living Southeastern Strong. The goal is to inspire you and point you to resources that can help you make positive changes in your own life. Rally®, a digital health platform free to SEFL-insured associates, can help you lose weight, eat healthy, quit smoking and move more. To sign up for Rally, go to www.SouthCarolinaBlues.com and log in to My Health Toolkit®. Select the Wellness tab, then select Rally from the drop-down menu and follow the instructions.



**SOUTHEASTERN
STRONG**

We're On This Road Together

Rally is a product of Rally Health Inc., an independent company that offers a digital health platform on behalf of BlueCross.
BlueCross BlueShield of South Carolina is an independent licensee of the Blue Cross and Blue Shield Association.