



**BlueCross BlueShield  
of Minnesota**

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**NEWS RELEASE**

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## **Blue Cross' *do*<sup>®</sup> campaign highlights how Minnesotans tackle obesity**

*Moving more, eating better is key to better health*

EAGAN, Minn. (Nov. 30, 2009) — Local Bemidji man T.J. Melcher, 33, stars in new TV commercial, sharing how he met obesity head on and won. TJ's success story was selected out of numerous entries to be featured in Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Minnesota's (Blue Cross) new *do* campaign. The campaign is part of an aggressive effort to curb and reverse the state's increasing obesity trend. Slowing the rise of obesity is a critical issue in the state because more than 60 percent, approximately 2.4 million adult Minnesotans – are overweight or obese, resulting in increased risk for high blood pressure, Type 2 diabetes, heart disease, stroke, osteoarthritis, and colon cancer.

People who need to lose weight often are overwhelmed by the prospect. Blue Cross' market research confirms many barriers exist, but health risks related to obesity are a top motivator for weight loss. The new *do* ad campaign features individual success stories and highlights how people overcame common barriers to achieve and maintain a healthy weight. The goal of the campaign is to inspire others to move more and eat less to achieve better health.

TJ's journey to better health began nearly four years ago, after his physician told him he had possibly developed diabetes. TJ remembers being overweight in high school. After graduating and enlisting in the Army Reserve, he returned from basic training 45 lbs. lighter and with a renewed sense of confidence. He enrolled at Bemidji State University, married and started a family. But stress from school and everyday life caused him to turn to food, which resulted in TJ steadily gaining more weight and losing focus on his aspirations to become a police officer.

TJ's turning point occurred shortly after he turned 30. TJ recalled, "I could see that my overeating was spilling over to my family. I was missing out on the joys of fatherhood because I would get too full to play with my kids. I knew I had to change." The push TJ needed was right in front of him. His wife Carrie had wanted to run a relay-marathon so he joined her on that first run. That run was the beginning of his success. By changing his eating habits to healthier foods and returning to his basic training fitness regimen, TJ lost more than 100 lbs. and received a clean bill of health free from diabetes. This motivated TJ to re-enlist in Minnesota's Army National Guard and he now serves as a Second Lieutenant. He is the happiest and healthiest he's ever been.

"We've heard hundreds of inspiring stories like TJ's since the *do* campaign began and we wanted to find a way to showcase these stories so even more Minnesotans are motivated to be healthy," said Marc Manley, MD, chief prevention officer for Blue Cross. "Losing weight and adopting a healthier lifestyle can seem overwhelming, but success can be easier if you don't feel alone. Our new ad campaign is designed to build momentum and get friends, family and coworkers moving and doing something about obesity and its alarming upward trend."

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Blue Cross is tackling obesity to improve the quality of life of Minnesotans and to address rising health care costs. Treating obesity related illness greatly strains our health care system. A 2008 Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Minnesota report found that obesity was responsible for 27 percent of the recent increases in Minnesota's health care costs, and will account for 31 percent of future increases – adding nearly \$1 billion to Minnesota's total annual health care spending by 2010 and \$3.7 billion by 2020.

The *do* campaign is one of many ways Blue Cross is working to improve the health of Minnesotans. As part of Blue Cross' Prevention Minnesota initiative, the *do* campaign is funded entirely by Blue Cross' settlement proceeds from its historic lawsuit against the tobacco companies. Prevention Minnesota works to tackle the leading causes of preventable death and disease in Minnesota. Other programs and services to help members achieve and maintain a healthy weight include: free online health risk assessments and coaching modules, an online wellness center offering such tools as healthy eating plans and BMI calculators, discounts on Weight Watchers and fitness center membership, biking incentives such as "do-cycle," a "Walking Works" walking program for employers, and more.

To view the commercials, and many other inspiring stories, visit the [do-groove.com](http://do-groove.com) website. People interested in sharing their personal story can submit it for inclusion on the site and also become a *do* campaign Facebook fan. For more information about Blue Cross' many prevention efforts go to [www.bluecrossmn.com/preventionminnesota](http://www.bluecrossmn.com/preventionminnesota).

*do*<sup>®</sup> is a registered trademark of Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Minnesota. Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Minnesota, with headquarters in the St. Paul suburb of Eagan, was chartered in 1933 as Minnesota's first health plan and continues to carry out its charter mission today: to promote a wider, more economical and timely availability of health services for the people of Minnesota. A nonprofit, taxable organization, Blue Cross is the largest health plan based in Minnesota, covering 2.8 million members in Minnesota and nationally through its health plans or plans administered by its affiliated companies. Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Minnesota is a nonprofit independent licensee of the Blue Cross and Blue Shield Association headquartered in Chicago. Go to [bluecrossmn.com](http://bluecrossmn.com) to learn more about Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Minnesota.