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by Airman 1st Class Marissa Tucker
4th Fighter Wing Public Affairs

7/29/2009 - SEYMOUR JOHNSON AIR FORCE BASE, N.C. -- The power of motivation is amazing. It can take on any obstacle, adversity or hardship. Sometimes, hardships fuel one's drive to complete their goals, knowing in the end they will be much more self-fulfilled having completed something they may have thought was impossible.

An ambition to be healthy was the plan for Tech Sgt. Jason Bamshaw, a computer technician with the 4th Communications Squadron. As a single father of two young boys, Donovan, 7 and Dominic, 5, Sergeant Bamshaw had at least two very good reasons to be healthy.

"I wanted to be able to chase my kids around while they're playing," he said. "I would get winded really quickly and I decided I needed to change my lifestyle. I want to be here for them as long as possible."

His career was also a contributing factor in his quest for a healthier lifestyle. As a supervisor and leadership figure, he didn't want to be the kind of person with the "do as I say, not as I do" attitude, so he made a commitment to himself that he would be an example to his children and his Airmen.

"You can't be the type of person who doesn't practice what you preach," he said. "Physical training is a very important aspect of an Air Force career, no matter what a person's particular job is."

Juggling his two children, a 3.98 grade point average, a career and a desire for a new body was a lot to take on for Sergeant Bamshaw, but he knew his end results would be well worth the struggle.

After forming a game plan and finding a workout partner, Sergeant Bamshaw decided to compete in a body transformation contest held by a popular supplement company. The nationwide contest began January 1, 2009. He began the competition at 195 pounds and had a 24 percent body fat count.

Soon after the competition began, Sergeant Bamshaw received some bad news from home. On January 21, 2009, he received the call that his father had died of heart failure.

"That was a big wake-up call for me," he said. "Even though it was very hard, I kept going with my training and I used it as more motivation. I know my father wanted me to continue on and I know he's proud of me for sticking with my goal."

Sergeant Bamshaw continued his strict workout routine with his friend and workout partner, Senior Airman Joshua Falso, also a computer technician with the 4th CS.

"I've always been pretty athletic, but it's always better to have someone to work out with," Airman Falso said. "You really have to push each other to meet your goals. I'm really proud of him; he's lost a lot of weight."

Having someone hold him accountable, the support of his family, coworkers and the fitness center staff, helped Sergeant Bamshaw stay focused on his goal and ultimately helped him place second in the competition, losing more than 40 pounds, 19 percent of his total body fat and gaining a one-year contract with the company.

"I was really excited about winning, but more importantly, showing my boys they can do anything they set their mind to," he said. "I also hoped it could inspire other people who want to be fit, but just don't know where to start."

His ambition to help others turned into an online support system, where he chats and e-mails people who have fitness goals. He helps them with workout plans, meal ideas, and offers moral support. So far, he has helped approximately 25 people lose a combined weight of more than 500 pounds.

"It means a lot to me to be able to help other people out, because I know exactly how they're feeling," he said. "I motivate people to keep going, even when they feel like they've hit a wall or they are just tired of trying. Pushing through those tough times makes you stronger mentally and physically."

He encourages others to become fit when they come to him for help, but does not force his lifestyle on others.

"I will never look down on anyone for the choices they make, but I want them to know that I'm here if they want my help," he said. "I'd rather lead by example by eating healthy and exercising regularly, so they can see what I'm doing instead of me trying to preach to them."

Sergeant Bamshaw and his children now make healthier food choices and participate in more physical activities, something he did not do much when he was younger.

"In my family, we didn't really go to the gym or things like that," he said. "I want my kids to remain active and healthy, so they have the best chance at the longest, most productive life possible, and I would like to be around to see it for as long as I can."

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