

# Jeannette Dotson

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**\$5,000 WINNER**

**Walmart Supercenter #0109**

**Cameron, MO**

When I got the call that my daughter, Rashelle, was giving birth, I rushed to the hospital. I had a weird feeling that something wasn't right. A nurse stopped me outside her room and said: "I have to tell you something before you go in. Henry died." We found out that when Henry was born, he wasn't breathing and there was nothing the doctors could do. It was devastating. I went in and she was with my son-in-law, Clint, holding the baby in her arms. He was perfect. As a family, it was the hardest thing we've ever had to go through.

## **I was so sad for my daughter and didn't know what to do to help her.**

Rashelle shut her family and her friends out and became very distant. She and Clint just wanted to be alone. We respected that but I found it hard. We're a very close family. I was depressed and couldn't sleep. Work was also stressful during the pandemic. I'm 53; I was working longer hours and wasn't working out. I turned to food for comfort — chips and French fries. The whole family gained weight. I'd cry a lot. My youngest son, Austin, would tease me and say, "There goes mom crying at a commercial." One night I said: "This isn't working, something's got to give."

## **I started reaching out to my daughter, letting her know I was thinking about her.**

I'd say: "Love you, have a great day." I let her know I was there for her. She'd respond and say, "Love you, thank you." It started my day off with a smile.

**On Mother's Day, the family got together for dinner and Rashelle came too.** My mom was with us and we all hugged and exchanged gifts. Rashelle was smiling and it was good to see her back out in the world. It was a joyful day. As time went on, Rashelle and Clint would come to more family events. They might not stay long, but they would come.

## **I started eating better, which made me feel better.**

We'd cook more vegetables, and instead of making spaghetti, we would have zoodles (spiralized zucchini noodles) with ground turkey sauce, which actually tastes great. We buy 100 calorie bags of low fat Kettle chips and I limit myself to one bag. I feel lighter — I can breathe in my clothes. I go walking on the trail by the reservoir with my husband, Steven, and we have date nights.



## **My other daughter, Brittany, gave birth to a baby boy, Johnny, and Rashelle got pregnant.**

We could see the joy coming back to Rashelle and Clint. When their daughter, Faye, was born, it was amazing holding this little miracle who made it into the world. It was healing for all of us.

## **On my days off, I watch my grandchildren.**

We put them on their little CoComelon truck and push them around the house. I have more energy to play. We also raise dogs — we have six Australian Shepherds, and the children love to play with them.

## **I always say I have three grandchildren — Henry will always be a part of our lives.**

It's been three years since we lost him. His picture is on our wall, right there with the other two. On his birthday, we go out there to his graveside and bring him a little gift.

## **Family has always been important to me.**

I have four siblings, and even after we all got married, we'd go to my parents' house on Sundays after church. I know that it's harder to get us all together with everybody's busy lives nowadays. And when your children are adults, you have to give them their space. I am working on that balance with our family dynamic now. But we still find time to come together.

## **Last fall we all went camping together at Harrison County Lake.**

There was a wonderful moment when the guys were going fishing on their kayaks and boat. All of us girls had the strollers and the babies. We watched the guys set off and we were all waving at each other, and laughing. They didn't catch any fish so Clint bought steaks and 10 of us sat around the campfire, eating, joking, and having fun. It was magical.



THRIVE