

# Sashawna Blake

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**\$5,000 WINNER**

**Walmart Supercenter #1578  
Roswell, GA**

Ten years ago, I moved with my family from Jamaica to the US, together with my son, Deshawn-Dray. My husband, Garey, who's a D.J., is still in Jamaica. I'm an American citizen and I was saving to pay for the official, legal paperwork so he can join us. I'm 30, Dray's 11, and our dream has been for us all to be together. We miss Garey so much. He is the best dad anyone could ask for. We talk all the time and we've visited him in Jamaica, but it's hard.

**I managed to save \$2,000 — that's a lot for me — but I lent it to a friend who needed help.** People said, "Don't do it," but we'd been friends since high school and I trusted her. She let me down, never paid me back, and disappeared. It hurt to the bones and I went into a dark place. I wasn't taking care of myself. We'd eat food that was quick to prepare, like Jamaican patties and pizza heated in the microwave.

**One day, Dray was reading a book to himself and I could hear his quiet voice.**

He came into my room and lay down beside me. I thought in the snap of a moment, I've got to do better for my son, and it makes me cry remembering what that moment felt like.

**I started focusing on being grateful and spending time with Dray.**

I work shifts and when I come home, we play games in the living room — he loves Monopoly and Uno. On days off, I'll take him to the waterpark or the pool. My god sisters came to stay from Jamaica — they cooked and we ate together around the table and had fun.

**When I have time, I'm cooking; Dray's favorite dinner is spaghetti and meatballs.**

I'm also trying out new food I haven't had before, like asparagus, which I love. Cutting down on fast food is helping me to save and we only eat out once or twice a month. I used to stress-shop for clothes, but now I think before spending and just buy what we need.

**We moved in with my sister, Danielle, and her daughter, which saves money.**

Danielle helps me with my son when I'm working; she's my rock. We didn't grow up together. I only met her when I was 13 and our bond has grown strong. We laugh and encourage each other.



**I'm meditating every day; I feel calm and I'm sleeping better.**

There's a Meditative Story on the Thrive app by Dr. Lucy Kalanithi, who lost her husband. I listen to it all the time. It reminds me of my great-grandmother, Ivy. She passed away at 98 years old. I loved her and as a kid she would read the Bible to me.

**My grandmother in Jamaica, Sonia, inspires me to be kind.**

I remember, growing up, she was always helping people and giving them food. So at Christmas two years ago, my son and I fed the homeless. We did it again last year. We made breakfast — bacon, eggs, and biscuits — for 30 people. It brings us so much joy and my goal is to do it every three months. But I'm also learning that a small gesture of kindness is just as significant as the big ones. I don't need to be helping everyone financially. Simply saying: "Great job, thank you," at work might be the most fantastic thing you can do to make someone's day. So I come home and reflect on one act of kindness I did that day.

**I got promoted, which was exciting.**

I'm a coach, working on store remodeling, a job I've wanted for a long time. The promotion is helping me put away more money. I've been paying off credit cards and I've actually saved \$1,500. My husband's coming to live with us this summer; we can't wait. I'm looking for an apartment. Maybe we'll expand our family — I'd love to adopt. It will give me peace of mind having my family together in our own home, and I have a lot of hope for the future.



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