

Michelle Winebrenner

\$5,000 WINNER

Store #2435

Dundalk, MD

When my oldest daughter, Cierra, told me she was getting married, I was so happy, but immediately thought, "I have to lose weight." I weighed 355 pounds and even though Cierra doesn't judge me, I really wanted to look good at her wedding next year. I also wanted to improve my health. I wasn't exercising, and our family — my husband, John, our younger children, and I — would eat lots of fast food like pizza and fries. I'm only 43 and was borderline diabetic with high cholesterol. I was feeling depressed and I started the Challenge, because I want to be here when I have grandchildren someday.

I started walking our chihuahua, Javier, twice around the block after work.

I'd also walk around the store at lunchtime, whereas in the past, I'd sit in the break room playing a game on my phone. I'm not ready to run a marathon yet and I don't feel comfortable joining a gym, but I'm moving and feel great. I'm spending a lot of time out in the yard with my husband instead of sitting on the couch inside. It used to be a contest of who would not cut the grass. Now I enjoy doing it as well as trimming the bushes. Gardening is relaxing and a great way to detox from work.

Instead of fast food, I cook delicious low-carb meals.

A favorite recipe is zucchini "boats" stuffed with chicken, grilled peppers, and onions. I make mashed cauliflower with cream cheese. It's hard when everyone's eating ice cream, but I remember how much I've achieved and resist temptation. For motivation, I keep a picture of myself from the start of the year on my phone. There's such a big difference already in the way I look and feel.



At work, I'm more positive and understanding.

I work in HR and often hear excuses about why things don't get done. I used to be judgmental, but now, I keep an open mind. I try to be attentive and relate to what associates are telling me about the challenges they're facing. If they need to vent to me, I give them my undivided attention. I helped one woman when her mom was diagnosed with cancer. And when her mom passed away, she said, "I wouldn't have gotten through it all without you." I'm encouraging others, like my store manager, Brandie, to download the app. She's also lost weight.

Giving back is important and I'm leading a fundraiser to support our local children's hospital. My goal is for our store to raise at least \$6,000.

I've lost 40 pounds and I'm proud of what I've achieved so far.

I'm happy and feeling healthy and my knees aren't hurting. John and I will celebrate our 25th wedding anniversary in March next year and we're planning a trip to Mexico. I know I will be ready to go, confident enough to be out there in those nice blue waters — in a swimsuit!

