

Jessica Hamilton

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\$5,000 WINNER
Neighborhood Market #6323
Gulfport, MS

I'm a single mom with a ten-year-old daughter, Jade, and I never made time for myself. I'm 33 and I didn't eat well or drink enough water. Last November, I went out to eat with a friend and I didn't feel well. There was pain shooting through my side. The pain became unbearable so I rushed to the ER. It turned out I had a urinary tract infection and a kidney stone. The urologist said I needed to drink more water and have a better lifestyle. I knew I had to change if I wanted to be here for my family or there would be no more me.

I downloaded the Thrive app and began by cutting out soda and drinking more water.

I bought a water bottle with inspirational words encouraging you to drink more like, "Almost Done," and "You've Made it," which help me stay on track! My stomach feels a lot better, and oh my goodness, my skin looks better. I also have more energy.

Spending time with my daughter has become a priority.

That means putting my work on the backburner after work and not answering work calls. We go to the beach, we're swimming, and we walk our dog, Mango. We went to the Mississippi Coast Model Railroad Museum, which was amazingly interesting.

Jade and I go roller skating.

Jade is an excellent skater. To start with I was like a baby deer with wobbly legs. I was uncoordinated. But I'm getting a lot better. We skate together holding hands. We skate round the house and down the street to her grandparents' home — anywhere our wheels will roll.

I discovered that Jade is an amazing artist.

So I've bought her art materials like paper and paints and pencils. She drew a picture of me with a big afro, doing my hair in front of the mirror! We're doing art projects together. I took art in high school and we'll draw cartoons. There's an overabundance of joy because it's something we both love and share.

We're sharing yard work.

Jade has a green thumb — which she did not get from me. So she takes charge and tells me what she wants me to do, like watering the plants.

I'm cooking good food like baked salmon with lemon pepper and broccoli.

Or I'll make chicken and rice. We put our phones away and have good conversations. Jade will tell me what's going on at school. She told me she saw a kid picking on someone who's really quiet. She felt bad about it, so I spoke to the principal. He thanked me for bringing it to his attention, because bullying isn't tolerated — and it stopped.



I had a meeting with a real estate agent to talk about becoming a first time home owner.

He's a friend and he's helping me fill out a grant to get assistance so I don't have to put down a huge down payment. I don't spend as much on clothes — I have enough — and I'm saving money every month. And this time next year I hope to have everything in order to start the process. I'd love a house with a wrap-around porch with rocking chairs, a big yard for our dog to run around in, and a guest room for my mom.

My boyfriend Al is a big support.

We'll take a picnic to the beach and just talk. It's great to have an adult conversation. He took me away to Ocean Springs for the weekend, which is 20 minutes away, and my mom took care of Jade. He gets along with Jade and she really likes him. We're taking it one day at a time and not moving too fast.

For alone time, I go for walks to the park.

Occasionally, I'll get a wonderful pedicure and massage. I'm friendly with the manicurist, Tammy. She's amazing. She paints butterflies and hearts and flower gardens on my nails, and I get them painted every color under the sun.

I'm going back to school to get a business degree.

And I'm enjoying giving back by volunteering for an organization that supports the homeless called Feed My Sheep. When we serve them a meal, I'm filled with a lot of emotion, because there are people my age who don't have a home. It's so rewarding and it makes me very grateful for what I have in my life.



THRIVE