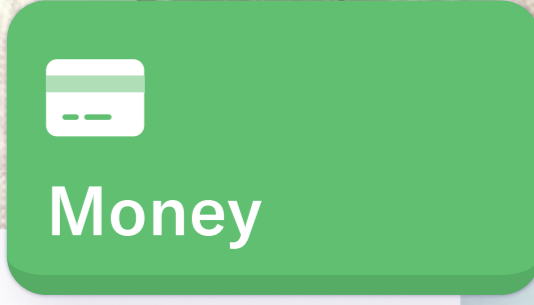




\$5,000 WINNER

Andres Guedez

HVFC #4124
Lebanon, TN



Microstep



I also choose activities that don't cost anything, like going for hikes at public parks and lakes.

Outcome



"I'm connecting with my dad and the rest of my family."

Three years ago my father and I moved from Venezuela to the U.S. as political refugees seeking asylum. I'm 28, and settling in a new country as an immigrant was stressful. I didn't have a safety net and I missed the rest of my family back home. I felt lonely and anxious about money. I have a work permit, but I was going through a rough patch because I have to pay a lawyer who is helping with the asylum process on my journey towards citizenship. Earlier this year, I heard about the Thrive Challenge and thought it would help me, so I got started.

My dad and I live together and support each other.

He also works at Walmart. We go hiking every weekend and we stay connected to our culture through food. We make arepas, traditional Venezuelan cornmeal pancakes filled with ham, egg, and cheese for breakfast, or with chicken for dinner. My mom and little brother are still in Venezuela. I talk to them every other day on video calls, and it makes me happy to hear their voices and see their faces, even though I'm sad that I haven't seen them for a long time.

Learning to communicate in English has been challenging.

Coming from a Spanish-speaking country made this journey difficult; I was scared to talk in case people couldn't understand my accent. By taking Microsteps, I found the courage to go up to people at work, smile, and say hello. I put more effort into talking to people, listening to them, taking a chance, and overcoming my fear. Everyone is friendly and I got to know people I might not have talked to who have similar interests to me, like music, reading, and soccer.

Friends I made at Walmart invited me to join a Sunday soccer league.

I'm super passionate about soccer and now I play every weekend. I've played ever since I was a kid, and it brings me a lot of joy. It's challenging and it keeps me active and healthy. Gradually, through soccer, I began to feel a sense of community like I had in my hometown, Maracaibo.

I met my girlfriend, Megan, at a soccer game.

I was invited to go and watch Nashville Soccer Club with a group of friends. Megan was also invited by mutual friends. She was really friendly and we got talking. A week later, I asked her out on a date and we're getting on really well. She likes soccer as much as I do and I like cooking for her. She loves my arepas!

Taking money Microsteps helped me to feel less stressed.

I have a big legal bill, but I talked to my lawyer and he's letting me pay in installments. I made a budget, and I'm managing to pay him \$500 a month. I'm saving money by eating out less and cooking more. I also choose activities that don't cost anything, like going for hikes at public parks and lakes.

I'm grateful I had the opportunity to leave my country and start a new life here.

By taking time for things that make me happy, I'm more settled and peaceful. I'm going through a Walmart mentorship program with my manager. I've learned such a lot from him and I've applied to become a team lead. I'm excited about my career — there are so many amazing opportunities. I'm hoping that soon my family will join us here in Nashville so we can be reunited.