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\$5,000 WINNER
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I'm from New Zealand and I moved to the States to get married to Ashley. We met on Facebook! Ashley and I have beautiful 11-year-old twins, Kingston and Lola, and we're so happy. But last December, Ashley had a health scare. She was feeling bad and was rushed to hospital. We found out she had double pneumonia in both lungs and she was in a medically induced coma for three weeks. She fully recovered — it's honestly a miracle — but it's been hard. I had to stop working for a while and take care of kids. The bills piled up, money was a struggle, and everything was stressful. Life was hitting me from every angle. I was eating fast food and I wasn't feeling good.

My manager, Jenny Ayala-Poe, inspired me to start the Thrive Challenge.

I stopped drinking pop and instead of eating out, I started learning new recipes and cooking. We all love Italian food and spaghetti is a family favorite. We love making homemade hamburgers with seasoned fries, and we eat lots of veggies, like carrots and broccoli. We're spending more time together as a family. Lola loves cooking and makes great tuna pasta. Kingston just likes to eat! But he helps in other ways like taking out the trash.

We're making better decisions with money.

Instead of buying name brands, we buy generic food, like cereal, and we do the same with household products like trash bags. Buying off-brand is saving us hundreds of dollars. I'm also being much less wasteful. I used to carelessly grab a handful of paper towels; now I grab one and make it last. I'm more mindful about everything and I'm not going on autopilot.

When I plan any trip in the car, I look for the most economical route.

We live out in the country and gas is expensive, so instead of going to the store and back several times, I'll plan ahead and do all my errands in one trip, which saves money and is better time management.

I canceled a bunch of subscriptions and streaming platforms.

That's saving me \$50 a month. I also switched to a cheaper phone plan. Money is starting to come in instead of going out all the time.

For the first time in five years I have no credit card debt — it's a huge, huge relief.

I'm 32, and I'm proud that we own our home; our plan is to pay down the mortgage by doubling up on how much we pay every month. We're also putting money away and we already have a \$3000 safety net.



Ashley and I are spending time together.

We've both been singing since we were kids and we love music. I've been in cover bands. We enjoy listening to the same bands, like Soundgarden and Led Zeppelin. We play music with the kids and Ashley sings with them. Kingston's already got that natural frontman vibe.

We play outside with the kids.

We have five acres and we're always outside. We have water balloon wars and we go swimming in the lake. We'll look for cool rocks.

Because I'm not as stressed, I have more time to really listen to my kids.

My son told me he wants to be a police officer and make the world a safe place. My daughter wants to be a chef and own a restaurant. She's happy when people enjoy the food she prepares. They're both talking about how they're excited to be going into sixth grade at a new school.

Thrive Microsteps help me with every aspect of my life.

I connect with people and listen to them. At work, I'll help people out. I saw a lady trying to reach for a jar of jam on a high shelf, so I said, "I'm tall, I'll get it." That small action helped make her day. My goal is to become an area manager.

Ashley and I have a beautiful connection — it's beyond heavenly.

I took her to Silver Beach in Michigan and we had an amazing time. We were swimming and dancing and affirming our love for each other. I feel so grateful that Ashley came through her illness and talking about it makes me emotional. And now I get to spend my life with her. Everything has turned out well. I have the dream home and the dream family. My goal: to be completely debt free.



THRIVE