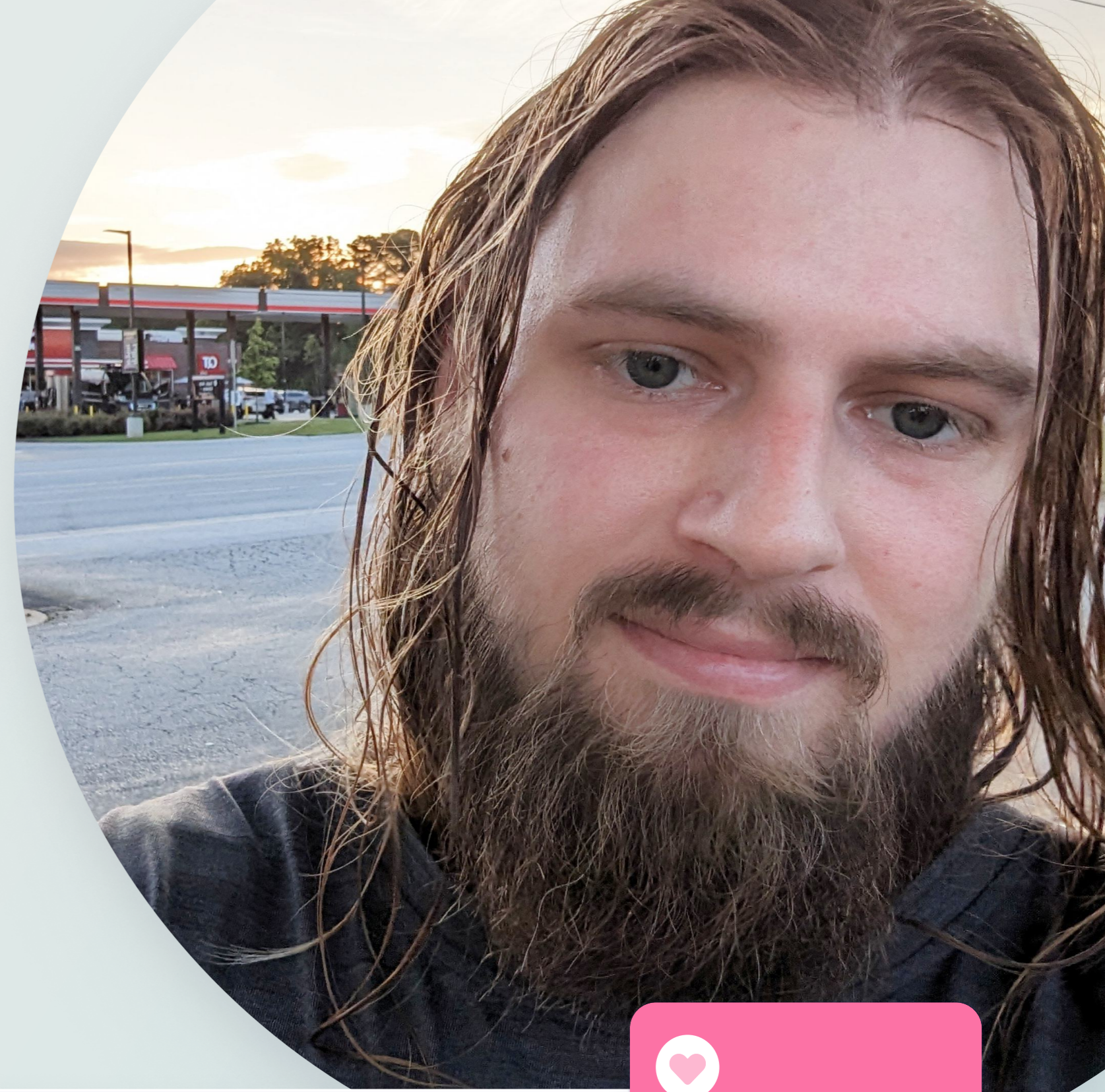


\$5,000 WINNER

Ralph Rose

**Distribution Center #6014
Laurens, SC****Connection****Microstep**

I write down affirmations like “I love myself,” on a board in my bedroom and say them out loud.

**Outcome**

“I’m connecting with friends and feeling grateful.”

When I was 14, my life changed. My mom was in a car accident which left her paralyzed with brain damage. I did most of the caregiving because my dad had health problems and wasn’t around a lot. I’d feed my mom, help her shower, and take her to the doctor. I had to grow up fast. My dad passed away in 2019, and I lost my mom last year. I was depressed and suffered from stress. I’m slightly autistic and have some difficulties communicating with people.

I’m 32 now, and I started the Thrive Challenge because I wanted more joy and less anxiety. I began by doing box breathing in the morning, which helped me to relax. I write down affirmations like “I love myself,” on a board in my bedroom and say them out loud to remind myself that I can get through my challenges. Exercising is another way I’m lowering stress; now I have a daily workout routine, which feels great. I start the day with basic stretches and then I knock out some push-ups and sit-ups.

My favorite Microstep is finding time for my hobby: drumming, which I hadn’t been doing for a long time. In my teens I used to love drumming and played in a Christian band. Recently, I picked up my drumsticks again. I play every day and it’s an excellent way to release stress. I’ll have a song or beat stuck in my head and I bring it to life by playing it. After a long day at work, I come home, go straight to my drum set, and lose myself in the music. It feels like I drum out any negative energy I might’ve picked up throughout the day. Drumming brings me joy and it’s the one gift I have that I’m most grateful for.

At work, I’m connecting with people, I’m listening more, and being thoughtful about what I say. I’m a better communicator. For support, I reach out to my friends. After my mom and dad passed away, my friends became my family. I’m always there for them if they need me. I miss my parents, but I wouldn’t change anything because through my struggles I’ve become a strong, caring person, and I’m grateful for my life.