

# Tina Thiessen

.....  
**\$5,000 WINNER**  
**Walmart Supercenter #3370**  
**Palmetto, FL**

My husband, Kevin, and I have been married for over 30 years. We have seven children; three still live with us. Kevin retired from the military, then worked in Afghanistan for 10 years. He's home now, which is wonderful, but we weren't communicating as a family. I've had a lot of loss. I used to be a nurse and I was caring for my mom who lived with us. My mom, dad, and sister died in a short space of time. Our dog and cat also died, and there was a sad place in my heart.

## **I had no energy.**

I'm 53 and I wasn't exercising or motivated to do anything. We used to eat as a family, but we weren't doing that anymore. Everyone grabbed something quick like a hot dog — it was a smorgasbord — then they'd be playing on their phones. I was stress-eating. I'd grab a snack, like a bag of chips. I wasn't taking care of myself.

## **I heard about the Thrive Challenge and got started.**

I liked the idea of taking small Microsteps. I thought, "That's a good idea." My 18-year-old daughter, Sophie, who works with me at Walmart, started too and we motivate each other.

## **I began by trading diet coke for water.**

I was like, "Okay, that's not so hard." We started making a list of what we were going to have for dinner, so the kids were involved in meal planning. The only one who likes veggies is Sophie. I asked the others to take turns picking a vegetable. Caleb, who's 13, picked broccoli; honestly, he'd never tried it before and he actually liked it! Easton, our 13-year-old, only likes corn and carrots. We're making grilled chicken, veggie burgers, and whole wheat noodles.

## **My mom's side of the family are from France so I'm making French recipes.**

I make delicious crêpes, minus the butter so they're healthy, and topped with fresh fruit. It brings back good memories. As a kid, we would visit my grandmother in France and she was a great cook. French culture centers around a good meal that brings everyone together and that's what I wanted for my kids.

## **We're eating together.**

We've done away with electronics at the table. We look at each other now and talk. The kids are opening up to us.

## **Easton told us he wasn't connecting with anybody at school.**

So I said, "We need to do something about that." I encouraged him to get involved in an activity, and he started playing the French horn. He loves it, he's made friends and is doing band camp. His teacher says he has a real chance of getting a college scholarship if he sticks with it. He's also getting together with our neighbors instead of playing video games. Sophie has decided to go to college and study art, so she's excited.



## **We're doing things as a family; last week we went bowling and had a blast.**

We were laughing the whole time, trying to beat each other. We also go for walks with our dogs, Pella and Loki, and we go on trips together. We went hiking in the mountains in Tennessee and visited Dollywood.

## **Way back, I used to run marathons, and I wanted to run again.**

So I started by walking, then I'd run for a bit, and every day I'd run a bit further. Now I'm running around the neighborhood. I love it — it's my time to think and reflect. I look at the beautiful birds and the scenery. Sometimes I'll stop halfway and do push ups and planks. People probably think I'm crazy! Caleb is doing cross country at school and he likes to run with me. Eventually I want to run another marathon.

## **My mood has improved and I've lost 14 pounds.**

I have the energy to play with my grandkids. Romello, who's eight, says, "Let's race, Grandma!" He thinks it's the greatest thing to see Grandma running down the hill — and to beat me!"

## **Kevin and I have weekly date nights.**

We're communicating, we'll watch a movie, or go fishing. We're sharing the chores; I load the dishes in the dishwasher and he unloads. And we wash the cars together. We're being more thoughtful; we're not criticizing each other.

## **The Challenge has helped me improve my physical and emotional well-being.**

I realize how lucky I am to have my family. I'm grateful and I feel blessed.



THRIVE