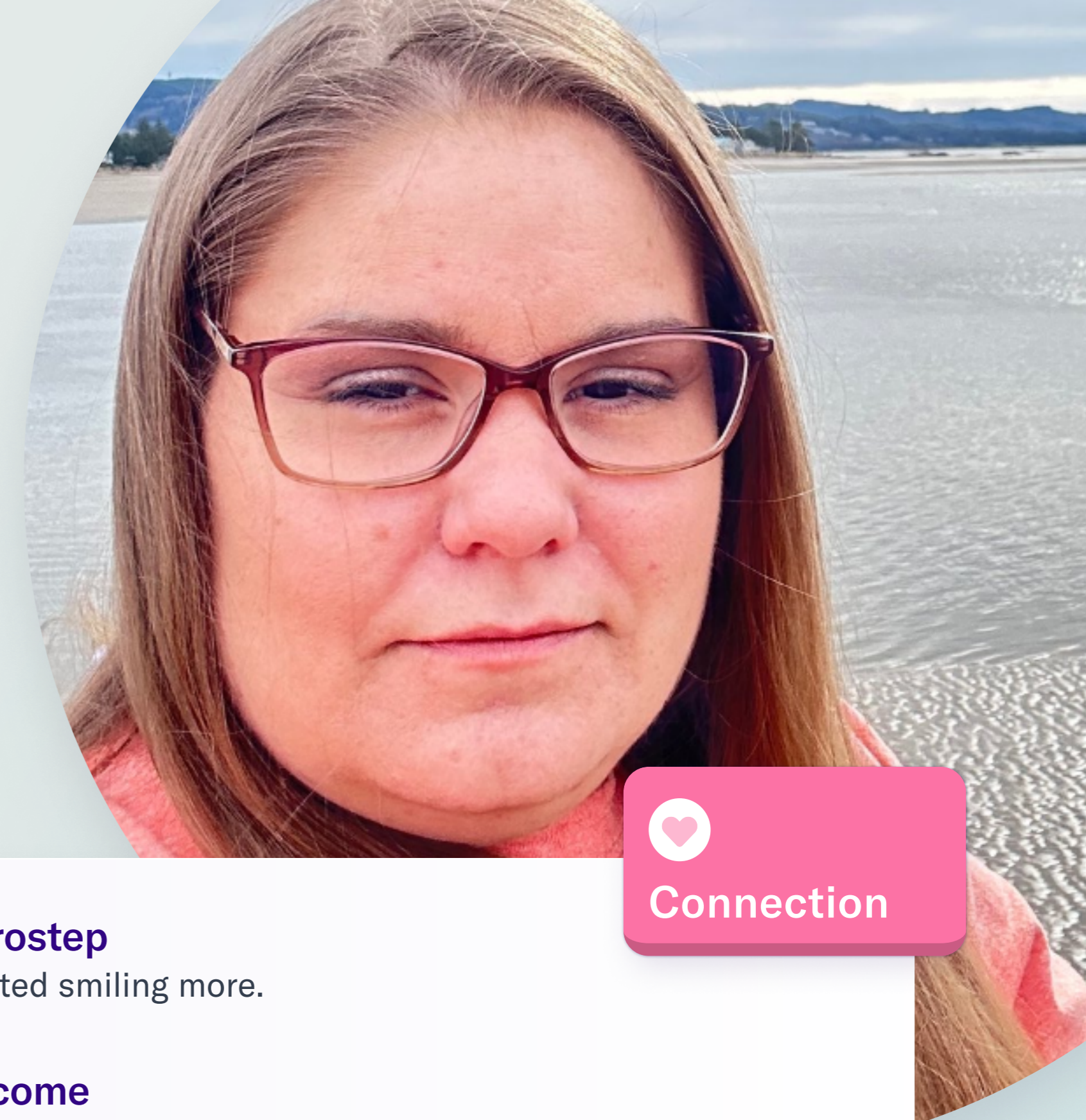


**\$5,000 WINNER**

# Lhanti Hewitt

**Store #1843  
Mcminnville, OR** **Connection****Microstep**

I started smiling more.

**Outcome**

"I'm more peaceful and I have a sense of belonging."

Sixteen years ago I made the difficult decision to place my newborn son with a wonderful adoptive couple. I was young and single and it was the best choice at the time. But it was the hardest thing I've ever had to do. Thankfully, we have an open adoption and I get to see him; he knows me and loves me. But there's a hole in my heart and sometimes I can't seem to fill it.

I'm 38 now and I have a wonderful husband, Ben, and a 19-year-old stepdaughter, Kellie. But I wanted more connection. I was staying home instead of engaging socially. I decided to take the Thrive Challenge and began with simple Microsteps. I started smiling more. At work I'm reaching out to people. One young man just joined our team and I went out of my way to be friendly and help him get adjusted.

At home, I tell my family how much I appreciate them. Kellie and I are cooking together and having great conversations about her goals. She'd like to pursue a career in fabric design, and I'm helping her with her resumé.

I've found that I'm slowly letting go of sadness and feeling more positive. I have a good relationship with my son's parents and they always send pictures, and I'm enjoying spending time with him, too. We have a beautiful relationship, and I'm so proud of him. He is a very handsome young man. He likes snowboarding and is on the school team.

Ben and I are bonding and listening to each other. I'm more patient. We're trying to put down our phones when we're together. We enjoy working in the yard together, and when we can, we like to steal away to the beach.

It's been a big goal to reconnect with my faith, and I've started to go to church again after several years. I joined the women's group and they're so welcoming. I've made one new friend, Kate, and I feel a real connection with her. Prayer is helping me heal. Grief comes and goes, but I'm getting stronger. I use all my Thrive tools, like walking in nature and listening to music. I'll go to lunch with a friend if I'm feeling down. I'm more peaceful and I have a sense of belonging.