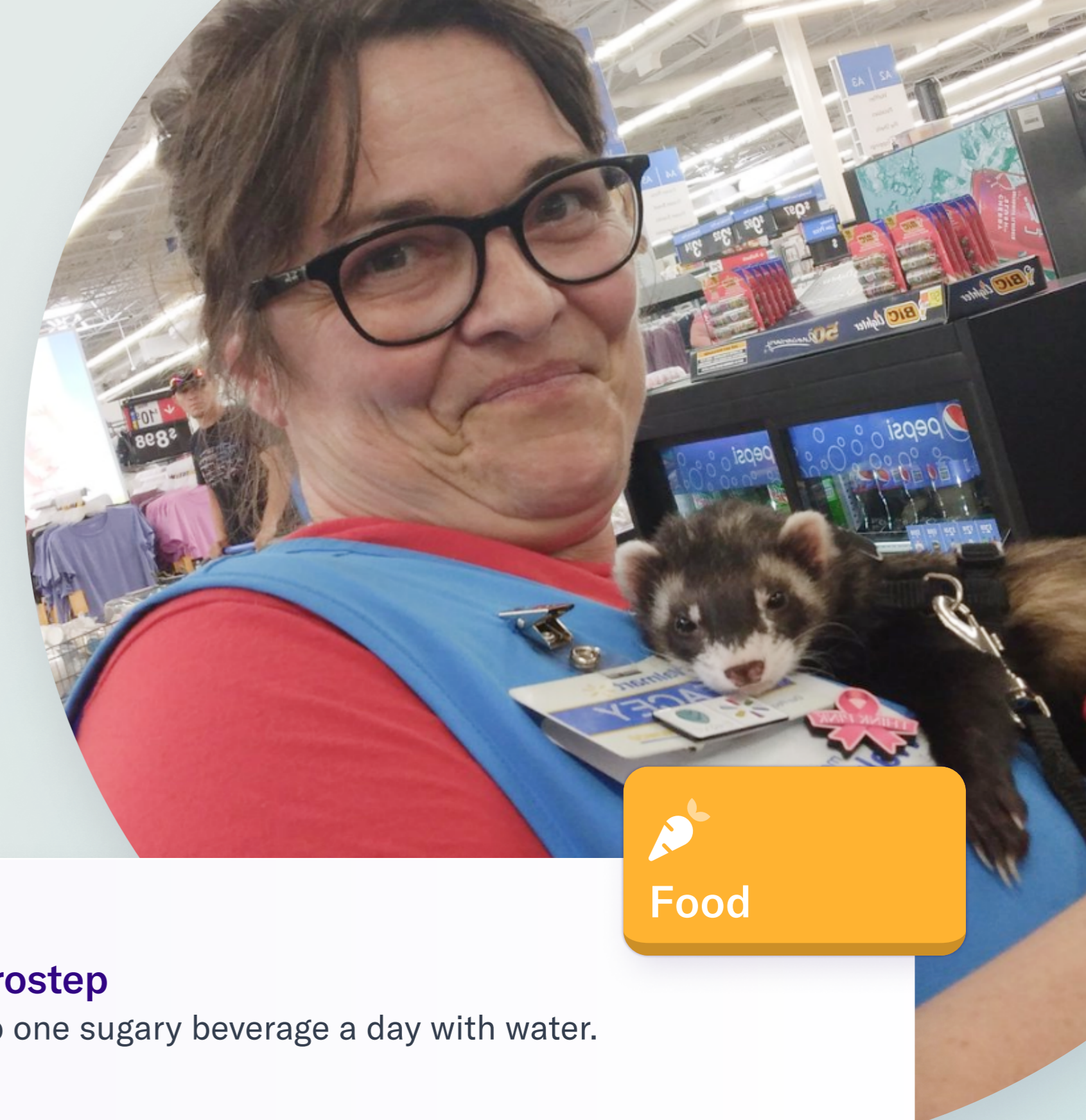


\$5,000 WINNER

Stacey Brooks

**Supercenter #2175
Branson West, MO****Microstep**

Swap one sugary beverage a day with water.

**Outcome**

“I’ve found that little by little, I’ve been building new habits, and I’m starting to feel like myself again.”

I was in a slump. I’m 41, and I was physically and mentally exhausted. I was eating a lot of processed food, drinking a lot of soda, and I wasn’t exercising. I gained weight and I didn’t have energy for my family.

I started the Thrive Challenge and began with a Microstep: swapping one sugary beverage for water. Then I established a whole hydration routine. As soon as I wake up I drink a glass of water, and whenever I feel fatigued during the day I’ll have a drink. I have a water bottle with me wherever I go.

I’ve been educating myself about nutrition. I learned about vitamins, protein, and fiber, and how they’re important to stay healthy. I found out about magnesium-enriched foods like nuts, avocados, and leafy greens. I started cooking spinach and kale, and I’ve been trying new veggies like okra.

I stopped eating out and began to make healthy meals like ground chicken with whole grain noodles and salad. It’s a hit with the family. I swapped my nightly bowl of ice cream for yogurt and fruit. I take nuts and fruit into work instead of chips and candy. Another tip: I have a buddy at work and we check in with each other when we need a confidence boost.

Moving regularly makes me feel more energetic.

For example, at home when I’m cleaning, I put on upbeat music and dance, which makes me feel happy. I practice volleyball with our 9-year-old daughter, Josie, and we go for bike rides. I know these little improvements I make every single day have made an enormous impact. I’ve been focusing on my well-being rather than weight loss, but I’ve actually lost 10 pounds.

Now that I’m exercising, I feel less stressed.

I’m journaling, writing down my feelings on paper, and I carry drawing supplies so I can doodle, which helps me to feel less overwhelmed. And if I’m feeling anxious, I’ll talk to my husband Kenny, who’s so supportive. I feel very grateful — I’ve learned the importance of being thankful for all the love I have in my life. I realize now how hard I was on myself and how I was my own biggest critic, and I’m learning to love and appreciate myself. I’ve found that little by little, I’ve been building new habits, and I’m starting to feel like myself again.