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\$5,000 WINNER
Walmart Store #2043
Warsaw, NY

My husband, Aaron, and I have six kids between us — we're a big blended family. We weren't eating well and part of that goes back to my childhood. I grew up in a low-income family and my parents divorced when I was four. We ate a lot of fried food and take-out like hamburgers and French fries.

Now I'm 37 and I really wanted to change my lifestyle.

I have a lot of responsibility as a store manager, but I was tired all the time and stressed. I weighed 275 pounds, I had foot pain, and my doctor said I was beginning to be pre-diabetic. The breaking point came when we had to order t-shirts for a big meeting of store managers. My shirt arrived and it didn't fit. I had to squeeze myself into it, and I felt so embarrassed.

The Thrive Challenge kicked me into gear.

I started meal prepping and bringing food into work, like turkey wraps, nuts, and veggies. I would never have touched brussels sprouts and zucchini when I was younger, but the more I've dabbled in cooking, the more I've discovered how delicious these vegetables can be.

One of our favorite dinners is my zucchini "pasta" bake.

I use zucchini noodles and cook them with turkey and low-carb tomato pasta sauce. Another meal we love is my scalloped yellow squash with cream and parmesan that we'll have with baked chicken.

We sit down for dinner in the dining room.

We try to make sure the kids are off the phones (which can be a struggle), and we'll each talk about our days. Ashley, who's 17, works at Walmart part-time. We're helping her navigate life and she's just been accepted to college. She's struggled with mental health and she wants to become a social worker so she can help others. Taya, who's 18, tells us about her studies. She loves animals and is getting a degree in zoology.

My daughters and I are taking our two golden retrievers, Joey and Timbit, for walks.

It gets us off the couch into the fresh air and off our devices. Our walks are becoming a habit even in the cold. I'll say, "Get your boots on, we're going out!" And of course the dogs don't care about the weather. Also, my husband and I and our two girls joined a gym. I do a mixture of cardio and weights.



We're doing more activities as a family.

We go to Altitude, a trampoline park. Jumping on the giant trampolines is a real workout. All the kids all enjoy it and I try to keep up with them. I'll be jumping and laughing and falling, and the kids think it's hilarious.

I'm learning to love my body.

My husband bought me gift certificates to a spa and I go for facials and beauty treatments. They really help with my self-image. And I can relax and escape the stressors of life for a little while.

Aaron and I have date nights every two weeks.

We'll go to dinner and we'll go bowling with friends. We look forward to those evenings and they help us appreciate each other. Bowling is kind of physical too, so we're moving. I'd never admit it, but Aaron always beats me! He's in a bowling league.

Work is easier because I feel better and I can move around better.

We've been converting our store back to normal after the holidays and I've been getting in there and helping our coaches and associates with things like organizing and stocking, instead of just telling them what to do. They really appreciate it. I'm more motivated and I motivate my team. I tell them I'm proud of them. Now, my goal is to take my career to the next level and become a market manager.

I've lost 65 pounds and my doctor is thrilled with my progress.

At my last appointment, he said everything is really good and in the "normal" range. I tell myself, "this is not a sprint, it's a life journey." And it's not just about weight loss. The changes I've made have helped my self-esteem and confidence. The Thrive Challenge is like a light switch going on, a burden being lifted off my shoulders. I'm so much stronger and I'm inspiring my family too.



THRIVE