

# Emma McCabe

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**\$5,000 WINNER**  
**Sam's Club #6572**  
**Knoxville, TN**

I'm in college studying for my degree, while also working full-time at Sam's Club. I'm 19, and the transition into adulthood has been difficult. My rent is expensive and I was very stressed about money. It was hard making time for myself, or my friends. And I was skipping meals — I'd be flying through my schedules, always moving onto the next thing, and I'd forget to eat. I was neglecting my physical and mental health. Sleep was another struggle. I was shaving off time for sleep in order to get my homework done. And I was constantly drained.

## **My manager, Patty Kennedy, introduced me to the Thrive Challenge.**

I have to thank her so much for inspiring me — she constantly checks in on me. Patty's changed her own life with Thrive, and I see how she truly cares for the well-being of others.

## **My first Microstep was taking the time to appreciate and enjoy my food.**

Thrive has helped me realize I need to eat regular meals, and now I make a point of eating three solid meals a day with healthy snacks in between. And I've switched out pop for water. Another Microstep is food prepping. I wake up earlier to make breakfast and pack dinner for work. Breakfast could be extravagant, like eggs and toast, or just oatmeal. I cook a full dinner that's not randomly put together. Recently, I made great lasagna with garlic bread. I've also made stuffed peppers with rice and broccoli.

## **Completing my daily step requirements on my Apple Watch brings me so much happiness.**

I didn't appreciate how much I moved until I started my Thrive Challenge. I know now that just because I haven't been going to the gym, it doesn't mean I am not active. I actually move throughout the day at school, and then I constantly move during my shifts at work. That recognition, giving myself credit, and knowing that I am moving, has benefited my mental health. I feel so much better.

## **By getting organized, I find time to connect with friends.**

I'll schedule a coffee date or just make a daily FaceTime call to let people know I care for them. I was always canceling on my friends because I was so busy and tired. But now I take naps and go to bed earlier. I have more energy, and I've strengthened my relationships. I'm communicating clearly with friends, explaining my situation with work and school demands, and making time for people I love, when I can. And every single one of my friends has been so incredibly understanding.



## **I plan little outings every week with my friends.**

Or we'll meet at someone's apartment, get in comfy clothes, and debrief about the week. It's great to trust that my friends are here for me. I also get great support from my family. My dad is unbelievably proud of me for keeping my grades up, while going to work. Knowing that he loves me so deeply fuels my drive to keep going. My connections with my friends and family are so strong now.

## **Connection Microsteps are helping me connect at work.**

I've always been someone who loves to give a warm smile! And now, I remember to ask people how they are. I'll ask my manager, Patty, about her day and ask if she needs help with anything. Working full-time has limited my abilities to volunteer for big events, but that doesn't stop me from holding doors or giving out compliments on a regular basis. Making someone's day is the best way for me to feel fulfilled.

## **I'm less stressed about money.**

My rent alone is \$1320. Add on gas, groceries, and other necessities, and there's little room for flexibility. But Thrive has helped me decide what's necessary and what is not. For the first time in my life, I'm budgeting — and cutting back. For example, before going out with friends, I eat at home so I don't have to worry about spending money on dinner. Or I'll just share an appetizer with someone. While I haven't been able to save money, I've been able to lessen the worries about my daily spending, which is all I could ask for at this point in my life.

## **By taking everything one step at a time, my mental health has improved so much.**

I'm closer to my friends, I'm sleeping well, I'm eating well, and I'm much happier!



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