

# Abel Contreras



**\$5,000 WINNER**  
**Return Center #9153**  
**Bentonville, AR**

My wife, Rosa, and I have a two-year-old daughter, Ava, and another baby on the way. We both work for Walmart and we were finding it hard to get childcare. So we decided to split shifts with me working weekends and Rosa working in the week. I had a physically demanding job as an order filler. I was eating fast food pretty much every day, and a lot of heavy, processed food. I weighed 315 pounds, and I felt my body was breaking down. One of my passions was powerlifting and that was my excuse to eat a lot. But I was in pain.

## **The breaking point came when I couldn't dress myself, and I couldn't sit down.**

I didn't want to end up in a wheelchair. I found out I had five herniated discs. I'm 32, and the neurosurgeon said I had the back of a 68-year-old man. She told me I needed to lose weight and to stop powerlifting. I couldn't believe it. I was very upset because I worked out with my close friends. We were a team.

## **My friend, Gabino, inspired me to download the Thrive app.**

I started by cutting out fast food and processed food. We're eating lots of vegetables, whole grains, and chicken. We'll get grass fed beef from local farms, make burgers, add cheese and wrap them in lettuce.

## **We make "alternative" pizza with a baked egg and cream cheese crust.**

We'll bake it and top it with marinara sauce, and turkey pepperoni. I feel satisfied and I don't overeat. I'm a good cook and the marvelous thing is how great I feel making delicious food my body craves. For a treat, we'll have a baked potato, or bread. Rosa and I are taking the Challenge together and she's a great support. Also, my power lifting friends have been supportive, and we still hang out.

## **I started working out doing things I'd never imagined I'd enjoy.**

I designed and built a home gym in our shed. I do calisthenics and exercises like push-ups and pull-ups. This is going to sound embarrassing, but because of my weight, I used to have a hard time riding a bike. Now I ride my bike every day to the library, with Ava in the baby bike seat. She loves it! At the library, we read stories. She loves any books with dinosaurs and ghosts.

## **Ava and I do a lot of painting.**

She puts on what I call her lab coat, and we set up the paints and brushes. Mostly, we do finger painting. Ava will use her whole hands and knuckles. She loves all the colors and does swirls all over the white paper.



## **My wife has a bike and we ride together to the lake.**

It's beautiful seeing the sun set over the water.

Sometimes I'll go for a run around the neighborhood; I'll do sprints to test my stamina. Being able to move my body freely again makes me believe I can do anything.

## **I play softball with my three nieces.**

We'll ride our bikes to the field and practice catching, throwing, and hitting. I'm getting more involved and learning more about the game — I'm really enjoying it.

## **I changed my job, I'm a maintenance technician, and I love my work.**

My new position requires more mental ability and responsibility. Before the Challenge, everyone around me was telling me I had a bright future, but I didn't have the self-confidence to pursue my dream job, even though I qualified as a technician in 2011. I'm also doing higher education through Walmart in heating, ventilation, and air conditioning (HVAC). It's been harder than I expected but I've almost finished and I feel accomplished.

## **In my spare time, I do home repairs.**

I'm a jack of all trades — I do construction and remodeling. I'm the one in the family that everyone calls when they need something fixed. Now I have the energy to help out.

## **I've lost 80 pounds.**

When I saw my doctor, she said, "Abel, what did you do?" My blood pressure is much lower, and she is very happy and impressed. My pain has gone and I feel confident in myself.

## **My motivation to change was my daughter and our family.**

I'm excited about our new baby. And now I know I'll be able to play with my kids, and be there for them as they grow up.

