

# Celinet Molina Portalatin

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**\$5,000 WINNER**  
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I used to be very overweight, and it caused me to have a heart attack five years ago. At that time, my doctor told me I had to start exercising and change my diet. It was difficult, but I was introduced to the keto diet and slowly started losing weight, and I ended up coming off of a pill I had to take after the incident. I was feeling better — but around the same time, I lost my home during Hurricane Maria, and that changed everything.

## **I remember seeing my home in ruins — it was traumatizing.**

Losing my home made me go backwards, and I felt like I was starting over. I was lucky that my colleagues helped me through that time. I fell down but got up again, and I'm thankful that I'm now stable and I have a little house, and everything worked out. But when that all happened, I lost my way a little and gained some of the weight back. It wasn't until I was eating lunch one day with a co-worker of mine that she mentioned the Thrive Challenge. I knew I needed a push to start again, and I remember saying to myself, "This could be my push." It was the spark I needed to get back on track.

## **I started inviting my 80-year-old dad to walk around a local track with me.**

I had to keep exercising to keep my cholesterol down, and my dad also has health issues and needed to start exercising. He has chronic diabetes, so it would be good for him. We walked together and he was enjoying it. I had to walk slower to keep to his pace, but I couldn't believe we were doing this together. We both enjoyed it.

## **I started packing my lunch at home and taking it to work with me.**

This has helped me eat better and also save money. I've never been great at saving. I was always the type of person who bought something if I liked it, no matter the cost. And when I lost my home, I knew I needed to save. I actually bought a little piggy bank and I've been putting all my change in it. Even if it's just two dollars and six cents, I save it. I'd love to save up enough to buy a Christmas gift for my grandson in December. And to improve my home.



## **My dad's health got worse, and we can't walk together anymore.**

My dad had to have his leg amputated from his diabetes. He fell into a bit of a depression afterwards because he can't go walking anymore. He wants to accompany me but he can't. He has to be at home, mostly sitting, so I've now started going over to his house and sitting with him on the balcony. I try to help keep him positive and encourage him to keep going. He's my inspiration, he's my daddy. I'm staying motivated to keep exercising for him, but it's hard to keep doing it without him. There are days where he doesn't want to eat, or talk — but I can't let him down. I tell him, "We have to get back on track."

## **After everything with my dad, I've started meditating.**

I used to see it as something that's boring, just sitting on the floor and breathing. But I said to myself, "I'm going to try," and I've started sitting still. We go to the beach sometimes so I'll do it there, and I'll sit for 45 minutes, just blending with nature. Just closing my eyes and being at peace with myself makes a difference. I'm proud of myself that I've been able to get here.

## **My goal now is to help other people achieve their goals.**

Helping my dad has motivated me to do the same for other people. I'm a much more positive person now and I've been able to turn sad moments into challenges that help me grow. I've been talking more at work, spending more time with family, and putting my phone away when I'm with other people. I've completely changed my lifestyle and I want to pay it forward.



THRIVE