

# Jolene Meade

**\$5,000 WINNER**  
**Walmart Customer**  
**Hornell, NY**

My parents split up when I was seven and my grandmother raised me and my younger sister. I love my grandma, but there was always junk food around. As a teenager, I was yo-yo dieting and I didn't like how I looked at all. I'm 27 now. My partner, Kevin, and I have been together since high school.

## **I was doing a lot of stress eating and we'd order fast food a lot.**

When I got pregnant with our son, Nivek (Kevin spelled backwards), I was eating bags of chips, ramen noodles, Slim Jims, and pizza. After the baby was born, I was up to 235 pounds. My ankles hurt and I couldn't go out to play with my son, who's now 10 months old. I have asthma and I knew I'd feel better if I lost weight.

## **My other half won the Thrive Challenge and inspired me to get started.**

I noticed how Kevin was much more motivated about everything. He was more fun and didn't just want to stay at home.

## **We began going to the gym and went for hikes together.**

We did a mud run in June, a 5K with an obstacle course — you have to crawl through the mud! It was definitely a big challenge, and I cut my leg, but it was fun. I finished strong and even won a medal.

## **It's great being on this journey together and Kevin encourages me all the time.**

He'll say, "Come on, you can do this, we're almost at the car." Then he'll say, "You did it, congratulations!"

## **I've been walking to the library with the baby for "Story Hour."**

The library has different activities for babies — they'll bring in animals like reptiles. A guy came in to talk about bees and butterflies and pollination. I love it and the baby loves it. I love his little face when he giggles at everything.

## **We've stopped going out to eat. Kevin does most of the cooking because he enjoys it.**

He makes mac and cheese and he'll add broccoli and basil. He does different chicken recipes: chicken with lemon zest, Italian style chicken alfredo and chicken with barbecue sauce, which is really, really good. I'm having lots of fruit; I'll eat apples and oranges all day. Honestly, I don't like many veggies, but I'm trying to eat more, and I'm eating salad. Kev's gardening.



We have cucumbers, lettuce, peppers, and tomatoes. We have so much, we share a lot of the veggies with the community. Some goes to the food pantry, and some goes to the Hornell YMCA.

## **Once a month, we'll get Dunkin' Donuts.**

I think it's important to have a treat sometimes because that tells you to keep going and not to give up.

## **I do yoga and stretching in the evening.**

It helps my body to calm down and relaxes me. I put my phone away and we'll go to bed at 9 p.m. The baby sleeps through the night now, and I'm sleeping well. In the morning, I feel ready for the day.

## **Kevin and I lost a baby in 2018 when I had a miscarriage, so I'm very grateful for Nivek.**

I honestly think I'm a great mom. We do everything together. Nivek's always with mommy. He's trying to walk and crawl and I have more energy for him. My two-year-old niece, Carson, comes over and hangs out with Nivek. She loves him. We'll all go to the park and play and go for walks.

## **When the baby's sleeping, I'll go into the other room and do my gem art.**

It's like painting by numbers using pretty gems, I love it. I just finished a painting of a white haired girl and a wolf. Right now, I'm working on a picture of a bear and her cub. Doing arts and crafts brings me joy, happiness, and positivity.

## **Kevin and I are spending more time together.**

We have a vacation planned: we're hoping to go to Sea Breeze, an amusement park in Rochester. I think it's important to have family time and Kev and I will also have a little bit of alone time too.

## **I haven't used my asthma inhaler for six months.**

My doctor is proud of me. I've lost 27 pounds and I feel so much better. I feel happy and accomplished.



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