

Ladonna Stafford

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\$5,000 WINNER
Walmart Supercenter #103
Shawnee, OK

My husband, Adam, and I have seven kids between us. Summer, our 20-year-old, and her 16-month-old daughter, Karsyn, live with us. We're happy, but I've struggled all my life with feeling unworthy. I'm 43, and I have a speech impediment, which has always made me feel embarrassed. I can't spell very well. My dad was illiterate — I've never even said that out loud. And my two brothers can't read or write.

I never gave myself credit for anything I accomplished., I was overeating because I felt bad about myself. I'd drink pop and eat fast food. My doctor told me I was obese and that was a turning point. Also, Adam and I have been together for 20 years, but we went through a rocky patch. We're good now, but it makes me emotional talking about it.

Kathryn Carpitcher, a Thrive Grand Champ, encouraged me to get started.

She's been a huge inspiration. Whenever she talks about Thrive, she lights up like a Christmas tree. My first Microstep was drinking water instead of pop. I stopped eating fried food. I'll make taco salad, grilled chicken salad, and beef shish kebabs. My favorite snack is celery and peanut butter. I'm 100 percent dedicated to my new way of eating, and I've lost 30 pounds.

We have family dinners; we talk about our day and laugh.

I don't want the kids on their phones — I want to know what's going on at basketball and softball.

I'm moving much more.

I exercise on my stair stepper, while listening to Michael Jackson. I like the fast beat. I go to the gym twice a week, and I have much more energy. I've been too embarrassed to do zumba but this is my year and I'll start going to classes. On my days off, Lacy, my 16-year-old, and I walk around the track near our house.

Adam and I are spending more time together,

We'll walk downtown, sit on the patio and talk, or watch a movie together. We just saw Dear John and really liked it. We'll do yard work together. I'll mow the lawn. Adam's got a green thumb, and he's been showing me how to plant flowers.

I got promoted to coach, and I was so excited; I couldn't believe it.

I didn't ever imagine I would ever get to where I am today, an equal with the other managers. I was worried about my struggles writing emails. But I proofread everything I write. My managers tell me how much they appreciate me, and I'm proud of myself. Next, I'm going to do a college course in computer skills.



I got a bonus at work and I saved enough money to buy a house — it's our forever home.

It's my family fort, and the feeling that I've earned something that's mine is amazing. I love that I have something to leave to my kids. We have a nice kitchen, a yard with flowers, and a porch.

I'm the glue that keeps our family together.

We'll grill chicken, shrimp and Polish sausages, sit down in the backyard and have a great time. My granddaughter, Karsyn, will play in the sand box. I've told the family, "I only want positivity in the new home. I need you to get along." We're really connecting and communicating and we're happy — which is all I've ever wanted in life. I'm about to cry talking about this — it really touches me.

At work, I go the extra mile.

I'm there to help, even if it's not my area. It makes me feel good about myself. If a customer can't find what they need, I'll look for it in the back room or get on the app to try and find it at another store. One customer bought a three-tiered cake for a baby shower, and the icing wasn't right. So I bought frosting and fixed it for her.

Thrive has taught me that it doesn't matter what my disabilities are.

If I don't try something new, it won't happen. I would like to be a store lead one day; there's so much I want to do. I'm like The Little Engine That Could.

Thrive has opened my eyes and my confidence has grown.

I tell myself, "Ladonna you can do this." My doctor is happy with my progress. My feet don't hurt anymore. I feel alive again.

