

# Alex Stephenson

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**\$5,000 WINNER**  
**Distribution Center #7055**  
**Gas City, IN**

For a long time, I was in a dark place. I struggled with alcoholism and it consumed my life; I was drinking cheap whiskey and malt liquor on a regular basis. I had no energy to engage with my wife, Victoria, and our daughters, 8-month-old Ellawyn and 2-year-old Adelia-Rae. One morning, I vividly remember waking up feeling sick to my stomach from drinking the night before. I was ashamed. It was a big wake-up call.

## **At the start of 2023 I reached out for help.**

Through Walmart, I had access to Doctor On Demand with doctors and mental health experts who helped me quit drinking. I'm 26 now, and I'm proud that I'm sober. I started the Thrive Challenge to get extra support in my recovery, as I continued my healing journey. I wanted to get healthy. I wanted to be present for my wife and kids.

## **I started getting in-person counseling with the head pastor at my church.**

We talk about my childhood trauma — there was a lot of abuse and bullying as I was growing up — and we talk about why I used to drink. My wife and I also have couple's counseling, which is great for our relationship. I couldn't have made it without my church.

## **Microsteps help me in my sobriety, like moving my body every day.**

I've joined a gym and I'm building stamina working out on the treadmill and stationary bike. I'm aiming to get strong again.

## **Victoria and I own a small farm and we love being in nature.**

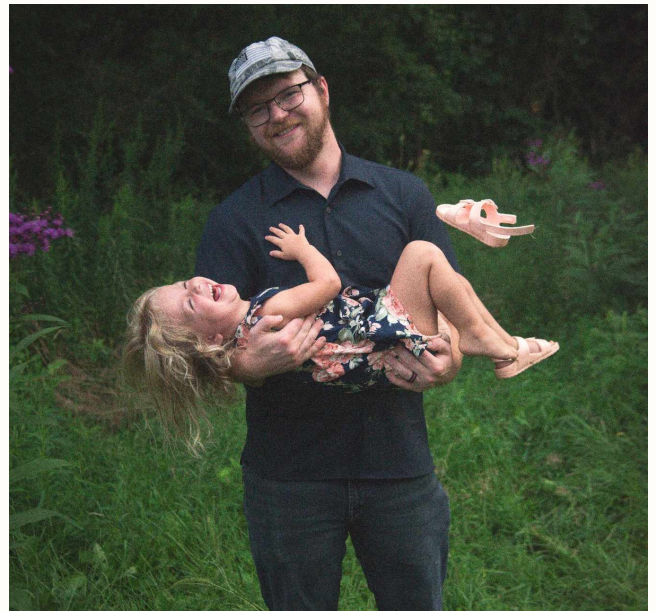
We walk along the road in the evening. When the weather's nice, Addi will ride her tricycle and Ella will be strapped to my chest. We stroll out to our apple orchard and I take the girls apple picking. When I was drinking, I wouldn't even think about doing these activities because I was always tired and stressed out.

## **Changing my diet is supporting me in my healing process.**

One Microstep that helped was drinking water instead of soda. I've cut out sugary drinks. Great, easy recipes on the Thrive app have made their way into our personal cookbook. We love the shrimp and veggie stir fry, and the smoothies. Victoria and I sit around the dining room table and search the app for new recipes.

## **We enjoy working on farm projects together.**

We ran new fencing for the horses, we ran a water line out to the barn, and we built a playhouse for Addi. I have more energy to play with Addi and she loves to jump on the trampoline, and I help with the baby.



## **Instead of being intoxicated and checked out, I'm connecting with Victoria.**

In the evening, we'll watch T.V. for a while, then turn it off and talk about our day. We'll play Uno or Victoria's favorite board game from childhood, Herd Your Horses. And sometimes we'll host friends for game nights. I can never thank my wife enough for sticking by my side. She's given me continued support and love even while I was putting her through the wringer.

## **I've rekindled my passion for reading.**

My grandmother was a librarian and she instilled a love of reading in me. I just read a great thriller by Dean Koontz called False Memory.

## **Setting boundaries is also helping me with my sobriety.**

I made the choice not to hang out with my old drinking buddies and go to bars. Instead I spend time healing my relationships with my family and good friends.

## **One of the best things I've learned from Thrive is how breathing can lower stress.**

I used to get irritable, and that led to drinking. Now I do breathing exercises when I feel anxious, and I've found I can stay calm and not worry about things that don't matter, like my daughter spilling apple juice on the floor.

## **I've discovered a whole new world of possibilities.**

I know now I'm capable of immense resilience and determination. I'm studying for a degree in cybersecurity and I can focus on my school work now without stressing about deadlines.

## **I can look back at my previous life and no longer feel ashamed.**

The Challenge is gradually transforming my perspective. And I am grateful for my new sense of purpose and fulfillment. I know I'll be strong and active in my girls' lives as they grow up. I'll be a great dad.



THRIVE