

# Debbie Slater

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**\$5,000 WINNER**  
**Neighborhood Market #322**  
**Fayetteville, AR**

Weight has been my biggest struggle. Growing up, we always had good Southern cooking and my mom fried everything — you always cleaned your plate. In high school, my weight started to bother me, and I tried every diet and every exercise plan known to man. I'm 48 now, and I was still eating that Southern food, like fried chicken with mac and cheese and bread.

## **My husband, Steve, and I have both worked for Walmart for 30 years.**

I love my job, but I wasn't feeling good. I had no energy for my family; we have two grown kids, Kaitlyn and Brock. I weighed 292 pounds, and I had high cholesterol and high blood pressure. I remember one day we were walking to an Arkansas Razorbacks football game, and I couldn't make it up the hill without stopping to catch my breath. That was my turning point. I researched bariatric weight loss surgery, and my doctor said it was a great option for me. I lost a few pounds, and then I was able to have the surgery, since my Walmart insurance covers it.

## **But I still had to change my mindset, and I had to eat right.**

I started the Thrive Challenge and first I cut out processed food and sugar. For dinner, I'll make grilled chicken or shrimp with veggies. I love asparagus, broccoli, and spinach. And I only drink water. In the beginning it was tough. It's almost like losing a best friend when you change your way of eating, but I've gained so much more.

## **I'm cooking for the family.**

Our son lives with us, and my daughter and son-in-law come over, and we'll hang out at the kitchen table and play card games. We're doing more together. We went to the Broadway show, Tootsie, that was playing here in Arkansas. We laughed so hard — it was amazing.

## **Steve and I joined a gym.**

I work out on the treadmill and do weight training. There are great hiking trails where we live and we love to walk our dogs, Max and Bailey. We're hiking in state parks like Lake Fort Smith. We're walking up hills, down ravines, and over creeks, which I couldn't have done before. It's thrilling. I have so much energy — I feel like I can walk forever.

## **We're making time for date nights.**

We'll go bowling or we'll get healthy take-out, like steak and broccoli. We'll relax at home and watch Netflix. We're loving New Amsterdam. I'm happier and our connection is deeper.



## **When I'm on the road in my car, I play Christian worship music and talk to God.**

I thank him because I feel so much better. Steve and I go to church every Sunday and when I was overweight, I wanted to just sit down and hide. Now I talk to people coming into church. We're joining in activities like marriage retreats. They have scavenger hunts where you run through town with your spouse — I just couldn't do that before because I'd get out of breath.

## **I'm spending time with my best friends, Jennifer and Genevie.**

We go to watch comedy, and we go to concerts together. We recently went to see Garth Brooks. Jennifer and Genevie have been right there with me, encouraging me through this whole process. It's so important to have friends if you're having a day that's not going like it should go. We all need someone to make us laugh.

## **I've gained my life back.**

I'm enjoying things I was afraid to try before. Steve and I went on vacation to a resort in Gatlinburg, Tennessee, and I went snowtubing. I felt like a little kid — it was exhilarating and awesome, and we had a blast. My next goal is ziplining which I've always wanted to.

## **I've lost 125 pounds in a year and my doctor says she's so impressed with my progress.**

I used to have arthritis and had to get steroid shots. I haven't had one a year. Nothing hurts at all. My cholesterol and blood pressure are normal and I'm off my meds.

## **I tell myself, "Debbie, I'm proud of you."**

I've gone from a size 18 to a size eight. I just bought myself new jeans, a short cream top, and brown suede booties, and when I look in the mirror, I like who I see now. A friend said to me, "Are you going to wear a bikini this summer?" And I actually thought, maybe. That would be phenomenal.

