

Tiarra Andrews

.....

\$5,000 WINNER
Distribution Center #6014
Laurens, SC

I've had low self-esteem ever since I was a little girl. I was skinny with a big gap between my teeth and I got picked on a lot. I used to come home from school crying. My mama would say, "You're fine the way you are." I didn't get any comfort but it was hard for her; she was a single mom and had four kids by the time she was 19. I started gaining weight in my teens; I would eat emotionally after a bad day at school.

Now I'm 33, a single mom myself, with two kids.

A few months ago, I was feeling down. I was eating fast food like burgers and I weighed 302 pounds — I had no confidence. My eight-year-old daughter, Journee, picked up on my sadness and she'd say, "Mama, it's okay to be big; you're beautiful." But when she wanted me to come outside and race her and Tristen, my four-year-old, I didn't have the energy. I said to myself, "You know what? I brought these kids into this world and I want to be there for them 100%." Also, arthritis runs in my family, my mom can't walk and I knew I had to do better.

I quit eating fried food, and fast food.

I researched the Keto diet and decided to try it. I started baking everything and eating green vegetables, and I only drink water — no soda. My go-to meal is chicken buffalo dip: shredded chicken with cream cheese and hot sauce in a lettuce wrap. I also love cauliflower mash. For dessert I actually make my own sugar-free ice cream. Occasionally I'll allow myself a cheat day and might have a piece of sweet potato pie.

I've lost 32 pounds and have much more energy.

I play basketball with the kids and we run around the local track together. Before I was just lying around all day. Now they say, "Mommy, let's go to the park." And I'm right there. We're all happier.

My sister, Dedricka, is my best friend and my biggest support.

She works at Walmart like me and we're both doing the Thrive Challenge. We cook together, we go for walks and go to the gym together. At the weekend we're at her house and they're at my house and we let the kids run around. We were so close growing up and we want to make sure our kids are always close.



We have dance parties.

The kids love the "Cha-Cha Slide" by DJ Casper. Dedricka and I grew up in the church — we were on the praise team and love gospel music. We listen to a lot of R&B. I just say, "Alexa, play Beyoncé!" I'll listen to anything by Beyoncé — "Single Ladies (Put a Ring on It)" is my song!

It's getting easier to look in the mirror.

I say, "Okay, Tiarra, you've got this, don't worry." Recently, I got dressed up for my mother's 50th birthday. I looked at my reflection and said, "You look good today." I felt confident.

To relax, I'll go to the spa for a manicure.

It helps me feel at peace and "in the moment." Reading also helps. I step out of reality for a moment and escape. I like urban fiction and right now I'm reading the Butterfly series by Ashley Antoinette.

I'm a religious person and praying motivates me.

It gives me strength to continue with my diet, because I used to start a plan and then in two days I was through with it. And I pray for others! I say, "God, please watch over everyone I love — everyone you love."

Saving money is easier now that I'm not eating out.

I had no idea that I was spending so much at restaurants. I'm putting the money I would have spent away, and that's around \$300 a month.

My determination is growing, I'm happier and I've come a long way.

My goals: to meet someone and be in a great relationship in the next three years, and to buy my own house.



THRIVE