

April Harris



\$5,000 WINNER **Walmart Supercenter #715** **Tuscaloosa, AL**

Since I was 13, I've battled depression. I'm 42 now and in June I broke up with my boyfriend. I was homeless and I didn't have anywhere to go. My home has always been with whoever I was dating and I had to live in my car. My 21-year-old daughter, Robyn, lives with her fiancé in a one bedroom apartment, so that wasn't a situation I could barge into.

Because of my stress and depression, I was spending too much.

I'd buy trinkets, gifts, and clothes as a form of retail therapy. I was behind on bills and my debts were crushing me. I felt like I was drowning and couldn't grab onto anything solid to pull myself out of the depths. I distanced myself from people, mostly from shame. I didn't want anyone to know what I was struggling with. I was always sleepy and I was gaining weight.

I read the Thrive Challenge Entry Book in the break room and downloaded the Thrive app.

Robert Flores, who is on the cover, was my inspiration. He was homeless, and I saw a lot of my life in what he went through. I thought, "Here is someone who made it, so I can make it, too."

For a while, I rented a room with a friend, then I bought a nice camper.

Things are much better. I'm saving to buy a tiny home. I'll remodel it and put it in a bathroom, because I'm good at construction and DIY.

I bought a journal and made a budget.

I began with Microsteps, writing out everything I owed and tracking my spending. I gave myself an allowance and I've stuck to it. Before, I'd buy things I didn't need, like a coffee pot. Soon I was able to pay off some debts and save a little money.

If I felt like spending money I'd take a walk and now I walk a lot.

I'll stroll outside and reflect on my life. I love watching the leaves falling and listening to the wind blowing. Being in nature helps me to de-stress and I can breathe more easily. I think about positive things in my life, like that I have a job and I'm a good person. I say, "You've got this April, you can do this."

I make better food choices.

I cook fish and make vegetable stew or black beans and rice. Instead of red meat, I use ground turkey which is a lot healthier. I've lost 20 pounds and feel much healthier.



At work, I used to keep myself to myself, and now, I'm connecting with people.

I opened up and told a couple of co-workers what I was going through, and they told me what they were going through. Now, we've got friendships going and work is a lot more fun. I'm also seeing my daughter regularly. We're best friends and I go to her place a lot.

I've reconnected with my first love, Brandon, and we're in a relationship.

Brandon also works at Walmart. We broke up a long time ago, but we stayed in touch as friends. Now it's great. We have fun doing nothing — we don't spend a dime, we just talk and do goofy Facebook Reels for fun. And we listen to music, everything from Mozart and Chopin to opera and rap. I love YelloPain — his music has very positive, deep messages.

Brandon's good for me and builds up my confidence.

He tells me I'm the smartest person he knows — he calls me "Google" because I know a lot. To other people we might be boring, but we just love hanging out.

After a few more paychecks, I'll have cleared my debts.

I'm really excited about buying a tiny home. I married when I was really young and I've made a lot of bad choices with men. I was always taking care of other people's households, but none of them were mine. Now it's time for me to have a home of my own.

My tiny home won't be my final destination — I have a plan.

After five years I'll look into buying a house. I want to put down roots and have a place my grandkids can come to. The Thrive Challenge has been a life vest for me. I can see light at the end of the tunnel. And it's aptly named, because I'm finally thriving.



THRIVE