

Karen Crawford

.....
\$5,000 WINNER
Walmart Supercenter #2663
Ebensburg, PA

There's been a lot of loss in my life. I've been divorced from my husband since 2008 and it's been really hard. Then last year I lost my mom to brain cancer. Oh my gosh, it was hard, because we were so close. I'd look at her pictures and say: "Mom why did you have to leave me?" My sister-in-law died from skin cancer last summer, and then I lost my dog, Duchess. And my dad died in January this year. His heart stopped. I felt bad, and food was a comfort. I'm 60 and I have a wonderful 29-year-old son, Matthew, and I'm engaged to a very nice man, Jim, but he lives two hours from me so I don't see him a lot. I'd get off work and sit on the couch crying and eating kettle chips, Ben & Jerry's ice cream, and frozen dinners, and I put on 24 pounds.

My co-workers Danielle and Victoria encouraged me to start the Thrive Challenge.

They're both winners. Victoria helped me with the app and said, "You can do this, Karen." The first thing I did was to cut down on frozen dinners and start cooking. I make chicken in the oven and I'll make a tomato salad. I'm making my own pizza with low carb flatbread topped with tomato sauce, turkey pepperoni, and lots of veggies. It's so good, and what a healthy meal! And I don't get cravings for real pizza anymore. I also eat much slower and pay attention to what I'm eating. I've lost 16 pounds so far and feel great.

I ride my stationary bike every morning and I do 50 sit ups.

I'm also doing lots of walking on the trail near my home with my new rescue dog, Lucy, who has been helping me to heal.

Matthew and I are very close — I am very blessed.

He has a successful YouTube channel, with videos about anime, and I'm so proud of him; I love seeing what he's working on. Matthew's a great cook and Jim and I sometimes go over to his house for dinner.

Baking is my passion and connects me with my mom.

We used to bake together, she was amazing and taught me to make cakes and biscuits. I enter a lot of baking competitions and I just won second place in a chocolate cake contest. For another competition, I made triple chocolate scones and won first place. I make 40 different flavors of fudge and invent new flavors, like my banana fudge with a graham cracker crust. Baking is very creative, and it makes me happy — and the best part is sharing it with Matthew and Jim and my friends. I don't eat a lot myself but I always taste what I bake.



To relax, I watch my favorite soap opera *The Bold and The Beautiful*.

I record every episode and it helps keep my mind off anything stressful or sad.

My relationship with Jim is much better because I'm more positive and happier.

We're more understanding of each other. We'll go to the movies or for walks together and we're appreciating each other. He's amazing because he's a contractor and he fixes everything in my house, like wiring and plumbing. He's always there for me. In the future we want to get married — I want to share my life with him.

I won the "Happy To Help" award at work, and I have the plaque on my wall.

Customers who take online surveys have been complimenting me, saying things like, "Karen's a very friendly cashier. She's always helpful and she's always smiling."

My faith is helping with the grief.

My parents were Ukrainian and I'm Ukrainian Orthodox. I'll go to church sometimes and I visit my mom's grave which makes me feel close to her. I talk to her all the time and say, "Mom I miss you." I know my mom and dad are together now and I feel at peace. My mom wouldn't want me to be sad, she'd want me to be happy and go on with life, so that is what I'm doing.



THRIVE