

# Bill Linsner

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**\$5,000 WINNER**  
**Walmart Store #2326**  
**Hornell, NY**

During COVID, I was having a rough time at work and felt like I couldn't get enough done. A lot of people were on COVID leave and we all had to roll up our sleeves, dig in, and do the jobs of everyone who wasn't there — pushing carts, stacking shelves — whatever was needed for our customers. I was eating McDonald's and Taco Bell, food that made me feel bad. I was depressed and kept it to myself because I didn't want to burden my wife, Megan. I'm only 38, but I was too tired and sluggish to go out and play with my kids, eight-year-old Abby and five-year-old Olivia. I used to run every day, but I'd stopped exercising. I wanted to be the loving, supporting father that I knew I had in me, but my self-esteem took a huge hit. Kirsten Ohara, a Thrive Challenge winner, and Kevin Lowe, our store's Thrive Challenge Grand Champ, encouraged me to download the Thrive app.

## **I think about what I put in my body.**

I've cut out sodas and drink water instead. When I'm home, I do most of the cooking. I make great chicken tacos in the crock pot, and we're cooking lots of plant-based meals. Chickpeas have been a game-changer, we add them to stir fries. We'll also have spaghetti with veggies and chili with beans and corn. We're trying to make family dinners device-free — it's a struggle! But we all sit around the table, find out what the kids did at school, and plan vacations.

## **We had a family vacation this summer and we had a blast.**

We went to Hersheypark in Pennsylvania and took the girls on the roller coasters. They had so much fun, it melted my heart. We've also been going on camping trips to Stony Brook State Park. We take our dog Chase with us. It's relaxing and peaceful to be in nature with minimal cell service. We play card games and hike the trails. There's a pool under the waterfall where you can swim, and watching the girls play in the water collecting rocks reminds me how important it is to be grateful for the little things in life.

## **I started running on my treadmill to get my endurance back up.**

I wasn't as out of shape as I thought I was, and in September I ran a 5K with Kirsten and Kevin. It was a little tough but it felt like a big accomplishment. That was my jumping-off point to get myself ready for a half marathon I'm running next February.



## **My pastor is a great support and I open up to him about everything.**

Pastor Steve married us, and we're good friends at this point. He'll give me advice and he'll occasionally lean on me and ask me for advice, which makes me feel really empowered.

## **Megan and I are on the same page.**

Before, there were arguments and snide comments like, "You were home all day, why didn't you clean up?" Now, we're communicating and we'll text each other throughout the day if there's something on our mind. We're divvying up the chores and the kids are helping too. They know they have to clean their rooms, and they actually enjoy running round the house sweeping the floor. The house is more organized and peaceful.

## **I'm feeling less stressed at work.**

We all support each other. When I feel like grabbing a soda, I'll look at Kirsten and I won't do it! We've increased the fun level. Paul, our manager, and Kirsten put on reindeer costumes and were running around the store making everyone laugh. Little things like that make you want to be at work.

## **I know I'm on the right track.**

I have more of a go-get-em attitude. I can keep up with the kids now, I'm not depressed anymore, and I just feel better.

## **I'm a third-generation volunteer firefighter.**

It's what I grew up around and what I enjoy doing. I serve as assistant chief of our fire department. Recently we were called to an accident where a motorcyclist had been hit by a car. He was thrown from his bike, 40 feet from the point of impact. Our quick response not only helped to save his life, but he somehow only ended up walking away with minor injuries. One of the most rewarding things for me about firefighting is knowing I'm able to make a difference and save lives.



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