

Benita White

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\$5,000 WINNER

Supercenter #3205

Lithia Springs, GA

I used to be exhausted all the time. I have asthma and sarcoidosis, a rare disease, which means I get short of breath just walking down the street. At home I have an oxygen tank. I had high cholesterol, weighed 210 pounds and was eating mostly junk food: hamburgers, cookies, and ice cream. I'm 57, a single mom with three grown children, and I had no energy for my seven grandchildren. My doctor said I'd probably need a lung transplant if I didn't change my lifestyle.

My wake-up came when my sister, Michelle, passed away.

She was just 60, overweight, and had a heart condition. We were very close and before she died she said: "Nita, take care of yourself." Then a co-worker, Sharon Pittman, a Thrive Challenge winner, inspired me to start in February, because I saw that unlike all those people who lose 50 pounds then gain it all back, she'd lost weight and kept it off. Sharon became my mentor.

I began by buying a lunch box and bringing turkey sandwiches into work instead of going to McDonald's. Instead of ginger ale I drink water now. For dinner I make baked fish or chicken with veggies like cabbage or broccoli.

I've made a home gym for me and my 13-year-old granddaughter, Maryiah.

Maryiah and I have become "sparring partners." I bought dumbbells and a treadmill, and I roll around on a big purple ball which eases my sciatica. Maryiah helps me balance. My 10-year-old grandson, Marcus, does yard work with me. We plant flowers and made a pretty rock garden. And, as a family, we go bowling, which I love and never thought I'd have the strength to do. My daughter, Marqutta, is doing the Thrive Challenge with me, and we swap recipes.



I do breathing exercises using the Thrive app.

They help me relax and sleep well. I also have a Bible study group. Sometimes, when I'm stressed and just want to cry, reading the Bible makes me feel better inside out.

I have more energy at work.

As a photo specialist, I develop film for our customers. I never used to interact with them much. Now I engage with people when they show me pictures of their families and vacations — I feel like I have traveled with them! When you feel better about yourself, you can help other people feel better too.

I'm writing a book about my life journey.

I became an orphan at eight years old when both my parents died. Kind relatives took us in but it wasn't easy. Now I'm motivated to share my story and let other people know they can make it through hard times.

I've lost 30 pounds and I can breathe better.

I don't need a lung transplant and I don't need extra oxygen at work. My doctor said: "Whatever you're doing, keep it up." I am so grateful. I talk to Michelle in my prayers and tell her: "Sis, I'm taking good care of myself."



THRIVE