

# Jennifer Gilles

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**\$5,000 WINNER**

**Walmart Store #2435  
Dundalk, MD**

In 2017, I slipped in my kitchen and herniated a disc in my back that ended up causing nerve damage in my foot. I had to wear a boot for four months, and when I finally got the boot off, they figured out that I had gotten a blood clot in that same leg. It took a while until I could get back to my usual activity. I wasn't putting in effort to maintain my weight, eat better, or do the exercises that I needed to make sure that my body was healing. Then, in March of this year, I herniated another disc. I felt so frustrated. I said to myself, "I can't keep doing this to my body. I need to do something to help myself."

## **My Store People Lead, Michelle Winebrenner, told me about the Thrive Challenge.**

She had mentioned it a few times in the past, but after I hurt myself, I started asking her more about it. I have a hard time staying motivated, and I needed something to help motivate me. The Thrive Challenge felt like it could be a step toward that goal. At the end of the day, I want to be with my kids and to be around for my grandkids. And if I don't take care of myself now, I'll only have more trouble later on.

## **My first step was cutting out soda and instead drinking water and tea.**

I've always been one to drink my calories, so this swap was a big one for me. I also started swapping out hummus for mayonnaise in my recipes, and using lettuce leaves instead of bread. My go-to meal has been chicken teriyaki. I cut up chicken breast and vegetables, and put cauliflower in the food processor instead of white rice.



## **I've accepted that I'll never be a runner, but I can still meet my goals.**

The issues with my foot and my back still limit what I can do physically. But walking, stretching, and hiking have definitely decreased my pain and made my mobility better. Over the summer, I tried to walk four days a week. My goal is to lose enough weight to help circulation and strength in my legs. I weighed 228 pounds in September 2020, and today I weigh 207!

## **I've worked for Walmart for 20 years, and I've had four kids during my career here.**

My kids are 18, 16, 11, and nine. My oldest just graduated last year! We've always liked to go outside, go camping, hiking, bowling, and swimming — but all of that was difficult when I was overweight. Now, I can finally be active with them again. They've joined me on my walks around the neighborhood and I've been teaching them how to build new habits.

## **The biggest shift has been my mindset.**

There are plenty of days where I feel like I don't have time to walk or make the right food choices, but I've been trying to stop making so many excuses. Plus, I've been getting better at controlling my stress and staying positive. The Thrive Challenge has helped decrease my pain, keep me accountable, and remind me how far I've come.



THRIVE