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Publisher

# Inside

## An early Christmas, contest and the Fountain

Well, check off Christmas number one for our family.

Diane and I traveled to West Orange, N.J. last week to visit her daughter, Tammy, husband Brandon and their two boys.

The weather was cold. The highs were in the low to mid 30s most of the week. I don't like the cold, especially when it is windy, too. And it was when we went to Willowbrook Mall Wednesday afternoon to do some last minute shopping for the boys. We heard on the radio that the windchill was 17 degrees.

Wednesday night, we ordered some take out Italian food and gathered around the Christmas tree. This is the first year that grandson Brandon, now 2-1/2, understands what Christmas is all about.

Tammie took him and brother Brodie to see Santa the previous week. Brandon told Santa what he wanted while year-old Brodie didn't like his initial encounter with the jolly man in the red suit. He screamed his unhappiness when placed on Santa's lap.

But Wednesday night, Brodie showed he knows how to tear off the wrapping paper from the presents. He likes and understands that much about Christmas.

It was a good visit, and when we returned Saturday, the high was 45 degrees. It actually didn't feel too bad when we were unloading the car at the airport.

We'll get to see the West Coast granddaughters on the day after Christmas when daughter Holly and her family will make a quick stop at our house before going to Mexico to visit her mom.

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This is the final week of our "Holidays Cash in the Hills" contest. Be sure to stop at as many of the participating businesses as your schedule will allow by noon Friday. Fill out a coupon and drop it in the contest box. All entries turned in this week are eligible for our fourth weekly drawing for a \$25 prize, and the Grand Prize drawing.

There are three grand prizes: \$500, \$300 and \$200. Also eligible for the grand prize drawing are the 15 previous weekly winners.

All prizes are awarded in *Fountain Hills Times* dollars and can be spent in any of the 39 participating businesses by Jan. 31, 2011.

In addition to signing up for the drawings, take the opportunity to see what specials are being offered by the merchants and restaurants.

Good luck!

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Today is a milestone day in our town. It was 40 years ago today that the fountain was turned on for the first time.

At that time it was the tallest in the world.

The man who came up with the idea of having the fountain installed in the middle of the desert was C.V. Wood, the president of McCulloch Oil and the man who headed the design team that created Disneyland.

It was his intention that the world's tallest fountain and a collection of replicas of world-famous fountains along the Avenue of the Fountains would bring tourists to Fountain Hills and be the engine for a tourism-based economy.

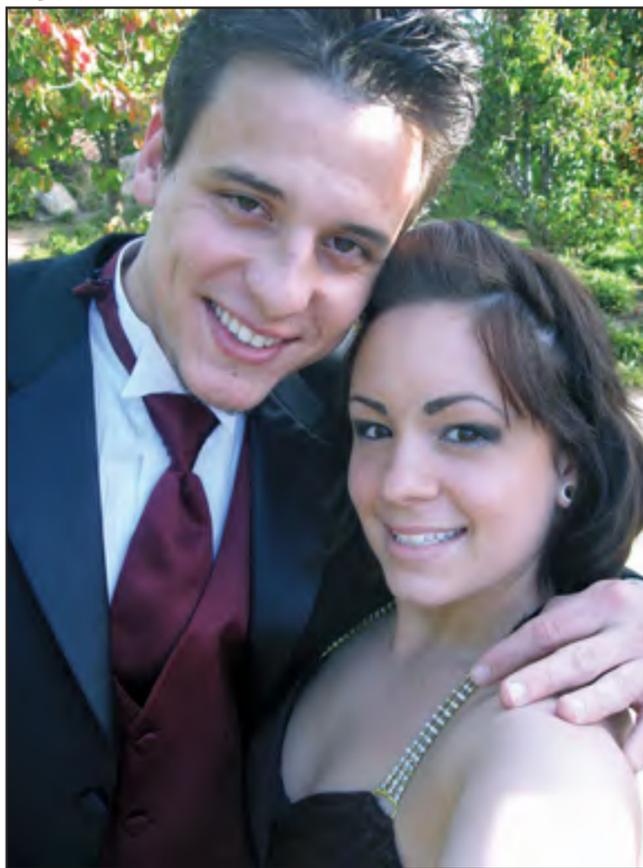
Unfortunately the fountains on the Avenue didn't happen.

I still think we need to see if we can come up with an affordable way to create a series of unique fountains

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# HOOKED on HEROIN?

## No, she kicked the habit.



Christine Platt and Dominic Alvarez are engaged to be married and look forward to spending new lives together.

## Christine does rehab, comes home clean

By Michael Scharnow  
Times Editor

*"You just don't win with heroin. If you don't get help, you either die or you go to jail; there is no middle ground, there are no options."*

Thanksgiving and Christmas are always special holidays for families, but for the Platt family, the holiday season of 2010 may be difficult to top.

The *Times* in February profiled "Christine," a young Fountain Hills woman hooked on heroin, and what the drug had done to her life and her parents at home.

The 19-year-old at the time was going through drug withdrawals and preparing to check into a rehab facility.

She just didn't know where yet.

Today, Christine Platt is ready to tell "the rest of the story," borrowing the indomitable words of broadcaster Paul Harvey.

"I pretty much hit rock bottom," the petite 20-year-old says today. "I was ready to get some help."

She was strung out on junk (heroin) every day and running away from her Fountain Hills home, family and support system.

Christine was getting money wherever and however she could to support her heroin habit.

*"Junk is not like alcohol or weed, a means to increase enjoyment of life. Once you get addicted it is a way of life."*

Once she agreed to rehab and change that way of life, parents Rich and Lucille had to form a 24-hour watch system to be with Christine constantly as she started the physical withdrawals and fight the mental triggers drawing her to score another cheap fix of junk.

"We found it extremely difficult to stand tough and not allow our daughter back home until she was ready to accept help," mom Lucille says.

"We knew we could not give her money or enable her to continue on that path."

Once she checked into the Casa Palmera facility in Del Mar, Calif., Christine was subjected to intense inpatient drug rehab. She was given Suboxone, which is used to fight opiate addiction, during the preliminary treatment.

"That place really was great," Christine says. "I was so happy to get off heroin and stay off of it."

Because of insurance coverage and lack of financial resources beyond that, Christine could only stay at the coastal facility for a month.

"While Christine was in rehab, we weren't prepared for the extreme ups

and downs she would go through and relate to us during her daily phone calls," mom says. "It was extremely difficult for

her to be able to deal with the emotions that flooded and overwhelmed her as the cloud she was in slowly started clearing."

The Platts had to resist the urge to simply drive over and pick up their "little girl," knowing the transition would be difficult.

"We realized the battle was far from over," Lucille adds, "and there would be no comfort or rest for a long time."

*"It's not heroin or cocaine that makes one an addict, it is the need to escape from a harsh reality."*

Christine's parents traveled to the coast for a special three-day family visit.

They met other parents, the counselors and sat in group meetings along with one-on-one time with Christine's counselors.

"We learned it was going to take a lot more time than we thought before her thought processes returned to normal and the cravings subsided," Lucille recalls.

Still, the Platts also learned that their hard-line approach likely brought Christine to the point of accepting real help.

"More than one coun-

selor told us that Christine was lucky, that we were strong enough to resist enabling her habit," Lucille adds.

Christine acknowledged that with her parents as well, justifying their stance.

"That helped us know we made the right decision, but it didn't erase the pain and hopelessness we felt in the past," Lucille says.

### Real world

After a month, however, it was time to depart the rehab facility and face the "real world" once again. Under normal circumstances, the stay would have been longer and the follow-up care would have been more intense at another facility.

Instead, the Platts had to improvise and organize their own support system for Christine, setting up eight-hour shifts and various appointments with counselors and doctors.

"We knew it was going to be difficult to keep her away from the many teenagers here in Fountain Hills who were still using," Lucille says.

"We were told that is a major reason for relapse."

Christine says she was feeling homesick and ready to leave rehab, though she acknowledged not looking up her friends and fighting the triggers were the most difficult part.

"My parents were very supportive, but they didn't know what it felt like," she says. "The mental part is the toughest, especially once you get through withdrawals."

"You have to keep busy or otherwise that's all you think about."

*"I did not feel like something was going to take over my life and destroy it. It felt like a subtle flower instead of a manipulative demon. That's the mystery of heroin."*

So Christine started working out often at a gym, kept away from all her old friends and avoided those places where she used to hang out.

Sounds like a cliché, but it was a long and hot summer.

### More mystery

Christine had been pray-

ing for other people to come into her life, specifically a man, someone who would understand her past and her addiction tendencies.

An acquaintance from Fountain Hills High School, Dominic Alvarez, just happened to be in town visiting from New Mexico and randomly contacted Christine to see how she was doing with no knowledge of what she had been through.

Well, one thing led to another, and they soon started dating.

Alvarez came from a similar background, having smoked plenty of weed and ingested cocaine earlier in his life, even going through rehab at a Valley treatment center.

"I can relate to her stories and what she had been through," says Alvarez, who has been clean and sober for five years.

"She's doing really well." Today they are engaged and living in a Scottsdale apartment.

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## \*Where to get help

The Crisis Activated Response Effort (CARE) of Fountain Hills often encounters families and individuals who need help in the area of substance abuse. CARE is an emergency-dispatched trauma intervention program.

Its director, Victoria Caltabiano, is a part of the Fountain Hills Youth Substance Abuse Prevention Coalition and has compiled referral information for those needing professional substance abuse help.

"Most of what we distribute is incident specific," Caltabiano said. "Before engaging in any program, people are always advised to consult with their insurance company to determine coverage." For additional information on CARE/FH, call (480) 478-4030 or Community Information and Referrals at (602) 263-8856.

Additional information also is available from the Substance Abuse Prevention Coalition, which can be reached at (480) 639-0519 or fhcoalition.com.

Some of the hotline numbers provide phone support and can assist people in finding the help that they need.

### Treatment facilities

- \* Community Bridges/EVARC; Mesa; (480) 962-7711
- \* TERROS; Phoenix and Mesa; (602) 685-6000; crisis, (602) 222-9444
- \* Southwest Behavioral Health, Phoenix, (602) 997-2233
- \* St. Luke's Medical Center, Phoenix, (602) 251-8535
- \* St. Luke's Behavioral Health Center, Mesa, (480) 827-2440
- \* Teen Challenge, Phoenix, (602) 271-4084

### Intensive outpatient programs

- \* Learning Effective Sobriety Skills, Mesa, (602) 820-7509
- \* St. Luke's Behavioral Hospital, Mesa, (480) 827-2440
- \* Banner Behavioral Health Hospital, Scottsdale, (602) 254-4357
- \* Center for Lifestyle Change, Phoenix, (602) 852-0911
- \* Community Bridges, Mesa, (480) 962-7922

### Hotline assistance

- \* Marijuana Anonymous, 800-766-6770; marijuana-anonymous.org
- \* Narcotics Anonymous, (480) 897-4636; na.org
- \* Alcoholics Anonymous, (602) 957-7457; aa.org
- \* Alanon/Alateen, (602) 249-1257; al-anon.alateen.org

24-hour crisis hotline/phone support

- \* EMPACT, (480) 784-1500; empact-spc.com
- \* Parents Anonymous, (602) 248-0428; parentsanonymous.org
- \* Teen Link-Peer Counselors (3-9 p.m.), (602) 248-8336, teenlifeline.org
- \* Teen Link-automated, (602) 235-9678, teenlifeline.org

### Additional information

- \* Alcohol and Drug Information Line, (800) 720-6686, ncadi.samhsa.gov
- \* Drug screening-TASC, (602) 254-7328; tasc-arizona.org