



## Jill

written with Julie Kudrna

**Thank you for giving me the opportunity to wisely use the tools you gave me because I'm on my way to a new life.**

*Jill turns 60 in a few weeks, around the same time when she will have her own place to stay for the first time in nearly 6 years. Jill is soon to be graduate of Casa Paloma, Primavera's transitional housing program for formerly homeless women. At the thought of her own apartment, an aura of pure joy surrounds her and she smiles so deeply that her eyes cannot be seen. This is her story:*

I'm from northern New Jersey. My parents moved here [to Arizona] in 1970. I came out for visits and decided to move out here when the time came in 1985. Moving here started a 14-year abusive relationship. I tried to get away; he followed me to Oakland and abused me there.

I had a job in Oakland but it folded. I ran a storage facility and pallet yard, living onsite. The property got sold and my job went in the toilet. I had a motor home, but it didn't run, so I was on the streets for 14 months. I ventured into a couple shelters. They gave me 1-800 numbers to call. The numbers connected you with states that were able to take domestic violence victims right away. I was looking for some place he wouldn't know where I was and I found out that Tucson had the most services for women without anything. Openings filled up very quickly. It took six months until I found some place in Tucson that would take me. Waiting, that was the hard part.

My brother was a truck driver. By a chance of luck he was coming through Oakland and picked me up. The TCWC (Tucson Centers for Women and Children) accepted me when I got here; I didn't have to spend a day on the street. I got accepted at Casa Paloma the very day my time at TCWC was up.

I was here 15 months, and then I went and worked taking care of a 92-year-old woman. I shared an apartment with some people who stole

all my money so I came back to Casa Paloma. Two months after I got back, my health went downhill. I wasn't allowed to go to a doctor the whole time I was with that guy; he thought I would tell on him. I didn't realize how sick I was until I went to the hospital. I lost my gall bladder and almost didn't make it. I applied for disability and was lucky because I got it eventually—a lot of people who have it worse than I do never get it.



I've been at Casa Paloma almost two years now. The reason I've been here so long is I've been waiting for housing. Rent is really outrageous and when you're getting \$600 a month that's a little rough. So, public housing became a good option.



When I came here I had 18 goals. Now, with finding housing, I have achieved 13 of them. The big ones left are: finding my daughter, getting teeth, and getting the rights to see my granddaughter. I've gone to counseling and through programs. I've learned to not be so critical. I've learned not to be abusive. When you yourself have been abused for any amount of time, you become used to it and don't realize that you put it on others. Unconsciously I know I've said and done some bad things to others. The biggest thing I've learned...is to see my faults, stop, and do a 180 to correct it while it's happening. You cannot be possessed by your past. You have to only go forward.

I'm very glad I had the opportunity to come here. I don't know how far I would have gotten without Primavera. Because of new beginnings, family and friends are more supportive now. I thank Primavera for a place to come when you are in need of so much help, and they provide the tools to help you become emotionally and mentally strong. Thank you for being there for me and so many before me and those coming behind me. Thank you for giving me the opportunity to wisely use the tools you gave me because I'm on my way to a new life. I will miss everyone here but being on my own is the only way to go.

