

MOM KRISTIN

A little girl named Skyler-Ivy lives in Tucson, Arizona, and she's the reason her mom, Kristin, does everything. Maybe most importantly, she's the reason Kristin stopped using heroin -- and has kept that commitment for over a year.

A Reason for Change

Last year, Kristin found out she was pregnant.

"I went to California to start a career in fashion. I was partying and drinking, then I tried coke, and soon it was heroin. I was homeless within six months," she said. "I don't know how it escalated so quickly, but it's easy to tell yourself that everyone is doing it."

Pregnant, homeless and committed to quitting drugs, Kristin knew she needed support. She called her mom, who drove to California and brought her back to Tucson.



Kristin graduated from rehab on Oct. 25 and continues to work to stay clean for herself and her daughter. Skyler-Ivy was born on Dec. 28, 2019.

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MY MAIN FOCUSES ARE MY SOBRIETY AND MY DAUGHTER. I'M DOING WHATEVER I HAVE TO DO SO I CAN PROVIDE FOR HER. I WANT HER TO FEEL SAFE, PROTECTED AND LOVED.

During those initial days in Arizona, Kristin went to a local agency that specializes in pregnancy support. There, she learned about Nurse-Family Partnership®. She was assigned a personal nurse – Dawn, an NFP nurse with Casa de los Ninos in Tucson.

"I came back from California on July 5, and for the first three weeks, I worked to get myself clean without help," Kristin recalled. "It was hard and miserable. I had never tried to get clean. But, in my mind, I had never had such a good reason to get clean."

Kristin relapsed – just once, but once was enough for her to realize she needed help. "I was so disappointed in myself. I couldn't understand why I couldn't get healthy for my child."

She called Dawn and voluntarily checked into an in-patient rehabilitation facility.

"I only met Dawn a couple weeks before I went into rehab, but I called her. I didn't feel like I had to hide it from her," Kristin said. The important role Dawn has played as Kristin's nurse was highlighted in an [October 2020 story in USA Today](#).

Throughout her stay at Arizona Rehabilitation Center (ARC), Dawn visited Kristin every week. “She was very clear from the start that she was getting better for herself and for her daughter,” Dawn said. “We did our visits in rehab, and I would bring her extra things that were of interest to her beyond what I typically share with moms.”

For Kristin, Dawn was a lifeline. “She came out every week the whole time I was there,” she said. “Every time I had questions, she would research the topic and bring it back. She would sit with me and listen to me and was so helpful. She never judged me for my mistakes. We just clicked.”

Kristin graduated from rehab on Oct. 25 and decided to continue with an outpatient program. “I wanted to continue getting therapy until I had the baby. I really wanted to do whatever it took to stay clean and to get the help I needed.”

Skyler-Ivy was born Dec. 28.

A Reason to Learn

“Kristin has a million questions,” Dawn said. “It’s wonderful to see how she notices every nuance of change about her daughter. I love how curious she is, and I love all the questions.”

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Skyler-Ivy was born without any signs of withdrawal or side effects from the medication Kristin takes to help her stay sober.

Many of Kristin’s questions were typical of a first-time mom. “I didn’t know what to expect. It’s my first child, and I didn’t have a lot of experience with other people’s kids,” she said. “Dawn helped ease some of my anxiety and would give me information about what my symptoms might be that week.”

There were also questions about how Kristin’s drug use before she learned she was pregnant might affect Skyler-Ivy. Thankfully, Skyler-Ivy was born without any signs of withdrawal or side effects from the medication Kristin takes to help her stay sober.

After Skyler-Ivy’s birth, Kristin, recovering from an emergency C-section and struggling with breastfeeding, continued to rely on Dawn’s advice and expertise. “It was stressful and really blissful at the same time. I felt helpless at times, but Dawn would come over, bring things for the baby and answer all of my questions.”

As Kristin learned to be a mom, Dawn was there, connecting her with a lactation specialist and providing her with diapers, baby toys, tummy time mats and other resources through organizations Casa de los Ninos works with.

A Reason to Persevere

Just as Kristin was adjusting to a life without drugs and with a daughter, the COVID-19 pandemic struck. Her therapy through COPE Community Services and her recover meetings became virtual, and her visits with nurse Dawn had to shift to phone or video conference.

Dawn has been intentional about staying connected to Kristin and the other moms she works with. “Kristin has been more isolated than other clients. She’s trying to be sober with an infant. It’s an amazing testimony of her fortitude,” Dawn said.

Kristin was particularly interested in making sure her daughter was growing well and gaining weight, something Dawn would have helped monitor if face-to-face visits were possible. Instead, Dawn and Kristin figured out a way to outsmart the pandemic. “Dawn sanitizes the scale, leaves it on the front porch, goes back to her car and calls me,” Kristin said, laughing. “Then I go get the scale, weigh Skyler-Ivy and put the scale back on the front porch so she can sanitize it again and put it in her car.”

It’s extra effort, but it’s well worth it to Dawn. “She is such a great mom. I just adore her spirit and determination. And she is a powerhouse.”

Kristin knows how far she’s come from her life in California, and she wants her experience to help others. “I know that in the beginning, I didn’t want to ask anyone for anything. So, a lot of times it would hold me back from getting the help I was wishing for,” she said. “I want people to know that they’re not alone and not be afraid to ask for help.”

Even while Kristin is thankful she’s been able to live with her mom, she’s focused on building a more independent life for herself and Skyler-Ivy, setting and working to achieve one goal at a time. First on



When the COVID-19 pandemic hit, Nurse-Family Partnership quickly shifted to telehealth. Kristin and nurse Dawn have kept up their visits through phone and video.

her list was finding a job. Dawn helped her get a one-year scholarship for daycare, and after several months of searching, Kristin found full-time work as a housekeeper at a Tucson hotel. Then she checked off getting a cell phone in her own name and getting a car. Next on the list is finding an apartment for herself and Skyler-Ivy.

These goals are paired with Kristin’s hopes for Skyler-Ivy. “My main focuses are my sobriety and my daughter. I’m doing whatever I have to do so I can provide for her,” said Kristin. “I want her to feel safe, protected and loved. I want to make sure that she’s meeting all of her milestones, learning and thriving as a child. And I want her to always know that she’s really, really loved.”

Dawn attributes Kristin’s success in her recovery and in motherhood to her perseverance. “She has worked very hard. She’s just a strong, dynamic woman determined to succeed and be a good example for her daughter.”