

TACOMA



Published Since 1890

Daily Index

OFFICIAL
NEWSPAPER
OF THE CITY
OF TACOMA

*Devoted to the Courts,
Real Estate, Finance,
Industrial Activities,
and Publication of
Legal Notices*

Visit our Web site at
www.tacomadailyindex.com

INSIDE:
LEGAL NOTICES
BANKRUPTCIES
LIENS
ORDERS
FEDERAL COURT
AUDITORS OFFICE
NEW BUSINESSES

editor@tacomadailyindex.com



A Voice From the Winthrop

*For Jessica Creso, a stressful
recovery in a downtown high-rise*

**Article and Photos By Todd Matthews,
Editor**

It is difficult for Jessica Creso to see the Winthrop as Home Sweet Home.

"This place has stressed me out so much that I'm really sick," she says of her second-floor, one-bedroom apartment. Like most of the Winthrop's residents, Creso, 32, is on a fixed income. Her rent is \$208 per month, and she receives a steady disability check. "I feel like staying here is hard and difficult. Even the air in the Winthrop is bad. It is stagnant."

Just a few years ago, Creso's life appeared to be better. A Tacoma native, she moved to Los Angeles six years ago to pursue a career in fashion and cosmetology. But an unforeseen disease would put everything on hold. When Creso was 29 years old, she learned she had breast cancer. She says her family encouraged her to move back to Tacoma for the treatment.

That's how she arrived at the Winthrop.

"I don't have a lot of options," she says. "During the time I've spent here, I've had

**CONTINUED
ON PAGE 2**

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1 two surgeries, gone through breast cancer treatment, and I take heart medication. I'm not in the best predicament right now, but I'm trying to make the best of my life anyway."

Creso is the latest subject of the *Tacoma Daily Index's* series of interviews with Winthrop residents.

She is one of nearly 200 people who qualify as low-income and live in the 84-year-old, 12-story former Winthrop Hotel in downtown Tacoma. The building is the focus of much attention. Some want to see it restored as an historic hotel; others point to the building's track record as a magnet for crime and emergency service calls, and want it shut down; and still others want city leaders to find alternate housing so residents aren't concentrated in one location. In May, Tacoma Housing Authority (THA) announced that it was asked by Prium (the current building owner who had originally planned to convert the building into a four-star hotel) if it wanted to purchase the building (see "THA weighs Winthrop building purchase," TDI, 05/29/09 and "Historic hotel or affordable housing? Tough economy shines realistic light on Winthrop development plan," TDI, 08/04/09). THA is currently weighing that decision.

If anything keeps Creso afloat at the Winthrop, it's writing poetry (although much of what she writes documents her frustrations living in the building). She speaks fondly of her 93-year-old writing instructor, Laurene Jensen, who provides literary guidance. "She gives me inspiration for what to write about," Creso explains. "Her opinion of my writing style is like a rapper's melody. She says I have a modern style and use beautiful words."

Another thing that keeps her spirits up: the possibility of moving. She has been working with a counselor at Comprehensive Mental Health Center to try to move to Spanish Hills in Tacoma. In a few weeks, she'll meet with her counselor to learn if she is any closer to achieving that goal.

Until then, she's biding her time at the Winthrop. "We, as a whole of people, have to work together and be friendly and amenable to each other," she says. "A lot of the people that moved in here in the past year don't seem to want to treat the Winthrop as that entity."

Here is what she had to say about her life and experience living in the Winthrop.

"I wore hand-me-downs through high school and didn't feel comfortable with myself."

I grew up in the North End of Tacoma. I was brought up in a Catholic School, but it didn't really work out for me. So I went to public schools. I went to Stadium High School. I was extremely shy in high school. I wore hand-me-downs and didn't feel comfortable with myself. I wrote poetry. My teachers were very impressed with what I was writing. After high school, I was a waitress for five years. My ex-fiance helped me go to cosmetology school. I became a make-up artist and hair stylist in Los Angeles. At the time, I was also

going to Los Angeles City College where I was majoring in art. I was going to work with this one salon exclusively, but I got breast cancer.

"I felt like I was out of my mind."

I started the breast cancer treatment in 2006 and it didn't end for me until a few months ago. I went through two surgeries -- a lumpectomy and a mastectomy, and six months of chemotherapy.



I went through two months of radiation. I went through a year of Tamoxifen and four months of Lupron shots. At the end, I felt like I was out of my mind. But I recovered. I haven't been able to work. The chemotherapy made my heart 50 percent damaged. I take Enalapril for my heart. My doctor says it will take a year and a half for my heart to recover. I try to walk to build it up. I hope my heart is strong enough to go back to work. I would love to go back to work. I like to be busy.

"It's gotten really bad."

I moved to the Winthrop in July of 2007. I had friends that lived at the Winthrop before. They had a good sense of character about them. They had fun in their lives. They liked to live life. I guess that's what drew me to the Winthrop. The Winthrop was a very sociable place. It was a place where people can sort of be who they want to be. But in the past year or so, it has changed. It's not that place anymore. It doesn't have that sociable appeal anymore. [There are a] lot of uneducated people in the building. People who aren't really going anywhere in their lives and haven't been anywhere in their lives. People who have caused kind of a catastrophe in the building. There are people hanging out in front of the teriyaki business and right in front of the entryway. They barricaded the door so much that my grandmother

couldn't even get in. I was sick and she couldn't even bring me the soup she wanted to bring me. She said she didn't want to stay there. It's gotten really bad. These are the kind of people in the building -- people who cause problems on a daily basis. I'm a little bit scared because it's gotten really bad.

"The building was off the hook and out of control."

Living at the Winthrop has been so stressful that I ended up having a heart attack in October 2008. That's because the building was off the hook and out of control. There was nothing being done. It was just crazy to live there. A lot of the people targeted me because of my situation, having had breast cancer. There were these girls that hung out on the corner that called me every name in the book and I don't even have a boyfriend. I don't bring any guys into my apartment, period. Now that the new management is here, they're not putting up with any crap. They are trying to clean up the gutter that [former managers] Monique and Erica once cleaned up at the Winthrop.

"Either comply or vacate."

I think the Winthrop really needs someone who is going to take control and power over this building and not let thug-type people have control over it. That's what has happened. They think they are running the whole show here. It wasn't that way when I moved in. For almost a whole year, we never had any problems. I've met the new management. I think they're very professional and intelligent. There is a psychotic schizophrenic guy who lives down the hall from me. I couldn't even take out my garbage without him coming out of his apartment and yelling at me. The old management wouldn't do anything about it. But the current manager gave him a 10-day notice -- either comply or vacate. The new management is cleaning it up.

For earlier installments of the Winthrop interview series, visit the Index online for the following articles:

"A Voice From the Winthrop: After 15 years at downtown's most notorious address, Glenn Grigsby has seen it all," TDI, 06/16/09

"A Voice From the Winthrop: In downtown Tacoma's most notorious building, Otha Adams finds independence," TDI, 06/26/09

"A Voice From the Winthrop: Nanette Colby's urban experience," TDI, 07/15/09

"A Voice From the Winthrop: The ups and downs of 'Yo-Yo Man,'" TDI, 07/30/09

"A Voice From the Winthrop: After disabling injuries, David Allen finds uneasy peace inside the Winthrop," TDI, 08/13/09

"A Voice From the Winthrop: David Miller comes full circle in an old downtown Tacoma building," TDI, 08/20/09

"A Voice From the Winthrop: High above downtown Tacoma, Kerry Hudson finds a home," TDI, 08/27/09