

The Doc Is In

AFTER YEARS IN PRACTICE AND IN THE PUBLIC EYE, PROLIFIC DOCTOR DREW PINSKY IS STILL DOING PASADENA PROUD.

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PHOTOGRAPHY BY SARAH BREWER

▶ **YOU MAY KNOW DR. DREW PINSKY** FROM HIS "LOVELINE" RADIO SHOW ON KROQ, ON THE AIR SINCE 1982, AND FROM WHEN IT AIRED ON MTV. HE GOES BY THE NAME "DR. DREW" AND CALMLY DOLES OUT MOSTLY SEX-RELATED ADVICE TO TEENS WHILE CRINGING AT HIS VARIOUS CO-HOSTS' CRUDE COMMENTS. BUT MANY MAY NOT KNOW HE WAS BORN AND RAISED IN PASADENA, AND HE LIVES AND WORKS HERE STILL.

"I love this town," Dr. Drew said of his home. "I'm very connected to it. I'm so grateful for my education and all the richness that is Pasadena. To be able to have my kids experience this is really important for me."

He added, "It's one of the only cities in Southern California that really has a history. It has a culture ... like a transplanted Eastern culture, which is how it got going—when a bunch of Easterners and Midwesterners came and set up shop; it's why I think I feel so connected with the East. I went to college in the East." Dr. Drew studied biology at Amherst in Massachusetts before getting his medical degree at University of Southern California's School of Medicine.

"There're so many stories, so many connections with the history of the country ... so many amazing things have happened in Pasadena," he said.

When asked if the city has changed much since he was

a kid, he said, "Oh, yeah. Pasadena was pretty economically distressed in the '60s and '70s. Awful. I mean, Colorado Boulevard—when I was a kid, there were army surplus stores ... it was like Beirut. It could be dangerous to walk down Colorado Boulevard."

Dr. Drew credits the Pasadena Historical Society for the improvements that have occurred in the last 15 years. "Old Town—no one went near there. Now, people walk around ... it's unbelievable. I can't believe I live in a city where that's the case. Every type of food is in our backyard. Yet we have deer, we have bobcats, skunks, raccoons ..." referring to how his home, while surrounded by nature, is so close to all that Pasadena has to offer.

The doctor lives with his wife, Susan, and their 14-year-old triplets—Paulina, Jordan and Douglas—in a Tudor-style home nestled in the Pasadena Hills surrounded by towering pines.



ON THE AIR Dr. Drew Pinsky, a Pasadena native, doles out advice to teens on his "Loveline" radio show, which became a national hit when it aired on MTV. As the medical director for the Department of Chemical Dependency Services, he also meets with addicts once a week to counsel them on their addictions.

With his closely cropped white-silver hair and black eyeglass frames set against his lightly tanned skin, Dr. Drew is perfectly cast as a doctor in TV or film. But rather than merely play a man of medicine, as he has in movies like the Olsen twins' "New York Minute," he is a very busy practicing doctor.

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He’s a staff member at Huntington Memorial Hospital, he runs a private practice, and he’s assistant clinical professor of psychiatry at the Keck USC School of Medicine.

If all that isn’t incredible enough, he’s also the medical director for the Department of

Chemical Dependency Services—otherwise known as addiction rehab—at Las Encinas Hospital in Pasadena.

Surrounded by trees and set back off Del Mar Boulevard, Las Encinas is not easy to see. The 30 acres of lush lawns, meandering pathways and dark brown wooden bungalows surrounding

a swimming pool and tennis court make the place seem like a vacation resort from the past. Paths are framed and shaded with palms, purple-flowered jacaranda, ferns, yellow rose bushes, green stalks of bamboo and gnarly oaks with maze-like roots wound beneath thick trunks.

On Wednesday afternoons, Dr. Drew talks to addicts to help them better understand addiction. “Can you believe I grew up in Pasadena and never knew this place existed?” he remarked while on the way to one of his weekly lectures. “Not until I started moonlighting here as an internist.”

When Dr. Drew arrives, the elementary classroom-sized bungalow is packed to standing-room-only capacity. He walks in, heads straight to the blackboard, grabs a black marker, looks around the room and begins. “What makes addiction a disease?” he asks.

A woman with short gray hair speaks up. “Symptoms?”

Dr. Drew nods, “It’s a complex relationship between genetics and environment, resulting in abnormal biology, which is reflected in signs and symptoms with a predictable response to treatment.” He then goes on to explain a slate of alcohol-related symptoms and scenarios in his characteristic audience-friendly and easy-to-fol-

low way. But beyond his poised presence, Dr. Drew exudes a calm demeanor that makes his listeners feel comfortable and empowered.

“Statistically there’s a 50 percent chance that a child of an alcoholic will also be an alcoholic,” he says, the crowd fixating on his every word. “But that doesn’t mean it’s your destiny.”

With those words of hope, a tiny wave of relief washes over the crowd as shoulders relax and tensions melt.

Five nights a week, even after all the hospital-related work he has already done, Dr. Drew continues working until midnight. He hosts his radio show, Loveline, to give his wise advice to young people across the nation. “It’s a lot of plates spinning,” he said, although he’s quick to add that it’s a job well worth doing. “I have the greatest work in the world. I get to help people.”

Yet another reason that Pasadena is proud of its resident M.D., Dr. Drew.