



## After suicide attempted, saved by strangers

Scripps Howard News Service  
In Print: Monday, September 6, 2010

### Most emailed

- ☑ Sports on TV/radio
- ☑ Couple injured on Clearwater Beach when parasail tether detaches from boat
- ☑ Clearwater parasail accident investigated after tourist is severely injured
- ☑ Many troops not claiming back pay for 'stop-loss' duty
- ☑ Jacksonville man accused of flashing child in Tampa bookstore

### New Articles



[Scripps Howard News Service]

FORT PIERCE — A despondent Faltecha Munch sat in her motorized wheelchair at the highest part of a local bridge for half an hour in the darkness, contemplating plunging to her death 75 feet below.

Munch, 41, wanted to die.

She was homeless after being evicted from her apartment and was out of money, living in the shadows in a park by the Seaway Drive Bridge. She said a man had even tried to rape her in the park.

A former nursing assistant and house painter, Munch needed the wheelchair for an ailing heart and an array of other health problems, for which she has had eight surgeries and lost her spleen.

That Aug. 17 night, Munch was feverish from an infected bug bite that had swollen her face. And no one cared — including a fast-food restaurant clerk who had just turned away the hungry woman holding \$4 given by a passerby. The restaurant had just closed.

Print | Email | Post | Republish

Story Tools  
Comment on this story | Contact the editor  
Email Newsletters

Social Bookmarking | ShareThis

ADVERTISEMENT

Subscribe to the Times

Click here for daily delivery of the St. Petersburg Times.

ADVERTISEMENT

ADVERTISEMENT

ADVERTISEMENT

In desperation, Munch decided to die.

As she headed toward the bridge she thought of driving her chair in front of a train. But she continued up the bridge. There she wrote a note saying, "Thanks for not coming to get me."

She stood up at 2 a.m., slid over the rail and fell to the rushing water of the Fort Pierce Inlet below, looking up at the sky.

"My life was in the toilet," she said Thursday after being released from medical treatment following her rescue by three strangers, all teenage friends from Okeechobee who happened to be fishing under the bridge that night.

Munch said the efforts made by Travis Mauldin, 17, Cody Beasley, 17, and Brandon Smith, 16, changed her life. Munch since then decided "to not give up, not now, not ever," she said.

As she reflected in the interview on her decision to jump, she paused and tears filled her eyes. She is staying at a friend's Fort Pierce home until her next Social Security check arrives.

"Something happened when I saw those kids" in the water, Munch said. "It was the most astounding thing."

On Wednesday, the Fort Pierce Police Department recognized the heroism of the youths.

At first, the boys thought the huge splash was a large dolphin or whale. But it was Munch crashing into the water and sinking to the bottom. She gulped water while surfacing and emerged stunned — going in and out of consciousness.

When the youths saw a floating, motionless body they jumped into the strong-moving tide as others watched or called 911. Munch said she saw the 150-pound, 6-foot Mauldin, floundering as he was dragged down by the weight of his water-soaked blue jeans far from the shore.

"I did not want them to die for my stupidity," said Munch.

She told them to leave, despite her pain from breaking bones in the fall.

But Mauldin didn't stop.

"I couldn't watch someone float away and die," he said soon after the rescue, which included swimming with her for 300 yards across a strong current. Their efforts finally touched her heart.

Now, Munch wants to fight against her eviction from the apartment in Fort Pierce where she had lived for years.

Currently, she is recuperating from the injuries sustained from the fall: two fractured ribs, a fractured sternum and a collapsed lung.

All the while she keeps her rescuers in mind.

"They helped when no one wanted to," Munch said. "I hope that whatever they want to achieve comes to them."

[Last modified: Sep 05, 2010 10:18 PM]



[Click here for reuse options!](#)

Copyright 2010 St. Petersburg Times



[Click here to post a comment](#)

There are 2 comments

Oldest First



**RetireeFromTierraVerde** wrote:

Best of luck to this woman and kudos to the kids for the good deed. I fear we will see a dramatic increase in this sort of thing (along with crime, substance abuse, etc.) as the economy continues to destroy people's ability to support themselves.