



MINUTE FOR MISSION

Menaul School's academic excellence, diversity, and values inspire achievement

Mari Duran is a happy seventh grader who wants to be a judge when she grows up. Right now, however, she is enjoying life as an honor student, a cheerleader, a volleyball player, and a budding actress at the Presbyterian-related Menaul School in Albuquerque, New Mexico.

Mari did not coast to the achievement she is now experiencing. She was born to a drug-addicted mother and taken directly from the hospital into foster care. Her maternal grandmother, Debra Duran, gained custody four months later and eventually adopted Mari.

Debra, a widow, vowed to care well for Mari, teach her moral values, and afford her a good education. When the time came to choose a middle school, she found Menaul School's mission reflected her goals for Mari.

"It provides a good education and they teach values, so it's not just me teaching them at home," Debra says. "She's learning them at school; she's also learning about Jesus and about God."

Debra likes the diversity of cultures, races, and ethnicities Mari experiences at Menaul. It is one of the Presbyterian racial-ethnic institutions supported by gifts to the Christmas Joy Offering. The schools receive half of the offering's receipts, while the other half goes to help current and retired church workers and their families who are in need.

Mari, whose ethnicity is Native American and Hispanic, is among the 60% of Menaul students who come from racial-ethnic groups. Mari has no reluctance to recommend Menaul to prospective students. "It's a great school," she says. "If they're worried about their studies, the teachers will be with them. There's diversity like they have never experienced in any other school. Overall, it's wonderful."

Debra sees Menaul offering her granddaughter opportunities she never had. Debra grew up in an impoverished family and had to leave high school before graduation. She earned her GED and attended college later in life, and now sells real estate. But Debra enjoys thinking about Mari attending prom, taking college preparatory classes, and selecting a college. While Mari still has much time to choose a career, she's clear why, at this point, she wants to be a judge. Her ambition stems not from a desire to dispense justice, but from a longing to help people resolve problems. Demonstrating a precocious understanding of the judicial system, she would like to preside in family court. "I want to help people and families work things out," Mari explains.

The critical funding from the Christmas Joy Offering enables Presbyterian racial-ethnic schools to provide Mari and students like her opportunities to overcome obstacles and excel. Your generous gift will help these schools continue their transformative ministries.

LET US PRAY:

Transforming God, Thank you for young people who pursue ambitious dreams and for opportunities to help them achieve those dreams. Help our racial-ethnic schools as they nurture dreams and as they encourage students to reach their God-given potential. Amen.