

MINUTE FOR MISSION

MENAU SCHOOL PUTS CHILDREN ON A NEW PATH

Tony and Lilia Acabal carried deep memories of the struggles they faced as new immigrants years ago.

Tony's family escaped violence-riddled Guatemala in 1987 when he was 15. A decades-long civil war, which claimed the lives of 200,000 people, posed danger at every turn. Lilia's family came to the United States from Mexico when she was 14.

For Tony, getting a good education in his home country was difficult at best, compounding the challenges of learning a new language and culture. Lilia still remembers the loneliness she encountered when she started high school in the U.S.

For their own children — Marco, Celeste and Luis — Tony and Lilia considered the sacrifices they would have to make and decided to send them to the Menaul School, a Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.)-related secondary school in Albuquerque, New Mexico. And they couldn't be happier! Their children are growing up with enriching experiences on all levels: educationally, spiritually, culturally and socially.

"Our children feel like they belong to the community, and we feel like that as well," Lilia said. "They build close relationships with other students as well as their teachers."

Their son Marco, a 2019 graduate, acknowledged that Menaul is "a challenging experience," but he said the concern of teachers and small classes help students succeed. He added that Menaul, much more than most schools, offers classes where "they talk about spiritual things."

While Tony and Lilia sacrificed financially to send their children to Menaul, they know their children's school would not have been possible without the generosity of others. Gifts to the PC(USA)'s Christmas Joy Offering help Menaul extend scholarships to the 60 percent of their students who need assistance.

In gratitude for their children's opportunities, Tony and Lilia are among the school's most faithful volunteers. They are frequent chaperones at dances and other school events, and Tony, a nurse, accompanies students on school-sponsored camping trips, medical supplies in tow.

"We really want to give something back because Menaul has done a lot for us," Tony said.

The Acabal family has come a long way in a single generation, thanks in part to the generosity of Presbyterians around the country who come together through gifts to the Christmas Joy Offering. These make a difference in the lives of young people who have been enriched by the Presbyterian-related schools and colleges equipping communities of color over the years. Your gifts help not only with their education, but also with their spiritual awakening and faith formation as church leaders of the future.

They also help church workers — past and present — and their families with critical financial assistance. Please give generously.

Let Us Pray ~

Faithful God,

*we pray that you will strengthen
and encourage parents who are striving
to afford their children a better life.*

*We give thanks that you are opening doors
of opportunity for a new generation.*

*May our children and youth be able to
become all that you have created
them to be.*

Amen.