

## MINUTE FOR MISSION

### **MENAU SCHOOL MOLDS DETERMINATION, ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENT AND SPIRITUAL FORMATION**

While a summertime academic emphasis is not unusual for high-achieving high school students, Lucianna (Luci) Astorga's educational focus between school years has been much different than that of most of her scholastically minded peers. Since the eighth grade, this honor roll student's summer priority has been on earning tuition for the upcoming academic year at the school she loves, the Menaul School in Albuquerque, New Mexico.

Her education at Menaul also has been made possible in part by gifts to the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.)'s Christmas Joy Offering, which benefits Menaul and the church's other historically Presbyterian-related schools and colleges equipping communities of color. The Offering is especially important for families with limited financial means like Luci's. Although her mother Dolores is a single mother unable to work due to a medical disability, gifts from the Christmas Joy Offering helped open the door for Luci and her two sisters, Marianna, her twin, and Esperanza, a May 2018 graduate, to attend Menaul.

Luci says Menaul lived up to its reputation in both its academic and spiritual emphases. "Chapel and religion classes really help with spiritual growth," she says. "Being able to grow spiritually is one thing that really drew us here."

Menaul has also helped stretch her intellect, she says. "The classes here aren't the easiest classes. They are challenging, so you really have to be on the edge of your seat and ready for anything that comes at you."

Known around campus for her infectious smile and cheery attitude, Luci isn't blind to the needs of her community and the larger world. Luci says Menaul's service projects and mission trips have helped shape her career aspirations. She would like to be a

nurse or a teacher. “I really do want to help people,” she says. “I know that sounds like a cliché, but that (desire to help) is what I got from Menaul.”

Because of our gifts to the Christmas Joy Offering as well as other congregations across the nation, students like Luci and her sisters are entering adulthood prepared to serve others. One half of the offering goes to Presbyterian-related schools and colleges equipping communities of color like Menaul, while the other half provides assistance for current and retired church workers and their families with critical financial need. Our gifts support leaders in our Church and in the world — past, present and future.

### *Let us pray,*

*Giver of fields to tend and classrooms  
in which to grow, we give you thanks  
for the work that is ours to do.*

*Bless each act of effort that develops the  
mind and deepens the spirit.*

*And bless each act of generous giving which  
comes from you and supports the work  
we do together.*

Amen.