



4.2.19  
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## Meals to Lower Cholesterol, and Lift the Spirits

By [John Brece](#), Communications Volunteer

On the fire escape of the Spanish Harlem apartment Milagros would be enveloped by the wind, become part of the sky, and dream of horses. Here she was high above the hard and teeming streets, escaping, if only for a little while, the difficult life of a family rendered by separation. On the fire escape she could almost feel free of the chaos and suffering and confusion everywhere else.

This little Puerto Rican girl growing up in the 1940s knew that horses ran free, and just like those horses Milagros sought to run free of her troubled world.

Raised primarily by her father Milagros spent much of her childhood separated from her mother and brother. When life was at its most challenging, she went to church and in the peace of this sanctuary she initially sought to become a nun.

But after attending Julia Richman High School Milagros went to the Hospital for Special Surgery to study nursing and became a licensed practical nurse. She was a nurse for almost 50 years and this included Milagros working long hours on September 11, 2001, collecting blood from volunteers and doing whatever else she could. It was a frantic effort, and she was just one of many medical professionals gearing up for the many patients who were expected but never materialized from that tragic event.

Milagros had a son in 1960 named Robert and a daughter named Rima in 1965 and is the proud grandmother of a National Guardsman, Robert Jr.

After her long career of serving others as a nurse Milagros herself needed help. She turned to God's Love when most of her money was

rapidly draining due to a mounting pile of doctor's bills. Milagros had heart issues and osteoarthritis and got a case manager through the New York Fund for Seniors who in turn set her up with the nutritionally specific meals of God's Love to lower her cholesterol. At God's Love Mary O'Hara, a Registered Dietitian Nutritionist, got Milagros set up with specially designed meals for her medical condition.

Milagros is grateful for these meals as they are so much better tasting than the food she got from her time in the hospital. Knowing that the God's Love meals will be arriving is comforting for Milagros. She says, "It's like a baby getting its bottle. I say 'OK - I know I have something to eat.'"

For Milagros there is a continuity and a comfort of knowing where her next meal is coming from. In a way, her participation in the program is spiritual for Milagros.

"It is a gift. It ... continues to be a blessing and I'm very grateful."

She values her solitude by looks forward to seeing the volunteers bringing her weekly meals. Because the deliveries are in the morning the God's Love volunteers are often the first people she sees in the course of her day. To the volunteers she says, "you're making a difference in my world. The love you put into everything you do . . . I can feel it. I need to feel this."

"Words don't suffice. I owe you my gratitude." When she recently celebrated a birthday a cake that was included in her delivery from God's Love was the highlight of her celebrations.

Milagros absorbs the positive energy around her during her interaction with the God's Love volunteers and feels she can harness that feeling in dealing with any difficulty that might come down the line when she really needs it. For Milagros the whole God's Love experience is about "absorbing the goodness. It sustains me." Today Milagros feels a freedom from want, a feeling akin to what she longed for during those distant days of dreaming of horses on that Spanish Harlem fire escape.



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