

JCL Miracles: Traumatic Crash Leads Peoria Mother into Spiritual Life

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God had a bigger plan for Peoria mom Maria Valdez. She's sure of it. She's sure that's why four years after her skull was crushed in a horrendous freeway crash, she's surviving and thriving as a staff member for the Grand Canyon Chapter of the American Red Cross – where her work is helping others.



She indeed is one of John C. Lincoln's miracle patients, the ones whose broken, battered bodies defied the odds to heal and come back strong. She never lost hope, but her trauma physicians will tell you what a close call she had.

She was driving south, approaching Cactus on Interstate 17, traveling to meet her daughter for early shopping for family Christmas presents. She really doesn't remember what caused the crash; trauma patients rarely remember details of their accidents.

But witnesses reported seeing her car veer across traffic and flip five times. EMTs arrived within minutes and rushed her to John C. Lincoln North Mountain Hospital's Level I Trauma Center.

Neurosurgeon Gianni Vishteh, MD, bluntly says she would have been dead, if the skilled trauma team had not intervened. Not only was her skull concave, but she had bone fragments in her brain and bleeding inside her skull was life-threatening.

Trauma physicians, nurses and specialized technicians performed extensive cranial and brain surgery and pulled her from the brink. They also performed a tricky surgical procedure to save her arm, which was also severely injured.

She began to recover in North Mountain's Intensive Care Unit, where she remembers her nurse for her gentle care and kindness, and her family gathered to keep vigil and pray.

It was, after all, Thanksgiving and Christmas season of 2007, a time for faith and hope. And their hopes were not disappointed. Valdez was in the hospital for 11 days before she was released for follow-up care.

With encouragement and support from family, friends and her miniature pinscher, Jax, Valdez struggled through long months of exhausting therapy that helped her learn to walk and talk again. "Jax was my best buddy," she said.

And not only is her body now healed, but her faith is stronger than ever.

"My life is changed," she said. "I believe with every fiber of my being that every doctor in the hospital was there as God's hands, and I have recovered, because of the grace of God. God is leading me, and I'm following."

Valdez explained she believes "God allows certain things in our lives for his purpose, in that when these things happen – if we cry out to him – he is always there. I for one consider myself as one of those whom God allowed this to happen as I cried out to him he did not let me down.

"God will use anything in his creation to make himself known," she added. "I am proud to be one of his miracles. If it were not for North Mountain's Intensive Care Unit, whose nurses were instruments of God's power to reveal himself to all mankind, which proves his existence, I would not be doing as well as I am.

"I thank Dr. Vishteh and all the people who work in Trauma Center!"