



Ruben Hernandez and Linda Moser Hernandez's story is part of the "Miracle Report" at the ASU Art Museum. ROB SCHUMACHER/THE REPUBLIC

Exploring miracles

ASU Art Museum shares the stories of believers and skeptics alike

By Weldon B. Johnson

The Republic | azcentral.com

Ruben Hernandez believes in miracles.

From a near drowning incident when he was 8 to a brush with death as a teenage gang member to the circumstances that allowed him to connect with his wife, Hernandez believes. That's why he was eager to participate in a project about miracles that was put together by a pair of artists at Arizona State University.

The exhibit, "Miracle Report," was put together by Ju-

'MIRACLE REPORT'

What: Exhibit featuring videos of people telling the story of miracles in their lives.

When: 11 a.m.-8 p.m. Tuesdays, 11 a.m.-5 p.m. Wednesdays-Saturdays, through June 2.

lianne Swartz and Ken Landauer as part of ASU's Social Studies series. It will be on display at the ASU Art Museum in the Herberger Institute for Design and the Arts through June 2. The museum

Where: ASU Art Museum in the Herberger Institute for Design and the Arts, southeast corner of Mill Avenue and 10th Street in Tempe.

Admission: Free.

Details: 480-965-1400.

is on the southeast corner of Mill Avenue and 10th Street in Tempe.

The exhibit uses a variety of video monitors and screens of different sizes. Each display features a close-up shot

of the hands of the person telling his or her story of miracles.

Hernandez talks about a day when he was at the beach with his family in Southern California when he and his sisters were playing on a raft and didn't realize the current was carrying them out to sea. He lost his grip on the raft and was starting to sink. Just when he thought he was about to drown, he said he heard, or sensed, a powerful male voice asking if he was ready to cross

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over. He said he wasn't, and though he thought he was far underwater, he found himself able to surface and take a breath.

"I was allowed to carry on in this world for whatever reason," Hernandez, now 60, said. "That was the first of many miracles in my life. My life seems to have a charmed protection. Even though I encountered death in other forms — I was a young gang member in Southern California, I experienced violence, drugs, I was stabbed and

I walked away from head-on collisions — that led me to believe I was being kept alive to fulfill a destiny somehow."

Another miracle in Hernandez's life actually happened to his wife, Linda Moser Hernandez. She had suffered a neck injury in a car accident years before she met him that left her unable to look up without experiencing excruciating pain. As a result, she had decided she was not going to date men taller than her first husband, who had died. Her first husband was about 5 feet 6, she said.

"About seven years after my husband died, I met Ruben through a friend," Moser Hernandez said. "He's like 6-3, so I

thought, 'Oh well, too bad.'"

A few days after she met Hernandez, she kept an appointment to meet with a psychic healer. While focusing on another body part, Moser Hernandez said she felt an electric current come through her head and explode in her neck.

"My whole body was shaking," she said. "I looked up and there was no pain. I looked left and right, no pain. I said, 'Wow, I guess I'll get to know that guy.'"

Some miracles featured in the exhibit are big; others are small things that might otherwise go unnoticed.

After experiencing what they felt was a miracle in their own lives, Swartz and Landauer

(who are married) set out to explore the topic and collect others' stories.

"We were thinking about miracles as a personal thing," Swartz said. "When we sent out the call, it was that no miracle was too big or too small. You could talk about whatever you deemed as a miracle, whatever you wanted to share."

Swartz said they also welcomed hearing from people who wanted to challenge the idea of miracles.

"We got less of that than we thought we would," Swartz said. "We got maybe three skeptics in all of our (61) calls. We found that people want miracles. They want them in their lives."

For Dale and Nancy Reinker, the idea of miracles is very real in their lives. About 20 years ago, Dale Reinker was diagnosed with a tumor in his neck. He was told he could not expect to live more than six months.

"My miracle was I found the right doctor who found out what my problem was," said Reinker, who now speaks using a mechanical larynx.

To remove the tumor, Reinker required surgery that removed his esophagus, larynx and other glands in his neck. But he and his wife have been able to enjoy each other's company for the past 20 years when they didn't think they'd be able to.