

EMPOWERING SURVIVORS

Maria Rivera-Garcia



Maria was first diagnosed in 2007 with myeloma, a type of cancer that attacks healthy blood cells in the bone marrow. Frightened and sick, she turned to her faith in God for the strength and courage to fight and survive multiple rounds of treatment and two bone marrow transplants.

She counts herself lucky to be a 13 year survivor of the disease, and feels even more fortunate to have found support, encouragement and camaradery in a place she never expected—the **Geneva YMCA**.

In 2018, facing a new round of Chemotherapy and radiation treatments, Maria enrolled in **the Geneva Y's Thrive to Survive Cancer Recovery Program**. This program is designed to help cancer survivors reclaim their health, well-being and quality of life following a cancer diagnosis.

Maria admits to being nervous on the first day of the program, she didn't know anyone or what to expect. The group consisted of 11 survivors and program leaders Laura & Karen. Maria said, "after the first day it was like we all had known each other for years". As the group shared their stories and offered each other support, Maria says she was struck by how helpful it was to be with people who shared her experiences, knew what she was going through and provided a positive and supportive 'community of survivors'.

The Thrive program officially ended in December, but Maria is still coming to the Y. Her goal is to get to the Y every day. Maria relishes her "me at the Y time." "I am so comfortable here, it feels like you're at home here at the Y."

