

# Medicine

THEN AND NOW

Cordillera Ranch Residents,  
Dr.'s Gerardo and Megan Ortiz,  
Lead the Way

By Cheryl Van Tuyl Jividen :: Photography by Mark Humphries

*You could say Dr. Gerardo Ortiz had a date with destiny. Born in Mexico City, he was delivered by his OB/GYN grandfather. Perhaps that's where his future in medicine started to formulate. Years later, he would deliver a program for compassionate and patient-centric Emergency Room care.*





Gerardo moved with his Mexican father and Guatemalan mother to New Orleans as an infant and became a naturalized citizen at age 7. His future bride, Megan Lenhart Ortiz, relocated with her family to Lubbock after she was born in the small Colorado town of La Junta.

College took Gerardo to Texas A&M University and then to Medical School at the University of Texas Health Science Center (UTHSC) in San Antonio. Megan graduated from Texas Tech University and interned for Representative Larry Combest in Washington, DC which she says was clarifying. "It confirmed that a life in politics was not for me." Instead, she attended the UTHSC in San Antonio where she met Gerardo. The couple headed to Denver where she did her residency in OB/GYN at the University of Colorado and he did his residency at the renowned Denver Health Medical Center — the setting of the nonfiction book, *The Knife and Gun Club* — where he was immersed in the developing field of Emergency Medicine. Following their residencies, they moved to Pueblo, Colorado and Gerardo eventually became president of his Emergency Medicine Group while Megan had a private practice.



On a family vacation to San Antonio in 2015, Gerardo had a fateful lunch with one of his former medical school roommates. The conversation turned to their shared frustrations with traditional Emergency Room medicine. "The problems include overcrowded waiting rooms and long waits for patients," says Gerardo. But there are also challenges for practitioners, he says.



"Protocol-driven treatment plans prevented individualized care, and growing government-implemented demands made the red-tape medicine more time consuming than actual patient interaction." The friends saw these issues were affecting patients. "We knew there was a better way to deliver medicine in emergent situations." The lunch became the catalyst that resulted in the friends becoming partners in the establishment of Lonestar 24 Hour Emergency Room, and a relocation to Texas for the Ortiz family.

The facility opened in New Braunfels in October of 2017 and encompasses eight physician partners serving the community and addressing the very concerns that led to its development. Gerardo says, "Lonestar 24 Hour ER solves two problems: It makes quality, top-notch healthcare available to the patients in a friendly, welcoming, refreshing environment. It also makes the job of being a healthcare provider more enjoyable."

Those seeking medical aid will notice a difference, says Gerardo. "For patients,







there are much shorter wait times. In fact, there is no wait time. They are welcomed into our facility and not made to feel as if they are a burden or 'just another number.' The physician has time to listen to the patient, examine them and do what he/she feels is right for the patient. We do not have to worry about checking boxes or satisfying hospital metrics. This translates into cost savings for the patient, lower radiation exposure to unnecessary imaging and personalized care." Even children will find it welcoming. "We have television shows and games for the kids, to entertain them while a parent is being cared for." Ensuring the patient is central to the experience is something Gerardo considers paramount. "I can spend time with the patient, laugh with the patient and care for the patient as I have always envisioned. My job is simply to do what is best for the patient... and I love that. All our physicians are board certified in Emergency Medicine. This is a key difference for our facility. We strive to provide the best care, and in my opinion, that can only be done by doctors trained and experienced in Emergency Medicine. We all have years of experience in major trauma centers, stroke centers, academic institutions and critical access facilities. We are capable of practicing Emergency Medicine in any environment but have found joy in our practice at Lonestar 24 Hour ER."

Open around the clock, Lonestar 24 Hour ER has advanced medical equipment to accommodate all areas of specialized emergency care. Gerardo appreciates not only the state-of-the-

art machinery, but also the professional team. "I am also blessed to work with the best nurses, radiology techs and front desk staff in the business. There is nothing better than truly enjoying being with the people whom you work with."

This new approach to ER medicine is in step with the future of healthcare, says Gerardo. "I think I speak for most physicians when I say that the quickest way to help healthcare is to let physicians be physicians. Obviously, some regulations and oversight are necessary but over-regulating healthcare hinders healthcare providers from being able to put the patient's best interest first. In the end, this hurts both the patient and the healthcare provider. This sentiment is what has led to the more recent 'concierge' models of healthcare. I want to continue to explore ways in which the highest levels of healthcare can be provided via these patient-centric models."

Megan took the opening of Lonestar as an opportunity to slow down her busy work life a bit and enjoy her young children. She now works as an OB Hospitalist where she helps manage obstetric emergencies in a hospital and care for the underserved in the San Antonio and Austin communities.

Both Megan and Gerardo feel strongly about giving back to the community and honoring their faith. Megan explains, "My field of medicine reminds me daily of how blessed I am to have access to healthcare, a support system through friends and family, and financial stability especially when we were expanding our



family. The Hill Country Pregnancy Care Center (HCPC) allows me to help women in crisis pregnancies as well as those who just need a little support whether it be through health screening, parenting classes, basic financial literacy or baby supplies. Through the HCPC, the other volunteers and myself can do community outreach and education in our schools and other organizations serving the community. All of this while sharing our faith and the word of God."

Gerardo is a board member of Kingdom Ranch located outside of Snook, Texas. "It was founded by one of my college buddies, and I was honored to have him ask for my help on the board of directors. Kingdom Ranch is a Christian summer camp that serves special needs children and their siblings. Our goal is to enable our campers to experience an inspiring, activity-filled summer camp while building a better relationship with Jesus Christ. We utilize volunteers who desire the opportunity to assist and encourage our campers, especially by creating friendships that will help each other grow spiritually. We strive to have a one-to-one camper-to-counselor ratio to ensure that the needs of all campers are met."

The couple's dedication to medicine and volunteering have them thinking about a special kind of vacation, says Megan. "We are hoping to visit family in Mexico and Guatemala soon. It has been a while since we have visited." In the meantime, Gerardo says, "Annalise, age 10, is getting ready for middle school. Oliver is 8 and preparing for a professional football career with the New

Orleans Saints. We were robbed in the NFC Championship, by the way! Evelyn at 6 is just living and loving life. I look up to her for her ability to simply enjoy life no matter what she is doing."

At home in Cordillera Ranch, you can find the Ortiz family reveling in all things New Orleans. Crescent City native and Saints superfan Gerardo shares, "Our favorite parties with friends involve crawfish boils when they are in season. Let's face it, there isn't anything better than spicy crawfish and cold beer on a hot day. The kids love chasing each other with the live crawfish." Megan tells of Gerardo's legendary appetite for the tasty crustaceans and how they have become a family favorite. "Oliver has a goal of out eating Gerardo when it comes to crawfish, and he came close recently at a local restaurant when the waiter brought over one of his colleagues to watch the 'little guy' eat." Gerardo impressed several neighbors at the Clays and Crawfish event last year when he ate 17 pounds of crawfish by himself. He won't admit to eating that many, but what he will say is that he may not have won the clay shooting contest that day, but he definitely won at crawfish eating!

In keeping with the Big Easy theme, Megan says, "I have gotten pretty good at bread pudding and creme brûlée. But King Cake is sacred to Gerardo so I don't even attempt it!" When not feasting on Cajun delights, Megan says, "Gambino's and Ranzazzo's make frequent deliveries to the Ortiz household." Just in time for Mardi Gras! 🍷