

by Jackie Perrone



Megan and Jorge Gonzalez

Megan and Jorge Gonzalez are glad they settled down in the Lexington area — so are the Lexington Police, the LICS charity, Toys for Tots, and several PTA and Booster Club groups. This energetic couple not only runs a thriving Menchie's franchise, they devote time and profits to a wide variety of community causes. "We love it here! We want to be part of what makes this such a great place to live," they say.

Megan grew up in Aynor and graduated from Francis Marion University with a degree in marketing. She moved to Columbia for a job as an office manager at a doctor's office and met her future husband, a University of South Carolina grad who was selling cardiac pacemakers and defibrillators at the time. Their backgrounds seemed to focus on physical fitness, health, and medical care.

Jorge is the son of immigrants from Cuba; his father was a doctor for over 40 years in South Carolina. The young man was a successful salesman of medical products, but it involved constant travel, emergency on-call duty and very little time for his family's increasing needs. "My parents were aging," he says. "I wanted to spend more time with them."

Megan and Jorge acquired the first Menchie's franchise in the Midlands and poured their energies into making it a magnet for families and children. It's a yogurt specialty shop, offering party facilities and games along with healthful goodies. Somehow, they found themselves getting involved with the parents and young-

sters who came in. When the Lexington Police Department Fall Fest and Kids' Day activities were happening, Megan and Jorge jumped in to take part.

"We're part of these events every time," says Jorge. "During our Summer Safety Days here at Menchie's we do child-seat checks and bike safety education. Our mascot, Menchie, shows off for the kids." He remembers a family with three little boys who had never bought child-safety seats for their children because of the cost. Along with the other sponsors, they were able to provide seats for them at no cost. They also donated over 100 bike helmets during the bike safety portion of the event. They partner with LICS and Toys for Tots, Thanksgiving Food Drive -- whatever's going on to make it a better community for families. When the Midlands experienced the devastating flood in 2015, Jorge and Megan collaborated with Lexington PD in a three-day fundraiser, which raised \$1,200 for the cause.

What about Jorge's elderly parents? Well, the couple bought a larger house last year in order to have room for his mother and father to live with them and his father died recently at age 95. He and his mother had gone back to Cuba a couple of times when he was a child, and Jorge says, "It makes you appreciate all the things we take for granted here."

He puts it simply: "We enjoy this community." They've proven it time and again. ■