

Fruits of the (Entrepreneurial) Spirit

BY / BECCA BROADDUS

Recent grad relies on faith to explore opportunities outside the family business

Rebecca Rodriguez is more than just an employee. She's the youngest of six kids. An aunt to eight nieces and nephews. A Christian. A first-generation college student. A graduate of Baylor University. A global technology financial analyst at ExxonMobil.

"What I do is not who I am," she said. "Whose I am defines who I am, which directly influences how I do what I do daily. Each day, there are so many opportunities to be bold and to be a light that radiates hope and the power of love. For me, this is only possible by having my feet planted on solid ground—my faith."

What she does is handle the cost structure for global technology costs and serve as an interface between ExxonMobil's global affiliates and chemicals technology. From law to tax, she has expanded her understanding of a variety of subjects in her short time at the oil and gas

company. Her work environment has proven to be an avenue to embrace who she wants to be while shining through her work.

"I do believe that business is a platform to serve and empower others," Rodriguez said. "Going into everything I do or want to do, I want to glorify the Lord. This impacts the way I relate to others and how I seek to do business."

Rodriguez saw the potential within business and decided to use it as her platform. She started early. During her time at Baylor, she co-founded the Christian Business Leaders student organization using her commitment to her faith and entrepreneurial spirit, which she gets naturally. Her mother, Rebeca Peña, and uncle, Jaime Peña, own a pool construction and gunite company, Houston Gunite, Inc. The business has been servicing the greater Houston area for more than 30 years. Rodriguez's mom inherited

the startup from her late husband, and with hard work, lots of prayer and her family's support, she was able to grow it. Today, nearly 40 families make up Houston Gunite.

"[My mom] told me so many stories about overcoming setbacks and relying on Christ to pull you through, and truly, I believe her example has set the tone for how I choose to respond to seemingly hopeless situations or failures along the way," Rodriguez said.

Rodriguez decided to take those lessons and skills, and develop them outside of the family business.

"Being the youngest of a large family, I felt like I was given this sort of open door to do something different," Rodriguez said. "My older siblings are committed and dedicated to carrying on the family business, and I have no doubt they will take it to new heights."

Because of her confidence in the future of the family business, she chose to take a leap of faith and go

to Baylor, instead of a university based in Houston—a shocking decision to most of her family.

"It was quite the surprise for a lot of them, but I know my time in Waco helped me come to a better understanding of who I was called to be, how to maximize the skills God gave me, and find a place where those skills would be of best use to continue faithfully serving and contributing in a stimulating work environment," Rodriguez said.

Now that she is at ExxonMobil, she's happy to have her family close while continually being developed and encouraged to innovate at work.

"I grew up in a large family that has always treasured uniting around our kitchen table and breaking bread together," Rodriguez said. "Something so simple, but so powerful."

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