



2024  
NEW MEXICO STATE UNIVERSITY  
DISTINGUISHED ALUMNI

COLLEGE  
OF HEST

## REBECCA GALLEGOS '06



Rebecca Gallegos '06 wanted to make a significant life change, asking herself “How can I make the greatest contribution to the world before I leave?”

Deciding that nursing would best align with her worldview, she entered the NMSU Roadrunner program, a fast-track Bachelor of Science in Nursing for career-transitioning professionals.

**“My first experience with the Chihuahuan orphanage left me with an impression of the universe telling me, ‘You can do more.’”**

—Rebecca Gallegos '06

Today, Rebecca is the clinical manager at a regional cancer center in Michigan serving more than 540,000 people across eight hospitals and partner organizations in 29 counties. In 2020, she received the National Emerging Leader Award from the Oncology Nursing Society and was the Traverse Bay Region Oncology Nurse of the Year in 2019. She also has a psychology degree from

Indiana Wesleyan and a Master of Science in Nursing from Spring Arbor University.

Her husband, Micah, shares her commitment to helping others. In 2010, they took a short mission trip to an orphanage in Chihuahua, Mexico. Upon their return, they immediately made plans to go back, this time for three months with their children. While there, Rebecca used her nursing skills to improve hygiene, implement disease prevention protocols, and manage a flu outbreak.

After three months, they went home to their comfortable life, but Rebecca remained drawn to the orphanage. When their oldest child said to her, “If you quit your job today, 10 nurses will want it. If we don’t go back to Mexico, who will do what we were doing?”—the decision was made.

Rebecca started a 501c3 nonprofit called LOCO Ministries, and in 2011 the family moved to Chihuahua City. At first, they worked solely with orphanages, but their vision soon turned to prevention—supporting families so that children would never enter an orphanage.

Through LOCO Ministries, Rebecca developed a community center offering after-school tutoring and providing counseling and financial help for single mothers and grandparents. She also created a network of supporters who got the kids out into the community to have some fun and invested in the success of single mothers. Finally, she worked with foster parents, placing with them adolescents from the orphanage who had the desire, drive, and ability for more education after completing *secundaria*. With their foster family, these teens continue their education (academic or trade) and learn life skills they did not learn in the orphanage: going to the grocery store, navigating public transportation, and making a doctor appointment.

In 2014, Rebecca and Micah were granted custody of four siblings they adopted from the orphanage and knew it was time to return to Michigan, leaving LOCO Ministries in the capable hands of local community leaders.

Rebecca’s advice to students is embodied by her adopted son, Irwin Yonathan Ramirez Diaz, the Spring 2024 Alumni Association Outstanding Graduate for the College of HEST. She urged him to choose NMSU for its strong academics, vibrant culture, and the close connections it fosters—experiences that continue to shape his success today. ▲