

## Caring friendship grows into a medical-care practice

By Justin Breen

Doctors Gerald Dekayle and Charzale Stephens-Archer's roots are in the Caribbean, South America and Africa, and their life journeys have led through Chicago and its west and south suburbs. They're best friends and big success stories, and they're now teaming up in a South Loop specialty medical practice.

Friends since meeting at the University of Chicago, they found their friendship as roommates, on the way to becoming the first doctors in their families. Now they're business partners, too, co-owners of the new practice, Quench Wellness, 1319 S. Michigan Ave. The practice focuses on a variety of services, including intravenous vitamin infusions, hormone replacement and vaginal laser therapy.

"We respect each other,

and we're accountable to each other, whether it's been in college, medical school, in relationships or even working out together," said Dekayle. "She's like my accountability partner. That has strengthened our friendship, and it also has helped with our business."

The new wellness practice's catchy name refers to one of its core treatments. "The name Quench literally comes from the concept of quenching your thirst," Dekayle said.

"The fact remains, with the busy American lifestyle, it can be challenging to get in the amount of water, vitamins and nutrients the body needs to feel all that it needs to do. Dehydration, and furthermore vitamin depletion, is a huge burden on our health, both personally and as a society. IV infusions allow essential vitamins and nutrients to bypass the harsh environment of the stomach

and inconsistencies of gut absorption guaranteeing direct bloodstream delivery to the organs and tissues that need them the most."

Dekayle, of Chicago's Hyde Park neighborhood, and Stephens-Archer, of Elmhurst, are both examples of the American Dream come true: Dekayle moved to Chicago from Ghana when she was 5½ years old. The former Park Forest resident and Rich East High School alumna graduated from the University of Chicago before earning her medical degree from Rush University and completing her residency at the University of Chicago. In addition to her work at Quench, Dekayle is a full-time emergency room physician and associate medical director of Advanced South Suburban Emergency Department in Hazel Crest.

Stephens-Archer, whose mother is from Guyana and father from Barbados, grew up in Chicago's Ashburn neighborhood. She graduated from Whitney Young Magnet High School before heading to the University of Chicago. She studied medicine and trained as a resident at the University of Illinois at Chicago. She's now a full-time hospital-based doctor for DuPage Medical Group and has two young daughters — Hailey, 5, and Zuri, 3.

"Part of the reason I started this business was I'm helping my daughters see what going after your dreams looks like," Stephens-Archer said.

Dekayle and Stephens-Archer, both 35 and born about a month apart, first met in 2001 at University of Chicago's summer visitation weekend, when they determined



Dr. Gerald Dekayle (left) and Dr. Charzale Stephens-Archer at their new South Loop practice. (Quench Wellness photo)

that each would attend the school in the fall. They were roommates all four years and for several years after graduation while in separate medical schools. Their commonalities also led them to co-found BetterMD, a platform that aims to empower women through health education in a reliable and sturdy level.

Quench's recent debut is the latest evolution in their friendship.

"It's even harder than medical school because there's no roadmap for being a successful business person, but Gerald and I are going to give it our all," Stephens-Archer said.

Stephens-Archer said Quench will give her a chance to continue to educate and empower people and give her patients another way of looking at health maintenance and wellbeing.

"I look at medicine and see doctors prescribing pills, and I wanted to do something different," Stephens-Archer said. "This business is a passion project, and the more I do it, the more empowered and engaged I feel."

Dekayle said Quench allows her another outlet for her creative, artistic side.

"It's not a type of person who's comfortable doing only one thing," Dekayle said. "I never thought of myself as

just a doctor. I've always done more than what I expected of myself."

And even as they live about an hour's drive apart now — Dekayle loves Hyde Park for its mix of artists, college students and eclectic people who have been living there for decades, Stephens-Archer adores Elmhurst because it's family oriented, comfortable and her daughters already have a ton of friends just on their block — their friendship remains as close as ever.

"Doing this together, it makes things a lot easier," Dekayle said. "But more than that, it's making our piece of the world a little better and healthier."

## Families of first responders face stress as well

By Kevin Breen  
Staff reporter

Kathleen Willis still vividly remembers the telephone ringing at 3 a.m.

Her husband, who had been a Lombard firefighter/paramedic for less than a year, was on the other end of the line and told her to go check on their newborn daughter.

"I was like 'It's 3 o'clock in the morning.' He was like 'Just go do it. I need you to do it before I can get back to the job,'" Willis remembers.

Her husband, Tim, had just experienced his first SIDS (Sudden Infant Death Syndrome) death as a paramedic.

She said that was just one of a number of horrific events her husband experienced while part of the Lombard

Fire Department. Police officers, she said, deal with equally difficult issues and, at times, the anger and violence comes their way on a call.

In the unique position of the spouse of a retired firefighter and a state lawmaker, Willis said she wants to find ways the state can help first responders with the stress they face on the job and that steps with them when they head home.

"We're looking to alleviate that backpack. Take some of those pebbles out and make sure it does go better," state Rep. Willis (D-Addicks) said.

The state representative said there were difficult times and awkward silences at home during her husband's 18 years with the Lombard Fire

Department when he would come home after dealing with a difficult scene.

"He would come home with things and not be ready to talk about them," she said. "Having never been in the field, you don't understand what they go through."

She said that changed over time and her husband began to open up more about issues and used her as a sounding board.

"I was able to know when he wanted to talk and when he did not want to talk," Willis said.

Willis said when their children hit their teen years, her husband was very much focused on "Let's keep peace at all costs," dealing with enough stress on the job.

She said that for marriages

### Call for Help



Third in a series looking at the trauma first responders deal with and the impact it has on them and their families.

to survive, you have to be willing to take the in-laws too. For a first responder's marriage to survive, Willis said, you have to take the rest of the shift too.

Those years became part of the family, Willis said.

Although retired for eight years, her husband is still active with the Lombard Fire Department's booster group

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State Rep. Kathleen Willis (D-Addicks) talks during an October state hearing about being the wife of a former first responder. She said the state needs to do more to support first responders and their families. (BlazeNewsStream.com)

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