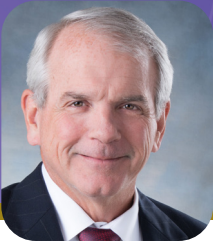


THE Importance of Caring

FEBRUARY 2021

my journey into health care



Ronald L. Ernst, MD

GENERAL SURGEON

Ronald L. Ernst, M.D. knew he wanted to work in medicine from a young age. But there has been some friendly debate about his inspiration.

Ernst credits an experience in high school where he was exposed to medical/nursing field specialties. As part of this program, he was able to follow a surgeon and that's when he decided to pursue a career in health care.

Ernst's mother, on the other hand, believed her son's interest in medicine started even earlier.

"My mother always said she planted the seed by buying me a doctor's kit at a young age," Ernst said.

Either way, once Ernst decided on a career in health care, he never looked back. He studied pre-medicine at the University of Nebraska Lincoln then attended medical school at the University of Nebraska Medical Center before doing surgery training at the University of Kansas in Wichita.

During his last year of training, Ernst contacted Don Zornes (then Columbus Community Hospital administrator) and some local family doctors about returning to his hometown of Columbus to practice.

"They were very supportive of my decision," Ernst said.

After completing his training, Ernst

founded Columbus General Surgery in Columbus in 1987. Since then, his solo practice has grown to include three board-certified general surgeons, including himself, Myron E. Morse, M.D. and Jeremy Albin, M.D.

Columbus General Surgery merged with CCH in May 2018.

General surgery includes gallbladder/hernia and abdominal surgeries, and the surgeons at Columbus General Surgery also deal with colon and breast cancer, as well as skin and soft tissue skin cancers. The practice performs the majority of colonoscopy screening in town and the surgeons at Columbus General Surgery also cover trauma for the community.

"One of us is available to help 24/7," Ernst said.

Along with these duties, Ernst is also the head of CCH's Wound, Ostomy and Continence (W.O.C.) Health Center. On a typical day, Ernst starts his morning at the hospital where he sees inpatients and performs surgeries and endoscopies. In the afternoon, he returns to his office to perform follow-ups and see new patients. Prior to going home in the evening, Ernst rounds on inpatients again.

This work can make for long days, but Ernst said he is well supported by CCH.

"CCH, through all the years, always has provided with me an environment and equipment to allow me to practice

my specialty to the fullest," Ernst said. **"I am surrounded by caring, educated professionals that help me every day."**

Even more importantly, Ernst said he is well supported at home.

"I stress that medicine is a great career, but not to forget about your family because they come first," he said. **"A doctor's day does not end when you go home. It takes a special partner to allow one to be a good doctor and I have been blessed with one. If you are not happy at home, you will not be happy at work."**

To help other people find the right job for them, the surgeons at Columbus General Surgery expose first year medical students to their lifestyles so they can see what it takes to be a surgeon. Though the work may be hard and **"it's a long road to our degree"** Ernst said it is well worth it.

For his part, Ernst never regrets the decision he made all those years ago when he followed a surgeon himself.

"I have been very fortunate to have a dream of being a surgeon in my hometown of Columbus," he said. **"I married my high school sweetheart, Ann. Our parents were present to see our kids grow. I have four grandkids and three live in Columbus. Yes, I am living my dream."**

For more information on Ernst or Columbus General Surgery, visit www.columbushosp.org.