





Born to be *a* pharmacist

Giving back to the community fulfills a life-long dream for Julie Wickman

by David Luong, PharmD



Julie Wickman has been immersed in pharmacy about as far back as she can remember. She worked at her local pharmacy as a soda jerk for most of her teenage years, whipping up milkshakes and sodas for customers coming in to get their medications. One day the pharmacist at the drugstore began teaching her pharmacy basics, including filling prescriptions and paying bills. Right then, Wickman knew she wanted to be a pharmacist. She received her PharmD at Mercer College of Pharmacy in 1996, and served on the Mercer University faculty from 1997-2001, teaching various pharmacy courses. She later owned two independent pharmacies, and since 2010 has been on the Philadelphia College of Osteopathic Medicine School of Pharmacy faculty.

With 22 years of pharmacy practice, Wickman is enthusiastic about teaching and mentoring new students. She finds it rewarding when her students become successful in their own practices. She wants the new generation of pharmacists to advance pharmacy to even higher levels and to practice to the top of their license. That's why Wickman loves giving back to her community. She currently precepts students in her own pharmacy, Medical Park Pharmacy in Gainesville, Ga., which she has owned since July 2016.

DME OPPORTUNITIES

What Wickman says separates her business from other pharmacies is having a durable medication equipment accreditation program in place. "It doesn't come cheap but it worth every penny," she says. Being accredited gives her



Fast Facts: Medical Park Pharmacy, Gainesville, Ga.

Established:	1983
Management:	Julie Wickman, PharmD, owner
Products & Services:	Includes standard retail prescriptions, free home delivery and drive-up window, refill reminders, durable medical equipment and supplies, flu shots and immunizations, custom compounding, and medication therapy management.
NCPA Member since:	2018
Education:	Mercer College of Pharmacy, 1996

the privileges to bill Medicare Part B services and products that are subject to Center for Medicare & Medicaid Services quality standards. Wickman saw an untapped market in the DME billing sector and took advantage of it. She knew that the infrastructure of local chain stores would not be able to support all the DME products she has to offer. Wickman recently opened a DME warehouse in Braselton, Ga., to store her hospital beds, bed and bath lifts, canes, insulin pumps, scooters, walkers, wheelchairs, and toilets. She also carries a full line of diabetes foot care products.

COMPOUNDING NICHE

Another profit piece for Wickman is compounding. She compounds everything that is non-sterile. Veterinarian medications and hormone compounds are her specialty. Wickman says she loves to be a mad scientist, creating new products to cater to her customers' needs. She is always thinking of new ideas and what she can add to the market. With <USP 800> becoming the new standard, also wants to get back into sterile compounding.

Recognizing that people like to "try before they buy," Wickman built a

race track for her wheelchair and scooter customers. Once word got out that there was a wheelchair race track at her pharmacy, there were lines out the door wanting to try it out the track out.

Wickman is heavily community invested, providing education to the public. She teaches on topics such as diabetes management, over-the-counter medications, supplements, and health and wellness. During influenza season, she offers flu shot clinics and health screening. Wickman says community involvement is key to a successful business.



Recognizing that customers like to “try before they buy,” Medical Park Pharmacy built a racetrack for its wheelchair and scooter customers. Once word got out, owner Julie Wickman says there were lines out the door with people wanting to try it out. At bottom, DME specialist and technician Rob Honeycutt stands in front of Medical Park’s Pharmacy’s van. The pharmacy offers free delivery.



“If you provide a good service and product, they will come,” she says.

SEEKING NEW OPPORTUNITIES

Wickman is always trying to push the envelope and seek new opportunities. She says that the NCPA Annual Convention has been helpful for her curiosity. She recently implemented point-of-care testing for influenza, and has a collaborative practice agreement with her local physician’s

office to prescribe Tamiflu when needed. She is looking into providing more of these point-of-care testing services going forward.

Wickman’s husband Jeff is the pharmacy’s businessman, doing marketing and advertising for her. Plenty of her business comes from referrals, and providing a referral program helps her business as well. Wickman is always running promotions for her

referral program, varying monthly. Her staff and service have kept her business thriving. Wickman says she always puts her customers first. Even if she must drive two hours to give her patient the product, she is willing to travel and go the extra mile.

Even in a successful business there are always challenges, and Wickman still finds reimbursement and DIR fees to be difficult to understand. And the constant battling with PBMs can be exhausting. She is thankful that NCPA supports her and continues to fight for her and the rest of community pharmacy.

“The key to having a successful business is to make those connections, always having attention to detail and having good customer service,” Wickman says. “You must always be open to change and be flexible with the times.” ■

David Luong, PharmD, is a 2019 graduate of the Philadelphia College of Osteopathic Medicine School of Pharmacy.