

# *Looking NICE*

## **Meet the winners of the fourth annual NICE Awards**

In recent years pharmacies have faced pressures from all angles. Low and slow reimbursement, pharmacy DIR fees, chain and online competition, abusive PBM practices ... you get the picture. And as if that weren't enough, 2020 brought a devastating global pandemic, forcing pharmacies to reimagine and adapt, often on the fly. With that in mind, the NCPA Innovation Center Excellence Awards for 2021 take on added meaning. We are recognizing pharmacies that have demonstrated excellence in their marketing and merchandising. The NCPA Innovation Center wants to extend thanks to QS/1 for its support of the NICE Awards program.

"Since 2018 the NICE Awards have showcased the best in community pharmacy branding and marketing – the innovations and redesigns that make promotions more effective and patients' experiences more rewarding," says NCPA Innovation Center President Kurt Proctor. "As we know, marketing is the lifeblood of a community pharmacy. The aim of the NICE Awards is to spotlight what good pharmacy marketing looks like – and what it accomplishes for a pharmacy business. We think it's nice if others could see and learn and achieve success as a result of these examples. This year, for our best internal and external remodel awards, we interjected a focus on changes made to meet customer needs related to the pandemic."

The following pages will highlight pharmacies in the following award categories:

- COVID-19 Best External Modification
- COVID-19 Best Internal Remodel
- Best Exterior Sign
- Best Delivery Vehicle
- Best Marketing/Promotion

by Chris Linville



**MEET OUR JUDGES :** Here are the nice judges who decided which pharmacies were **NICE**.



**AMINA ABUBAKAR**

Amina Abubakar, PharmD, AAHIVP, is the owner of Rx Clinic Pharmacy in Charlotte, N.C. She is also the founder and president of the Avant Institute of Clinical Pharmacy, where her passion for furthering the affect and success of clinical pharmacy services is realized through online learning, webinars, and consultations with pharmacies across the United States. Amina is a clinical pharmacist, certified HIV specialty pharmacist, and a preceptor to University of North Carolina Chapel Hill residents and students from several schools of pharmacy. Additionally, Amina serves as a luminary for CPESN® USA, where she helps other community pharmacists to facilitate the advancement of CPESN networks.



**DAVE WENDLAND**

With nearly 30 years' experience within the Hamacher Resource Group, Dave Wendland is responsible for strategic partner development and trade relations for the organization. Additionally, Dave works closely with the company's marketing, business development, and national account teams to strengthen client relationships and enhance product value. Dave is also the primary architect and leader of the company's collaborative strategy sessions conducted on behalf of clients looking to extend their market reach, discover new opportunities, or plan future products. As vice president of strategic relations and part of the HRG ownership team, he has connected, counseled, and offered business-improvement solutions to manufacturers, distributors, retailers, and technology providers.



**JAY WILLIAMS**

An enthusiasm for helping businesses improve their go-to-market strategy and a strong belief in community pharmacy collided for Jay Williams 20 years ago. Since then, he has been working directly with independent, community-based pharmacy owners to help them tell their story. As a director for CPESN® USA, Jay continues that journey. Prior to joining CPESN, Jay served as the vice president of marketing for PrescribeWellness, Cardinal Health, and AmerisourceBergen. In each of these leadership positions, he was responsible for the marketing strategy and communications deliverables impacting independent pharmacies.

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If you want a NICE-style pharmacy, NCPA has programs to help members be successful beyond the prescription department, led by our own front-end guru, Gabe Trahan. These include live programming at our conferences, a focused one-day Front-End Profit Building Seminar sponsored by Good Neighbor Pharmacy, the twice-monthly *Profit Makers* publication, and monthly columns in *America's Pharmacist*®, along with a plethora of great advice, examples, tools, and resources on the NCPA website.

Thanks to all who submitted entries for the 2021 NICE Awards. If you are planning on making pharmacy improvements this year, take plenty of pictures, let us know, and you could be named among the nicest of the NICE in 2022. Look for nomination information coming this fall.

# COVID-19 BEST EXTERNAL REMODEL

## **McCoy Tygart Drug, Sheridan, Ark.**

Donald "Sparky" Hedden, owner of McCoy Tygart Drug in Sheridan, Ark., knew in late winter that something was up. He was in Nashville, Tenn., to watch his beloved Arkansas Razorbacks in the Southeastern Conference basketball tournament. After only a few games the tournament, like many other events, was abruptly canceled. Hedden returned to Arkansas and knew he needed to take action.



"In the middle of March, when COVID-19 became a reality for the entire country, we knew we needed to do something to protect our staff and our patients," he says. "We put up a pop-up tent. People drove up but couldn't come in because we closed the store for walk-in traffic, so staff would take prescriptions out to the patients. But we knew that wasn't going to work for long."

McCoy Tygart Drug is landlocked in a strip mall with a grocery store on one side and a pizza restaurant on the other, so there's no room for a drive-thru. Hedden says he got in touch with Little Rock Tent and Awning Company, which installed a 30-feet by 40-feet temporary drive-thru tent

in the parking lot. Hedden then hired about 10 college and high school students as "runners." They were out of school because of the pandemic.

With the tent in place, as cars would drive up, the students would use forms to note the make and model of the vehicles, get the prescription information from the patients, bring it into the pharmacy, have the prescriptions filled, and take them to the register to ring them up. The students would then deliver the medicine to patients in the parking lot.

"They would walk from 10-13 miles each daily, and at least 4-5 were there seven days a week," Hedden says. "One girl walked 850 miles in the six months we had the tent set up. I couldn't ask for better group of kids."

Using this system, McCoy Tygart Drug was able to dispense 700-800 prescriptions daily, a 10 percent

increase from the previous period a year earlier.

"We had great feedback," Hedden says of the service. "People appreciated us taking care of their safety and the safety of our own staff."

The store reopened for walk-in business in August, with plexiglass installed, mask-wearing required, and a detailed cleaning and sanitizing schedule in place. Hedden says the pharmacy has picked up a number of new customers who told him they appreciated the focus on safety protocols that seemed to be lagging at the chains. It's probably no wonder McCoy Tygart Drug was named the 2020 Good Neighbor Pharmacy of the Year.

McCoy Tygart Drug has also made a big push in its medication synchronization program, going from 160 patients pre-pandemic to more than 1,200 now. Where patients were typically coming in 3-4 times a month previously, they now are coming in once a month, reducing coronavirus exposure risk.

### **Fast Facts: McCoy Tygart Drug**

**Established:**

1895 (Donald "Sparky" Hedden purchased ownership stake in 1984.)

**Management:**

Sparky Hedden, pharmacist and owner. Son

Casey is partner and pharmacist in charge.

Includes standard retail, immunizations, medication synchronization, durable medical equipment, OTC products, free local delivery, gift shop, wedding and baby registry, and tuxedo rental.

**NCPA member since:**

2006

# COVID-19 BEST INTERNAL REMODEL

***Medi-Wise Pharmacy,  
Newcomerstown, Ohio***

Jeff Neidig, owner of Medi-Wise Pharmacy in Newcomerstown, Ohio, says his "RONA"-vation occurred when his retail store's front end was closed for six months due to COVID-19.

"We relocated and resized all departments in our 5,800 square feet retail store to have a new layout and colors in a 2,500 square feet space," he says. "We moved our DME department to make way for a 1,200 square feet-dedicated space for our pharmacy clinic."

Neidig says he had been planning to change things up for a while. A visit a few years ago from Gabe Trahan, NCPA senior director of store operations and marketing, gave him some ideas. Neidig is also a CPESN Ohio luminary, so his vision is to give the pharmacy more of a clinical orientation, incorporating the CPESN model toward patient care.

"I had been seeing a significant change in customer purchasing habits," he says. Ironically, the pharmacy's success with its medication synchronization program – with patients needing to make fewer in-store visits – also meant less shopping for retail items such as gifts.

Neidig says that he would visit other pharmacies and see a lot of merchandise on shelves that wasn't moving. "I didn't want that," he says. "I wanted to have a fresh look, and that fresh look meant a smaller footprint (with fewer departments). We're going to continue to focus on clinical services, and expand our offerings in that area," which



includes items such as transitions in care, med sync, and compliance packaging.

Neidig is excited about his in-store patient facility, called the Clinic at Medi-Wise Pharmacy. "When people come in for vaccines, they go into the seating area and then proceed into the treatment rooms where we give the injections," he says. "When we do COVID-19 vaccines we will have a large area for people to sit

and be monitored before and after getting their vaccine."

The store has received rave reviews since it reopened Oct. 1, Neidig says. "A lot of people say it looks like a brand-new store," he says. "Our merchandising changes have our regular shoppers browsing more and buying more. We can't wait until more customers feel comfortable to shop inside so they can see our improvements."

## Fast Facts: Medi-Wise Pharmacy

<b>Established:</b>	1993
<b>Management:</b>	Jeff Neidig, pharmacist and owner since 2002
<b>Products &amp; Services:</b>	Includes clinical consultations and services, medication adherence/synchronization, durable medication equipment, medication therapy management, immunizations, multi-dose pill packaging, and transitions in care services.
<b>NCPA member since:</b>	2006

# BEST EXTERIOR SIGN

**Webb's Family Pharmacy,  
Rochester, Ind.**

Harry Webb, owner of Webb's Family Pharmacy, says the façade of its Rochester, Ind., location has undergone a complete renovation in recent years (Webb owns three pharmacies in northern Indiana), with an exterior pharmacy sign being the finishing touch.

Like many independent pharmacists, Webb consulted with marketing and merchandising guru Gabe Trahan (aka NCPA's senior director of store operations and marketing) to get some ideas.

"After attending one of Gabe's marketing workshops, I decided to have a sign designed that said 'Pharmacy' in bold white letters and I minimized my logo," Webb says. "The concept for the arrow came from looking at a lot of old historic signs. I wanted something that had a bit of a retro design."

Webb says Gabe told him that "artsy" signs can't be read quickly, and he agreed. Even though the pharmacy is something of a local landmark, if new residents are driving by and the sign is cluttered, those are potential lost customers.

Webb says it's hard to say if the sign or the entire façade remodel was the biggest factor, but the pharmacy's front-end store sales increased substantially after the project, and front-end sales have continued to hold. He says in 2018 gift department sales increased 32 percent from the prior year, with front-end increasing 25 percent in the same period. In 2019 gift sales increased again slightly and Webb says front-end sales are



"The cost of the sign was easily paid for from increase in front-end sales," he says. "I believe front-end impulse sales are a much better reflection of store visibility than prescription sales, because your regular prescription customers already know where you are located."

Webb says he had been interested in doing the renovations for a number of years. He received a store preservation grant from the state of Indiana to help defray some of the expense. "As pharmacists we all tend to get complacent with how our businesses look," he says. "We are so busy we don't really look at the front end. Having things look fresh and clean really makes a difference."

## Fast Facts: Webb's Family Pharmacy

**Established:**

1990 (a pharmacy has operated on the site since 1880.)

**Management:**

Harry Webb, pharmacist and owner

**Products & Services:**

Includes standard retail, compounding, insurances, integrated services, disease management, compliance packaging, LTC, immunizations, durable medical equipment, refill prescriptions, gift shop, and delivery.

**NCPA member since:**

1991

# BEST DELIVERY VEHICLE

***Happy Druggist, Mechanicsburg, Ohio***

When pharmacy owner Joe Craft purchased what is now Happy Druggist in Mechanicsburg, Ohio, he was told that the previous owner offered delivery, but it was a "secret."

"A staff member overheard me offering delivery and told me they only delivered to certain people and only in town," Craft recalls. As the owner of three other pharmacies with multiple delivery vehicles, that wasn't good enough. Craft immediately ordered a Chevrolet Equinox SUV from the local dealership and greatly expanded the delivery area.

Craft says his mentor, fellow Ohio pharmacy owner Ernie Sparks, once told him, "You have to have a delivery car and you need to have your logo on it."

When it came to signage for the car, Craft got some advice from Gabe Trahan, NCPA senior director of store operations and marketing. "We put on some decals and they only cost



\$400 for the design work and installation. It was a great investment. Our delivery business doubled in the two months after we put the car in service in September 2020."

At his other stores, Craft has a couple of Honda CRVs and several delivery vans, all adorned with company signage. "You have to brand it," he says.

Along with being seen out and about on deliveries, Craft's vehicles have gotten publicity in other ways, such as driving in parades in Columbus. Some are parked in front of the store for some extra visibility.

As any vehicle owner knows, tender loving care is essential to keep it running smoothly. Craft says a van serving his West Jefferson patients traveled about 30,000 miles in four years, while the CRV in Plain City clocked 40,000 miles in one year. He says every five years or so he will review his fleet and decide if he needs replacement vehicles and refreshed signage.

"You want to project the image of success," Craft says. "You don't want your cars to look worn out, with rust and a bad muffler."

If you haven't guessed it, Craft is absolutely sold on delivery vehicles. "Not everybody will get delivery, but it's good to know that it's available if they need it," he says.

## Fast Facts: Plain City Druggist, Plain City, Ohio; Happy Druggist locations in Columbus, West Jefferson and Mechanicsburg, Ohio

<b>Established:</b>	1999 (Plain City Druggist is original store.)
<b>Management:</b>	Joe and wife Robin Craft, pharmacists and owners
<b>Products &amp; Services:</b>	Includes standard retail, immunizations, medication therapy management, medication synchronization, durable medical equipment, compounding, free local delivery, online prescription access, diabetes footwear, gifts and cards, automatic refills, and general health news and videos.
<b>NCPA member since:</b>	1997

# BEST MARKETING PROMOTION

**Norland Avenue Pharmacy,  
Chambersburg, Pa.**

When the COVID-19 pandemic caused its patients to quarantine and Norland Avenue Pharmacy to shut its doors, the pharmacy focused on staying connected through social media. Kim Dockman, the pharmacy's store manager and marketing director, says that owner Wayne Myers and several other employees did regular Facebook Live videos, with several attracting more than 1,500 views.

"Some videos were educational, some were sales focused, and some

were just for fun," Dockman says. "One of our favorites was a video of the staff singing to a Spice Girls' song encouraging patients to call in their orders for delivery, curbside, or drive-thru service."

Dockman says that Facebook has been the pharmacy's primary communication tool, and the staff made sure it was updated daily. "Social media has been the No. 1 key to what we do to keep our patients informed," she says. Norland Avenue Pharmacy also sends out 3,000 print

and 3,000 electronic newsletters monthly, along with emails.

Dockman says the pharmacy adjusted its offerings according to its customer needs. "We carried masks of all types, made our own hand sanitizer in our compounding lab, and offered free delivery to everyone."

In May, Norland Avenue Pharmacy promoted and sold Gratitude Gift Bags for first responders. The \$25 bag included a supplement for immune support, hand sanitizer, a KN95 mask, lotion, a healthy snack, a small gift item, and a customized card.



"We sold over 40 total gift bags that month," Dockman says. "When the weather permitted, we set up an outdoor store alongside our drive-thru lane. This allowed guests using our drive-thru to choose masks, puzzles, flags, gloves, sanitizer, and more from the safety of their car. Our efforts paid off! At one point, we sold over \$5,000 worth of hand sanitizer in 30 days. We also sold 1,000 KN95 masks in less than 24 hours."

## Fast Facts: Norland Avenue Pharmacy

<b>Established:</b>	2001
<b>Management:</b>	Wayne Myers, pharmacist and owner
<b>Products &amp; Services:</b>	Includes standard retail, compounding, vitamins and supplements, essential oils, CBD, diabetes footwear, medication synchronization, immunizations, clinical consultations, free local delivery, gifts, and rewards program.
<b>NCPA member since:</b>	2003

Even with the doors closed and locked, Dockman says the pharmacy had a record-breaking April for storefront sales (and its seventh highest overall month ever in the pharmacy's 20-year history – \$83,513.71).

"Our pharmacy team worked tirelessly to serve and maintained the high level of customer care that our community has come to know us by," Dockman says.