



PHARMACY AT WELLINGTON | LITTLE ROCK, ARK.

When the COVID-19 pandemic began last March and people began hunkering down, it created obvious challenges for pharmacies as they had to become creative in providing prescription medication services while keeping patients and staff safe. For pharmacies that derived revenue from non-medication items such as gifts, it provided another dilemma — how do you sell those items when customers can't come into the store?

Brittany Sanders, PharmD, managing partner and pharmacist in charge of the Pharmacy at Wellington in Little Rock, Ark., came up with an idea. Through social media, the pharmacy spread the word about what items were in stock. When a customer called asking about a birthday card for his mom, Sanders says that the staff picked out several that they thought might be appropriate, took pictures of them, and texted them to the customer asking which one he preferred. Sanders says the card would then be delivered to the mom's door just as if it were a prescription.

"We've done tons of birthday items

that way," Sanders says. "We call it 'a very Wellington birthday.'"

Another idea Sanders had was to turn the pharmacy front counter backward so patients arriving for curbside pickup could be assured that items such as toilet paper and hand sanitizer were available.

"Another thing we did was put up a sign so if you were about the third or fourth car back to go ahead and call us in the store and let us know who you are and tell us if there is anything you need," she says. "We have a shopper in the store who can go and grab it. That makes it easier."

Sanders, a 2005 graduate of the University of Arkansas for Medical Sciences, grew up in Hot Springs, Ark., about an hour from Little Rock. When she was in ninth grade, her father's job took the family to Johannesburg, South Africa, where they lived for the rest of Sanders' high school years. It was a tough time to move, but she learned to adapt, a trait that would serve well in her pharmacy career. After college, Sanders worked at a pharmacy chain but didn't like the fact that her job stressed dispensing and not interacting with patients, which was the reason she chose the career in the first place.

"I always loved chemistry and I wanted to help people," Sanders says. "Ownership was always in the back of my mind. I took a leap of faith and decided to do it."

She didn't have to move far. Her former employer is located across the street. When asked what it's

like to be across the street from the chain store, she replies, "They make a mistake, and we get a new patient."

Patient care and accessibility, hallmarks of independent pharmacy, are the focus at Wellington.

"We have the time to develop relationships," Sanders says. "We try to meet the needs where they are. Some of our patients come in every day. Sometimes they bring cookies. We are open long hours because it's what our patients need."

Sanders not only wants the Pharmacy at Wellington to provide professional and friendly service, she also wants the pharmacy to be attractive and welcoming for patients. Among the personal touches she added were large photos on the walls. She hired a professional photographer to take photos of the staff interacting with families, friends, and customers. Sanders purchased the files from the photographer and then shopped for affordable canvas photo printing. The store's walls are painted restful green, and the OTC fixtures are a rich black.

When she started planning her move to ownership, Sanders attended an NCPA Ownership Workshop, an experience she highly recommends.

"It was very valuable," she says. "I created terrific connections. At every turn, NCPA has been there to provide the services we need."