

Entrepreneurial Spotlight

Nicole Vlcek-Sullivan is the entrepreneurial business owner of Wellsville Chiropractic in Wellsville, Kansas. Her business is located at 711 Main Street. Nicole began her business in August of 2013. When asked, Nicole said, "I never imagined being a business owner." She knew she wanted to be in the medical field, but initially, she thought she'd be a surgeon. Nicole attained her EMT certification with plans of going to medical school.

Nicole said an accident in college had left an impression on her regarding chiropractic care. As the story goes, she had a lifeguarding accident which caused a dislocated shoulder and a severe neck injury that left her with frequent migraines. She had tried going the conventional medical route, but the solution was only to use medication, physical therapy, or finally either neck surgery or nerve oblations. She had tried the medication and physical therapy to no avail. Nicole would have migraines several times each month that would knock her down for three-four days at a time. She had a tough time with her medical school classes due to this suffering.

Finally, Nicole had graduated pre-med in Health-related Sciences and was working at a hospital. From the inside, she learned she didn't love what healthcare had to offer the patient as a solution. Basically, she said, "the remedy for everything was to take a pill or have surgery." At age 21, Nicole had been referred to a chiropractor and thought that sounded less scary than surgery or a nerve ablation. The chiropractor was able to talk to her and explain the problem. Nicole said, "I was finally given some hope!" She was impressed by the time he spent helping her understand her problem versus what she'd previously experienced. Within two adjustments, she said she was 90% better. Her headaches and migraines were mostly gone, and she could turn her neck and move her shoulder again.

Over time, she developed a friendship with the chiropractor, and he encouraged her to go to chiropractic school. Her parents thought she was crazy to abandon the medical education she's worked so hard toward. She initially started school in Kansas City but ended up finding the best fit for chiropractic school was in St. Louis. For three full years, she would leave on Monday and come home on Fridays. At this time, she lived in Wellsville and had two small children. She would go to school, study, and work around the clock while she was away during the week and spend the weekends giving her family her undivided attention. She had a chiropractic mentor in St. Louis who owned his own practice. She was able to work for him around her school schedule, learning the essentials of running an office.

Nicole was wanting to start her own practice in Wellsville, but several instructors were telling her it was too small to support her business. But Nicole loved the "country feel" of Wellsville, the rural community, being close to the schools her kids attended and thought she'd really enjoy having an office here. When asked, she said, "I'm so glad I decided to take the risk and start my practice here, but I honestly had no idea it would take off so quickly."

The biggest challenges at Wellsville Chiropractic for Nicole were building her confidence as a chiropractor without having an ego take over. Nicole said, "Doctor means teacher". She wanted to be approachable and perceived as a regular person. "Early on, I had to get out of my own way a few times, trusting my education, and give credit to the art and practice of chiropractic."

"I've enjoyed owning my own business for many reasons, one of them being the ability to make the business my own." said Nicole. She said she doesn't really feel like she's her own boss, though. The

said, “My patients are my boss!” She said in the beginning, her business was like an infant that she had to care for all the time. Now, 10 years later, she feels the business is a little more self-sufficient. She mentioned, “I can now make up for the time I missed when my kids were smaller.” Nicole says that word-of-mouth or referral-based marketing helped her and continues to help her grow her business.

Nicole says that it’s very satisfying to look at the business now. She states, “I treat my patients as I would my family members.” She knows chiropractic is sometimes a “last option” for people as it was for her when she had her lifeguarding injury. She feels that experience helps her relate to her patients better since she’s lived through her own health issues, and experienced how chiropractic can work. Nicole said, “I’m humbled daily by how people trust me and my techniques. I know that chiropractic is only one means to aid in healing, but for some, it IS the answer. I see miracles in my office every day. We celebrate the small things, and I always want to give my patients hope as my first chiropractor did for me. It’s important to me to be able to look at myself in the mirror each night and know I tried my best with every patient.”

Nicole mentioned that it’s very important to her that she can communicate to a patient when she doesn’t feel chiropractic is the answer. “Sometimes, another medical modality might be necessary,” says Nicole. She also appreciates that her patients feel comfortable coming to her with their questions and concerns so that they can make educated decisions about their care. Another thing that’s very important to Nicole is that she can keep the prices affordable for most everyone. She doesn’t want money to be a barrier for people in need of care.

When asked about work-life balance, Nicole admitted that balancing the business and her family is hard. She’s learned she can’t please everyone. As her five kids have grown, as well as her business, she’s had to decide on hours that fit her patient’s needs AND her busy family’s needs. “Sometimes I miss out on my kids and sometimes I need to take some time off from the office.” She understands that when people are hurting, they want help right then and don’t want to have to wait until Monday. She said, “It’s really hard when you’re your own worst critic.”

We were talking about anything Nicole would like to change about the journey to where she is now with her business. She said, “Everything I’ve gone through has provided life lessons to shape me and my business into what it is today, so I wouldn’t change a thing!” She feels these experiences help her to connect with her patients about other things that trouble them. She said that besides chiropractic care, her patients will often confide in her about problems like anxiety and depression issues because they are areas, she has openly struggled with herself.

Nicole admits her greatest inspiration is her mom. She says the older she gets, the more she can sense her mom’s influence. She said, “I can really relate to my mom because she was a strong, military wife, who raised three kids mostly on her own.” Nicole is the oldest. “If someone told my mom she couldn’t do something, she went out of her way to prove them wrong. I see that in myself,” says Nicole. Another of her mom’s favorite sayings was, “If you’re reaching your bar, you have it set too low.” Nicole feels she gets her perfectionism and work ethic from her strong-willed mom. And it wasn’t just her mom who inspired her. At 55-years old, Nicole’s dad graduated from nursing school, after 25 years of active military service, currently still working at the Nebraska VA hospital.

If you have a chiropractic need and would like to visit Wellsville Chiropractic, please call them at [\(785\) 883-2234](tel:785-883-2234) to book an appointment or visit them on Facebook at <https://www.facebook.com/WellsvilleChiropractic/>.



Dr. Nicole Vito

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