



GOLDILOCKS PEDIATRICS/MONGOLD MEDICAL SERVICES

BUCKHANNON, UPSHUR COUNTY, WV

PEDIATRIC & FAMILY MEDICAL PRACTICE

In her senior year of high school in Philippi, West Virginia (WV), Jessica Mongold told her coach she wasn't going to college. He balked, telling her, "Yes, you are." A series of similar assertions, encouragement, and support from family, friends, colleagues, and community members, along with her own evident determination and enthusiasm for helping others, led her down a path she never expected.

Jessica (Jess) is the owner of Mongold Medical Services LLC, DBA Goldilocks Pediatrics in Buckhannon, WV. A Doctor of Nursing Practice (DNP), she serves pediatric and adult patients, with her practice focused mostly on infants and children. Many of the families she helps have children with attention-deficit/hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) and/or autism spectrum disorder (ASD), a population that is highly underserved in WV.

This is not where Jess planned or thought life would take her, but as she puts it, "Things just kind of fall into place the way they need to, I guess."

Fortunately, for the Buckhannon community, Jess decided to go to college. While she hadn't considered a career in nursing, her mom and sister told her she would be good at it and should give it a try. She enrolled at Fairmont State University, got an Associate of Science in Nursing (ASN), then a registered nursing (RN) degree, and considered herself done with formal schooling. She entered the workforce as an RN working in adult intensive care.

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Then, a move to Florida changed her course, eventually leading her right back home.

"I worked with a nurse practitioner there that was everyone's superwoman. She was so cool," Jess says. "I was like, I want to be Denise when I grow up. Denise Sabatino was her name."

The idea of returning to school to become a nurse practitioner planted itself. Jess began to wonder if she would be accepted if she applied to a program. Mostly out of curiosity, she applied and was accepted. But she didn't pursue it.

Jess continued working in healthcare and moved to Pennsylvania before returning to WV at her family's urging. Her grandparents were aging, and the call of home was growing. She applied for a pediatric intensive care unit (ICU) position, which she didn't expect to get. To her surprise, she was offered the job, prompting her move back to WV.



Working for an expanding regional hospital and healthcare system, Jess experienced the frustrations of providing care within the confines of a complex machine. She learned a lot about what she didn't want to do as a provider, and the idea of pursuing an NP degree kept returning. Jess worried that the two-and-a-half-year program was too long. Talking it over with her grandfather, she recalls him telling her those years would go by regardless. The seed continued to grow.

Jess applied to the master's level family nurse practitioner program at West Virginia Wesleyan College and was accepted. This time, she went for it. Knowing she would be unlikely to return to school if she stopped after completing the master's program, she continued through and completed the doctorate of nursing practice program at Wesleyan.

Working again for a large healthcare system, Jess learned that her position was going to be eliminated. While considering her options, the idea of starting her own practice reignited the prodding she had silenced when she reached the goal of becoming a DNP.

With steady encouragement from friends, Jess haphazardly started working toward setting up a medical practice of her own. She began the lengthy credentialing process required to bill insurers and browsed potential office spaces. One would have required a \$15,000 build-out. Fortunately, a friend of a friend referred her to someone selling a tanning salon in Buckhannon. The space was set up nearly perfectly, with only minor adjustments needed to turn it into a medical office.

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Jess began turning the space into the office she envisioned, doing most of the work herself, with plenty of help from her dad and local friends. She sourced supplies and equipment from online medical auctions, buying exam beds and other needs at discounts from providers in Baltimore, Cleveland, and Atlanta. She and a friend made a 24-hour round trip to Atlanta and back to pick up a \$5,000 baby scale stand she purchased for \$100. They even made a detour to help out another friend along the way.

Around this time, Jess connected with Susie Higgins, a business coach with the WV Small Business Development Center (WVSBDC) serving Upshur County.

"I'm very thankful for the small business association here," says Jess. "Susie Higgins is who got me in communication with The Center for Rural Health Development."

Still, Jess was hesitant to reach out for help, not wanting to rely on others to manage the process of starting her business.

"Susie's like, 'You need help. Stop doing what you're doing,'" Jess laughs.

Susie and the WWSBDC provided valuable business coaching and resources that impressed Jess.

"They do a lot for the town of Buckhannon," she notes.

With an established business development partner in the WVSBC, Jess started working with The Center for Rural Health Development (The Center) to receive funding from the West Virginia Rural Health Infrastructure Loan Fund (Loan Fund). She says her experience with The Center was great, and they made the process easy. She recalls Co-CEO and Loan Fund Manager Rob Dearing telling her they wanted to get to know her personally and learn how she planned to make her business work. Jess never felt like she was just numbers on paper.

While reviewing her plans for the practice, The Center's team expressed concerns that her current patients might not follow her from a larger, established healthcare organization to a start-up solo practice. Pressing on with The Center's support, she filed her business registration, got a phone number, and went live with the Facebook page for Goldilocks Pediatrics on the same day. Two hundred patients, new and returning clients from her previous practice, called and left messages.

"And I was like, 'Okay, I'm going to have to find time to call all of these people back,'" says Jess.

Jess opened her medical practice in Buckhannon on January 5, 2026. She and her team saw 200 patients that month, and the next, and the next. The Center set a goal for Mongold Medical Services to see at least 600 patients in 2026. They hit that mark on April 1, 2026.

"I don't know if I was fooling myself, fooling them, but we got the job done," Jess laughs. "There are still moments that I have that I'm like, 'Did I actually pull this off?'"



Jess now works with a staff of three to serve the needs of children and families in North Central West Virginia. In addition to herself as the primary practitioner, she employs a receptionist/office manager, a medical assistant, and a nurse who help her provide the attentive, personalized care she envisioned when she started dreaming up her practice. They also work with a local lactation consultant on a contract basis to better serve families with newborns. Patients, some of whom moved out of the area, travel as far as three hours to see Jess and her team.

"Patients tell me, 'You're the first person that's actually sat down and listened to me and asked me questions,'" says Jess. "I just feel like I'm doing my job."

In addition to taking the time needed to genuinely evaluate and assess patients' needs, Jess attributes much of her success to the support and help of family, friends, and the community. She also says being a small practice has perks when it comes to having the agility and



flexibility to address business concerns as they arise, as opposed to the challenges she saw and faced when she worked for larger providers.

The Goldilocks Pediatrics social media page is also thriving, and it's a driver of both community and business. Patients enjoy the playful, genuine behind-the-scenes content and camaraderie, with some even telling her they already feel like part of the family after following and engaging with the team online.

That same sense of community is part of the reason Jess chose to locate her business in Buckhannon, where she was already an established provider.

"These are the kids that I've watched grow up for the past five years," she says, noting that children she saw as newborns in her previous practice are now starting kindergarten.

Building these relationships is simply part of being a medical provider for Jess. It's one of the most rewarding parts of the job, she says.

"It's so great to see the relief on these parents' faces when they have someone finally listen to them," Jess says, noting that she tells parents, "I'm not here to tell you how to raise your kid. I'm here to help you raise your kid."

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Asked what advice she would give someone considering starting a small medical practice in rural WV, Jess says, "Ask questions. Find people. You don't even necessarily have to know what you need. You just have to be willing to know you're going to do whatever it takes to get it."

And where does she plan to go from here? Jess says her practice is already outgrowing its current space, and she hopes to expand to a larger property or possibly open a second location. She sees a real need in the area for support services, like those provided by occupational, physical, and speech therapists, particularly in pediatrics.

Jess wonders if, over the next five to ten years, her practice could become a kind of one-stop shop. If her success so far and commitment to her work and patients are any indicator, the probability is high that things will continue to fall into place for Jessica Mongold and Mongold Medical Services.

