

## Hospital Invests in Pediatric Care for Waldo County

In what represents a significant investment in the health of the community, Waldo County General Hospital has launched a new pediatrics department in a dedicated building on the hospital's main campus in Belfast.

The hospital has also hired its first staff pediatrician, Jennifer Paul, MD. She will see a range of patients, from newborns to young adults, out of offices in the newly established WCMP Pediatrics at 9 Fahy St.

"We're excited to expand our ability to provide high quality healthcare to the youngest members of our community," said Waldo President Denise Needham, PharmD. "We know

that good healthcare at a young age has a positive life-long impact on a person's health and by extension a community's health. By building our own pediatric practice, we are improving the quality of life for the next generation and generations to come."

The opening of a pediatrics practice is part of an ongoing series of investments MaineHealth has been making to expand access to care for residents in Waldo County. In 2021, Waldo opened a walk-in clinic, and last year the hospital expanded the number of patient rooms in its primary care offices and also launched a Community Health Worker program.

The latter is a critical element of MaineHealth's vision of making our communities the healthiest in America. The hospital's two community health workers spend their time reaching out to people who otherwise might not come to the hospital because of barriers such as a lack of transportation or insurance, or a discomfort with navigating the medical system. The service is free.

The pediatrics department represents the most recent investment by MaineHealth. For years the hospital offered pediatric care through an independent physician. However, as demand for pediatric care has grown in

recent years, it became evident that the hospital would need to open its own pediatric department to ensure that Waldo County residents could receive timely care close to home.

To lead the department, the hospital hired Dr. Paul, who comes from MaineHealth's Maine Medical Center, where she completed her pediatric residency after receiving her medical degree from the University of Queensland School of Medicine in Brisbane, Queensland, Australia, in 2017.

Dr. Paul is now accepting new patients. For more information, please call WCMP Pediatrics at 207-505-3600.

## Meet Waldo's First Pediatrician, Jennifer Paul, MD

*Jennifer Paul, MD, recently joined Waldo County General Hospital as the first staff pediatrician of the hospital's newly established pediatrics practice.*

*Dr. Paul's arrival and the opening of WCMP Pediatrics is part of an ongoing investment by MaineHealth and WCGH to expand access to care in the communities they serve. The pediatrics department is located at 9 Fahy St. in Belfast, just across the road from the main hospital building.*

*To learn more about WCMP Pediatrics, go to [wcgh.org](http://wcgh.org). To learn more about Dr. Paul and how she came to be a pediatrician, read on.*



Jennifer Paul, MD

medicine, I had another career at a nonprofit that developed and implemented programs targeted at safety net clinics. I enjoyed my work there but ultimately felt limited by my lack of clinical knowledge and I wanted to work more directly with people. Those two aspects helped push me to make a career change.

### Were there any important mentors along the way?

As a medical student, I went on a volunteer trip with the Global Medical Brigades to Honduras to restock local pharmacies with medications and provide medical care in community based medical clinics. On the trip, I worked with a pediatrician and admired the warmth that he brought to his patients and how he seemed to be able to put them at ease. He was also a fierce advocate of making sure children were getting the right care at the right time. I greatly admired that quality, given my background in public policy. Witnessing his passion and working with other great pediatricians helped steer me toward pediatrics and working with families.

### Was there an "aha" moment that confirmed you made the correct choice?

It's hard to name one because there have been so many, but to be able to help people and families when they're vulnerable is a gift and very rewarding. When I'm helping them through an illness or a vulnerability, that's very affirming in terms of how I'm spending my limited time here on earth.

### What can a patient expect when they meet you for the first time?

The first time is a conversation and a chance for the patient to learn a little bit about me and my approach to patient care. It's important that parents are comfortable with my recommendations and kids feel safe and can trust me. There's not always one right answer in primary care, but rather a path with a menu of options.

### How does it feel for you knowing that you're helping to build this practice from the ground up?

I've had the opportunity to get to know Waldo County as a community member, a parent, and a pediatrician, so it's exciting to be able to build on

those experiences. I feel very fortunate to have great care team members that are familiar with pediatrics and the community. We're small enough that we can change workflows and approaches if needed or innovate and improvise in a nimble way.

### What are your passions outside of the hospital?

I love being outdoors. I grew up in northern Michigan and with four distinct seasons. I'm into skiing and gravitate more to lakes than oceans, due to my childhood roots. I've spent a lot of time swimming and boating on lakes during the summer, and I love spending time with my family and dog, Lola.

### Why Maine?

My husband, Russ Kizor, MD, who also works for Waldo as an anesthesiologist, grew up in the mountains and I with water. When we came to Maine, we both fell in love with the state. It has water and mountains and it felt like a great fit for us and our family. Belfast is very welcoming, with proximity to nature and it's easy to navigate. I can't imagine a better community to raise our family in.

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### Who, or what, inspired you to enter medicine?

I grew up in a healthcare family. Both of my parents are registered nurses, most of my aunts are nurses and my grandma was a nurse. Healthcare was always in the background of my life growing up, as was its vocabulary. Before