

# IN PERSON





# Road *to* Invention

*SF graduate finds a quick and easy way to keep your bed made every single day.*

By Heather Holtschlag

Anyone who knew former Hickory Heights resident Natalie Monaco during her childhood may not be at all surprised at what she has accomplished. Even as a young girl, she was drawn to business and knew that she would be in business when she got older.

“By age 14, I had built a very lucrative babysitting business in South Fayette that carried me through college,” Monaco said. “I became the ‘go-to’ girl for babysitting just through referrals and passing out fliers in my neighborhood. It was typical for me to be walking around my neighborhood pushing a stroller with a flock of kids behind me! When I wasn’t at school or babysitting, I was working at Fitness Fanatics in Bridgeville, where I sold memberships. That was my first sales job.”

Today, Monaco serves as the president and inventor of Covermade Bedding, a comforter with a super stretch elastic that is hidden under the mattress of a bed that helps keep the covers where they belong and makes the morning bed-making routine a breeze.

“During my (previous) job as a medical device sales representative, I was often leaving the house by 5 a.m. to drive all over the state to visit accounts,” Monaco said as she explained what sparked the idea for Covermade. “My mornings were busy and rushed, and every morning as I went to make the bed, I kept thinking, ‘Why isn’t there a way to keep the covers in place, so that it is easier to make the bed?’ I hated that I had to completely remake the bed every morning, and I hated that ‘cover-stealing’ disruption during my sleep.”

Monaco remembers thinking that there should be a bedding product on the market that worked to keep the covers in place so that she could sleep better at night, while also allowing for much easier bed making in the morning. So, she began searching everywhere for products that could simplify the bed-making process.

“To my surprise, I could not find anything,” Monaco said. “That is when I decided to create a solution myself.”

Monaco, a 2001 graduate of South Fayette High School and a 2005 graduate of the University of Pittsburgh, worked in various positions that would ultimately give her the experience required to achieve her goal. She worked in advertising sales for about a year and then began as a medical device sales representative for Bayer Healthcare – Diabetes Care Division. There she sold blood glucose monitoring

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systems throughout a large geographic territory that included central Ohio and part of West Virginia.

When she wasn't working, Monaco could be found at the local library, where she researched as many books as she could about patenting and product development.

"I started reading and studying all of them," she said. "I learned ways to get prototypes, locate manufacturers and pitch my idea. I also tried to learn as much as I could about other inventors and how they brought their ideas to market. I would research any product I found that appeared to be a new invention on the market. I would try to figure out who was behind the ideas and what path they took to build prototypes and locate manufacturers. I would learn from their stories and try to apply what I learned to my situation."

It took about two years from the time Monaco started her research until the time her idea became a reality. "That first year was well-spent learning and studying things I needed to move forward, and testing and building the initial prototypes," she explained. "I also worked on writing the patent application with my legal counsel. The second year became all about pitching and finding a manufacturer. It took a long time developing and testing, and we did a lot of tweaking. I had to make sure everything was perfect before it went to production, which finally happened in 2012, when I guest co-hosted its introduction on EVINE Live Home Shopping Network (formerly ShopNBC)."

Just as any of Monaco's fellow entrepreneurs can surely attest, some days are better than others. But it's learning how to accept and view those challenges that can determine the level of success.

"All of the obstacles that have come my way have really turned into motivation," Monaco noted. "The obstacles are all learning experiences, and they also have been great motivation to keep going, to try harder. For me, the end result is a product that has had no complaints and no returns to date. That motivates me to work harder because I know that people are really seeing the value in what I do."

Covermade Bedding is sold online at [www.covermadebedding.com](http://www.covermadebedding.com) or in select retail outlets including Brookstone, Joss & Main and Wayfair.com. For more information, visit the website or call 614.389.8388. ■

