



AMANDA CROW OPENS A POSTNET IN NORFOLK

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QUOTE OF THE WEEK

It's scary to leave a job that pays you on the 1st and 15th of each month to not knowing when you will start making money."

Amanda Crow, PostNet, Page 18



Amanda Crow, 26, a retired disabled veteran and parachute rigger with Navy Special Warfare, says she came up with the idea of becoming a franchise owner after an unpleasant experience at the post office.

HARRY GERWILN PHOTOS

Thinking outside the mailbox

MILITARY VETERAN OPENS A POSTNET FRANCHISE IN OCEAN VIEW

If you go

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BY LAKESHIA ARTIS
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Last week, Amanda Crow opened a PostNet franchise, a printing, shipping and mail business, in the Ocean View area of Norfolk.

The company, which has hundreds of stores nationwide and in several countries, describes itself as a neighborhood business center. PostNet services and products include computer rental stations, fax services and office supplies. The company prints business cards, scans images and documents to CDs, and offers document-finishing services like binding, stapling and laminating.

"We offer any printing, copying and finishing services," Crow said. "Our location provides notary service and we are an authorized shipping location for FedEx, UPS, DHL and the U.S. Postal Service. We also provide mailboxes that are better than P.O. boxes because you can receive FedEx and UPS at a private mailbox as opposed to a P.O. address."

Crow, 26, a retired disabled veteran and parachute rigger with Navy Special Warfare, came up with the idea of becoming a franchise owner after an unpleasant experience at the post office.

"My husband and I were trying to ship things out of a post office in Ocean View and the line was crazy," Crow said. "The idea came from that experience. I drove down to a PostNet in Virginia Beach and

spoke with the owner, Dennis Allord, who gave us a lot of information. Plus we saw a need for it in the Ocean View community because we didn't see any other business like that around."

Crow credits Allord for being supportive and offering her advice and guidance.

"I had previously been a customer of his and I sat down with him prior to starting the process," she said. "I asked him how the franchiser supports you, is it a good company to work for and what was the franchising experience like?"

For Crow, the road to becoming a franchise owner was a smooth one because of the tremendous support she received from PostNet.

"I first met with Jeff Mullin, a franchise coordinator who works with individuals to find out if they are a good match for PostNet," Crow said. "He was fantastic and answered all of my questions. I really wanted to become part of PostNet because of its family-like atmosphere."

To maintain a tight-knit group of franchise owners, PostNet discourages absentee owners and will only grant franchises to individuals who plan to be involved initially as a full-time owner-operator. Long-term, full-time operation of the centers is not required; however, initially it is critical.

"PostNet looks for entrepreneurs who have the same goal," she said. "They will franchise only to people who are owner-

operators, as opposed to individuals who buy five McDonalds and open them up. I will say that we have a cohesive group of franchisees."

The next step to becoming a franchise owner was a week-and-a-half training session at PostNet World headquarters in Denver, Colo., which consisted of learning about the history of PostNet, making copies, point of sales on the register, finances and much more.

"After successfully completing the training in Denver, I signed my paperwork," Crow said.

Shortly after, Crow secured a location in Ocean View that had to be cleared with PostNet. Typically, the company assists new owners in securing a location. After running an analysis on the area, it was determined to be a viable location.

"The first week of the store opening, a trainer from headquarters will come out to help you," Crow said. "Then in a month, another trainer will come out and help you out with any glitches that need to be worked out. After that trainer leaves, I will have access to a business consultant. Someone at PostNet is available 24/7. If you have an issue, someone will always get back in touch with you."

Additionally, UPS, FedEx, DHL and USPS representatives will offer training to help owners set up and sell their products and services.

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AMANDA CROW,
owner

In the owner's words

Amanda Crow, owner, talked to Inside Business about PostNet, a printing, shipping and mail business in Norfolk that is part of a global franchise. Services include but are not limited to, business cards, stationery, business forms and carbonless forms, copy and finishing services, digital services, crating and freighting, graphic design, and direct mail and marketing materials.

Hardest part about launching the business I would say the hardest thing is trying to get everything done in one day. At the beginning of the day, I always make a to-do list. And usually by the end of the day, the list has grown. I try my best to stay on top of everything. You learn early on how to delegate responsibility and trust that they will get things done. That was a hard lesson to do.

One lesson you learned that you wished you'd known before you started I don't know. If I had any questions, the representatives at PostNet were there to assist me.

Biggest risk you took I got out of the military. That was secure income. It's scary to leave a job that pays you on the 1st and 15th of each month to not knowing when you will start making money.

Biggest obstacle you overcame Doing this without my husband has been the hardest thing. I had planned to do this with his help. Fortunately, I have great friends that have helped throughout this process.

Future plans I'm interested in opening other franchises. Up until now, everything has been an awesome experience. Hopefully in the future, Dennis Allord, a PostNet owner in Virginia Beach, and I will work together on something. I look forward to having a successful business in Ocean View.

Employees Four

Financing Personal savings and a loan through Navy Federal Credit Union.

Marketing PostNet assists me with marketing and the promotion of the business. For the next few weeks, we will do fliers and door hangers.