

Pomfrey returns to business ownership with PostNet franchise

BY ERIC REINHARDT
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SYRACUSE — After several years as a stay-at-home mom raising three children, Kellie Pomfrey is ready to be a business owner again.

With two of her three children in college and the youngest in high

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Kellie Pomfrey, the franchisee of PostNet at 2363 James St. in Syracuse, is pictured inside the store. PostNet, which opened Dec. 1, is a Denver-based franchise that specializes in design, printing, copying, and shipping services for consumers and small businesses.

POSTNET: Founded in 1993, Denver-based PostNet has more than 850 locations worldwide

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school, Pomfrey felt the time was right to pursue her own business.

"I think it's time for me now to look for a new career," she says. "I don't want to see my life slowing down."

Pomfrey, a one-time antiques dealer, is the franchisee for Syracuse's first location of PostNet. It's a franchise of "neighborhood business centers" specializing in design, printing, copying, and shipping for consumers and small businesses, according to the company's website.

PostNet also serves as a shipping and drop-off location for carriers such as UPS, FedEx, DHL, and the U.S. Postal Service. Pomfrey says she saw that as an attractive quality about the franchise.

"We're not just locked into offering just one service [for packing and shipping]," she says.

Pomfrey had been looking for a franchise to operate for about a year, and after discovering PostNet, she began thinking seriously about it in early 2010, she says.

She had looked at other similar pack-and-ship businesses, but decided PostNet is a "much bigger package to offer people," Pomfrey says.

"From the packing, to the shipping, to the printing, to the graphics," she adds.

Pomfrey opened the business in a 2,000-square-foot location at 2363 James St. on Dec. 1. She has a five-year lease for the office, for which she declined to disclose the lease holder's name.

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The office is located next door to Pomco Group, a benefits-management group for self-insured medical, workers'-compensation, and disability-benefits plans. Kellie Pomfrey is the wife of Pomco Group President and CEO Robert Pomfrey, she says.

Henderson-Johnson Co. Inc. of Syracuse handled the space preparation, but Pomfrey isn't sure how much it cost because the lease-holder handled the repair expense.

The local PostNet store employs seven people, including a mix of full- and part-time employees. The employees include Lisa McDermott, the store's assistant manager.

Pomfrey and McDermott traveled to PostNet's Denver headquarters in late October for a 10-day training course the firm administered through books and computers.

A PostNet trainer also arrived at the local office on Nov. 29 and stayed the entire week to work with the local staff.

The training included instructing the staff how to operate the company computer system, including how to "punch in all the information for a package and then get all the different quote prices up," she says.

The store's location, in the heart of Syracuse's Eastwood section, is geared

toward targeting consumers and small businesses in that part of the city and the neighboring areas of East Syracuse and DeWitt.

"We're really going to be soliciting ... companies that you just know have got to be doing a lot of printing," Pomfrey says, noting it could be a restaurant that changes its menu every month and has weekly specials.

The store has many suppliers, she says, including the local location of Loveland, Ohio-based Xpedx for paper supplies.

Pomfrey declined to disclose any revenue projection she has for the local PostNet store. She says she used her own assets to finance the start of the franchise.

About the company, franchisee

Pomfrey, a native of Canajoharie, graduated from Morrisville State College in 1981 with an associate degree in business management. She then worked as a recruiter for the Syracuse campus of Bryant & Stratton College from 1981 to 1987. Later, Pomfrey handled accounts receivables and billing for Comprehensive Care, a home health-care agency in Fayetteville, from 1987 to 1989.

In addition, Pomfrey also operated her own antiques dealership, called Cozy Corner Antiques, and displayed her products in local shops such as Behind the Iron Gates in Syracuse.

Founded in 1993, Denver-based and privately held PostNet has more than 850 locations worldwide, including nearly 400 in the United States, according to its website. In upstate New York, it has a store in Gloversville, in addition to the new Syracuse location.

Steven Greenbaum and Brian Spindel founded the company, and Greenbaum currently serves as CEO of PostNet, according to Greenbaum's profile on the social-networking website LinkedIn.

The firm started franchising locations in 1993, according to Entrepreneur.com, the website of *Entrepreneur* magazine.

To operate a franchise location of PostNet, a franchisee's initial investment totals between \$172,000 and \$198,000, according to Entrepreneur.com. The franchise fee is nearly \$30,000, with an ongoing royalty fee of 5 percent of gross sales to pay for company support. Franchisees operate on a 15-year agreement, which is renewable, the website says.

On its own website, PostNet says a prospective franchisee must have a net worth of at least \$300,000, including a minimum of \$60,000 in liquid assets, and have a good credit score and history. □

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