



AMANDA CROW: FROM PARACHUTE RIGGER TO POSTNET OWNER.

Ship to shore

A retired sailor sheds her sea legs and finds solid ground—and financial freedom—as owner of a PostNet franchise

At Christmastime in 2009, Amanda Crow and her husband, Jeremy, both active-duty members of the Naval Special Warfare Command, headed to the local post office in Ocean View, a suburb of Norfolk, Va., to mail their presents. The line was out the door and wrapped around the block. “I looked at my husband and said, ‘Let’s just go to that PostNet in Virginia Beach,’” Crow says. They hopped in their truck and made the 30-minute drive to the national shipping, printing and copying franchise. “We mailed our stuff quickly, and I put my hands on my hips and I looked at the owner, Dennis, and said, ‘How do you open one of these?’”

Crow was only half-serious at the time, but she was beginning to think about a post-military career, and opening a business was at the top of her list. She took a PostNet franchising brochure and put it in a drawer.

Two months later, while she was deployed to the relief effort in Haiti following the earthquake there, the 26-year-old was notified that her husband, a Special Warfare Combatant-craft Crewman, had been killed. It was a devastating blow, made even harder by the fact that Amanda was transferred to a desk job in Norfolk. After seven years of rigging parachutes for Navy SEALs and serving as a jumpmaster, answering phones was driving her crazy. When her enlistment was up, she left the service and used her savings and a loan from Navy Federal Bank to open her Ocean View PostNet location in October 2010. We spoke to Crow about how she made the switch from packing parachutes to posting Christmas presents. —JASON DALEY

WHY DID YOU START YOUR OWN BUSINESS?

I can’t take orders from anybody else, really. Being a parachute rigger, I thought, “Man, what am I going to do after this?” I enjoyed the really fast pace of specialized warfare. We were constantly moving and our goal was to support SEAL teams. If they wanted to jump at midnight and then go diving afterward, we got boats and the parachutes ready and the aircraft lined up. Setting up and running a business keeps me really busy, too.

WHAT’S BEEN THE HARDEST PART?

I was a jumpmaster. I’d throw people out of airplanes, so I was used to being in charge. And then, when I started the franchise, I was the person going through training and learning all the copiers and computers. There is so much involved in making copies. It’s definitely more involved than you think, especially doing graphic design and fonts.

ANY EXPANSION PLANS?

I’d love to eventually open another PostNet in the area. I’d like to work with the Navy Exchanges on bases and maybe get a spot there, because we have a lot of services to offer. Some single sailors who live in the barracks don’t have an address, so mail goes to their command. And then the mail gets lost or is very late. If they had a private mailbox at PostNet, they could get FedEx and UPS packages, and once a week we’d send out all their mail to them on the ship.

HOW DOES FRANCHISING COMPARE TO SPECIAL WARFARE?

I think franchising in general, and in particular PostNet, has been awesome. It’s really nice to go from the military, where you have rules and manuals to tell you how to do things, to a franchise, where you have that built in—especially coming from specialized warfare, where everything is written in blood. At least that’s what we say, because someone got hurt or died if something wasn’t done a certain way. It’s great to have a little bit of structure, but still get to do your own thing.