

SUCCESS STORY

AMANDA'S GIFTS & MORE

Driving through a small town gives the opportunity to explore eclectic storefronts that have their individual personality and charm. In the heart of Steubenville, Ohio, a unique small business is Amanda's Gifts and More.

In late 2019, Amanda DeShong and Joan Wallace saw a location in town that they knew they couldn't pass up. Amanda had been a professional medium for 15 years and knew it was the perfect time for them to open their own spiritual gift shop.

The storefront had a grand opening in February 2020 and offered a large variety of spiritual and meta-physical gifts, in addition to hosting mediumship readings. Their opening garnered a lot of interest from the town, and Amanda and Joan saw that the business was gaining momentum. Shortly thereafter, COVID-19 hit, and they had to close their store.

After two months of being shut down, they wondered if they should continue the business or just cut their losses and move on. However, they had signed a lease for a year and would have to deal with that. Joan reached out

to local Small Business Development Center (SBDC) Director Steve Schillig to ask about how to best move forward. Steve directed them toward a marketing seminar that would increase their online presence during a time when many brick-and-mortar shops across the nation had to close.

Amanda and Joan ended up attending several SBDC training classes and having a one-on-one Facebook makeover session with SBDC consultant Erika Metzger. After learning about targeted persona building, it was clear they needed to step up their marketing efforts and change the way they did business. COVID-19 restrictions and stay-at-home orders were impeding the store's sales because they didn't have a website.

The SBDC provided Amanda's Gifts and More with a talented merchandising expert to help teach them how to create an inviting and memorable atmosphere in the store that would also be experienced digitally through Facebook and website imagery. They worked with Erika to create a Google business listing that within two weeks increased their revenue by \$1,000, and they gained a dozen new customers.



*Amanda DeShong, Owner of
Amanda's Gifts & More*

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When I ask customers how they find my shop, most of them still mention Google, and our revenue has continued to grow because of that,” Joan said. “Erika is so knowledgeable about social media and website stuff, and it continues to blow my mind. She’s phenomenal.

While their storefront reopened in May 2020, Joan and Amanda are continuing to pursue their online presence and have taken to using Facebook as their main source of connecting to their consumers and selling merchandise. They saw a lot of their regular customers come back, which Joan said is “such a blessing for the type of shop we have.”



For more information on Amanda's Gifts and More, visit them on Facebook.



Chakra healing stones sold at Amanda Gifts & More.

To learn more about the Ohio Small Business Development Centers, visit clients.ohiosbdc.ohio.gov.



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