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Ex-Cop Starts a Business Cleaning Crime Scenes

Laura Spaulding Saw a Potential Niche in Meth Labs and Other Sites

By *Alex Davidson*

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As a police officer, Laura Spaulding tried to clean up the streets of Kansas City, Mo. Then she was inspired to clean up crime in a very different way.



Laura Spaulding is planning to franchise her crime-scene cleanup business. PHOTO:SPAULDING DECON

Ms. Spaulding saw many methamphetamine labs and crime scenes during her seven years on the force. “I used to think, ‘I wonder what happens to these when we’re done?’ ” she says.

Then, one Christmas, she responded to a shooting at a family gathering. The mother, who wasn’t involved in the shooting, wondered how she could get her house cleaned up after the authorities left. ”She was under the false impression that law enforcement cleans up the crime scenes,” Ms. Spaulding says.

Feeling bad about the woman’s plight, and seeing an opportunity, Ms. Spaulding decided to make an unusual offer: She would clean the place herself, and get reimbursed from the woman’s homeowners insurance.

“After that incident I was hooked and knew there was a need for the service and that it was a niche that was recession proof,” she says.

Her bosses weren't happy with the sideline at first but eventually allowed her to do the work outside the city, she says. Even so, she decided to leave the force soon after and get training in meth-lab cleanup techniques. She then set up shop in her home state of Florida.

Her company, Spaulding Decon, also deals with general crime-scene cleanup and working on sites that have been affected by hoarding. But meth labs, which have surged during the past 10 years, make up a third of her business.

In 2006, she decontaminated about 10 meth labs, and now that figure has jumped to more than 300 annually. She hopes to expand her business through franchising, with help from a \$15,000 prize she won in a business-pitch competition in August.

“By training franchisees on our techniques and trade secrets we should capture the market,” says Ms. Spaulding, who expects the market to grow as more states put laws on the books defining decontamination standards for former meth labs. “The sky is the limit.”