

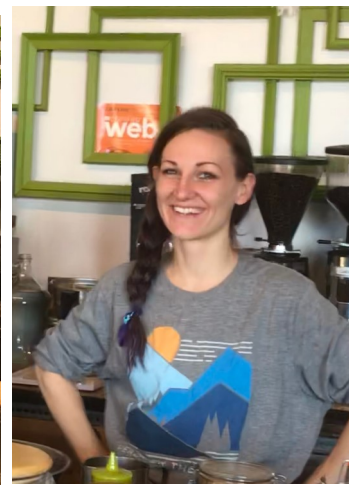
# Creative Beings: Business Owners

By Sarah Kiser

Sisters Amanda and Ashley Almazan are the busy owners of popular coffee location, Lucky Tree. They work at the shop a lot, preparing coffees and baking. Even their presence and personalities are integral to Lucky Tree's atmosphere of relaxed, welcoming, and local.



Ashley Almazan



Amanda Almazan

The inspiration for the shop came from when, “my sister and I had a treehouse as kids, and as we grew up we always wanted to go into business together.” Amanda explained. After a while, “organically, it came to us to do this space. She had a strong background in coffee, and I had worked in the food industry for a long time.”

The shop is fairly small, but it feels comfortable with a dining room table for meetings, a counter, and a lounge spot comprised of perfectly fitting eclectic pieces of furniture. Local artists' work covers the walls, and the entire atmosphere is centered around an aesthetic of the coolest treehouse you could imagine. Every time I stop by, there is always a new detail to appreciate, yet it is never overwhelming.

Amanda said of all their hard work that “as it was taking shape, we realized it was sort of like our adult tree house because as kids, people would come and play in the tree house even if we weren't home, so it was very much like a community shared space, and this,” here she gestured to the intricate design of the

shop with its chandelier-type apparatus containing succulents and piano as a display for locally made textiles, “kind of embodies that.”

Running their own business keeps Amanda and Ashley busy, but it also allows them to express creativity and freedom in their professional writing.

In addition to having to define roles and expectations for the other employees of whom there are 7, Amanda said they “communicate to the public what we care about, what is the why behind our business.” Amanda and Ashley care about “sourcing local and how to be thoughtful in that aspect.”

They are a tag team of sorts. Amanda works at the shop during the day, allowing Ashley to be at home doing the office work then coming in in the evenings. They’ve been at their current location for two and a half years. At this point, they’ve already got systems in place which means less writing and more working and tweaking as they go. The work “is so hands on,” Amanda said. Part of what they end up writing is instructions for “how to prepare certain drinks and what should be in the case.” It’s day to day work about what should always be in stock and when to start baking different foods. They’ve found that the easiest way to communicate with employees, Lucky Tree being a small outfit, is through group chat.

Any business involves another form of professional writing, government forms. Ashley told me how they learned to navigate that. “Years ago we went to Durham Tech for business 101 and opened a small cleaning business. We did that as almost a training ground because we wanted to open a business like this, but we had an accountant put together the paperwork for us. So then when it came to opening up we just kind of copied what he did. And we were able to open a corporation by looking at how someone opened a corporation.”

Other outlets of professional writing allow them to be as creative as they were when they designed their space. Ashley mentioned that she does “website writing, advertisements, flyers, and promotional things.” It’s all about the details. Even things “like ingredient tags” Ashley said has to be taken care of. These details can be creative too. Ashley told me how she takes the time to “Pick out fonts.” For [her] “as a creative person, it definitely takes energy.”

Then, there are things that, like Amanda said in a separate interview, communicate about their business, “You have to write about yourself for putting your brand out there,” Ashley said. Partially for that goal, Ashley said, that they do events. Preparation for those includes writing “descriptions of the event, what’s gonna take place, if we do any kind of sales. It’s writing the wordage of that, trying to be efficient in a small amount of space.” She writes for their website and social media, sometimes in-store handouts.

They also like to do big projects. “We’re big DIYers,” Ashley said. “A lot of it’s creative, which can take an endless amount of time.”

As part of that creative element they enjoy, they often do projects “that involves being outside and building something or moving something,” Ashley explained. Right now, they are creating a new menu. They’ve already built it and now “we just have to fill the content.” They’re working on expanding the drink menu, and they haven’t decided yet about the food aspect, but when they do, they can design a new board along with paper menus, another element of creative professional writing that their job allows.