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WHAT'S INSIDE

YARD WORK: Glamorous it isn't, but someone has to clean up after canines when nature calls. In Rhode Island, there are several



businesses dedicated to the task, including DoodyCalls, in Warwick. **H2**

"ENTREMANURES"

They're striving to be No. 1 in the No. 2 business

Glamorous it's not, but someone has to clean after canines when nature calls.

BY ANDY SMITH
JOURNAL STAFF WRITER

When doody calls, Jim Conway answers.

Conway, based in Warwick, owns a franchise for a national company called DoodyCalls, which picks up the digestive waste that pets leave behind. Driving a lime-green truck with the company logo on it, Conway will come to your yard, scoop the poop your dog has left behind, bag it, and leave it in your garbage. Cost is about \$15 per weekly visit, depending on the size of the yard and the number of dogs. (Brian Card, operations and engineering manager for the state Central Landfill, said animal waste in normal household quantities is not considered toxic and does not require any special handling at the landfill.)

"This is not the kind of business you want to go into if you want to impress friends at the bar," said DoodyCalls national founder Jacob D'Aniello.

So far, Conway said, he has about 10 customers. They're mostly residential, although he does maintain the pet waste stations at a dog park in Barrington. By year's end, Conway said, his goal is to have 100 customers.

It turns out Conway is not alone. There are several other companies working the same messy turf in Rhode Island, plus another DoodyCalls franchise that just started in Newport.

Linda Carr, who has a regular job as a nurse, said she saw an article about pet waste removal in the Newport Daily News and decided to start a DoodyCalls franchise. She got her first customer about



Jim Conway removes dog droppings from the backyard of a Cranston home before making a clean getaway.

two weeks ago, and hopes to have between 20 and 30 by the end of the summer. "I have my own dog; I have kids. It doesn't bother me to clean up mess."

It's all part of a service economy, said D'Aniello. "People are willing to pay for different goods or services that make them happy," he said. "In a way, this is no different than buying pre-made spaghetti sauce. Sure, you could make your own. But you don't."

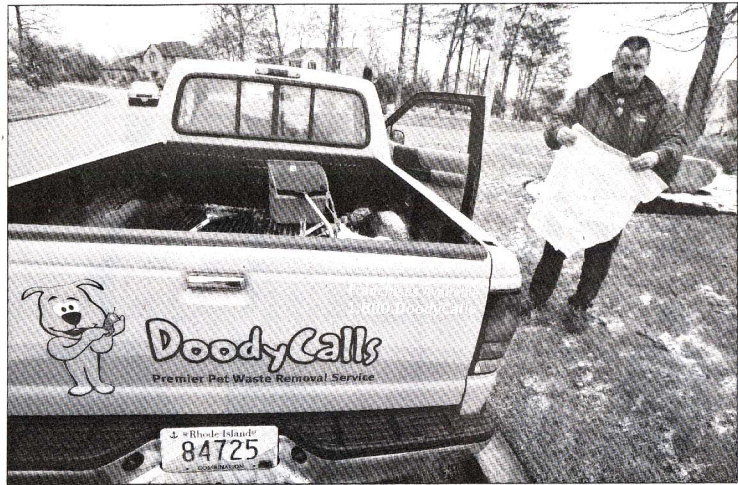
Conway said he first got the idea for a DoodyCalls franchise when he was driving on Route 95 last summer and saw one of the company's trucks. He was looking for a business opportunity, although that particular option had never occurred to him. So he did some research on the Internet, talked to some other franchise owners, and took the plunge.

D'Aniello, president of DoodyCalls, is based in Charlottesville, Va. So far, he said, the company has 25 franchises across the country. His goal is to reach 100 franchises in the next three years.

D'Aniello said he had been an information technology consultant in Washington, D.C., and when the market took a downturn in 2000, he started thinking about other possibilities. He had read something about the pet waste removal business, and smelled an opportunity.

"Forty percent of the households in America have a dog. That means 40 percent of the population is doing something they don't want to do, and there's no one to do it for them. I was looking for something with a steady revenue stream. Dogs keep pooping. People don't like to pick up dog poop in 2000, and they still won't like it in 2057.... the main problem is letting people know the service exists.

"There's no glory in it," said Conway. "I look at it from a business perspective instead of focusing on the actual physical task." Conway said he plans to reach the point where he is just running the business, and can hire employees to handle the unsavory end of the



THE PROVIDENCE JOURNAL / RUBEN W. PEREZ

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job.

Conway, 50, had owned an auto supply business in Apponaug, which he sold to NAPA Auto Parts in 2001. Then he worked as a real-estate broker, specializing in multifamily apartments. But with the real-estate market slowing, Conway was looking for something else. And he said he missed owning a business.

Bob Romano, of Warwick, just started a Rhode Island franchise of Pet Butler, a company based in Texas with 97 franchises across the country, on Feb. 1. Romano, who also owns and operates Coutu Brothers Movers, said he was looking for another business op-

portunity, and this one made sense to him. "I'm a pet owner and pet lover myself," he said. "I don't like doing it myself, and I figured other people don't, either."

So far, he said, he had about eight customers. Typically, he added, March and April are the prime time for new business, as the weather warms up, snow melts and homeowners get a good look at their yards.

Other companies in the pet waste disposal business include Your Dog's Business in Smithfield, which has been around since 2004. Owner Ken Petersen, who occasionally refers to himself as an "entremeneur," said he has 40

and 50 customers. Kanine Kleenup Pooper Scooper Services is based in Dighton, Mass., although owner Brian Woodard said some of his 25 customers are in Rhode Island.

Dawn and Derek Essery run Doggies Doo Canine Waste Pick-up & Removal Business in Tiverton, which they started about four years ago. Dawn Essery said the company has about 24 customers. "It's not necessarily the most affluent people," Derek Essery said. "A guy works hard 40 hours a week, the last thing he wants to do is come home and clean up poop."

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