

IN BRIEF REGIONAL

Hercules to expand Missouri plant in response to orders from Uniqema
Wilmington chemical company Hercules Inc. plans to expand its synthetic lubricant manufacturing plant in Louisiana, Mo., and double its production capacity by the second quarter of next year, company officials said.

NATIONAL

Cingular to add \$5 charge to bills of customers with older technology
About 4.7 million Cingular Wireless subscribers with older phones will pay \$5 extra each month as the company tries to prod them to get new handsets so it can devote its entire network to one type of signal.

Doctor among 14 accused in N.Y. of scamming car insurance companies

A doctor and 13 other people were indicted in a multimillion-dollar auto insurance scam involving staged crashes in New York City. Three corporations have also been indicted in the 20-month investigation by authorities in New York, a state with some of the highest insurance premiums in the nation.

Oil prices rise on traders' worries about supply disruptions in Mideast

Oil prices rose Monday as fighting between Israel and Hezbollah raged on, keeping traders tense about a possible Mideast supply disruption. Light sweet crude for September delivery rose \$1.06 to \$74.30 in New York.

Microsoft hands over documents to EU, but still might risk penalties

Microsoft has given the European Union more documents in response to a 2004 antitrust order, but regulators said they do not know yet whether the company will avoid additional fines.

Northwest attendants reject offer, setting stage for possible walkout

Northwest Airlines flight attendants rejected a wage-cutting contract, setting the stage for a possible strike. Northwest already has permission from a bankruptcy judge to impose an earlier tentative agreement rejected by 80 percent of flight attendants in June.

From staff, Associated Press and Dow Jones Newswire reports

Pet crematories give animals a proper departure



Earl Nichols Jr. and wife, Kathy, are the owners of Royal Pet Cremation in Christiana Hundred, which meets the needs of bereaved pet owners. Containers for ashes (top) come in many different styles.

Demand for NCCo business in relatively new industry is steady

By DWAYNE STEWARD The News Journal

Last week, Charles and Rochelle Ryan experienced a death in the family. But they found closure the next day. After Riley, their 14-year-old silver toy poodle, died unexpectedly on the night of July 24, the devastated Chesapeake City, Md., couple immediately called Royal Pet Cremation in Christiana Hundred.

Earl Nichols Jr., of Wilmington, who owns the business with his wife, Kathy, had the ashes placed in a boxed urn for the couple by the next evening.

"For us, it was very traumatic. Riley had been in our family for 9 years, and he was with us every day. We took him everywhere," Rochelle Ryan said.

Earl Nichols, 51, who also owns Classic Auto Body in Christiana Hundred, said Royal Pet Cremation is in its first year of business and, according to customers, it's providing an invaluable service to the community.

"Most people think they can only get their pet cremated through their vet. We wanted to provide a more personal service that focuses on the individual," Earl Nichols said.

With the rise of national companies such as PetSmart and Petco, pet owners are taking animal care more seriously, even in the afterlife.

"Pets are not just service animals anymore. They've become part of the family, and when they pass, pet owners want them to be treated as such," said Brenda Down, executive secretary of the International Association of Pet Cemeteries and Crematories.

According to the association, there are between 750 and 800 pet cemeteries in the nation, 90 percent of which offer cremations. There are

eight pet crematories in Delaware that are inspected by Delaware Natural Resources and Environmental Control.

"The industry is definitely moving more toward cremations," Down said. "More people are deciding to cremate their pets because burial isn't really an option for most anymore."

Cremations usually start at \$75, but prices vary depending on the arrangements.

"We basically treat it like a funeral home would," Kathy Nichols said. A typical individual cremation is \$275, including cremation, urn and possibly keepsake jewelry.

"Some people like to keep their pet's ashes with them everywhere they go, which is why we offer keepsake jewelry," said Earl Nichols, a licensed funeral director who worked in his family's funeral home.

A hollowed-out emblem that contains ashes is usually attached to a necklace or other jewelry. Prices range from \$35 to \$500.

Royal Pet Cremation also sells personalized urns and memorial stones.

"In many states it's considered illegal to bury your pet in your backyard," Earl Nichols said.

"We provide memorial stones that have urns attached underneath that can go in the ground."

Earl Nichols considers Ron Fox's Delaware Pet Cremations in Wilmington to be his main competition.

"Any time you mention Ron's name in Delaware, you always hear that he's a nice guy," Earl Nichols said.

Fox, who runs Delaware Pet Cremations with his wife, Kathy, said he does regular rounds at 90 percent of the area veterinarian offices and 45 percent of his business includes disposals.

"We're providing a service that didn't exist 10 years ago," Fox said. "Neither of us should have a problem - there's plenty of business to go around."

Contact Dwayne Steward at 324-2467 or dsteward@delawareonline.com.

Toyota closes gap with GM

Japanese automaker poised to take lead in global sales

By GREG BENSINGER and KAE INOUE Bloomberg News

Toyota Motor Corp., buoyed by demand for fuel-efficient vehicles, is moving closer to ending General Motors Corp.'s 80-year reign as the world's biggest automaker.

Toyota's worldwide sales grew 7.1 percent to 4.36 million in the year's first half, according to Toyota spokeswoman Shiori Hashimoto. GM's fell 2.3 percent, to 4.6 million, spokesman John McDonald said.

Toyota is advancing in large part on the strength of sales in GM's home market. Toyota City, Japan-based Toyota passed GM's cross-town rival Ford Motor Co. globally in 2003, and so far this year had a 9.8 percent U.S. sales gain.

"It looks like GM is going to hang on by the skin of its teeth this year," said Nigel Griffiths, a London-based analyst for forecaster Global Insight Inc.

Halfway through 2005, GM led Toyota by about 600,000 vehicles. At the end of last year, GM had 9.17 million sales and a lead of 260,000. Five years ago, in 2001, GM outsold Toyota by more than 2.6 million vehicles, according to data from Automotive News.

Toyota said in May it would probably sell a record 8.85 million cars and trucks worldwide this year, 9 percent more than in 2005, including vehicles from subsidiaries Hino Motors Ltd. and Daihatsu Motor Co.

GM is trying to win back U.S. customers through redesigned cars and light trucks and more fuel-efficient "crossovers" that combine features of passenger cars and sport-utility vehicles.

The automakers report U.S. sales for July today. U.S. gasoline prices near \$3 per gallon have hurt demand for the types of light trucks, such as the Ford Explorer and GM's Chevrolet TrailBlazer.

Buyers are eschewing such mid-sized SUVs while turning to models with better fuel economy, said David Lucas, an analyst with Autodata Corp. in Woodcliff Lake, New Jersey.

Average U.S. gasoline prices rose to \$3.01 last week, marking a 32 percent increase in the past 12 months and a high for the year, according to AAA data.

"Toyota is perceived to make more fuel-efficient cars, and they control the critical U.S. markets of the East and West coasts," said Jesse Toprak, director of market forecasting for Edmunds.com.

"We're providing a service that didn't exist 10 years ago," Fox said. "Neither of us should have a problem - there's plenty of business to go around."

With a solid business background, I have the skills to manage the business in areas such as administration, marketing and accounting.

In the past we have been able to make each product as the orders are placed. In the future, we will have to keep a supply of pre-painted frames on hand to keep up with requests.

What advice do you have for someone who wants to start a business? Build your business based on something you have a passion for.

BUSINESSPEOPLE

COMMUNICATIONS

Bridget Gillespie Paverd of Greenville, principal of BGP Publicity, was named a winner in the annual National Federation of Press Women communications contest. She earned first place for the teen magazine/newsletter VOICE, which she produces for the American Lung Association of Delaware's youth movement.

INSURANCE

The McIntyre Group, an insurance brokerage and consulting firm in Cherry Hill, N.J., announced that James S. Walker was named senior marketing executive. Walker, a Wilmington resident, most recently was a financial advisor at Bernstein Global Wealth Management in New York.

REAL ESTATE

Lisa Short joined Keller Williams Realty in Wilmington. Short previously worked with the Brandywine School District and has been in the real estate industry for three years.

SPOTLIGHT ON SMALL BUSINESS: CHRISTINA KRAWCZYK

INTERVIEW WITH LOCAL ENTREPRENEURS

Name of business: A and J Keepsakes
Age: 35
Education: Associate's degree in business administration, bachelor of arts degree in accounting
Family: Married with two children
Brief description of business: The first product line we developed was hand-painted custom frames.



Christina Krawczyk started her hand-painted picture frame business through setting up an eBay store.

How did you get started? The idea for hand-painted custom picture frames came to my grandmother and me while taking my children to get their Christmas pictures taken.
Who or what has been your biggest source of inspiration and why? My maternal grandparents. I've inherited my

creativity straight from them.
Who is your typical customer? The first type is anyone with a special event happening in their life and a desire to preserve the memory.
What is the toughest business decision you have had to make? Planning a way to balance time between product creation and the administrative side of business.

upcoming holiday season with a lot of happy, satisfied customers. Our long-term goal is to provide our frames on a larger scale to a related business.

Keeping our creative energies in full swing. Our products have to look like nothing else on the market in order to keep our customers coming back and encourage new ones to shop with us.

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