## 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 year, company officials said. The company initiated the expansion because of increased demand for its products by New Castle-based Unigema, a division of ICI Americas, which makes products that allow oil and water to mix. The two companies have had a manufacturing agreement since the mid-1990s, officials said. The companies jointly announced they are extending that agreement.

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 signal. The new surcharge, unique among big U.S. carriers, will be added to bills starting in September. Cingular, jointly owned by prospective merger partners AT&T Inc. and BellSouth Corp., reported earlier this month that roughly 92 percent of its 57.3 million customers' phones use the globally dominant technology known as GSM, or Global System for Mobile. The rest have handsets based on one of two older technologies.

#### 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. Some of those indicted are accused of staging accidents and recruiting people to pose as injured pedestrians or as witnesses. The physician, a physical rehabilitation specialist, is accused of falsely diagnosing injuries and referring patients for unnecessary tests and treatment.

## 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. The EU had threatened new penalties of \$3.82 million a day beginning Monday, on top of \$357 million levied July 12. Regulators have said the Redmond, Wash., software giant has yet to hand over "complete and accurate technical specifications" to help rivals write software that can communicate better with computers running Microsoft's Windows operating system.

#### 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

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

"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 and Kathy were extremely comforting and sympathetic. It was a relief to have everything taken care of so

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 invalu-

able 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. "We want people to know that they have options once your pet

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 usu-

ally attached to a necklace or

other jewelry. Prices range from \$35 to \$500. Royal Pet Cremation also sells personalized urns and

Vessels to hold a pet's ashes come memorial stones. in a variety of styles, including wear-"In many states it's conable pendants and traditional urns. sidered illegal to bury your pet in your backyard," Earl

said. "We provide memorial stones that have urns attached underneath that can go in the Earl Nichols considers Ron Fox's Delaware

Pet Cremations in Wilmington to be his main 'Any time you mention Ron's name in Dela-

ware, you always hear that he's a nice guy," Earl Nichols said. "I've only got great things to say 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

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

Toyota Motor Corp., buoyed by demand for fuel-efficient vehicles, is moving closer to ending Gen-eral 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. GM's advantage, now 240,000 units, has shrunk to less than half its size of 12 months ago. Toyota is advancing in large part on the strength

of sales in GM's home market. Toyota City, Japanbased 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. U.S. sales for Detroitbased GM dropped 12.3 percent through June. "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. "We see GM still ahead by about 105,000 units at year end. Next year, we have Toyota ahead by

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



Sales of Toyota vehicles are expected to surpass those of GM next year.

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-effi cient "crossovers" that combine features of passenger cars and sport-utility vehicles. To restore profit, GM Chief Executive Officer Rick Wagoner plans to trim North American production by 1 million units by year's end while closing 12 North American facilities by 2008. 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, that underpinned profit for GM and Ford for a decade. 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. They include Toyota's Prius gasoline-electric hybrid and the Corolla, Yaris and Scion small cars.

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

"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, an industry data service in Santa Monica, Calif. "In the short term, there doesn't seem to be much GM can do to stop the Japanese from gaining on them.'

## **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

submitted. All entries in the national contest had received

The McIntyre Group, an insurance brokerage and consult-

ing firm in Cherry Hill, N.J., announced that James S. Walker

resident, most recently was a financial advisor at Bernstein

was named senior marketing executive. Walker, a Wilmington

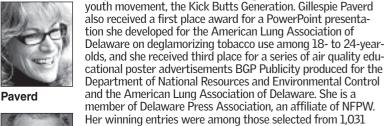
Global Wealth Management in New York. His insurance experi-

ence dates back to 1992, including his position as a producer

at the Graham Company. Prior to his business career, Walker

served seven years in the U.S. Navy as a naval flight officer. He

will be responsible for analyzing and structuring insurance pro-



first-place awards at the state level.



grams for complex commercial risk exposures.

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. She is also a member of the National Association

## SPOTLIGHT ON SMALL BUSINESS: CHRISTINAKRAWCZYK

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 handpainted custom frames. We have since added a line of engravable gifts, as well as personalized candles.

**Location of business:** Newark Number of employees: Three Date business opened: December 2004

Annual sales: Projecting \$10,000 for our second year in business.

## 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. Once we had a variety of designs together I opened an online store on eBay at http://stores.ebay.com/ aandjkeepsakes to gain exposure and build a customer base. A few months later, I opened a second Web site store at www. ajkeepsakes.net.

Who or what has been your biggest source of inspiration and why?

My maternal grandparents. I've inherited my



Courtesy of A and J Keepsakes

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

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. The second type is the gift-giver looking for something personal and unique that applies directly to the occasion. 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 What are your goals for short term? Long

term? Our short-term goal is to get through the

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

## What is the biggest challenge facing your business? Your industry?

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. The biggest challenge to our industry is the rising cost of everything.

What has been your key to With a solid business background, I

have the skills to manage the busi-

ness in areas such as administration, market ing and accounting. The ideas for product creation come from my family and artistic classes taken in both high school and college.

#### How do you expect to succeed in the future?

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 prepainted 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



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