

**SUNDAY**  
JULY 4, 2010

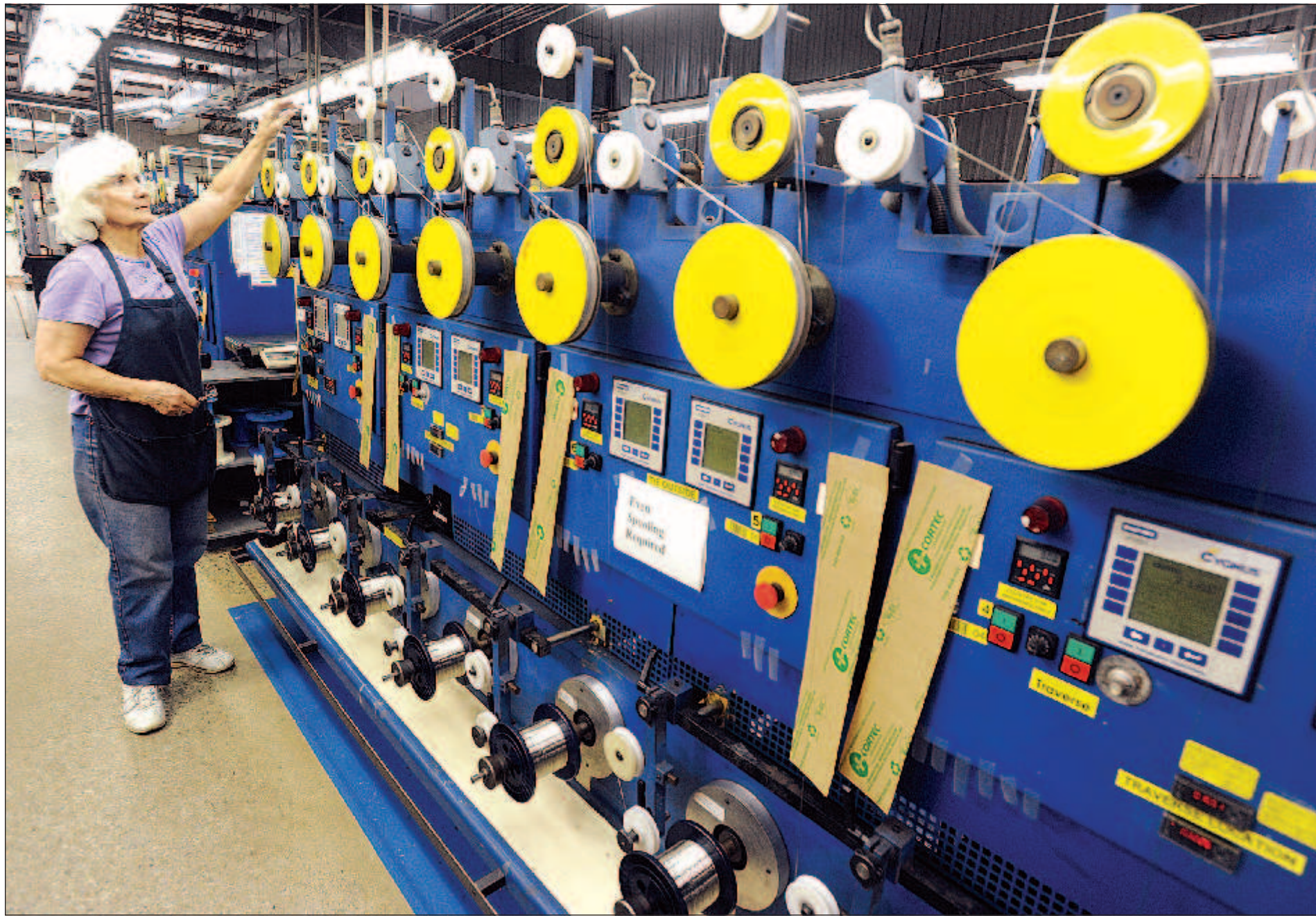
**D**

# BUSINESS



**Inside:** Columnist Rachel Beck writes that GM has more work to do to show why investors should buy its stock again/D3

## 50 & still flexible



**Top:** Rick Thompson, executive vice president at Ken-Tron Manufacturing Inc., displays a power outlet used in automobiles on Wednesday that is manufactured at Ken-Tron. **Left:** Nelda Bickwermer, an employee of Ken-Tron Manufacturing Inc., checks the take-up machine that was reeling lines of nickel-plated steel used for guitar strings on Wednesday at the Industrial Drive business. The nickel-plated steel had gone through an annealing furnace, which makes it softer, said Thompson. Ken-Tron has two divisions — parts and wire — and about 70 employees, Thompson said.

Photos by Jenny Sevcik, Messenger-Inquirer

## From receiving tubes to the color TV explosion to the Internet, Ken-Tron Manufacturing and its president are still adapting

By Joy Campbell  
Messenger-Inquirer

In June of 1960, Bob Hudson was looking for a summer job to help him finish his last year at Western Kentucky University.

His new wife, Patsy Miller Hudson, had a job. The couple had met at the Bowling Green business college that is now part of Western.

Hudson landed a job at a small company then-called Kentucky Electronics.

The 23-year-old never left.

And in 2001, he became sole owner of the Owensboro company now known as Ken-Tron Manufacturing Inc.

In June, the plant's 67 employees celebrated the 50th anniversary of a company that has stayed the course through recessions and morphed several times as technology and product markets have changed.

Today it supplies metal stampings and wire forms to a diverse set of customers in a

**"I had a primary, second and third mortgage and had everything on the line. But I knew that if it was run properly, we could make a go of it."**

— Bob Hudson, Ken-Tron president, on becoming co-owner in 1983



long list of industries that includes medical, aerospace, music and electronics.

**Owner recalls ups and downs**

Fifty years ago, the start-up wire company employed 13 people with General Electric as a primary customer. A year after opening, a metal stamping operation was added.

Kentucky Electronics struggled in its infancy.

In 1962, the company received a cash infusion for expansion when Texas Gas Transmission Corp. bought controlling interest.

And in 1966 "everybody geared up as color television sales exploded," Hudson said.

Kentucky Electronics was making grid wires for GE's receiving tubes. During this time, the company reached peak employment at 600 and had six plants operating in Owensboro.

"We thought it would last forever, but it leveled off," he said.

Transistors replaced receiving tubes. In 1967, facing overcapacity and foreign competition, the company laid off about 200 people overnight, Hudson said.

During the high-growth period, KE started construction on a 144,000-square-foot building.

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Reels turn as they are loaded with wire Wednesday at the Ken-Tron plant on Industrial Drive.

## Owensboro area riding wave of job, construction momentum

The Owensboro region has the big M going for us.

Momentum is building.

Last week ended on a positive note for the region with Gov. Steve Beshear announcing that U.S. Bank Home Mortgage will add 500 new jobs in Owensboro, and Swedish Match will invest \$3.7 million in its Owensboro plant to keep almost 300 workers in



Joy Campbell  
Messenger-Inquirer

their jobs.

Owensboro Medical Health System also reported that local companies have gained \$25 million in contracts so far in the design development stage of building a 447-bed hospital at 1041 Pleasant Valley Road.

More than two-thirds of the total \$385 million price tag, or \$270 million, will be spent on construction, according to Merrill Bowers, senior project manager

for Turner Construction, the firm overseeing the project.

Local firms will have more opportunities to compete for contracts as the hospital project progresses. It's expected to open in 2013.

Another important announcement — a bit under the radar — got the attention of Mayor Ron Payne this week.

The state will soon advertise for bids for the second phase of the U.S. 60 bypass extension, according to Kevin McClearn, the chief district engineer for the Kentucky Transportation Cabinet's District 2 in

Madisonville.

McClearn didn't give firm dates for the bidding on the stretch between Kentucky 54 and Reid Road, but Payne said the news was a good signal that the project is moving faster than expected.

The District 2 engineer also gave an update on phase one that will connect U.S. 60 East with Kentucky 144. That project is going well with blacktopping likely by the end of the contract season.

The information was shared at the Owensboro-Daviess County Metropolitan Planning

Organization Technical Advisory Committee meeting Tuesday.

The bypass extension is another segment of the connector between Interstate 64 and Interstate 65.

All of this, combined with continued work on the downtown development project, should present a positive picture to other prospects.

• And speaking of that. Two Owensboro developers contacted this week were optimistic about future announcements for new businesses at various locations,

but neither have inked their deals.

Maybe last week's announcements will help solidify some plans.

• America imported \$209 million worth of fireworks from China in 2009, which was the bulk of all fireworks imported into the U.S.

Exports of U.S. fireworks only amounted to \$42.9 million last year, according to Foreign Trade Statistics in the U.S. Census.

Joy Campbell, 691-7299, jcampbell@messenger-inquirer.com

# Market Roundup

	This Week	Last Week	Chg.		19.04	19.79	-75
AK Steel Hold	11.71	13.83	-2.12	EchoStar Corp	19.04	19.79	-75
AT&T Inc	24.29	24.79	-0.50	Ericsson Tel	10.80	10.97	-17
Advance Auto Parts	51.01	50.90	+0.11	Exxon Mobil Corp	56.57	59.10	-2.53
Aegon NV	5.43	5.84	-0.41	Fannie Mae	.33	0.39	-0.05
Aetna Inc	26.25	28.47	-2.22	FedEx Corp	71.41	75.96	-4.55
Alcatel-Lucent	2.53	2.76	-0.23	Fifth Third Bcp	11.82	13.37	-1.55
Alcoa Inc	10.00	11.23	-1.23	Fort Motor	10.28	10.75	-0.47
Allstate Corp	28.28	30.83	-2.55	Fortune Brands	38.71	42.29	-3.58
Altria Group	20.31	19.70	+0.61	Freddie Mac	.38	0.45	-0.08
Amazon.com Inc	109.14	121.00	-11.86	Gen Dynamics	58.70	62.80	-4.10
Am Ele Pwr	32.39	32.99	-0.60	Gen Electric	13.88	14.91	-1.03
Am Express	39.42	42.49	-3.07	Goldman Sachs	131.08	139.66	-8.58
Am Intl Grp	33.10	36.95	-3.85	Goodyear	10.01	11.40	-1.39
Apple Inc	246.94	266.70	-19.76	Google Inc	436.55	472.68	-36.13
Ashland Inc	44.37	51.49	-7.12	viGrace W.R. & Co	20.30	22.82	-2.52
ATMOS Energy	26.82	27.90	-1.08	HNI Corp	26.03	29.73	-3.70
Avon Products	26.46	27.49	-1.03	Halliburton	25.74	26.34	-0.60
BB&T Corp	26.02	28.76	-2.74	HealthSouth Corp	17.71	19.37	-1.66
BCE Inc	29.17	30.21	-1.04	Hewlett Packard	42.81	45.92	-3.11
BP PLC	29.35	27.02	+2.33	Home Depot	27.76	30.20	-2.44
Baidu Inc	69.75	76.10	-6.35	Honeywell Intl	38.53	41.60	-3.07
Bank of America	13.84	15.42	-1.58	Humana	44.34	48.10	-3.76
Best Buy Co	33.86	35.02	-1.16	Intel Corp	19.20	20.03	-0.83
Big Lots	32.77	32.40	+0.37	IBM	121.86	127.12	-5.26
Biglari Holding	280.00	320.61	-40.61	JPMorgan Chase	35.83	39.39	-3.56
Boardwalk Pipeline	30.48	30.00	+0.48	Johnson & Johnson	59.08	58.70	+0.38
Boeing Co	61.94	68.77	-6.83	Juniper Networks	24.08	23.72	+0.36
Brist Myr Sqb	24.69	25.25	-0.56	Kimball Intl	5.65	5.97	-0.32
Brown-Forman A	58.83	59.18	-0.35	Kimberly Clark	60.49	61.47	-0.98
Burger King Hldgs	16.66	17.66	-1.00	Kinder Morg Engy	64.68	65.97	-1.29
CSX Corp	47.70	52.25	-4.55	Kohls Corp	48.28	49.52	-1.24
Capital One FncI	39.43	43.44	-4.01	Kroger Co	19.86	20.23	-0.37
Century Aluminum	8.60	10.50	-1.90	LSI Corp	4.50	4.91	-0.41
Chevron Corp	67.31	70.06	-2.75	Level 3 Commun	.97	1.19	-0.22
Cisco Syst	21.13	22.18	-1.05	Lilly Eli	33.67	33.94	-0.27
Citigroup	3.79	3.94	-0.15	Loews Corp	33.57	33.88	-0.31
CocaCola	50.05	50.26	-0.21	Lowes Cos	20.27	21.33	-1.06
ConocoPhillips	48.82	51.92	-3.10	Macy's Inc	17.85	19.02	-1.17
Constellation Brds A	15.39	16.01	-0.62	MainSource Finl Grp	6.57	7.83	-1.26
Cracker Barrel	46.31	47.40	-1.09	Marathon Oil	30.83	32.75	-1.92
Dana Holding	9.49	11.25	-1.76	MasterCard Inc	202.77	218.24	-15.47
Deere Co	54.50	59.44	-4.94	McDonalds Corp	66.14	67.42	-1.28
Dell Inc	12.03	12.93	-0.90	Merck & Co	34.22	35.93	-1.71
Dillard's Inc	20.97	23.81	-2.84	MetLife Inc	37.20	41.01	-3.81
DineEquity Inc	26.45	29.58	-3.13	Microsoft Corp	23.27	24.53	-1.26
DirectTV A	33.64	35.83	-2.19	Morgan Stanley	22.83	25.01	-2.18
Disney	31.38	33.48	-2.10	Motorola Inc	6.48	7.07	-0.59
Domtar Corp	48.26	52.47	-4.21	NYSE Euronext	27.34	28.78	-1.44
Dow Chemical	22.97	25.18	-2.21	Nike Inc B	67.86	70.12	-2.26
DuPont	34.06	36.66	-2.60	OCharleys	5.10	5.90	-0.80
Duff & Phelps Corp	12.10	12.13	-0.03	Office Depot	4.09	4.58	-0.49
eBay Inc	19.26	20.95	-1.69	Old NBcp IN	9.80	10.86	-1.06
EMC Corp	18.04	19.24	-1.20	Oracle Corp	21.83	22.66	-0.83
East Kodak	4.30	4.90	-0.60	PNC Financial	55.67	61.03	-5.36
				Panera Bread Co	76.09	78.98	-2.89
				Peabody Energy	38.99	43.55	-4.56
				Penney JC Co Inc	21.16	23.21	-2.05
				PepsiCo	61.53	60.77	+0.76
				Pfizer Inc	14.14	14.64	-0.50
				Pier 1 Imports	6.11	6.51	-0.40
				Procter & Gamble	59.38	59.79	-0.41
				Prudential FncI	53.89	57.55	-3.66
				Qwest Commun	5.24	5.27	-0.03
				RadioShack Corp	20.52	21.28	-0.76
				Regions FncI	6.24	6.99	-0.75
				Rent-A-Center Inc	20.31	21.97	-1.66
				Republic Bancorp	22.03	23.45	-1.42
				Research in Motion	48.14	52.23	-4.09
				Reynolds American	52.44	51.37	+1.07
				Rite Aid Corp	.92	1.01	-0.09
				Ruby Tuesday	8.27	9.13	-0.86
				Sara Lee Corp	13.99	14.58	-0.59
				Sears Holdings Cp	62.64	72.52	-9.88
				Sherwin Wms	69.43	71.48	-2.05
				Shoe Carnival	19.22	20.66	-1.44
				Sirius XM Radio Inc	.96	1.09	-0.14
				Sonic Corp	7.76	8.20	-0.44
				Southern Co	33.38	33.28	+0.10
				Sprint Nextel Corp	4.16	4.20	-0.04
				Staples Inc	19.19	20.09	-0.90
				Starbucks Cp	24.35	26.81	-2.46
				Target Corp	49.53	50.50	-0.97
				Texas Roadhouse	12.50	13.34	-0.84
				3M Company	77.67	78.90	-1.23
				Time Warner	28.20	30.76	-2.56
				Toyota Mot	68.26	70.00	-1.74
				Travelers Cos	48.54	51.12	-2.58
				Tyco Intl Ltd	34.43	37.11	-2.68
				Unilever NV	27.42	28.17	-0.75
				UPS class B	56.76	60.35	-3.59
				US Bancorp	21.88	23.31	-1.43
				US Steel Corp	37.66	43.24	-5.58
				Veritas Inc	46.41	48.56	-2.15
				Verizon Comm	26.81	26.70	+0.11
				Viacom Inc A	35.46	37.96	-2.50
				Visa Inc	73.18	76.66	-3.48
				WalMart Strs	48.00	48.80	-0.80
				Walgreen Co	26.36	26.93	-0.57
				Waste Mgmt Inc	31.81	32.15	-0.34
				WellPoint Inc	47.43	51.75	-4.32
				WendysArbys Gp	4.00	4.17	-0.17
				Weyerhaeuser	34.49	37.30	-2.81
				Whirlpool	84.10	96.65	-12.55
				Williams Cos	17.67	19.82	-2.15
				Xerox Corp	7.99	8.69	-0.70
				Yahoo Inc	14.07	14.81	-0.74
				Yum! Brands Inc	38.53	40.96	-2.43

## Business Briefs

**Action Pest Control merges**  
Action Pest Control Inc. has merged with Blessinger's Exterm-It-All of Jasper, Ind. Action is headquartered in Evansville with branch offices in Owensboro, as well as Washington and Indianapolis.  
The company will continue through operations at the Jasper branch.  
Action has been ranked in the Top 100 industry companies by Pest Control Technology magazine for the last seven years.  
Blessinger's Exterm-It-All was founded in 1989 by Terry and Pam Blessinger with service services to customers in Jasper and all of Dubois, Spencer and Pike counties.  
The new Action Exterm-It-All office is at 1117 S. State Road 162 in Jasper.

### JA honors companies, individuals

Junior Achievement gave awards to seven local companies, one high school class and two volunteers for their service during the 2009-10 school year.  
The President's Volunteer Service Awards were presented to the following: Best Buy, both Walmart stores, Old National Bank, PNC Bank, Sam's Club, U.S. Bank and the Daviess County High School Introduction to Education class.  
Each award winner gave a minimum of 200 volunteer hours during the 2009-10 school year.  
The criteria for these awards for individuals, groups and families is to have met or exceeded requirements for volunteer service and have demonstrated exemplary citizenship through volunteering. They are issued by the President's Council on Service and Civic Participation.  
The Bill Elmer Volunteer of Excellence Award was presented to Chip Pride with Old National Bank, and Lauren Mayhew of Daviess County Teachers Federal Credit Union.  
Pride volunteered 60 hours, and Mayhew amassed 88 hours teaching JA programs in six to seven classes in various schools.  
Elmer, a past president of Texas Gas, founded JA of Owensboro in 1959. The award was established during the 2008-09 school year to recognize individuals who show his passion for JA.

### Mortgage Rates

Bank	30-year Rate	Origination Fee	Points	Phone
First Security	4.375%	0.75%	0%	688-4672
First Liberty Financial	4.75%			685-2085

Bank	3/1 ARM Rate	Annual Cap	Lifetime Cap	Phone
First Liberty Financial	3.875%			685-2085

Bank	Home Equity Rate	Phone
First Security	1.99%	688-4672

Rates are as of 4 p.m. Wednesday. Rates are adjusted daily. A 3/1 ARM is an adjustable rate mortgage. The interest rate is fixed for three years and then is adjustable annually thereafter. Lending institutions wishing to be included in this list should contact Robert Bruck, city editor, at 691-7306.

## BUILDING PERMITS

- 8850 Kentucky 815**, Image Builders. Construct a single-family home, 1,760 square feet.
- 311 W. 10th St.**, RLK Farms. Reconstruct a portion of a demolished storage warehouse well, \$40,000.
- 4443 Harbor Hills Trace**, Image Builders. Construct a single-family home, 3,786 square feet.
- 3120 Kentucky 54**, C&C Construction. Remodel a tenant space, \$25,000.
- 1934 Hughes Ave.**, Oda Shouse Jr. Construct a detached,

- residential storage building with porch, \$14,000.
- 2808 Summer Valley Lane**, Martin Custom Building. Construct a single-family home, 3,818 square feet.
- 661 Carter Road**, Chad Clayton. Construct a front porch addition, \$3,500.
- 2912 Bittel Road**, Thompson Homes Inc. Construct a single-family home, 2,395 square feet.
- 3140 Trails Way**, Jagoe Homes Inc. Construct a single-family home, 2,143 square feet.

## Brother of dead wrestler critical of WWE lawsuit

By Susan Haigh  
Associated Press

HARTFORD, Conn. — Pro wrestler Bret "The Hitman" Hart said he supports World Wrestling Entertainment's release of a new video featuring his late brother, Owen, despite his sister-in-law's lawsuit against the company and its leaders, including Connecticut U.S. Senate candidate Linda McMahon.  
In a recent telephone interview with The Associated Press, Hart said the video that prompted Martha Hart's lawsuit is a tribute to his family and its long history in professional wrestling.  
"It was done with really good taste," he said from his home in Calgary, Canada. "As a family, we're really proud of it and Martha's lawsuit sort of makes it seem like there's something bad or wrong about it. It's just a bunch of brothers and sisters celebrating the memory of the whole family."  
Last month, Martha Hart announced she had filed the lawsuit claiming that Stamford-based WWE, McMahon and her husband Vince used images of Owen Hart in at least 37 videos, including "Hart & Soul: the Hart Family Anthology," without her knowledge or permission.  
She said she had made it clear she did not want her late husband's likeness associated with WWE.

Owen Hart died May 23, 1999, after falling from an apparatus about 80 feet high before a crowd of 16,500 people at Kemper Arena in Kansas City, Mo.  
A WWE attorney has called Martha Hart's lawsuit "a political stunt" coming as Linda McMahon campaigns as the Republican Party's endorsed candidate to replace U.S. Sen. Chris Dodd.  
In a posting on his website this week, Bret Hart said his brother "would turn in his grave watching Martha erase every single thing he ever did, all for spite."

- 1100 Walnut St.**, Crossroads Contracting. Remodel an office, Suite 205, \$25,000.
- 2805 Wimsatt Court**, Barry's Construction. Construct a front porch, \$7,800.
- 2002 Scherm Road**, Stan Lightner. Construct an attached garage addition, \$7,000.
- 6423 Old State Road**, Anthony Newman. Cover an existing patio, \$2,250.
- 6465 McPherson Road**, Payne Construction & Remodeling. Construct a single-family home, 1,623 square feet.

## PEOPLE IN BUSINESS

**Thomas B. Phelps** has been promoted to senior vice president at BB&T.

Phelps, who joined the bank in 2006, is the senior credit officer in BB&T's Western Kentucky Regional Credit Department. He is based at 230 Frederica St.

The Lexington, N.C., native earned his bachelor's degree in Spanish from Wake Forest University.

BB&T Corporation (NYSE: BBT) is the 10th-largest financial services holding company in the U.S. with more than \$163 billion in assets and market capitalization of \$22.4 billion, as of March 31.

More information about BB&T is available at www.BBT.com.

**Kevin W. Schwartz, CPA** with Schwartz CPA Group LLC, is a new member of the board

of directors for the Kentucky Society of Certified Public Accountants

He was recognized at that group's annual meeting June 15 and began his official duties July 1.

KyCPA board membership is voluntary, and members are elected by the general membership.

More information on KyCPA is available at www.kycpa.org.

**James R. Riney**, professional engineer and professional surveyor, will participate in the Kentucky Geographic Information Advisory Council's initial



James R. Riney

meeting July 15 in Frankfort as the Kentucky Chamber of Commerce's designee.

He will represent the engineering interests of chamber members.

The formation of the Commonwealth's Strategic Plan for Geospatial Data and Services will be built on the council's information and direction.

Riney, managing member of HRG, PLLC Surveying & Engineering, recently served on the Kentucky Board of Licensure for Engineers and Surveyors.

He continues to serve the National Council for Engineering and Surveying in licensure examination development for national examinations administered in more than 50 states and territories as well as in use internationally for candidate qualification.

## REAL ESTATE TRANSFERS

The following Daviess County real estate transfers were recorded May 2-5:

- 6306 Waterfield Drive**, Bevonna Scott to Elizabeth K. Payne, \$112,000.
- 3727 Legacy Run**, John H. Helmers, master commissioner, to Kentucky Housing Corporation, \$75,000.
- 8930 Crisp Road**, Bradley E. Kinney to Jesse L. Mayfield, \$68,000.
- 226 Tremont Drive**, Ronald L. Presser, master commissioner, to Federal National Mortgage Association, \$51,000.

**ALL BUSINESS**

# GM must prove its stock is worth buying again

NEW YORK

Think back to what seemed to be a lifetime ago — like a whole three years — and you'd be hard-pressed to find someone who didn't have GM stock in some part of their portfolio.

It was one of the most widely held stocks in the world and one of the world's best-known brands.

And then it crashed and burned.

We're on the other side of that story now. The turnaround of GM has begun, or so its leadership is telling us. GM earned \$865 million in the first quarter, its first profit since 2007, and has slashed more than \$10 billion in costs by closing plants, cutting jobs and reducing health care expenses and debt.

Numbers like that would normally give a stock a boost. But there's a catch: GM filed for bankruptcy court protection last summer and one of the bluest of blue-chip stocks hasn't traded since then.

Now, a year after emerging from bankruptcy, GM is preparing for an IPO that could hit the market by the fourth quarter. Analysts estimate GM could be worth at least \$70 billion, topping the peak value of around \$60 billion it reached in 2000.

It's a bold assessment for a company that a year ago was nearly dead. But GM executives say that today's GM is making money and operating more efficiently. They took that sales pitch to Wall Street Tuesday at a gathering of 200 financial analysts at a GM facility near Detroit.

"We are not re-introducing GM today," said Ed Whitacre, GM's chairman and chief executive. "We are introducing a new GM, because we are a new and a much different company than we were 12 months ago."

Whitacre and his team make a convincing case. GM is selling more vehicles today with four

brands than it did a year ago with eight. It has stricter controls over production, and its inventories run about 400,000 units, half of what they were a year ago. Consumers are paying on average \$3,000 more for GM vehicles this year than last. It leads in China, the world's fastest growing market.

GM is moving in the right direction, and it's not a bad idea for the automaker to go public. But one strong quarter, or even two, isn't enough to ensure a successful offering.

GM shouldn't rush an IPO. There's too much at stake. The automaker needs to cash out its current owners — starting with the U.S. government, which owns 61 percent of the company — and convince new investors that the stock is a good buy.

In order to do that, GM still has plenty to prove, such as turning out new products that become winners. A crucial test is coming up in September when it will roll out its latest small car, the Chevrolet Cruze.

GM has never been able to produce a decent compact car, but its executives say this time will be different. It better be, since more drivers are expected to look for smaller cars in the coming years instead of gas-guzzling SUVs.

The Cruze has to be as reliable as the Toyota Corolla or Honda Civic, the top-selling U.S. compacts. It will sell for \$17,000, slightly more than its competitors but with more standard features.

The company's executive team is also mostly new, and some of its top leaders have never worked in the auto business. Chief Financial Officer Chris Liddell came from Microsoft last December, and Stephen J. Girsky, who was named vice chairman of corporate strategy and business development in February, was a long-time Wall Street auto analyst.

"There has been a lot of shuffling in the management ranks over the last year, and

we need to know that the new managers are committed to both products and consumers," says Erich Merkle, who runs auto industry analysis and consulting firm autoconomy.com in Grand Rapids, Mich.

GM also faces an uncertain global economy.

GM's sales have been rising, but not necessarily because of brisk buying by American consumers. Strong sales from fleet customers such as car rental agencies and the government boosted GM's results in May. Those sales pulled back in June, slowing the pace of GM's overall growth. For June, GM's total sales rose about 11 percent, compared with 17 percent gain in May.

U.S. consumers in June dramatically cut their expectations to buy a car within the next six months, according to new research by The Conference Board, a private research group.

Working against GM, and all automakers, is the fact that nearly one in 10 Americans remain unemployed. "Car sales are a function of job security," says Van Conway of the consulting firm Conway MacKenzie, Inc.

Any slowdown abroad could also hurt GM, especially since the automaker's executives say international sales are a key driver of growth. A third of GM's sales in 2009 came from foreign markets.

Of particular concern is GM's European business, which continues to lose money and isn't expected to be profitable until next year. Economic conditions in Europe have deteriorated in recent months, and the euro has tumbled this year against the U.S. dollar. That makes U.S. exports more expensive abroad.

GM still has a few months to persuade investors why they should buy their stock again. If its executives want the "new" GM shares to hold the same value and prestige as the "old" GM stock once did, they still have some work to do.

Rachel Beck is the national business columnist for The Associated Press.



**Rachel Beck**  
Associated Press



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**Boxes of small** metal parts that are used to make Thompson, executive vice president at Ken-Tron, said the lithium batteries that receive the parts are used in military communication equipment.

## 50: Quality, 'competitive price' sought

From Page D1

"By the time we were through, we had half the employees we had planned for," Hudson said.

The United Steelworkers of America began representing the plant's 300 or so employees in 1968.

Other changes came to the plant in 1973. Texas Gas decided KE was no longer a fit and hired consultant Ken Best Sr. to recommend a plan for divesting. Best bought the plant in 1973, Hudson said.

KE got out of the big, new building and operated at its current plant and another facility on Wing Avenue.

"We got into doing assembly work for IBM in Lexington and started doing much better," Hudson said. That lasted 10 years, and the company opened two plants in Portland, Tenn.

Hudson and Bill Cundiff bought KE in 1983, creating Ken-Tron.

"At that time, I had a primary, second and third mortgage and had everything on the line," Hudson said. "But I knew that if it was run properly, we could make a go of it."

It took from three to five years, but it slowly built up. Hudson bought Cundiff out in 2001.

Rick D. Thompson, the executive vice president, joined Ken-Tron in 1987.

"I would say we are a conservative company, but it's a good conservative," he said. "We don't take a lot of risk, but if we do, it's calculated."

Another big change for Ken-Tron has been in the role the Internet plays in operations. Ken-Tron does business with companies in Brazil, Mexico and India.

Hudson said while that has improved efficiency, he misses the rapport that was developed with customers in the United States who moved business off shore.

Both executives tout Ken-Tron's employees.

"A lot of people have worked here 35 years or more and have raised a family and sent their kids to school, but they're still working," Thompson said. "That says a lot."

### Plant having 'controlled growth'

Ken-Tron is experiencing controlled growth.

On a plant tour, Thompson points out the two distinct operations conducted in the facility — manufacturing parts on one side and wire on the other. The wire department runs three shifts, and parts operates one shift.

Thompson gives examples of the factor's work. Ken-Tron makes filaments that go in stadium lighting and component parts that go into lithium batteries that U.S. troops have in their backpacks for radio communications.

It also makes a part used for a circular, surgical knife and the wire used for hip replacements and for staples.

The company also makes wrap wire for guitar strings.

"It's neat to see some star on stage playing the guitar and knowing that in all likelihood the wrap wire came from Ken-Tron," Thompson said.

In August or September, Ken-Tron expects to launch its core wire line. That new product line was a suggestion from customers, Thompson said.

The company also maintains its own equipment.

On a 90-degree-plus June

day, the air-conditioned plant is comfortable even with six furnaces putting out heat.

In one room, automatic lights come on when entering, one of the efficiencies the plant has implemented.

As electricity goes up, Ken-Tron continues to look for ways to stay competitive, Thompson said.

"We need both quality and a competitive price," he said.

The recession took a bite out of Ken-Tron with sales down 35 percent last year. This year, Hudson expects sales to go back up to where they were before that hit.

Ken-Tron has a five-member board of directors that meets quarterly.

Hudson expects his company will continue to do well, but he does have some concerns for U.S. manufacturing in general.

"There is a whole bunch of stuff coming out of Washington that is not good for business," he said.

He cites the uncertainty of the impact of health insurance reform and continued discussions about cap and trade.

"I started working for \$80 a week, and I probably would have taken \$60," Hudson said. "It was a struggling company, and I spent a lot of time here in those days."

These days, though, the 74-year-old has cut his hours back to two to three hours a day. He plays tennis twice a week.

When he first retired, he found a lot of projects to do around the house.

"His wife and I have a deal that we have to accept him here for a few hours a day," Thompson joked.

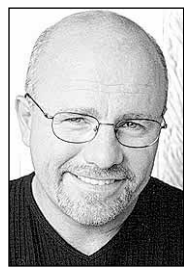
Joy Campbell, 691-7299, jcampbell@messenger-inquirer.com

### DAVE SAYS

# Travel sports are a luxury

Dear Dave: My husband lost his job a few months ago. He's found another one since then, but we're still trying to rebuild our finances.

At the same time, our daughter plays softball on a travel team. It's a great character-building experience, but the costs involved can be pretty high. Do you think we should cut down on the travel team activities for a while? — **Natasha**



**Dave Ramsey**  
Syndicated columnist

Dear Natasha: You're right. Playing sports can be a great part of the character-building process. But she can learn character lessons playing in a softball league at your local park. She doesn't have to travel all over the place to learn those kinds of things.

If you have kids, there's a pretty good chance you're going to spend some money to help encourage their hobbies and interests. That comes with the territory, and it should be a fun and rewarding experience for everyone. You just have to take a look at your financial situation — and the kid's desires and abilities — and make sure it's a reasonable amount of money.

In your situation, playing on a travel team right now is a luxury. You don't need to be footing the bill for hotel rooms and gas and stuff while you're trying to get back on solid ground financially. Chances are, this child is not going to make a living playing softball. Even if she is that good, she can still sharpen her skills in a hometown league until you guys are back on your feet.

Dear Dave: My wife and I are following your plan, and we're in the middle of paying off our debts using the debt snowball. When we told my mother-in-law that by doing this we'd be able to pay off our house within 10 years, she told us that would be a stupid move. She couldn't give us a reason why she thought it was stupid, but we couldn't convince her otherwise. How can we explain things to her? — **Jason**

Dear Jason: Okay, she's telling you it's a bad idea, but she has no idea why it's a bad idea? It sounds to me like she's the dumb one if she thinks you should behave a certain way, but can't even tell you why. If someone can't tell you why

they have an argument against something, then they have no argument in the first place!

A lot of talking heads think it's smart to not pay off your home. They'll tell you things like it's better to borrow money against your house and invest it in the stock market. What they won't tell you is that there's virtually nothing there by the time you adjust for risk and taxes.

Another line they'll throw out is that you don't want to lose your tax deduction. If you have a \$200,000 loan at 5 percent interest, you'll pay about \$10,000 a year in interest. Now, let's also say you make \$70,000 a year, and you're in the 25 percent tax bracket. That \$10,000 tax deduction is saving you \$2,500 in taxes. In essence, you're sending \$10,000 to the mortgage company to keep from sending the government \$2,500. You'd be better off to be debt-free and give \$10,000 to some charity or your church.



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# Agriculture

## Homemade foods have new safety rules



Associated Press

**A customer buys** a bottle of pickled vegetables June 26 at a farmer's market near downtown Milwaukee. Wisconsin lawmakers enacted the so-called Pickle Bill in February that allows small vendors to sell high-acid canned foods, such as pickled fruits, salsas and sauerkraut, without a license.

# Safe to Eat?

By Dinesh Ramde  
Associated Press

### MILWAUKEE

At Wisconsin farmers markets, vendors no longer need licenses to sell pickles, jams and other canned foods, while small farmers in Maine can sell slaughtered chickens without worrying about inspections.

Federal and state laws require that most food sold to the public be made in licensed facilities open to government inspectors. But as more people become interested in buying local food, a few states have created exemptions for amateur chefs who sell homemade goods at farmers markets and on small farms.

The exemptions have touched off a debate about how to balance the need for food safety with a dose of regulatory common sense.

Supporters say they recognize food safety regulations designed for big commercial food handlers can be a burden for small-time cooks who just want to make a few extra bucks selling canned goods or other specialty products.

Opponents say that without regulation, the public is at risk for food-borne illnesses.

Wisconsin lawmakers enacted the so-called Pickle Bill in February. Among other things, it allows small vendors to sell high-acid canned foods, such as pickled fruits, salsas and sauerkraut, without a license.

It does not apply to low-acid canned goods, such as pickled eggs, which typically carry a higher risk of contamination.

To get a license, food processors must have approved refrigeration and

ventilation systems, which can cost tens of thousands of dollars, as well as meet strict cleanliness standards and consent to regular inspections. If they don't own appropriate facilities, they can sometimes rent commercial kitchens.

But even that can cost too much for people who just want to make a few extra dollars, said Joan Arnold, a retiree in Rudolph, Wis. She made a few hundred dollars last year selling jams from berries she grows in her garden before she learned of the regulations.

"I don't make that much. I'm just doing this as a hobby, to make a little bit of money," Arnold said. "I don't want to just throw the berries in the compost heap."

She's now exempt from the rules under the Pickle Bill, which applies to people who earn less than \$5,000 a year from food sales. Their products, however, must be labeled as made in a facility not subject to state inspection.

Many food safety officials, however, say that label doesn't do enough to protect the public. They worry that without inspections, food made in unsanitary conditions could make people sick or expose them to unlabeled allergens.

"The two major failures in food production are temperature control and personal hygiene," said Robert Harrington, director of the Casper-Natrona County Health Department in Casper, Wyo. "If someone says they shouldn't have to follow regulations because they're making food in their home, I'd say, 'Why is your home so safe that it doesn't need that level of oversight and control?'"

Those concerns haven't stopped one Western

lawmaker from trying to ease regulations.

Wyoming doesn't require licenses for people making "non-hazardous" foods such as jams, jellies and baked goods, but Rep. Sue Wallis, R-Recluse, wants to eliminate all restrictions when cooks sell products directly to informed consumers.

Her legislation, which wouldn't apply to foods sold in stores or served to schoolchildren, was tabled during the last legislative session but she plans to reintroduce it.

"How (opponents) can possibly claim what I decide what I put in my mouth is something the government should be regulating is ridiculous," she said. "Then you're imposing on my rights as a consumer to eat the food I choose."

Lawmakers in Maine approved legislation last year exempting small chicken farmers from stringent processing rules that apply to larger poultry producers. Those with fewer than 1,000 birds don't need to use the same kind of elaborate — and costly — slaughtering facilities, but their products also must be labeled accordingly.

Rep. Jeff McCabe, D-Skowhegan, said he introduced the bill because of interest in locally produced foods. By freeing small farms from onerous rules, he said, more customers can buy food from down the street instead of from a giant poultry processor thousands of miles away.

"Now farmers have a little more freedom to develop that relationship with their customers," he said.

## Beef Production Field Day set; more voles seen

A Regional Beef Production Field Day will be Tuesday at Kentuckiana Livestock Market and at the farm of Tim Taylor.

This event is sponsored by the Green River Area Cooperative Extension Service offices and area agribusinesses. Registration will begin at 5:30 p.m. at the stockyard and a meal will be served at 6 p.m. The program will start soon after.

Topics of discussion will include an update on the CPH45 calf marketing program and how tobacco settlement money has been used at the stockyard to improve facilities utilized by the Green River CPH45 sales. The group will then move across the road to Taylor's farm.

Taylor implements top management strategies in the business of purchasing calves and backgrounding them to enter in the CPH45 sales.

We will discuss a feed test currently being conducted by the University of Kentucky at Tim's farm, as well as enterprise analysis information related to cow/calf and beef backgrounding farms.

An application by the Green River Area Beef Improvement Group to administer the 2010 Daviess County Agricultural Investment Program has been approved.

This field day will serve as an educational requirement event to participate in the CAIP this year. If you have not attended any other agricultural educational event or conference this year and would like to participate in cost share opportunities, the field day would meet those criteria.

For more information, contact the Daviess County Extension Office at 685-8480.

### Vole Problems in Area Fields

Voles, often referred to as meadow or field mice, have increased in number and damaged some area crops this year.

According to Dr. Tom Barnes, Extension Wildlife Specialist, voles run on a four-year cycle. This is undoubtedly the peak year and it has been made worse because of the abundant rainfall early that provided extra food and habitat for their runs.

Voles feed actively both day and night throughout the year.

High-protein grasses and legumes are their favorite foods, but they readily feed on grains when available. These animals create above-ground runways from 1 to 2 inches wide through existing vegetation that have holes leading to an underground tunnel system.

This system could contain a family (a pair of adults and their young) or a colony of voles. The feeding radius of a vole colony may be 10 to 15 feet, but the average feeding area is approximately one-fourth acre.

As for control, the only thing available is zinc phosphide that Kentucky has a 24C label for in no-till corn and you need a special addition to the planter to place the pellet in the furrow. This is a restricted-use pesticide. Tillage will also reduce the population by destroying the habitat, exposing them to predators.

The best way to control voles without zinc phosphide pellets is to take preventative measures. For no-till, spraying

fields early to prevent abundant weed growth will provide a less favorable habitat and expose them to predators.

Scout fields and borders for voles at least 30 days prior to the time crops are to be planted. Areas with good drainage and soil aeration are most attractive to these rodents and should be checked first.

### FSA Crop Reporting Deadline

Farmers have until July 15 to report their acreage of corn, soybeans, grain sorghum, tobacco, fruits, vegetables, hay, pasture and other spring seeded crops to the Farm Service Agency.

Complete crop reports with all cropland accounted for are required for farms participating in the Direct Counter Cyclical Payment Program; Conservation Reserve Program and farms requesting Loan Deficiency Payments. Producers will also be requested to provide planting dates for the crops they report.

The FSA office will be closed July 5 in observance of Independence Day, so producers are encouraged to plan office visits around this date. Please call the FSA office to schedule an appointment to report your crops.

Failure to report crops can result in a loss of program benefits; a late file fee will be charged to reports received after July 15.

Crops that are planted after July 15 have 15 days after the planting date to report the crop. For more information, call the Daviess County FSA Office at 684-9286 ext. 2.

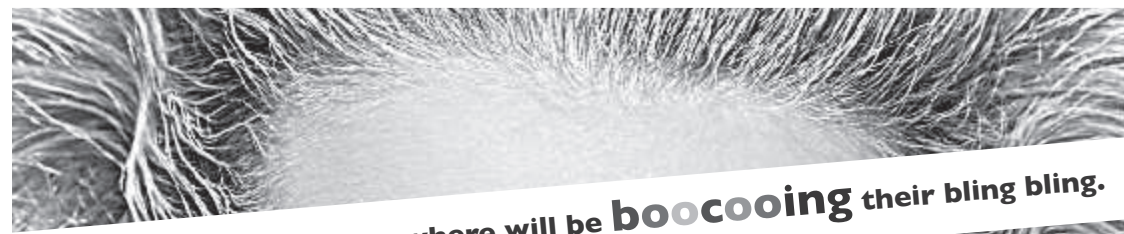
### Reminders

The Extension Office will be closed Monday for the Independence Day holiday.

The last day to consign calves for the August CPH45 sale is July 7.



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