

Palm Springs' Nick King

State's bountiful avocados a virtuous, versatile snack

FOOD & DRINK



The Desert Sun

WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 1, 2012

WWW.MYDESERT.COM

A GANNETT COMPANY

SERVING THE COACHELLA VALLEY SINCE 1927

Koch group quietly met in valley

By Kate McGinty and Erica Felci
The Desert Sun

A yearly affair hosted by Charles and David Koch, the billionaire brothers whose support of conservative causes drew noisy protests to their conference in Rancho Mirage last year, secretly returned to the desert last weekend.

Conference organizers and their guests successfully slipped in and out of the

Coachella Valley without being detected by buying out nearly all of the 500-plus rooms at the Renaissance Esmeralda resort in Indian Wells. The resort closed its restaurants, locked down the grounds with private security guards and sent many workers home.

The three-day conference ended Tuesday morning and by afternoon the usual traffic in and out of the resort had resumed.

Riverside County sheriff's Capt. Kevin

Vest, who oversees police services in Indian Wells, confirmed the Koch group was at the hotel.

"It's over and done with, and I don't want a whole bunch of suspicion," Vest told The Desert Sun.

"Compared to last year, I'm very pleased with the way things went, and it was much more the type of event that we would prefer to have in the Coachella Valley."

Please see KOCH, A2

Houston sells CBS affiliate to KESQ

TV stations merge some operations; staff trimmed

By Mike Perrault
The Desert Sun

The Coachella Valley's ABC affiliate, KESQ-TV News Channel 3, has acquired CBS affiliate KPSP Local 2 News, forming a single company that will continue to operate both television stations.

About half of KPSP's staff lost their jobs as a result of the merger, but 70 percent of anchors and on-air personalities will stay on, said Mike Stutz, KESQ general manager and corporate news director.



Houston

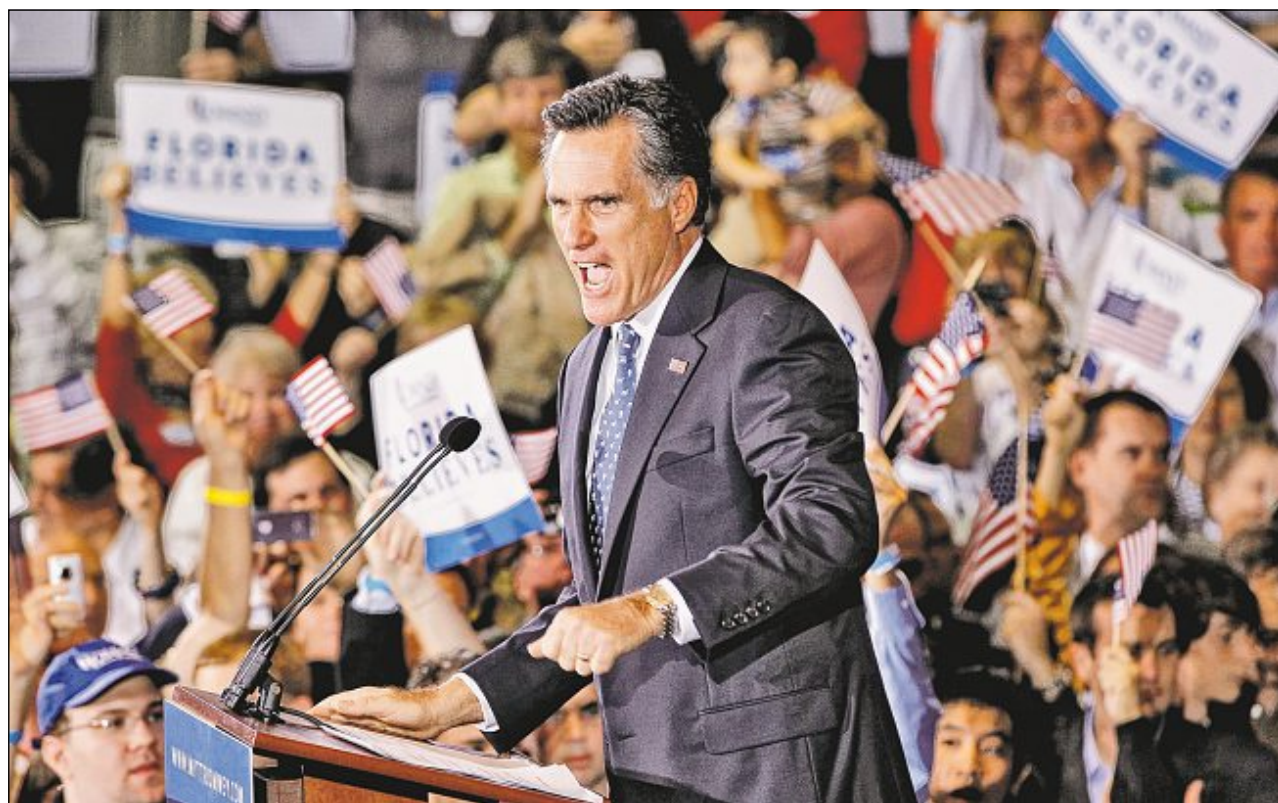
"We will be sharing some of the news-gathering resources for both stations, and our intent is to create unique news content for each station moving forward," Stutz said Tuesday. "We're retaining as many of the staff members from KPSP as we can."

Employees learned of the changes, which took effect immediately, on Tuesday morning.

Please see MERGER, A2

ELECTION 2012: FLORIDA PRIMARY

Romney wins big



Former Massachusetts Gov. Mitt Romney celebrates his Florida primary election win at the Tampa Convention Center on Tuesday. CHARLES DHARAPAK/THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Experts: Rout shows GOP front-runner can take it all

By Marc Caputo
McClatchy Newspapers

MIAMI — Case closed.

Mitt Romney's lopsided Florida victory over Newt Gingrich proved the Republican front-runner can win conservatives, triumph in debates and fight a bruising campaign that can lay an opponent to waste.

The former Massachusetts governor earned 46 percent of the vote, with Gingrich coming in a distant second with 32 percent.

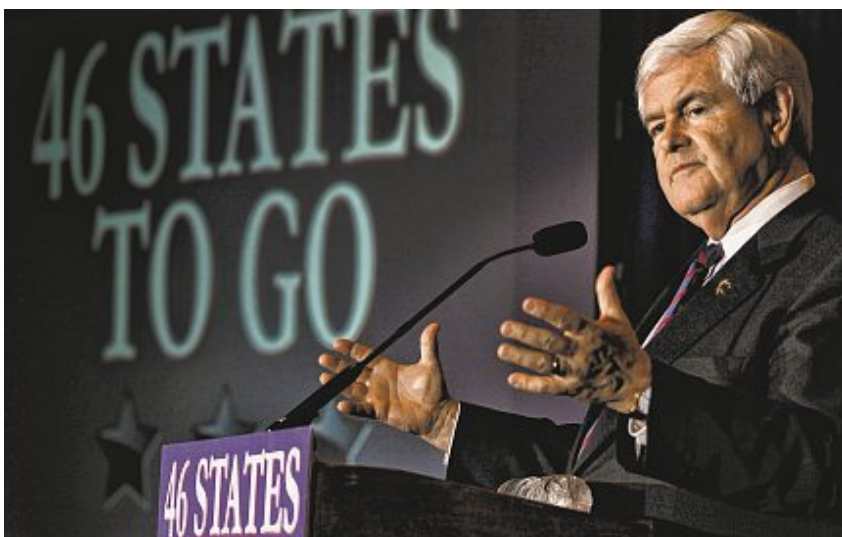
Romney's Florida win also showed Republicans he can run the kind of national campaign that can defeat President Barack Obama in November.

"Doing well in Florida," Romney said Tuesday, "is a pretty good indication of your prospects nationally."

That's because Florida is more like the nation than any of the other three early states.

North Florida is the Deep South. Southwest Florida is like the Midwest. Latin America meets New York in southeast Florida. And it all mixes together along the I-4 corridor from Tampa Bay through central Florida.

Romney excelled in south Florida and among Hispanics, exit polls



Former House Speaker Newt Gingrich addresses the crowd during a Florida Republican presidential primary night rally. He came in a distant second place to former Massachusetts Gov. Mitt Romney. MATT ROURKE/THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

showed. Early results indicated he might lose north Florida, but he was winning everywhere else by big margins.

"Florida is the nation's reflecting pool," said Alex Castellanos, a Republican consultant who worked for Rom-

ney in 2008 and George W. Bush in 2004. "It is what New York and Ellis Island used to be, the gateway to the country's future."

Before the first ballot was even cast on Election Day, Romney had a cushion

Please see GOP, A2

RENEWABLE ENERGY



Brad Williams, president of Solar Service Center in Thousand Palms, got local investors to back a company-funded solar leasing program. OMAR ORNELAS/THE DESERT SUN

Valley pitches clean-energy opportunities

By K Kaufmann
The Desert Sun

Hundreds of top-level venture capitalists and company executives focused solely on clean-tech investment are in the Coachella Valley this week, but they may not consider the region's abundant sun, wind and geothermal resources for their next big opportunity.

At least not yet. Valley leaders routinely promote the region as the epicenter of renewable energy development, but it has lagged behind in the current heated competition — in California and across the nation — for clean-tech startups and investment dollars.

"There isn't a community in the country that

Please see ENERGY, A6

GOOD MORNING

Pleasant
74° 50°

Advice **D9** Movies **D9**
Business **A11** Obituaries **B6,8**
Comics **D8** Opinion **B9**
Food **D1** Stocks **A12-13**
Lottery **B7** Weather **B10**



The Desert Sun is printed using recycled paper



75¢ newspaper designated market \$1.00 outside of market

INSIDE TODAY'S PAPER

DEAL CHICKEN

Find out what great money-saving offer the deal chicken has for you today. **A3**

MEASURE J SPENDING

A local developer spent more than \$95,000 convincing Palm Springs voters to support a sales tax increase. **B1**



GAS PRICES IN VALLEY

Coachella Valley drivers are making adjustments as gas prices creep toward the \$4 mark. **B1**

To subscribe or report a delivery problem, call (800) 834-6052 or visit mydesert.com/cs

© A Gannett Newspaper

Freedom from HERNIATED DISCS WITHOUT SURGERY?

Decompression Therapy

COULD BE THE ANSWER!

Herniated Disc • Bulging Disc • Degenerative Disc
Facet Syndrome • Sciatica • Spinal Stenosis • Neck & Arm Pain

CALL for your Free Consultation and TWO FREE Trial Sessions

Medicare and most insurance may cover a portion of your care.

SPINAL DECOMPRESSION AT

McDonald Chiropractic, Inc.

Greg McDonald, D.C.

35900 Bob Hope Dr., Ste. 100, Rancho Mirage

www.mcdonaldchiro.com

(760) 328-8212



DS-0000292688

ENERGY

Continued from A1

doesn't want to play a role in clean energy," said Steve Weiss, president and CEO of the Coachella Valley Angel Networks.

The group of investors he put together six years ago looks for companies with clean-tech and innovative products aimed at national and international markets, but, to date, has had to go outside the valley for most of its investment opportunities, he said.

One of the goals of the Coachella Valley iHub — the recently opened green business incubator — is to serve as a magnet for startup ideas and connect the fledgling companies with local investors and potential business partners.

The incubator — located at the Coachella Valley Economic Partnership's headquarters in Palm Springs — provides free office space and technical support, but no direct financial investment.

When the two-day Clean-Tech Investor Summit — now in its eighth year here — kicks off today, CVEP and other local business leaders will try to change perceptions of the region and raise interest in the desert's emerging clean-tech sector.

CVEP is a sponsor of the two-day Indian Wells event and hosted a networking event Tuesday.

"We've got the bait to get them here," said Joe Wallace, the new managing director of the iHub.

"The next question is: Do we have the cluster of technical talent to put together a startup? The perception in the present is that it is a limiting factor."

Among desert businesses looking for investors is Electric Vehicle Enterprises, the first business invited into the iHub after it opened last year.

"They have introduced us to a few investors; there is some interest. We are rewriting our business plan right now," said Bill Schlanger, the group's president. The company, which converts regular cars to

electric vehicles, originally sought about \$300,000 in seed investments, but has found potential partners who may cut a need for outside investors, he said.

Electric Vehicle Enterprises and other green businesses in the valley are competing for clean-tech investment dollars at a time when the sources and drivers behind available funds are in flux, some industry analysts say.

The bankruptcy of Solyndra, the Northern California solar manufacturer that last August defaulted on \$535 million in federal loan guarantees, was just one sign of a shakeout in the solar industry.

Plunging panel prices and competition from Chinese panel-makers forced the closing or reorganization of several solar companies such as Solar Millennium, the German solar developer that pulled out of two large projects on public land east of the valley.

Dec. 31 also saw the end of key federal incentives, including the Department of Energy's loan guarantee program and the 1603 cash grant program, which allowed solar developers to take a 30 percent federal income tax credit as cash.

Both provided critical support for the two remaining large-scale solar projects now under construction in the Riverside East zone between Joshua Tree National Park and Blythe.

Without federal incentives, industry analysts project a funding bottleneck for renewable energy projects, with the demand for private dollars far outstripping supply and investors demanding higher returns for their money.

For Brad Williams, president of Solar Service Center in Thousand Palms, the 1603 program was a cornerstone of his successful effort to draw in local investors to back a company-funded solar leasing program. Most local solar installers that offer the no-money-down leases work with one of several national leasing companies such as SunPower or SolarCity.

Creating his own leasing model with local funding has allowed



Susan Preston, general partner in the San Francisco-based Clean Energy Angel Fund, sees the valley's wealthy snowbirds as an untapped pool of potential investors. WADE BYARS/THE DESERT SUN

Williams to expand from one office to three, he said. The company recently ranked third for all solar installations in Southern California Edison's territory.

Without 1603, he said his leasing model may be less attractive to individual investors and he needs institutional lenders who can work on a smaller, local scale.

"When we talk with conventional financing, they have no interest," he said. "If you can't use \$100 million, they're not interested."

Other experts argue that strong global markets for renewable energy are a better barometer of investment opportunities than Americans' obsession with the failure of Solyndra.

"The fundamental drivers of the clean-tech industry haven't changed," said Ira Ehrenpreis, chairman of the Clean-Tech Investor Summit. "This year marked the one trillionth dollar invested in clean tech since 2004."

"We're seeing so many other countries create material demand for products and innovations coming out of clean tech," said Ehrenpreis, who also leads clean-tech investing at

Technology Partners, a Silicon Valley venture firm. "We're a global industry, solving global problems."

Translating such international opportunities into startups that drive valley economic development and jobs remains the core challenge. The region can't build on its sun, wind and geothermal resources without the technological and social infrastructure that draw investors, local leaders say.

"It would be great if we had an academic university that was throwing off technology in the clean-tech space that could be the source of entrepreneurial ventures," Weiss said. "UCR is 60 miles away, but we don't have a lot of interface with them."

Susan Preston, general partner in the San Francisco-based Clean Energy Angel Fund, sees the valley's wealthy snowbirds as an untapped pool of potential investors.

But she said, "Are there other types of incentives? Are there labs? Are there (people with) the ability to run certain types of machinery? This is always the big issue for many towns that don't have universities and aren't known as high-tech areas."

Weiss' suggestion for building a strong clean-tech cluster in the valley is to bring in top-level executives of large solar and similar firms doing business here to brainstorm the innovations that will be needed in the sector going forward.

"We can work with them to stimulate entrepreneurial ventures that might come out of their businesses or see a void," he said.

That could create the kind of "idea flow" that draws angel and venture capital investors and produces a steady stream of startups over time, Wallace said.

"If we have one person with one idea, they'll give him money and yank him up to San Jose."

"If they see hundreds of ideas, then we become a cluster. It's not pixie dust; it doesn't happen overnight. We have to earn it one successful business at a time."

K Kaufmann can be reached at k.kaufmann@thedesertsun.com or (760) 778-4622. Follow on Twitter @kkaufmann.

GREEN OPPORTUNITIES

Economic growth, in the U.S. and globally, depends on energy. But balancing growing demand with the environmental impacts of coal, oil and gas will require a range of new technologies.

"There is no silver bullet," said Susan Preston, general partner of the the California Clean Energy Angel Fund. "There are many opportunities for technological advancement, many opportunities for young companies." The areas she's tracking for future investment include:

■ **Energy efficiency:** Cutting energy use is seen universally as the quickest, most effective way to affect both corporate bottom lines, create jobs and reduce carbon emissions. "We just don't do enough — efficient lighting, building envelopes. It's very impressive."

■ **Solar and wind energy storage:** Renewables such as wind and solar can't fully replace fossil fuels until the power they generate can be reliably stored. "We've got wind blowing at night, but need it during the day, and we need clean ways of giving demand response," she said.

■ **Grid parity:** Solar and wind energy remain more expensive than traditional fossil fuels, especially with falling natural gas prices. "We've got to get to the point where we are competitive with coal and natural gas," she said.

■ **Energy management systems:** The development of a high-tech, efficient smart grid, and the increasing demands on it, will drive the need for sophisticated, reliable energy management systems. In addition to utilities, she said, "it's distributed generation, renewables and electric vehicles. They have to have it."

Frontier's

Height of the Season Fare Sale

Fares shown are one way to/from Palm Springs, roundtrip purchase not required. Buy by 2/8 for travel through 5/14/12*.

Akron-Canton	\$186
Albuquerque	\$136
Aspen	\$183
Atlanta	\$181
Chicago (MDW)	\$166
Colorado Springs	\$126
Dallas/Ft. Worth	\$191
Denver	\$115
Kansas City	\$161
Knoxville	\$151
Milwaukee	\$171
Minneapolis/St. Paul	\$161
New York (LGA)	\$191
Omaha	\$161
St. Louis	\$166
Salt Lake City	\$171

FrontierAirlines.com

Terms and Conditions
 *Tickets must be purchased by 11:59 p.m. Eastern time, February 8, 2012. Fares shown are one way for travel through May 14, 2012, for flights Monday through Thursday and Saturday and apply to nonstop or single connect flights only. Roundtrip purchase not required. Blackout dates of March 31 and May 28, 2012 apply. A 21-day advance purchase applies. Seats are limited to these fares and certain flights and/or days of travel may be unavailable, especially during busy travel periods. Tickets are nonrefundable, but may be transferred or reissued for up to a \$100 change fee (depending on the fare type purchased) as well as a possible fare increase to a non-promotional fare type. Previously purchased tickets may not be exchanged for these special fare tickets. Flight segment(s) must be cancelled prior to scheduled departure time or the ticket(s) and all monies will be forfeited.

Fares shown reflect purchase at FrontierAirlines.com. Tickets purchased on Frontier's website must be paid for at the time the reservation is made. Depending on the fare type purchased, a \$20 fee may be charged each way for the first and for the second pieces of checked baggage. Fares shown include all fees and taxes and are subject to change without notice.

Some markets do not offer daily connections. Due to schedule changes, markets may not connect throughout the valid travel period.

Flights are operated by Frontier Airlines, Republic Airlines or Chautauqua Airlines. Some flights go through or connect in Denver, Kansas City or Milwaukee. Fares and schedules are subject to change without notice. Other restrictions may apply.

800-432-1359

WE MAKE CONCRETE BEAUTIFUL!

- * DECORATIVE FLAGSTONE AND TILE DESIGN
- * CONCRETE STAINING AND SEALING
- * COOL DECK RESTORATION AND COLOR SEALING
- * NEW CONCRETE ADDITIONS
- * SERVING THE COACHELLA VALLEY FOR OVER 12 YEARS
- * LICENSED, BONDED AND INSURED

CA State Contractors Lic# 871730 **FREE ESTIMATES**

760 779-4320

Visit Us at WWW.CONCRETEBYDESIGN.COM

It's About Time.
 [To get your watch fixed.]

\$100 Off Watch Repair
 On premises repair, most same day.

Deduca
 Jewelers & Manufacturers Since 1947

Appraisals ♦ Jewelry Restyle
 Fine Watch & Jewelry Repair ♦ Resale

760.773.1763
 73655 El Paseo, Suite F, Palm Desert