

# Business

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STEEL AND SHADE  
THE ARCHITECTURE OF  
DONALD WEXLER  
PALM SPRINGS ART  
MUSEUM  
101 Museum Drive  
Downtown Palm Springs  
psmuseum.org  
Donald Wexler, Steel House, 1962,  
photograph © Juergen Nogai, 2010



 DOW 12,068.50 | 
  S&P 500 1,306.10 | 
  NASDAQ 2,737.90 | 
  AMEX 2,319.17 | 
  NYSE 8,276.29

## Small businesses key for valley jobs

### Expo in Indio lets owners network and gain new tips

BY DEBRA GRUSZECKI

The Desert Sun

Job creation comes one company, one person at a time.

And Randy Nelson, CEO and owner of SwissTrax in Indio, was showcased Thursday as a classic example of a

small-business owner in the Coachella Valley who is revitalizing the economy one job at a time.

He has added another person to the payroll in 2011 and plans to hire another next month.

"We have 8,000-12,000 small businesses in the Coachella Valley," said Coachella Valley Economic Partnership operating officer Wes Ahlgren.

"If half of them added one employee, we'd achieve 4,000 new hires in the Coachella Valley; (and) that's a significant difference."



Flavin

More than 100 people and 30 vendors gathered Thursday for CVEP's third annual Small Business Resource Forum and Expo at Sun City Shadow Hills in Indio.

Amanda Maze, branch manager of Xerox Image Source, was there to

prospect for new accounts and pick up some tips from the speakers panel. "As they grow, we grow," she said.

Vendors from Kaiser Permanente and lending institutions such as Sunrise Bank, Palm Desert National, Citibank and the Farm Service Agency passed out literature and offered help to startups and businesses that need a loan or plan to expand.

Thomas Flavin, chief executive of CVEP, said "We want to make sure we do all we can to help small business grow," he said.

Russell Abeyratne, owner of AAY Realty of Palm Desert, a real estate company with 20 people and in hiring mode, said he appreciated the overview. "With all the rules, regulations and labyrinth of fees, it can be difficult to maneuver," he said.

Indio Mayor Lupe Ramos Watson, in her welcome address, credited financial experts and counselors such as Brad Mix of the California Small Business Development Center for helping her open her business years ago.

### Mecca's Colmac biomass plant sold

BY K KAUFMANN

The Desert Sun

Greenleaf Power of Sacramento announced it has finalized its purchase of Colmac Energy's biomass power plant in Mecca.

The 47-megawatt plant is one of the largest biomass plants in California and provides power to Southern California Edison.

Greenleaf, which owns and operates two other biomass plants in California, first announced its tentative agreement to purchase the Mecca plant from Colmac in December.

Finalization of the deal came Tuesday after a recent approval of the deal by the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission.

Neither company has disclosed the financial terms of the sale.

"Biomass energy is one of the lowest cost, baseload renewable sources of power," said Hugh Smith, president of Greenleaf.

"While most other renewable sources are intermittent, biomass can provide a continuous stream of power."

The plant employs about 54 full-time workers.

Matt Ross, a spokesman for Greenleaf, said the company is now conducting a plantwide review, but declined comment on what impact, if any, the sale might have on staffing levels.

"What they're trying to do is make the plant sustainable long term," Ross said. "You have fuel delivery; you have Southern California Edison; you have when the plant goes offline for routine maintenance. It takes a while."

The Mecca plant uses about 400,000 tons of biomass material annually, including clean wood wastes and agricultural wastes.

## Another Toyota recall: gas pedals

### Action comes after Congress asks for study

BY GREG GARDNER

Detroit Free Press

DETROIT — Toyota is expanding a 2009 recall and initiated new recall campaigns covering 2.17 million vehicles in which accelerator pedals can become entrapped or jammed in floor mats or carpeting.

The expanded voluntary action comes about two weeks after a study requested by Congress and the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration found no electronic cause of unintended acceleration.

About 1.38 million of the new recalls are an expansion of Toyota's massive November 2009 recall to address the risk that improperly placed floor mats could be entrapped by accelerator pedal.

The Japanese automaker has recalled more than 14 million vehicles worldwide since 2009 for a variety of safety and quality concerns, including sudden unintended acceleration. Earlier this month, a panel of NASA experts reported they found no evidence that electronic malfunctions contributed to unintended acceleration.

Quality concerns were a factor in driving Toyota's U.S. market share to 15.3 percent last year from 17 percent in 2009. On Tuesday, Toyota also reported that its profit fell 39 percent, to \$1.1 billion in the last financial quarter.

The new models affected by the November 2009 recall are about 603,000 4Runner SUVs from model years 2003 through 2009, about 17,000 Lexus LX



YVES LOGGHE THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Toyota Europe spokesman Etienne Plas talks Jan. 26 to The Associated Press in Brussels about the automaker's previous recall, which involved nearly 1.7 million cars worldwide for fuel leaks. Now, another 2.2 million vehicles with gas pedal issues is the latest in a ballooning number of quality problems that could add another dent to its tarnished reputation in the crucial U.S. market.

570 models from models years 2008 through 2011 and 761,000 RAV4 compact SUVs from model years 2006 through 2010. Owners of those vehicles will be notified by mail in the next few weeks. Toyota will send a second notice when dealers are ready

to fix the problem.

Separately, Toyota is recalling 372,000 Lexus RX 330, RX 350 and RX 400H vehicles from 2004 through early 2007 model years and 397,000 Toyota Highlander SUVs and hybrids from 2004 through 2006 model years.



### Another 2 million

Since 2009, the world's top automaker has recalled more than 10 million cars and trucks for defects. Major events:

**Sept. 2009** Nearly 4 million vehicles recalled for faulty gas pedals and floor mats that could trap accelerators

**Jan. 2010** About 2.3 million U.S. vehicles recalled for potentially defective accelerator pedals

**Feb. 2010** Akio Toyoda, the company's president, apologizes to the U.S. Congress and Toyota owners for quality lapses that led to deaths, recalls

**April 2010** Toyota agrees to pay \$16.4 million fine in the U.S. for failing to report defects

**July 2010** About 700,000 vehicles recalled to fix faulty transmissions

**Aug. 2010** 1.1 million Corolla sedans and Matrix hatchbacks recalled because their engines may stall

**Oct. 2010** 1.5 million Lexus, Avalon and other models recalled for problems with brake fluid and fuel pumps

**Jan. 2011** 1.2 million models being recalled in Japan, 421,000 overseas for possible fuel leakage

**Feb. 2011** 2.2 million vehicles recalled in the U.S. to fix issues related to gas pedals sticking in floor mats and carpeting

SOURCES: AP, BBC MCCLATCHY-TRIBUNE

Dealers will replace floor carpet covering and retention clips on the driver's side that could interfere with the accelerator pedal arm.

In yet another action, Toyota is recalling 20,000 Lexus GS 300 and 350 all-wheel drive models to change the shape of a plastic pad embedded in the driver's side floor carpet that could cause pedal interference.

Beyond replacing or tweaking floor mats, Toyota is introducing brake override technology in all new models that ensures that drivers could bring any vehicle to a quick stop even if there is an unintended surge of acceleration.

### SMALL BUSINESS SNAPSHOT

**Business name:** Photo ColorGraphix.

**Address:** 41-841 Beacon Hill, Suite A, Palm Desert.

**Days and hours:** 9 a.m.-5 p.m. Monday-Thursday; 9 a.m.-noon Fridays.

**Owner:** PCG1 Inc. (Sharron Kenty, president).

**Date founded:** May 1994; incorporated 2010.

**Description of business:** "Digital photo and art prints. We excel at the fine art of combining photos, colors and graphics to convey your business' visual message or to beautify your home or office."

**Employees:** Part-time helper.

**Projected revenue:** \$125,000.

**Cost of startup:** \$5,000; used equipment and lots of hard work.

**Did you write a business plan?** Yes.

**Marketing budget:** About \$300 per month.

**Recipe for success:** "Details, details, details ... making sure the value, quality, and service is tops."



SUBMITTED PHOTO

Owner Sharron Kenty and Production Manager Chas Allen of Photo ColorGraphix of Palm Desert.

**Personal motto or mantra:** "Do it right once."

**Where do you seek advice:** Industry organizations, SCORE, Coachella Valley Women's Business Center, other business leaders.

**Information:** (760) 568-1595.

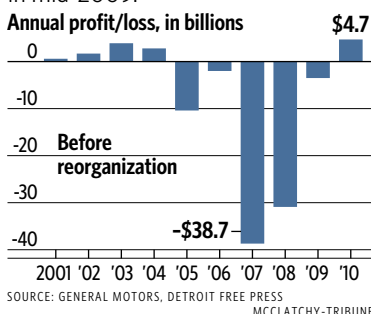
— JOHN HUSSAR

### Small Business Snapshot

The Desert Sun is taking snapshots of small businesses in the Coachella Valley. If you'd like to nominate a business, please e-mail John Hussar at BizSnaps@gmail.com or call (760) 567-8073.

### GM On the road again

General Motors posted its first profitable year since 2004, following its reorganization in a government-sponsored bankruptcy in mid-2009.



### clarification

The photo on the right, which ran with the Feb. 18 Small Business Snapshot, should have included this caption information:

Carmelo Aleman of Aleman Electric demonstrates a new GreenSwitch, which is designed to eliminate the drain of unattended air conditioners, forgotten lights and other phantom power drains, reducing electric bills by 15 percent to 30 percent.



### BUSINESS HIGHLIGHT

detroit

### Once-bankrupt GM posts 1st full-year profit since 2004

In a remarkable financial U-turn, once-bankrupt General Motors recorded its first profitable year since 2004 and is tantalizingly close to reclaiming its title as the world's No. 1 automaker.

The company faces a bumpy road ahead: Gas prices are rising, GM has only a few new models and its European operations are still losing money.

Still, the automaker's \$4.7 billion profit for 2010 was impressive, especially con-

sidering where it has been. The company lost more than \$80 billion in the five years before its bankruptcy and needed a government bailout to survive.

It emerged in the summer of 2009 cleansed of huge debt and costly labor contracts, returned to the stock market in November, and managed to make money even with auto sales near historic lows.

The annual profit, fueled by strong sales in China and the U.S. as the global auto market began to recover, gave GM its best year since 1999, when it made \$6 billion at the height of the pickup truck and sport utility vehicle boom.

### BUSINESSFACT

### Would you still consider a car brand despite product/safety recalls?

