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NEWS BRIEFS

The Mount Pleasant-based Sticky Fingers Restaurant Group recently opened a 180-seat Sticky Fingers Restaurant and Bar in Hilton Head. The new, 70-employee restaurant is Sticky Fingers' ninth. The restaurant occupies a 6,100-square-foot building that underwent a \$350,000 renovation.

During the restaurant's first week in operation, sales exceeded projections by 15%, putting the new restaurant on track to meet first-year sales forecasts of more than \$2 million.

Sticky Fingers plans to open its 10th restaurant this August in Columbia.

The South Carolina Small Business Chamber of Commerce will serve on a Health Insurance Policy Advisory Committee and will play a role in the data collection for a \$1.1 million grant to the S.C. Department of Insurance.

The Small Business Chamber first identified health insurance as a priority for small business in July of 2000 while holding small business forums around the state. Since then, the Small Business Chamber has worked to educate state government and the public about the crisis in small group health insurance and to press for action.

Today there are only 27 companies offering small group health insurance in the state, a drop of 63% since 1997. However, two of these companies write over 50% of the small group business in South Carolina. As a result of lack of competition, the rising cost of health care and other important factors, health insurance affordability and availability is at a crisis level in the state, according to the Small Business Chamber.

This 12-month project will include the development and formulation of a Health Insurance Policy Advisory Committee to work with the grant team on data analysis and policy formulation. The project also involves the examination of existing data and the collection of state-specific health insurance data through interviews, focus groups and

surveys. The project will culminate in May of 2003 with a Health Insurance Forum and final report that will be forwarded to the South Carolina General Assembly.

The Alcoa Foundation has awarded Charleston Southern University a grant to fund a saltwater aquarium initiative benefiting students studying environmental management.

The aquarium will be used as a research project for environmental management students, who will spend two semesters setting up the aquarium, monitoring it and maintaining it. The Alcoa Foundation awarded CSU more than \$5,000 for the program.

Alcoa Foundation is a global resource that actively invests in improving the quality of life in Alcoa communities worldwide.

Despite economic downturn and poor market conditions, demand for large boats and marina slips has actually increased in recent months, according to Ed Modzelewski, chairman of Applied Technology & Management Inc., an environmental, coastal and water resources engineering firm.

“There’s been a steady upswing in the demand for larger vessels and a slight drop in demand for smaller ones,” says Modzelewski. “As a result, many marina owners and operators are attempting to upgrade their facilities and provide additional expanded slips. They’re also changing their mix of slip sizes to accommodate the increased number of mega-yachts.”

The mega-yacht industry appears to be growing at a rate of 20% each year. To keep abreast of market changes and demands for larger slips, Modzelewski suggests that marine owners and operators watch sales trends on national, regional, and local levels to prepare for the storage needs of their clientele.

Founded in 1984, Applied Technology & Management Inc. specializes in marina planning, permitting, and design. The firm has offices in Mount Pleasant, Hilton Head, Savannah, Ga., Jacksonville, Gainesville, Cocoa Beach and West Palm Beach, Fla.

The MUSC Medical Center has been named by U.S. News and World Report as one of the country’s best hospitals in the treatment of digestive disorders.

The rankings were published in the magazine’s July 22 issue, which appeared on the newsstands July 15.

This is the sixth straight year that MUSC’s Digestive Disease Center was named to the list. It is ranked No. 14 out of the total of 50 hospitals that the magazine listed as being top facilities in the country—moving up from 24th place last year.

To be ranked, a hospital first must either belong to the Council of Teaching Hospitals,

be affiliated with a medical school, or have at least nine technology services out of a prescribed list of 17. That narrowed the field to 1,958 this year.

Eligibility for ranking in 13 of the 17 specialties, including digestive diseases, depends on performing a specified number of defined procedures during the past four years for which data is available or being named by at least one physician in U.S. News surveys during the past four years.

Benefitfocus.com has announced the development of its new Consumer-Driven Health Plan application for health insurance carriers and large corporations. Officials of the employee benefits software provider say the application is designed to support the rapid adoption of consumer-driven health plans by companies across the nation.

The CDHP application supports a wide range of benefit plan designs, ranging from those offering a few choices to those offering complex, diverse options. All employee elections can be accessed through the Internet or from kiosks within the company.

“We have built the Benefitfocus application to meet the needs of the largest health plans in the nation, yet it is infinitely flexible in the display of information and the presentation of complex products,” says Doug Moreland, Benefitfocus’ chief technology officer.

Trident United Way recently released its 2002-2003 community investments for Berkeley, Charleston and Dorchester Counties.

United Way invests roughly \$6 million in tri-county services; \$3.25 million of that comes through the Community Investment process. (The rest is directed to specific agencies by donors, used to fund programs run by United Way, or invested in United Way’s Success By 6 initiative). Approximately 100 volunteers reviewed applications for investments and recommended that United Way invest in 78 programs in the following five areas: Nurturing children and youth, promoting health and healing, strengthening families, increasing self sufficiency and supporting older people.

Nine of the 78 programs received commendations for outcome measurement:

- Volunteer Buddy program of Lowcountry AIDS
- Residential Treatment program of Windwood Farm Home for Children
- Big Brothers/Big Sisters of Carolina Youth Development Center
- Day School of Carolina Youth Development Center

- **Support and Mentor Services of Charleston Communities in Schools**
- **Youth Development of Boy's and Girl's Club of the Trident Area**
- **Scout Reach of the Boy Scouts**
- **Before & After School Child Care of Summerville Family YMCA**
- **Job Skills Training of Berkeley Citizens**

“As non-profit organizations embrace United Way’s model of results-focused investments, we will continue to improve the lives of people in need and strengthen our community,” says Christopher Kerrigan, president of Trident United Way.

South Carolina Federal Credit Union employees raised \$16,484 for Children’s Miracle Network, surpassing their goal of \$15,000. A corporate contribution of \$5,000 from the credit union brought S.C. Federal’s total contribution to \$21,484. The funds will be contributed to MUSC Children’s Hospital in Charleston.

In addition to accepting donations from members who visited the credit union’s branches, S.C. Federal employees worked hard on other fund raising efforts, as departments and branches formed teams and competed to raise the most money.

To encourage and reward employee participation throughout the campaign, the credit union provided weekly prizes, including pizza parties and gift certificates, to individuals and teams. And for exceeding their fundraising goal, all employees enjoyed an entire week of dressing casually for work (usually reserved for Fridays).

Market activity continues to outpace last year’s figures. Through the end of May, there have been 109 properties sold on the Isle of Palms (including Wild Dunes) and Sullivan’s Island. During the same period of 2001, the number of properties sold totaled 78.

According to Ron Davis Realtors, 2002 year-to-date sales total \$76.4 million versus \$49.2 million in 2001. The median selling price is up 18% to \$515,000.

Charleston Gardens, an outdoor and garden-related furniture and accessories retailer, currently is showcasing its products at 177 Ponsbury in l’On. The items will be featured in the retailer’s fall catalog.

“Charleston Gardens’ vision to accentuate Lowcountry living complements our classic Lowcountry architecture,” says Vince Graham, president of l’On.

McMillan Smith & Partners Architects PLLC, a full-service architectural firm with offices in Charleston, Greenville and Spartanburg, recently launched its new web site, www.msp-arch.com.

Marking a major push into the New York City real estate market, Charleston-based Greystar Real Estate Partners announced in July the purchase of a portfolio of Manhattan apartments from Thurcon Properties Inc., a New York real estate company. The total purchase price for the portfolio, which is comprised of nine buildings in various Manhattan locations, is approximately \$240 million. The buildings also include 60,000 square feet of commercial space.

“The acquisition of these properties represents Greystar’s entrance into the highly-competitive Manhattan real estate market and immediately makes us one of the larger institutional owners of apartments in New York,” says Robert Faith, managing partner of Greystar. “We moved our investment advisory group to New York and opened our office here a little under a year ago. We intend to continue to grow our presence in the Metro New York area through additional acquisitions and third party property management assignments.”

“This is one of the largest purchases of existing Manhattan multifamily housing in recent history,” says Ben Friedman, president of Greystar Real Estate Advisors, the investment management arm of Greystar.

The properties will be managed by Greystar’s property management affiliate in New York, Greystar Manhattan Management LLC.

The Clean Beaches Council recently released its annual list of beaches that have been certified as “Blue Wave” beaches and Isle of Palms was the only South Carolina beach named. The Blue Wave campaign is America’s first environmental certification for beaches.

For more information on the Clean Beaches Council and Blue Wave certification, visit www.cleanbeaches.org.

Good News Computers Inc. has merged with Enterprise Telephone Inc. to form a new company, Enterprise Technologies Inc. The new company will provide computer network and telecommunications products and services to small and large businesses.

“I am excited about the new name and our expanded capabilities,” says John Mitchum, President of Enterprise Technologies. “I think ETI will set the standard for local computer and telephone service and support that others will want to follow. We look forward to growing in Charleston and throughout the state in the coming years.”

Enterprise Technologies Inc. is currently building a new headquarters and warehouse on Tile Drive near Leeds Avenue. The building is expected to be ready for occupancy near the end of 2002.

Charlestonjobmarket.com and The Citadel Career Services Office are partnering to provide area employers easy access to resumes of Citadel students seeking employment in the Charleston area and to help students with their local job search.

“Many of The Citadel’s approximately 2,000 cadets and 2,000 College of Graduate and Professional Studies students would like to live and work in the Charleston area upon graduation and we see this partnership as a great way to help them find local jobs,” says Brent Stewart, director of Citadel Career Services.

(Charlestonjobmarket.com is a service of the Charleston Regional Business Journal and Setcom Inc.).

In late July, Automated Trading Desk Inc. and Chicago Securities Group LLC announced they will combine their operations into a new entity to be called Automated Trading Desk LLC.

Mount Pleasant-based ATD is a pioneer of automated limit-order trading technology and CSG is a specialist firm on the Chicago Stock Exchange, trading more than 250 over-the-counter and listed stocks. CSG executes orders for many of the major retail brokerage firms and mutual fund managers.

The two companies have already begun to integrate their operations and will immediately begin using ATD’s trading technology. CSG’s operations will be managed as a wholly-owned subsidiary of the new company with Steve Swanson serving as the CEO of Automated Trading Desk LLC and Tom Lavery serving as president of its subsidiary, Chicago Securities Group LLC.

“CSG is a strategic addition to our current business. Since the onset of decimalization, many market making firms have experienced difficulties in trading both OTC and listed stocks,” says Swanson. “We see great opportunity to expand market share without increasing costs.”

For additional information on the merger, visit www.atdesk.com.

Charleston-based Blackbaud Inc. has announced significant enhancements for teachers in the latest version of its popular student information software, Registrar’s Office™. The release includes the introduction of “Faculty Access for the Web,” a new online component of Registrar’s Office.

“Teachers wear a lot of different hats,” says Germaine Ward, vice president of

products at Blackbaud. “Our goal with this new release is to provide enhanced tools that help teachers get the job done—wherever they are.”

Faculty Access for the Web allows teachers to access student records over the web. Teachers use this online component of Registrar’s Office to enter daily grades, skills assessments, attendance, final term grades and comments, in addition to viewing student record information and detailed progress and missing assignment reports.

The South Carolina Commerce Department will be featuring the state’s best products as part of a delegation to Expo USA in the Dominican Republic, September 12-14, 2002.

In its 13th year, Expo USA will give South Carolina companies an opportunity to showcase products and services. With exposure to more than 30,000 local and regional visitors, Expo USA will provide contact with potential agents, distributors and end-users throughout the region.

The Dominican Republic is the largest single market within the Caribbean for U.S. exports and direct investment, and the seventh largest export market in the Western Hemisphere. In 2001, U.S. merchandise exported to the country totaled \$4.5 billion. Of that amount, South Carolina exported \$69.7 million to the Dominican Republic.

U.S. Sen. Fritz Hollings has announced that the Federal Aviation Administration has awarded \$3,075,029 in federal grant funding to airports in the Lowcountry for improvement projects. The funding is part of the FAA’s Airport Improvement Program.

“These grant awards are a direct result of legislation Congress passed two years ago to fund airport improvement projects at metropolitan and regional airports,” said Sen. Hollings, Chairman of the Senate Commerce, Science and Transportation Committee which oversees the FAA. “Since then, the Lowcountry has received over 10 airport improvement grants which represent a significant federal investment in this region. Ultimately, this funding will provide for the kind of improvements that will allow for additional travel at these airports and increased economic development in these areas.”

The Charleston Air Force Base/International Airport will receive \$1,221,372 in federal funding to improve the terminal building, enhance security and develop a general aviation development plan to determine the airport’s future needs and development alternatives for the increased use of the airport by general aviation aircraft.

Charleston’s East Cooper Airport received a \$750,600 grant to increase needed storage for aircraft by extending the taxiway to the public use hangar area. The funding also will allow the airport to replace and relocate the aging airport beacon and relocate the perimeter fencing to represent the airport’s new property line.

The Air Transport Association has reported that systemwide revenue passenger miles declined 8.4% in June, versus the same month in 2001. Domestic RPMs (revenue passenger miles—one RPM equals one fare-paying passenger transported one mile) declined 7% and international RPMs decreased 12%.

“The U.S. airline industry made little progress toward economic recovery in June and air travel remains persistently below last year’s levels,” says ATA Chief Economist David Swierenga. “The recent decline in U.S. customer confidence and lingering frustration with the airport security experience is contributing to stagnation in air travel growth.”

The systemwide load factor, the percentage of utilized seating capacity, was 77.4 % in June and the domestic load factor was 75.6%. The international load factor was 82.4%.

Sen. Ernest F. Hollings recently announced the Appropriations Committee has approved funding to provide for next-generation detection technology and increased security at the Port of Charleston. This fiscal year 2003 funding is provided through the U.S. Customs Service, which is funded through the Treasury Department and General Government Appropriations bill.

In the bill, Hollings secured \$4,000,000 for a pilot program within the Customs Service which will evaluate existing technology utilized by the Defense Department and the Department of Energy to screen and detect contraband, explosives, chemical and biological weapons and radioactive materials for use by the Customs Service at the nation’s larger ports.

“The Defense Department and the Department of Energy both possess highly technical tools to detect the kind of weapons and radioactive materials that could cause tremendous damage to our country,” says Hollings. “This pilot program will provide for collaboration between DOD, DOE and the Customs Service to utilize those tools and develop their own to prevent these weapons from entering the county. With this legislation, the Senate has stipulated that this innovative program begin at the Port of Charleston.”

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