

Business Editor: John Hoke
(804) 649-6344
jhoke@timesdispatch.com

Business

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Keyword: **stocks**

Top local gainer **Chesapeake +70.00%** . . . Biggest local decliner **LandAmerica Finl -8.00%** . . . Top S&P gainer **Lincoln Natl +32.96%** . . . Biggest S&P decliner **DR Horton -12.63%**

Drop in home values

The following values are for all housing types, including single-family homes and condominiums, and percentage changes from a year ago.

U.S.: \$182,378, down 14.2 percent

Richmond area: \$209,126, down 6.4 percent

Virginia Beach area: \$226,692, down 6.2 percent

Washington: \$321,533, down 14.7 percent

SOURCE: Zillow Real Estate Market Reports

Area home values fall 6.4%, to \$209,126, from a year ago

In Richmond region, some neighborhoods are holding values better than others

BY CAROL HAZARD
Times-Dispatch Staff Writer

Richmond-area home values have fallen to \$209,126 — about where they were in late 2005, according to a report released yesterday by Zillow.

That represents a 6.4 percent decline in the first quarter from the same period a year ago. The value is a median, meaning half the houses are worth more and half less.

Some neighborhoods are holding their values better than others, the online real

estate company reported.

Values in the Westhampton area in Richmond's West End, for example, fell 3.1 percent to \$316,706 from a year ago. But if you live in Montpelier, your home could be worth 17.8 percent less than it was a year ago, or about \$291,650.

Zillow tracks home values in 161 metropolitan areas, using sales data and other public records.

Nationwide, home values slid for the ninth consecutive quarter, falling 14.2 percent from a year ago and declining 21.8 percent since the peak in 2006.

Nearly 22 percent of all homeowners in the U.S. owe more than their house is worth, and one in five homes sold in the past 12 months was a foreclosure.

While values in all 60 neighborhoods in the Richmond region fell from a year

ago, some areas showed price increases in the first three months from the last quarter in 2008. Notably, values in Glen Allen in western Henrico County ticked up, as they did in the Bellevue and Lake-side areas in North Richmond and the area near Regency Square Mall.

"It is true that there are pockets around town, where sales are up and doing better," said Don Atkinson, president of the Richmond Association of Realtors and general manager of Hometown Realty in Glen Allen.

The Realtors group reported the median sales price for the first quarter stood at \$198,702, down 11 percent from the same period in 2008.

• Contact Carol Hazard at (804) 775-8023 or chazard@timesdispatch.com.

Getting mass transit in gear

Marketing campaign explains why region needs a jump-start

BY MICHAEL MARTZ
Times-Dispatch Staff Writer

A child wears a protective mask against air pollution. A family looks to save money on gasoline. A lawyer rides a bus to work at least twice a week.

And an older man holds a sign that says, "I have no way of getting to the doctor's office."

A new marketing campaign is driving home the reasons why the Richmond region needs mass transit — from reducing pollution and traffic congestion to attracting business, giving people an affordable way to work, and saving money when every penny counts.

"The bottom line is this is something that affects us all," said Debbie Schebe, director of strategic alliances at Creative, a workplace interiors and technology company based in Ashland.

Schebe is part of a five-person working group in this year's Leadership Metro Richmond class who fashioned a marketing strategy launched yesterday to promote mass transit in the region.

The "Got Transit" working group unveiled a 60-second video at the Weinstein JCC that already had been posted on YouTube and other Web-based communication networks.

The video provides glimpses of how mass transit affects people — from the health of their children to their ability to make doctor's appointments or save money on fuel — and directs viewers to a new Web site, TransitTalk.com.

"Without transit funding for the Richmond region, everyone will feel the impact," the video

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Home prices
Search market values and trends nationwide, or in your neighborhood. Visit TimesDispatch.com. Keyword: featured



JOE MAHONEY/TIMES-DISPATCH

Drew Magyar, a consultant with award-winning Dominion Digital, works at the company's Innsbrook office in Henrico County.

Employers of Choice

Consultant Dominion Digital, Wyeth, SnagAJob.com among area firms honored with awards

BY EMILY C. DOOLEY
Times-Dispatch Staff Writer

Employees at the technology consulting firm Dominion Digital can telecommute, take advantage of flexible scheduling and are encouraged to find that balance between work and life.

The art director works in a room called the Creative Design Kitchen.

That imaginative attitude is promoted at the company's headquarters in western Henrico County.

Employees like their jobs so much that a blind survey about the company's work environment led to an award.

Yesterday, Dominion Digital won the Greater Richmond Area Employer of Choice award for small firms at the All Star Awards held at the Greater Richmond Convention Center.

SnagAJob.com, an online hourly job site, and pharmaceutical manufacturer Wyeth also won Employer of Choice awards for medium- and large-sized companies.

"Being recognized as an employer of choice in the Richmond area is a huge honor for Dominion Digital," business manager Heather Higgins said.

The awards are sponsored by the Richmond Human Resources Management Association and the Greater Richmond Chamber.

In its 11th year, the All Star awards recognize employers' best practices and showcase them to the rest of the community, awards co-chairman Bill Auchmoody said.

Employer of Choice awards go to companies

that excel at or encourage workplace development, diversity initiatives, community involvement and employee retention.

A committee reviews an application as well as blind surveys sent to employees who comment on the work environment.

SnagAJob, Dominion Digital and Wyeth also won in multiple categories.

Wyeth took honors in the community involvement and diversity categories.

The company has a diversity counsel that meets monthly.

The group recently had employees submit recipes from around the world, which were compiled into a cookbook that was published and sold. Proceeds went to the Central Virginia Foodbank, Wyeth spokesman Rob Norman said.

Other All Star awards:

- Best recruitment, engagement and retention

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CarMax reshuffling 130 workers

BY LOUIS LLOVIO
Times-Dispatch Staff Writer

About 130 CarMax Inc. employees will be changing roles as the retailer reshuffles positions

at its headquarters and at some of its 100 stores.

The Goochland County-based automobile retailer said yesterday that the "difficult economy has changed our business needs and the jobs that support them."

In all, 1 percent of the company's 13,000 jobs are affected, the company said. CarMax made the moves because shifts in its operations have made some jobs no longer necessary.

"There are enough open positions that every affected associate may choose to move into a new role," CarMax spokeswoman Trina Lee said in a statement.

The open positions are all full-time jobs with benefits, she said. Those who decide not to take new positions will be entitled to severance pay.

The open positions are at headquarters office and at the stores. Like much of the automobile industry, CarMax has been hit by dropping sales because of the weak economy.

Same-store sales, or sales at stores open at least a year, fell 27 percent during the fiscal fourth quarter, which ended Feb. 28. Total used-car unit sales decreased 21 percent.

For the fiscal year, same-store sales fell 17 percent for the year, while total used-car unit sales dropped 8 percent.

The chain made some cost-cutting moves in October, including laying off 610 people as well as cutting back on store openings and on the number of units it keeps on its lots.

• Contact Louis Llovio at (804) 649-6348 or LLLlovio@timesdispatch.com.

MyKey lets parents force safer driving

Ford's technology to limit teens' speed, radio volume is shown off in Richmond

BY LOUIS LLOVIO
Times-Dispatch Staff Writer

Ford Motor Co. showed off new technology in Richmond yesterday designed to keep teenage drivers safe.

Called MyKey, the technology allows parents to control certain settings in cars before teens drive the car.

Using the technology, parents can set a maximum speed limit, control radio volume and set speed warnings. The device allows parents to limit the radio to 44 percent of the total volume.

Among the other optional settings, parents can set the car so the radio

doesn't play until the seat belts in the front are buckled, and the traction control, which keeps cars from skidding, cannot be turned off.

"Anything that helps parents make kids safe is good," said A.J. Gordon, a sergeant with the Henrico County police. Gordon oversees the county's Traffic Safety Unit.

Gordon was observing the demonstration at Richmond Ford Lincoln Mercury.

Car crashes are the leading cause of death for U.S. teens, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. In 2005, 12 teens ages 16 to 19 died every day from motor-vehicle injuries.

While the technology is interesting, parents still need to keep a wary eye,

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At Richmond Ford Lincoln Mercury, Michael Phillips holds the keys to the MyKey technology. A master key lets parents make changes, and a second key tells the vehicle's computer that it needs to put the settings into effect.

DEAN HOFFMEYER/TIMES-DISPATCH

EARNINGS

Richmond-based firms: Tredegar Corp.

Tredegar Corp. reported a loss for the first quarter as sales deteriorated in the economic recession and the company took a goodwill impairment charge.

The Richmond-based maker of plastic films and aluminum extrusions reported a loss of \$28.8 million, or 85 cents per share, for the first quarter, compared with a profit of \$3.1 million or 9 cents per share in the first quarter of 2008.

Revenue fell 33 percent to \$153.9 million, as shipments declined on lower demand for

plastic film products and aluminum extrusions.

The company also took a noncash charge of \$30.6 million for the write-off of goodwill in its aluminum extrusions business.

Tredegar shares rose 31 cents, or 1.77 percent, to \$17.80 yesterday on the New York Stock Exchange. The company reported earnings after the market closed.

— **John Reid Blackwell**

Markel Corp.

Markel Corp.'s profit dropped 52 percent in the first quarter on lower investment returns and less favorable underwriting results.

The Henrico County-based specialty insurance company reported profit of \$16.4 million, or \$1.67 per share, compared

with profit of \$34 million, or \$3.41 per share, in the first quarter of 2008.

Total operating revenue was \$471 million, down from \$520 million in the same period of 2008.

The company reported a net realized investment loss of \$55.2 million compared with a loss of \$56.3 million in the same period of 2008.

Markel shares rose \$18.37, or 6.64 percent, to close at \$295.20 on the New York Stock Exchange.

— **John Reid Blackwell**

Major local employer: Delhaize

Delhaize Group, the owner of the Food Lion supermarket chain, reported profit that exceeded analysts' estimates as

rising sales of own-label goods and lower inventory losses lifted the gross margin to a six-year high.

First-quarter net income rose 24 percent to 127 million euros (\$169 million), or 1.24 euros a share, Brussels-based Delhaize said. Profit surpassed the 116 million-euro median estimate of analysts.

Sales advanced 13 percent to 5.09 billion euros.

Increased penetration of private labels at Food Lion and Hannaford stores in the U.S., computer-assisted inventory management and better purchasing terms in Europe lifted the percentage of revenue left after costs of goods sold to more than 26 percent for the first time since 2003.

— **Bloomberg News Service**

BUSINESS BRIEFS



MARK LENNIHAN/THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Amazon debuts bigger Kindle

Amazon.com Inc., aiming to broaden the appeal of its Kindle electronic reader, yesterday unveiled a model whose screen is 2 1/2 times bigger than the current version and is designed for newspapers and textbooks. Customers can pre-order the device for \$489, with shipments arriving this summer, Amazon said. Amazon founder and CEO Jeff Bezos said that because the newest Kindle has a 9.7-inch screen, it will be better suited than the 6-inch regular Kindle at showing "complex layouts" in everything from cookbooks to travel guides. In addition to a larger screen, the new version also offers more data storage — room for 3,500 books instead of 1,500 on the Kindle 2.

VIRGINIA

GM Fredericksburg site to be idled for six weeks

General Motors Corp.'s Fredericksburg powertrain plant will close for six weeks during the next three months.

In all, GM will temporarily close all or portions of 23 engine, transmission and parts factories across the country for several weeks because vehicle-making plants also will be idled.

The Fredericksburg plant, which makes parts, will close for a week starting Monday. It will then close again June 8 and not reopen until July 13, according to Sherrie Childers Arb, a GM spokeswoman.

The plant employs 83 people — 67 hourly and 16 salaried.

for the two companies last month, but Pepsi Bottling Group rejected the deal Monday, calling it "grossly inadequate."

■ **Supervalu Inc.** has appointed Wal-Mart executive Craig Herkert as its new chief executive officer.

Supervalu, a major Richmond area employer, said it has not set a start date for Herkert, 49, to assume the leadership position at the national supermarket chain and grocery distributor. He takes over the job from Jeff Noddle, 62, a more than 30-year employee at Supervalu who has served as CEO since 2001.

■ **Regal Entertainment Group** founder Mike Campbell is giving up his role as CEO but will continue as executive chairman of the country's largest movie theater company. Knoxville, Tenn.-based Regal said Chief Financial Officer Amy Miles will become CEO and Senior Vice President of Finance David Ownby will become CFO on June 30.

■ **Wal-Mart** has agreed to pay nearly \$2 million and improve safety at its 92 New York stores as part of a deal with prosecutors that avoids criminal charges in the trampling death of a temporary worker during a customer stampede on the day after Thanksgiving. The company agreed to implement an improved crowd-management plan for post-Thanksgiving Day sales, set up a \$400,000 victims' compensation and remuneration fund, and give a \$1.5 million grant to Nassau County social-services programs and non-profit groups. If criminal charges had been brought against the chain for negligence in the worker's death, the company would have been subject to a fine if convicted.

■ **Convicted conman Bernard Madoff** turned his investment firm into his personal piggy bank, using tens of millions of dollars in client funds to cover costs for employees and family members, court papers say. Madoff used money from his firm to pay loans, satisfy capital calls, fund real estate purchases and hire employees for his children, wife, brother and workers.

■ **Simon Property Group Inc.**, the biggest U.S. shopping-mall owner, plans to sell shares to the public for the second time this year. The company will offer 14 million shares, with the proceeds to be used for general corporate purposes, the company said. Simon Property sold 17.3 million shares and completed a \$650 million debt sale in the first quarter, raising about \$1.2 billion.

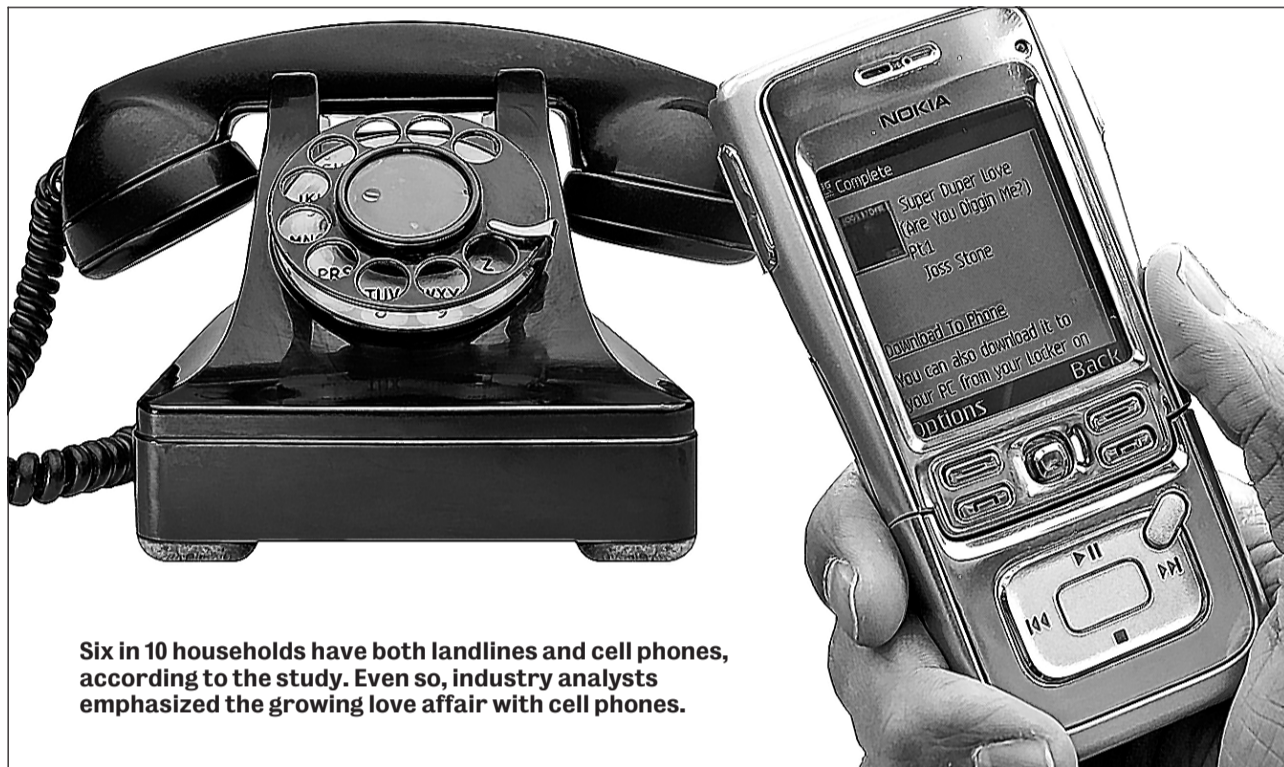
■ **Ford Motor Co.** stripped "truck" from the name of one its Detroit-area plants yesterday as it announced plans to build its next-generation Focus there, including a battery-electric version Ford expects will run up to 100 miles without using gas or emitting greenhouse gases. The next-generation Focus is expected to roll off the line next year. The retooled facility once built hefty sport utility vehicles such as the Lincoln Navigator.

■ **Ford Motor Co.**'s sale of Volvo is gathering pace as Geely Holding Group, China's biggest privately owned carmaker, and at least two more bidders review the automaker's books.

■ **Fiat SpA** is interested in acquiring Swedish carmaker Saab Automobile in addition to GM's European operations, CEO Sergio Marchionne said.

— **From Staff and Wire Reports**

Biz to Go



Six in 10 households have both landlines and cell phones, according to the study. Even so, industry analysts emphasized the growing love affair with cell phones.

TIMES-DISPATCH

Cell-only households outnumber landlines

In a high-tech shift accelerated by the recession, the number of U.S. households opting for only cell phones has for the first time surpassed those that just have traditional landlines.

It is the freshest evidence of the growing appeal of wireless phones.

Twenty percent of households had only cells during the last half of 2008, according to a Centers for Disease Control and Prevention survey released yesterday.

That was an increase of nearly 3 percentage points over the first half of the year, the largest six-month increase since the government started gathering such data in 2003.

The 20 percent of homes with only cell phones compared with 17 percent with landlines but no cells.

That ratio has changed starkly in recent years: In the first six months of 2003, just 3 percent of households were

wireless only, while 43 percent stuck to landlines.

Stephen Blumberg, senior scientist at the CDC and an author of the report, attributed the growing number of cell-only households in part to a recession that has forced many families to scour their budgets. People who live in homes that have only wireless service tend to be disproportionately low-income, young, renters and Hispanics.

"We do expect that with the recession, we'd see an increase in the prevalence of wireless-only households," Blumberg said.

Six in 10 households have both landlines and cell phones. Even so, analysts emphasized the public's growing love affair with the versatility of cell phones, which can perform functions like receiving text messages and are mobile.

In one illustration of the impact these changes are having, Verizon Communications Inc. had 39 million landline tele-

phone customers in March 2008 but 35 million a year later. Over the same period, its wireless customers grew from 67 million to 87 million, though 13 million of the added lines came from the firm's acquisition of Alltel Corp., according to figures provided by Verizon.

Further underscoring the public's diminishing reliance on landline phones, the federal survey found that 15 percent of households have both landlines and cells but take few or no calls on their landlines, often because they are wired into computers. Combined with wireless-only homes, that means 35 percent of households are basically reachable only on cells.

The data is compiled by the National Health Interview Survey, conducted by the CDC. The latest survey involved in-person interviews with members of 12,597 households from last July through December.

— **The Associated Press**

Transit

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concludes.

The "Got Transit" group worked with media partners — including the Richmond Times-Dispatch, Richmond Magazine, Style Weekly and WWBT-Channel 12 — and the GRTC Transit System.

The effort was one of several policy initiatives undertaken by this year's class of 70 LMR participants, who are looking for ways to address issues raised in a report last year by James A. Crupi about what the Richmond region needs to succeed, chief among them improved transportation systems. "This year, we were intentional about looking at the elements of the Crupi report and honing on that," said Carmen Foster, who is chairwoman of the LMR program committee.

Nine other groups also presented regional solutions on crime and public safety, education, regional identity, housing and job preparedness.

The "Got Transit" campaign focuses on mass transit's importance to the environment, relieving traffic congestion, helping people get to and from work, saving people money, and attracting new employers to the region.

"How does public transit affect me, or more bluntly, why should I care?" explained Richmond lawyer Robert Angle in outlining the reasons for people to support expansion of mass transit in the region.

The presentation made a positive impression on Chesterfield County Administrator James J.L. Stegmaier. "I think it's a great idea," said Stegmaier, noting the county's support for expanded commuter bus service and interest in a bus rapid-transit system.

The "Got Transit" work group includes Chesterfield supervisor Marleen K. Durfee, who said, "It's getting the message out there about mass transit."

• Contact Michael Martz at (804) 649-6964 or mmartz@timesdispatch.com.

Jury gets infomercial fraud case

The Associated Press

ALEXANDRIA — A federal jury is debating whether two self-described stock-trading experts who used late-night infomercials to tout their success were frauds who deceived consumers or successful salespeople who knew how to pitch products.

Lawyers made closing arguments yesterday in a monthlong trial against Utah residents Linda Woolf and David Gengler, who each made millions in commissions selling stock-picking systems from a company called Teach Me To Trade.

Prosecutors said Woolf and Gengler

falsely portrayed themselves as successful stock traders to persuade people to spend tens of thousands on Teach Me To Trade products. They also allegedly lied about the success rate of people who purchased the company's products.

While the two claimed in infomercials and hotel seminars to be successful stock traders, prosecutors said tax records show that Woolf lost money in the market and Gengler made a marginal profit.

Defense lawyers said there was no fraud because customers received exactly what they paid for. They said the two may have occasionally embellished some claims.

Ford

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said Josh Dare, who has teenage children. "In principle, there are some attractive qualities, but it can't replace parents," he said.

Dare has a 19-year-old son and a 16-year-old daughter. Both drive. "One of the great worries as a parent is handing the keys over," he said.

Dare said it's the parents' responsibility to teach their kids how to be courteous and safe drivers, but technology like MyKey can help enforce some of the lessons.

"It's a safeguard," he said.

Ford has been showing the technology for the past few days at dealers and events in Washington and Maryland.

Each vehicle with MyKey comes with two keys. A master key allows parents to make the changes, and a second key tells the vehicle's computer that it needs to put the settings into effect.

MyKey will first appear in the 2010 Focus, which comes to market this summer. It will be part of the Focus' standard equipment, so there will not be any additional costs.

It will begin appearing in other models in the next year.

• Contact Louis Llovio at (804) 649-6348 or LLLlovio@timesdispatch.com.

Employers

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practices: Dominion Digital (small-sized company), Hanover Fire EMS (medium-sized company) and Bon Secours Richmond Health System (large-sized company)

■ Community involvement: Snag-A-Job.com (medium); Wyeth (large)

■ Diversity excellence: Wyeth (large)

■ Work-force development: Colony Property & Casualty (medium); Virginia Commonwealth University Health System (large).

Six companies also won the 2009 Alfred P. Sloan Awards for Business Excellence in Workplace Flexibility. The award recognizes employers in several communities nationwide.

The winners were: Bon Secours Richmond Health System, Capital One Financial Corp., Anthem Blue Cross and Blue Shield, Rink Management Services Corp., accounting and consulting firm BDO Seidman LLP and recruiting and consulting firm Vaco Richmond LLC.

• Contact Emily C. Dooley at (804) 649-6016 or edooley@timesdispatch.com.