

Business

THE BOSTON GLOBE FRIDAY, MARCH 11, 2005

Markets

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45.89 POINTS	1.57 POINTS
DOW JONES 10,851.51	NASDAQ 2,059.72
US DOLLAR €0.745 ▼ 0.002	
10-YEAR TREASURY 4.47% ▼ 0.05	
MASSACHUSETTS 303.32 ▼ 1.05	

STEVE BAILEY

Downtown The best messenger?

It makes for a heck of a little-guy story. A 13-year-old boy goes out to walk his dog, Cassius, and the dog is zapped dead by stray voltage from an old NStar lamp-post site, the latest in a series of dogs to be killed or injured by the carelessness of the big utility company. The boy's dad hires a lawyer and together they come up with a novel way to send a message to the fat cats who have done far too little to fix the problem: They demand \$1.4 million, the size of the bonus to NStar chief executive Tom May, as compensation for Cassius's death, later trimming the demand to \$740,000, May's annual salary, when NStar balks.

"We tried to come up with an offer that had some poetry to it and that would say in very clear terms to NStar: We don't want this to keep happening," the family's lawyer, John G. Swomley, said this week at a crowded press conference, complete with pictures of 13-year-old Kyle DeVito and his year-old boxer, Cassius.

A man with a criminal past makes for a poor lecturer on ethics of NStar case.

It made for nice theater but for this: Kyle's dad, Paul DeVito, and the lawyer make for a strange pair to be lecturing anyone on the need to do the right thing.

The man who is now trying to hold up NStar for \$740,000 was arrested 10 years ago in connection with an investigation into a series of home invasions where men posing as cops were holding up drug dealers. A jury convicted Paul DeVito of distribution and possession with intent to distribute cocaine and conspiring to obstruct a grand jury investigation into the home invasions. A jury was deadlocked on whether he impersonated a federal drug agent in the armed home invasion. DeVito served six years of a nine-year sentence before getting out three years ago.

NStar will make no one's list of most-admired companies. This is the company that hired former FBI agent John Connolly and kept him on the payroll long after it became clear that he was being investigated as the guy who was helping infamous killer Whitey Bulger stay one step ahead of the law. NStar oversold the benefits of deregulation. And it has done a lousy job in fixing the problem of stray voltage. Nothing changes the fact that the DeVito family's dog was a victim of those problems. And, Paul DeVito served his time.

But a man who got out of jail not long ago for distributing cocaine and misleading a grand jury makes for a poor moral messenger.

DeVito declined to comment. Swomley, his lawyer, says DeVito's criminal history has nothing to do with NStar's problems. "I hope you will convey that you are less than savory," he says of me. "Your prurient interest is clearly not to further the debate about public policy but designed to sell newspapers." Of one of his own main lines of business, defending alleged sex offenders, Swomley says: "It is a very noble profession. They are the least among us."

In 1997, after his conviction, DeVito and another man charged in the robberies were the star witnesses for the government's case against a Legal Sea Foods executive who had also been charged with posing as a cop and ripping off drug dealers. The jury didn't buy their testimony and let the Legal executive walk.

This time there is no question that his dog is dead. There is no question that NStar has a problem that needs fixing. But when it comes to Paul DeVito, messenger of change, the question is this: Is he an aggrieved father or is he looking for the biggest score of his life?

You be the judge.

Steve Bailey is a Globe columnist. He can be reached at bailey@globe.com or at 617-929-2902.

Airline's woes mount

Delta shares plunge after the carrier warns it will post another substantial loss this year despite a recent round of cost cuts. **D2**

Clash over prayer at work

A national Muslim organization wants to mediate with Dell over 30 Somali workers who are at the center of a dispute. **D3**

Globe completes Metro deal

Antitrust inquiry, charges of racism at firm stalled sale

By Mark Jurkowitz
GLOBE STAFF

The Boston Globe yesterday said it completed its purchase of a 49 percent interest in the Metro Boston newspaper, a deal that had been delayed by concerns over racial insensitivity in the

Metro culture and by a Justice Department antitrust inquiry.

The \$16.5 million transaction between the state's largest daily and the free tabloid aimed at younger readers came after the Justice Department concluded its investigation without taking any action and after Metro Boston said it was forming a community advisory board and initiating a diversity and sensitivity training program for employees.

While officials of both parties lauded the deal yesterday, several representatives of the local African-American com-

munity said Metro's efforts at fostering diversity were insufficient. Boston Herald publisher Patrick J. Purcell, whose complaint triggered the antitrust investigation, said he disagreed with the Justice Department's decision to allow the sale to proceed.

The venture between the Globe, with a daily circulation of 451,471, and the Metro, which distributes about 180,000 papers daily, will create cross-promotional and cross-selling opportunities between the publications. Although the Globe will make some con-

tent available to the Metro, the two editorial departments will remain independent. The agreement also makes the Globe one of a growing number of established papers that have invested in or started up publications that provide a quick and compact digest of the day's news in order to attract the elusive young reader.

In a statement released yesterday, Globe publisher Richard Gilman said "after several weeks of careful examination of all the issues involved, we're con-

METRO, Page D8

Gates getting Groove

Company's software will help Microsoft fill hole in its offerings

By Robert Weisman
GLOBE STAFF

Groove Networks Inc., a Beverly company that makes software enabling roving and far-flung knowledge workers to collaborate, is being acquired by Microsoft Corp.

The deal, unveiled yesterday, will thrust Groove's software onto a much larger stage and, eventually, into the desktop and laptop computers of hundreds of millions of workers worldwide who use Microsoft's Office platform. The parties didn't disclose financial terms.

Groove will be integrated into Microsoft's "information worker" business. Jeff Raikes, group vice president for that business, said Microsoft plans to retain Groove's offices at Beverly's Cummings Center, and its 200 employees. Raikes said he hoped to grow the operation and may use it as a base to attract technology talent in the Boston area.

GROOVE NETWORKS, Page D8



Ray Ozzie, well-known technologist and founder of Beverly-based Groove, will join Microsoft's leadership team.



200 State St.'s prime location in a part of the city that's being reshaped made it a widely sought after property.

Beacon will buy State St. building

Office property will fetch \$141m

By Chris Reidy
GLOBE STAFF

Beacon Capital Partners LLC, which two years ago bought the John Hancock Tower, has agreed to buy a 16-story office building near Faneuil Hall Marketplace and the site of the Rose Kennedy Greenway for \$141 million, according to executives briefed on the bidding.

The seller of the building, Sullivan Properties Inc., referred inquiries to its broker, Riaz A. Cassum of Holliday Fenoglio Fowler LP. Through a colleague, Cassum confirmed that Sullivan and Beacon Capital had agreed to a sale of the 200 State St. location, but would not discuss price. A spokesman for Beacon Capital said the firm had no comment.

Boston's office market has been soft, and as of last month, 200 State St. had a 40 percent vacancy rate, but its prime location in a part of the city that's being reshaped by the depression of the Central Artery and the development of the Greenway made it a widely sought after property. A building that once had some of its views blocked by the artery will have some of its windows overlooking the Greenway.

The building attracted 37 bids, including 22 that were for \$130 million or more, said an unsuccessful bidder who asked not to be identified.

A \$141 million price tag for 200 **BEACON CAPITAL, Page D3**

Call up documents and work on them collaboratively, in real time

Alert users when a colleague is online and allow users to see who is online

Connects across Internet firewalls and security features are always on.

Chat with online colleagues in a variety of formats, including instant messages and VoIP.

The new guy at the Office

Collaboration software developed by Groove Networks Inc. allows workers to communicate, share data, and update spreadsheets, artwork, and documents in real time. Microsoft may incorporate Groove into future versions of its operating system and its Office suite of software.

Dueling spring travel sales heating up air fare battle

By Keith Reed
GLOBE STAFF

If you're tired of New England winters, this weekend might be a good time to stay out of the cold and surf the Internet for a cheap fare to somewhere warmer.

Several airlines have launched competing fare sales for spring travel, igniting a price war in the financially battered industry.

US Airways is offering fares as low as \$118 across all its routes, including a \$138 round trip to from Boston to Orlando. United Airlines has a worldwide fare sale, including roundtrip fares from Boston to Paris for \$430. Not to be left behind, American Airlines is offering

roundtrip flights from Boston to Los Angeles for \$288 and Boston to Miami for \$198.

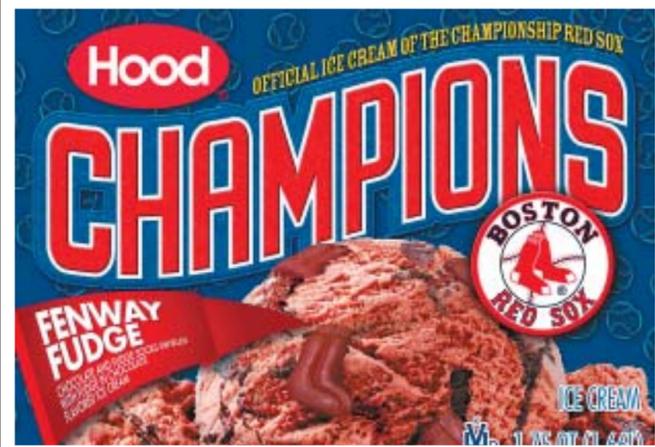
A Delta Air Lines sale on tickets to its Atlanta hub ended yesterday.

Although their sales all coincide with each other, the airlines said they were only following their normal cycle of seasonal ticket discounts and not dropping prices to compete with one another.

"We want to stimulate travel in the spring season," said Amy Kudwa, a spokeswoman for US Airways.

In typical fashion, getting in on the fare sales comes with a host of travel restrictions. US Airways, for example, requires at least a one-night stay on its dis-

CHEAP FARES, Page D3



DESSERT OF CHAMPIONS — HP Hood, in partnership with the Boston Red Sox, is savoring the sweet taste of 2004's baseball triumph with four new flavors: Green Monster Mint, Fenway Fudge, Comeback Caramel, and Peanut Butter Nation.