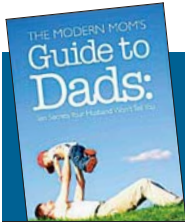


# THE ORANGE COUNTY REGISTER

PRICE: 50 CENTS • Monday, Dec. 3, 2007 • FOUNDED IN 1905



LIFE\* TOGETHER

## On a mission

Author wants moms to realize dads care too

BUSINESS MONDAY

## Styrofoam solution

Customers inspire businessman to lighten landfills' loads



We're breaking local news all day on [www.ocregister.com](http://www.ocregister.com).

Weather Details on Local 8



70/53 79/47  
COAST INLAND

VIVENDI, ACTIVISION TO MERGE

# ON TOP OF THEIR GAME

The deal is valued at \$19 billion and will create a rival to industry leader Electronic Arts.

By JESSICA HALL and SCOTT HILLIS  
REUTERS

**V**ivendi, parent company of Blizzard Entertainment in Irvine, the makers of the popular "World of Warcraft" online game, announced Sunday it plans to use its games division to gain control of video-game maker Activision. It's the publisher of, among other things, the "Guitar Hero" series and the "Tony Hawk" skateboarding games.

And if you think it's all silly business, well, it's a deal valued at nearly \$19 billion.

The merger is a testament to the popularity of Blizzard. The company is credited with helping Vivendi post a 25 percent increase in revenue last year to \$1.1 billion by eranking out online video games such as "WoW."

By combining forces with Vivendi, Activision chief executive Robert A. Kotick said, his company gains instant expertise in the Internet gaming world, where Blizzard has become a pioneer.

"We looked every which way to figure out how to participate in what Blizzard had

**TOWERING ABOVE THE REST:** Blizzard's "World of Warcraft" is the top multiplayer online role-playing franchise, with 9.3 million subscribers.



COURTESY OF BLIZZARD ENTERTAINMENT



KEYUR KHAMAR, BLOOMBERG NEWS

**MONEYMAKER:** Activision's popular "Guitar Hero" series has been a big factor in the company's surging sales and profits.

SEE MERGER • PAGE 4

THE MORNING READ

## PANCAKES AND PURPOSE

Ex-restauranteur Ron Voll aims to help parents of ailing children.

By MARY ANN MILBOURN  
THE ORANGE COUNTY REGISTER

Ron Voll knows pancakes. He's been making them for 50 years and couldn't imagine ever doing anything else.

"It's in your blood," he says. So it was with some reluctance last year that the 71-year-old hung up his apron as owner of the Original Pancake House restaurants in Anaheim and Yorba Linda and sold them to his two sons.

It wasn't that Voll didn't want to be in the restaurant business anymore, but he had a bigger idea. It's another restaurant — but one with a humanitarian

SEE ANGELS • PAGE 2



EUGENE GARCIA, THE ORANGE COUNTY REGISTER

**APPLE OF HIS EYE:** Ron Voll, 71, hung up his apron as owner of the Original Pancake House restaurants in Anaheim and Yorba Linda last year. He holds a signature apple pancake in Yorba Linda.

## Driven to seek alternatives

**M**ore than 1,000 people attended the 23rd International Electrical Vehicle Symposium in Anaheim on Sunday. It was a rare opportunity for eco-conscious consumers to view alternative fuel vehicles that are expected to hit the U.S. market next year. Some vehicles, including an \$11,000 all-electric scooter, are already available for purchase. The symposium continues through Wednesday, but beginning today, it is no longer open to the public. **NEWS 4**

ONLINE EXTRAS

To see a slide show, go to [ocregister.com/extras](http://ocregister.com/extras).

3 must-read stories you'll find inside today's paper

## DOCTORS DEMAND CASH PAYMENTS

Most doctors complain about the low rates they receive from insurance companies, and a few are moving to cash-only practices. Dr. Felice Gersh, an Irvine gynecologist, stopped accepting major private insurance plans this fall. Instead, her patients pay the entire cost of appointments and lab tests. Then, depending on their insurance plan, the patients receive reimbursement. It's a model that's catching on among doctors, though at a cost to patients.

IN DEPTH  
NEWS 3 >>>

## LARGEST SURF OF THE YEAR MAY BRING FLOODING

Big waves are forecast to show up here Tuesday, and that, combined with a high tide, could cause problems in low-lying coastal areas. **Local 1**

## VENEZUELAN VOTERS REJECT CONSTITUTIONAL CHANGES

Hugo Chávez had sought to cement his power Sunday in a vote on constitutional changes in Venezuela that could let him be president for life. The changes narrowly failed. **News 9**

On the Web

### Vote for your favorite display

Gucci. Apple. Saks. These were among the first-place winners in eight categories created as part of South Coast Plaza's annual holiday window display contest. Now you get to help pick the grand winner. Go to the new OC Retail blog at [ocregister.com/retail](http://ocregister.com/retail) today to vote for your favorite window.

### Reduced prices at Ruby's

To learn about a one-day price cut at Ruby's Diner, read the Fast Food Maven at [ocregister.com/fastfood](http://ocregister.com/fastfood).

Coming tomorrow



## Uncovering Victoria's Secret

Victoria's Secret models took to the runways last week to show off the latest lingerie. We show you a sneak peek ahead of Tuesday's CBS broadcast. **Life • trends**

Index

Abby • Life 4  
Comics • Life 8-9  
Crossword • Life 8-9  
Deaths • Local 5  
Lottery • Local 1  
Movies • Life 5  
Television • Life 10

The Orange County Register is a Freedom Communications newspaper. Copyright 2007. Customer service toll-free 1-877-OCR-7009 (627-7009). Read us online [www.ocregister.com](http://www.ocregister.com)



# Idea lightens landfills' load

Businessman finds solution for disposing of bulky Styrofoam by listening to his clients.

Jim Walker, owner of **Olympic Wire and Equipment Inc.** in Newport Beach, spends a large portion of his time talking to customers.

He sells waste-handling and recycling equipment, and he wants to know how customers use this expensive equipment and what else Olympic can do for them.



**JAN NORMAN**  
REGISTER  
WRITER

"The worst thing for a small-business owner is to be trapped in a bubble, not knowing what exists out there," Walker says.

His customers are retailers, printers and other large users of paper, cardboard and plastic. They continually asked Walker what else they could do to reduce the amount of trash they sent to landfills.

By listening to his customers and continually researching the latest in recycling, Walker has found a profitable addition to his \$10 million core business.

Paper and cardboard balers have been around a long time, and Olympic is one of the few distributors to carry multiple brands. But Walker didn't have a solution for the Styrofoam packaging materials piling up in customers' warehouses.

Companies spend tens of thousands of dollars a month to dump Styrofoam into landfills, where it sits for thousands of years because it doesn't break down. There hasn't been a market for used Styrofoam because it's so bulky that shipping is uneconomical.

Styrofoam is 95 percent air, so 900 pounds of the plastic fills a 53-foot-long trailer.

Walker went looking for a solution.

His industry background helped, he said. He and his father owned a company that sold baling wire, which they sold in the mid-1990s. Walker was familiar with many types of equipment that used wire, so he started Olympic to be a distributor. It has become the largest seller of waste-handling and recycling equipment on the West Coast.

For Styrofoam, he found a couple of approaches to compacting it for easier shipment: melting it or compressing it until the inert gas escapes.

The former can release styrene,



KEN STEINHARDT, THE ORANGE COUNTY REGISTER

**SURROUNDED BY STYROFOAM:** Linder's Furniture director of operations Mark Kantor stands above a week's worth of Styrofoam that he was paying to put in a landfill. Now he uses an Olympic Wire and Equipment product to compact the waste.

## Olympic Wire and Equipment Inc.

**Address:** 1300 Bristol St. North, Newport Beach, CA 92660

**Contact:** 949-646-9731 or [www.olympicequipment.com](http://www.olympicequipment.com)

**Type of business:** Distributor of waste-handling and recycling equipment

**Founder:** James L. Walker

**Employees:** Eight plus six field service crew

**Revenue:** \$10 million

which can cause cancer, according to the International Agency for Research on Cancer.

Walker found a Danish machine, the Runi, which compacts Styrofoam to 1/50th the original size. A one-foot cube weighs 19 pounds, he said.

The Runi, which comes in three sizes, isn't cheap: \$15,000 to \$64,000. But trash fees are so high that customers can recoup their investment in less than a year, Walker said.

One example is **Linder's Furniture**, a 10-store retailer based in Garden Grove.

Furniture is packed in Styrofoam for light-weight protection, and Linder's

warehouse was spending \$1,000 a week to send the packing material and other nonrecyclables to landfills, said Mark Kantor, director of operations.

At a trade show he saw Olympic's booth with the Runi machine and bought one. It has reduced Linder's trash hauling to \$500 every other week, he said.

"After paying the equipment lease and labor (to operate the machine), I have positive cash flow of \$2,500 a month. That's before I sell the (compacted Styrofoam) for about \$1,000 a month.

"Plus I like that we are doing our little bit for the planet," he added.

Now that Styrofoam can be more economically shipped, companies like **Timbron International** in the Bay Area buy used Styrofoam to make decorative molding. Others turn it into packing peanuts or housing insulation, Walker said. They pay about 17 cents to 25 cents a pound.

This prospect appeals to the city of Los Angeles. Rather than ban it as Oakland and Santa Monica have done, which is difficult to enforce, the city has contracted with **Bestway Recycling** to accept Styrofoam from residential trash collections.

The city had been paying \$30 a ton to dispose of used Styrofoam. Now it will be paid \$25 a ton.

Bestway is using Olympic's Runi machines for the program, which it is negotiating to expand throughout Los Angeles County.

Bestway hopes to break even the first year and start turning a profit on the Styrofoam recycling in the second year, according to Chief Financial Officer David Cho.

Olympic has sold 20 Runi Styrofoam compacters in a year. However, he doesn't expect that niche to eclipse Olympic's other waste-handling business.

"It's a nice part of the business, but every year our (recycling) industry keeps growing as more things need to be recycled," Walker said. "More companies want to recycle, both because of the costs (of disposal) and to be environmentally friendly. So there will always be something new."

He figures he'll find out about it by listening to his customers.

### CONTACT THE WRITER:

714-796-7927 or [jnorman@ocregister.com](mailto:jnorman@ocregister.com).  
Read more small-business stories at [ocregister.com/jan](http://ocregister.com/jan).

