

TODAY

COMING FRIDAY IN EXPOSED:
Quick Chek New Jersey
Festival of Ballooning.



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lehighvalleylive.com THE EXPRESS-TIMES C6

A Day in Life



TASTE

CUCUMBER HUMMUS SANDWICH

3 Tablespoons hummus
1 piece naan flatbread
1 Tablespoon honey
½ small cucumber, sliced
Salt and ground black pepper

Spread the hummus over half of the naan. Drizzle the honey over the other half of the naan. Arrange the cucumber slices over the hummus, then sprinkle with salt and pepper. Fold the naan in half to form a sandwich. Makes 1 serving.

Associated Press

LEHIGHVALLEYLIVE

LIFTING OFF

This year's Quick Chek New Jersey Festival of Ballooning in Readington Township has a little bit of everything — from Meat Loaf to "Cannon Lady" and, naturally, lots of hot-air balloons. With so much to do, we wanted to know if heading to the festival this weekend was on your to-do list. Vote in our poll at lehighvalleylive.com/exposed.



TRAVEL

GARDEN GROUP TO HELP SHARE D.C. AZALEAS

Horticulturalists from Magnolia Plantation and Gardens in South Carolina are traveling to Washington, D.C., to take cuttings from rare azaleas at the National Arboretum to share with gardens around the country.

Earlier this year, the 65-year-old azalea collection was saved by an anonymous \$1 million donation. The U.S. Department of Agriculture had planned to remove them because of funding troubles.

The horticulturalists from Magnolia Gardens will take the cuttings today. They say the plants likely have a genetic link to material kept at the Charleston, S.C., site. The National Arboretum's first director, Ben Morrison, used materials from Magnolia for his extensive breeding program to produce the first large flowered azaleas that could withstand cooler temperatures in the mid-Atlantic region.

The flowers bloom each April and May, drawing 100,000 visitors to Washington, D.C.

Associated Press

Weather or not to buy

WEATHER TRENDS INTERNATIONAL predicts year-out forecasts to affect global purchasing decisions.

BY KELLY HUTH
The Express-Times

Weather Trends International Inc. can help a bride in China figure out a sunny day for her wedding in Hawaii, a year before she's ready to say "I do."

Weather Trends uses statistical algorithms and 115 years worth of climate cycle data to predict the weather a year in advance for nearly every inch of the planet.

Looking into the future

The company released wt360 pro in June — a 99-cent app that gives iPhone and iPad users access to hourly, daily and yearly forecasts for 6½ million locations across the globe. The app also offers customizable e-mail alerts and global weather maps tracking temperatures, precipitation, wave heights and ocean temperatures. A new version of the app will be available in early August, and the company is working to bring the technology to Google Android users as well.

"It goes about 330 days beyond other weather apps," says Bill Kirk, CEO and co-founder of Weather Trends International.

The technology has an 80 to 85 percent rate of accuracy for temperature and 75 to 80 percent accuracy for precipitation, according to the weather auditing firm ForecastWatch.

Weather Trends International was founded in 2002 by Kirk and Executive Vice President Jack Grum. The company — ranked No. 5 on Forbes' list of America's Most Promising Companies in 2009, and with 11 other business awards to its name — is based in Hanover Township, Northampton County. The bread and butter of the business focuses on applying long-term weather predictions to companies for marketing and purchasing.

"Wal-Mart is buying product for spring 2012 now," Kirk says.

Knowing if that future season is going to bring warm, sunny days or cold, damp ones is the difference between stocking more umbrellas and galoshes or bringing out the bathing suits early. Weather forecasting allows companies to plan inventory, decide when to advertise and when to mark down. Even the Weather Channel is a client.

Clients like Lipton Iced Tea, Banana Boat and Coppertone know that a hot summer will boost sales of sun block, iced tea and other beach necessities.

Facebook ads tailored to users' profiles can also be modified to show a sunglasses ad on a day when people are most likely to buy — a hot and sunny scorcher.

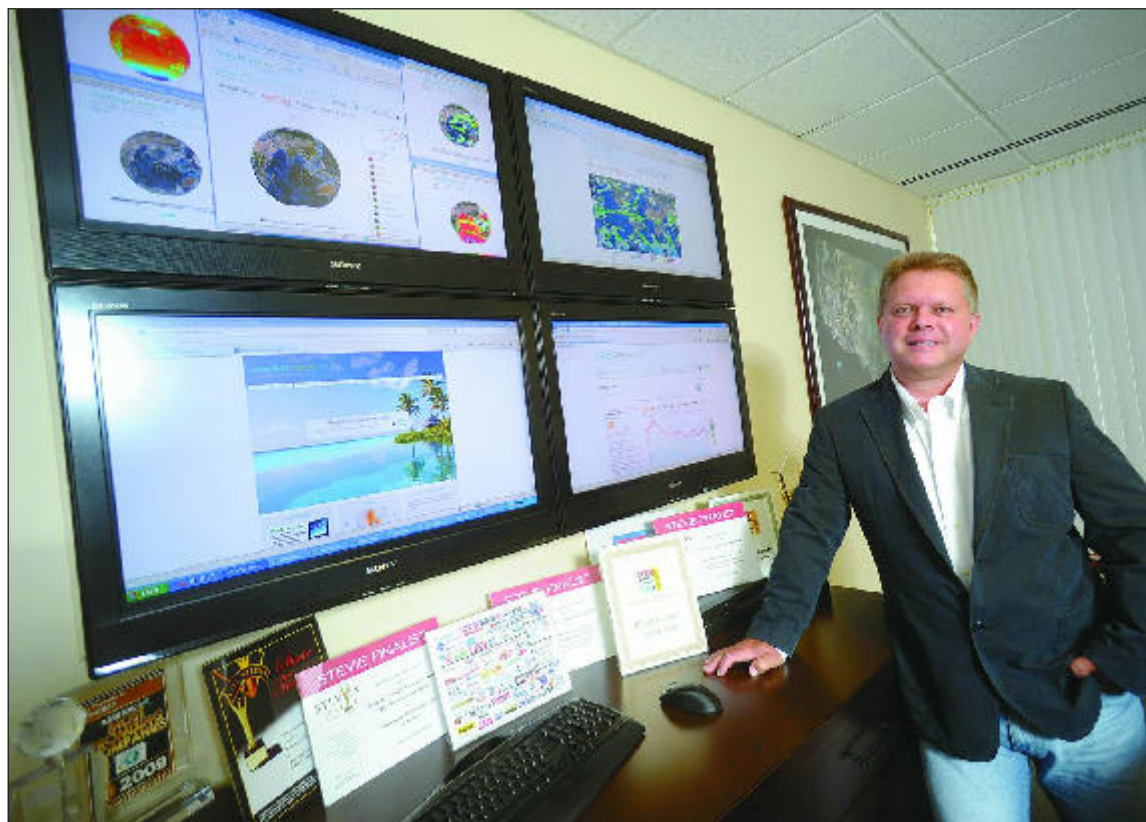
Extreme weather

Two years ago, Kirk says, the company was predicting a drought in India, which would shellac its sugarcane sales. The companies that doubted the severely hot weather paid for it when sugar shot to an all-time high that year.

"It's about assessing risk," says Kirk, who earned a degree in meteorology from Rutgers University.

Kirk started developing forecasts while serving in the U.S. Air Force in 1989. Gen. Norman Schwarzkopf, commander of Operation Desert Storm, needed longer-range forecasting for pilots and it was his comments that got Kirk's idea for Weather Trends technology rolling, Kirk said.

Kirk says weather has a ripple



EXPRESS-TIMES PHOTO | MATT SMITH

Weather Trends CEO Bill Kirk stands by monitors displaying the company's website at its headquarters on Valley Center Parkway in Hanover Township, Northampton County.

effect in the economy and was partly to blame for the recession.

"In 2008, we were forecasting a cold spring, a cold summer, hot fall and record blizzards in the winter," he says, adding that the weather was completely incompatible with what retailers were selling for each season. "Ten out of 12 months were out of sync. We saw that coming a year before it happened."

Hurricane Katrina was also not a surprise.

In 2004, the company predicted a major land-falling hurricane to hit the north central Gulf of Mexico in September 2005. Katrina hit in late August.

"Wal-Mart knew about it and was in there (stocking emergency supplies) before FEMA," Kirk says.

Tracey Johnston, a retired buyer who spent 28 years with Wal-Mart operations and merchandising, says the Weather Trends forecasts gave the retail giant an edge

THE POWER OF ONE

Weather Trends International maintains that one degree difference in year over year temperatures can affect sales.

- One degree cooler:
 - 15,000 more units of soup each week
 - 24 percent increase in electric blankets sold each week
 - 1,000 more vaporizers sold each week
- One degree hotter:
 - 240,000 more units of ice cream sold each week during the summer
 - 24 percent more air conditioners sold each week
 - 90,000 more units of sun care

products sold each week

One degree cooler:

- 15,000 more units of soup each week
- 24 percent increase in electric blankets sold each week
- 1,000 more vaporizers sold each week

Source: Weather Trends International Inc.

attention to the weather.

Word to the wise: The company is also predicting a major hurricane to land between Florida and North Carolina this hurricane season.

Weather Trends International had a 5.7 margin of error in forecasting temperature a year ahead when it was audited in April. AccuWeather had a 6.1 margin of error when forecasting one to 14 days out, according to ForecastWatch.

A clear sky for your wedding day

But it's not just the Wal-Mart's and Coca-Cola's of the world that can make use of Weather Trends technology. Weather Trends was behind Easton Main Street Initiative's decision to keep its farmers' market open two extra months last year, says Kirk.

Market Manager Megan McBride says the decision to extend the season into November was made mid-season.

"We based our decision on what he told us. November can be brutal, but he said it would be mild. It was well worth it," McBride says. "It's amazingly accurate."

"It gave our vendors an opportunity to continue selling and it gave them the opportunity to take advantage of holiday sales (turkeys, wine and crafts)," she says.

Kirk says that he and his staff of 20 use the technology on wt360.com — the free website that offers the same technology of the app — to plan their own vacations and weddings.

The app takes the same technology that goes for \$25,000 to \$250,000 for corporate clients and puts it in the hands of everyday users in 70 countries, he said.

WEATHER TRENDS INTERNATIONAL

1495 Valley Center Parkway, Hanover Township

- wxtrends.com
- wt360.com

over competitors. After summer sales got hammered in 2004 because of cooler weather, Johnston was very cautious about his air conditioner order for 2005. April was cool, May was cool, but Kirk said it was going to get hot, Johnston recalls.

"When somebody tells you they can get weather right 13 months out and the weather guy can't get it right two days out, you really wonder," Johnston says in a phone interview.

On Weather Trends' advice, Wal-Mart started buying up \$50 million worth of air conditioners that The Home Depot, Sears and Lowe's were dumping.

"Everyone thought we were nuts, but it really hit. Weather can change the game," Johnston says, adding that competitors are taking the hint and starting to pay more

CALENDAR ADDITIONS

We'd like to know what's going on in your community. To add to our calendar, please submit information about the event, including when, where, ticket prices and a phone number, by e-mail to exposed@express-times.com, by fax at 610-258-7130, or online at lehighvalleylive.com/myevent.

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