

# B

Section

# LIFE

## MySpace, the latest Internet star

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

NEW YORK — The Internet has a rising star whose name isn't Google.

Just over 2 years old, MySpace now has 2 1/2 times the traffic of Google Inc., and it quickly eclipsed Friendster as the top social-networking site where users build larger and larger circles of friends.

Credit luck and acumen: MySpace learned from predecessors and figured out the right tools to package. And when its founders noticed heavy usage among musicians and fans, MySpace embraced that community with custom features.

"It's like being at a giant music conference 24 hours a day every day," said Greg McIntosh, 27, guitarist for Ann Arbor, Michigan-based Great Lakes Myth Society.

College students, meanwhile, can rate their professors and find classmates or alumni. Others play games, view classified ads, send online party invitations or rate the brave on how "hot" they are.

Sure, none of these features is unique, but what's the point of going elsewhere if your friends are already on MySpace?

"I noticed a lot of my friends talking about it, so I went on it and signed up," said Magda Olszanowski, 24, a University of Toronto senior. "And I've really pressured my friends who don't have it to get it."

Instead of using e-mail and instant messaging, Olszanowski keeps in touch with many friends simply by posting bulletins on her personal MySpace page, known as a profile. There, friends can send her a private message or post a public comment; they can see her photo album or read her Web journal, called a blog.

The free, ad-supported site has gotten so popular among teens—a quarter of its users are registered as minors—that parents, schools and law enforcement officials have taken notice, warning of sexual predators and other dangers.

Big media noticed, too. Last year, News Corp., the Australian media conglomerate controlled by Rupert Murdoch, bought MySpace's owner for \$580 million in cash.

The U.S.-heavy site now wants to expand internationally and on wireless devices, and it is adding such features as video-sharing to become more like a Web portal.

"We want people to stay on MySpace," said Tom Anderson, its president. "We'll give them whatever they might want to do."

The development comes as the leading portal, Yahoo Inc., becomes more like MySpace, starting a social-networking service called 360 and buying content-sharing sites such as Flickr and Del.icio.us.

MySpace was by no means first. In early 2003, Friendster Inc. introduced a system that connects people for networking and dating through existing circles of friends, rather than randomly or by keyword matches alone.

But just a half-year after MySpace launched, it surpassed Friendster in monthly visitors and now ranks 13th among all sites, according to Nielsen/NetRatings.

Please see **MYSFACE/2B**



PHOTO ILLUSTRATION/WADE NASH

## Looking for love

Internet offers a hands-off approach to finding a mate

By Cherie F. Hodges  
cherie.hodges@thecharlottepost.com

Okay, so Valentine's Day is over, but the search for love isn't.

According to a romance poll from the online site Classmates.com, people are turning to the web to find love. Many of them are searching for the one that got away in high school.

"People often wonder how to get in touch with a first love, former sweet heart or other people in their past who they cared about," Mark Goldston, CEO and president of United Online.

According to the Classmates poll, 71 percent of respondents think more people will turn to the internet to find love in 2006.

"Classmates.com is the number one place to start looking for friends and acquaintances because tens of millions of members have listed themselves by school, work and military affiliations," Goldston said.

Charlotte resident Beverly McDuffie said she'd go online to find the college crush that got away. If McDuffie reaches

out to that lost love, more than likely he'd be happy to hear from her if the survey holds true. Fifty percent of classmates.com respondents said they would like to be contacted by an old flame.

But has she reached out in cyberspace to touch him?

"I haven't, but I might," she said coyly.

See **GOING/2B**

## Teen pageant trains girls to reign

By Victoria Elmore  
THE CHARLOTTE POST

The first Miss Teen African American Pageant will be held in Charlotte.

The national scholarship pageant and development program for girls 15-18 years old is July 7-23. The winner will receive a \$10,000 college scholarship and prizes. Deadline for applications is Feb. 28.

The pageant will differ from the average five-day preparation boot camps for contestants.

"By participating in this pageant and developmental program you will train

to reign," said former Miss Black America Rachel Oliver-Cobbin, the program's coordinator. "It is a preparatory course in self-development designed to equip the young women with a defined sense of self and purpose that leads to a more disciplined and courageous life."

After participating in and even winning pageants, Cobbin noticed that the contests were missing something - an academic component. "The pageants that I previously participated in had little to do with education. You paid your \$1200 and walked away," Cobbin said. "Black pageantry didn't have it

together. Therefore, I wanted to create a pageantry that flowed."

Said Keith Cobbin, CEO of the development program and the founder's husband: "She started doing this when she was 15 years old. After being crowned Miss Black America in 1986, it's been her vision since then."

The couple created a program that nurtures girls' gifts, and exposes them to the ones they haven't discovered. However, the Cobbins will not be the only ones running the show. They've brought in scholars who will conduct

Please see **TEEN/2B**

## Charlotte volunteers ready to start cooking

SPECIAL TO THE POST

The Charlotte Volunteers in Medicine Clinic will host its second annual "Cooking Gents of Charlotte" on Friday from 5-10 p.m. at

Levine Museum of the New South. The event will showcase culinary skills of some of the best male chefs in Charlotte. The fundraiser for the CVIM is designed

to promote awareness of Charlotte's hidden crisis: there are nearly 120,000 residents who do not have access to healthcare because they have no medical insurance.

The event is expected to host approximately 500 guests who will enjoy dishes prepared by chefs from Mert's Heart and Soul, The Charleston House, City Tavern, Presto Restaurant, Creative Catering, Junior's Chicken and Waffles, as well as others in the Queen City. There will also be amateur and celebrity chefs on hand.

Chefs who wish to participate in the event should prepare a dish of their choice and provide decorations for

their table with their individual theme. Each participant will be recognized in promotional ads on television, radio, print media, and our printed event program. Each dish will serve as a tax-deductible donation to CVIM. All proceeds from the event will support patient care at the Charlotte Volunteers in Medicine Clinic, located in the Greenville Recreation Center, 1330 Spring Street. Tickets are \$15, which is tax deductible and available at the Greenville Center and other locations.

For more information, call Candace Marshall at (704) 350-1300 or Nilsa Lopez at (704) 336-3367.



PHOTO/WADE NASH

James Brazelle of Mert's Heart and Soul is one of the participants in Friday's event.

## Designers recall '70s, '80s in today's fashion

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

NEW YORK — Fashion designers made their case and now it's up to the retailers, editors and stylists who attended New York Fashion Week to weigh in on what will be in—or out—in the fall.

Of course, the real verdict will be

revealed in August and September when ordinary people do their seasonal shopping.

The choices for women likely will include 1970s- and '80s-inspired clothes: skinny pants—even leggings—chunky-knit cardigan coats and fine-knit jersey dresses, shirt-

dresses, men's-style suits with feminine lace or tie-neck blouses, bow adornments and a lot of black and other somber colors.

Pleats and thick belts were all over the runways, while provocative, skin-flashing clothes were not. Coats, many

Please see **FASHION/3B**



## McDonald's fries contain potential allergens

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

CHICAGO — And another thing about McDonald's fries: They're not gluten-free.

Not long after disclosing that its french fries contain more trans fat than thought, McDonald's Corp. said Monday that wheat and dairy ingredients are used to flavor the popular menu item—an acknowledgment it had not previously made.

The presence of those substances can cause allergic or other medical reactions in food-sensitive consumers.

McDonald's had said until recently that its fries were free of gluten and milk or wheat allergens and safe to eat for those with dietary issues related to the consumption of dairy items. But the fast-food company quietly added "Contains wheat and milk ingredients" this month to the french fries listing on its Web site.

The company said the move came in response to new rules by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration for the packaged foods industry, including one requiring that the presence of common allergens such as milk, eggs, wheat, fish or peanuts be reported. As a restaurant operator, Oak Brook, Ill.-based McDonald's does not have to comply but is doing so voluntarily.

McDonald's director of global nutrition, Cathy Kapica, said its potato suppliers remove all wheat and dairy proteins, such as gluten, which can cause allergic reactions. But the flavoring agent in the cooking oil is a derivative of wheat and dairy ingredients, and the company decided to note their presence because of the FDA's stipulation that potential allergens be disclosed.

Boise-based J.R. Simplot Co. supplies McDonald's restaurants with more than half their fries.

"We knew there were always wheat and dairy derivatives in there, but they were not the protein component," Kapica said. "Technically there are no allergens in there. What this is an example of is science evolving" and McDonald's responding as more is learned, she said.

While the company wanted to make consumers aware that fries were derived in part from wheat and dairy sources, she said, those who have eaten the product without problem should be able to continue to do so without incident.

The acknowledgment has stirred anger and some concern among consumers who are on gluten-free diets since it was posted on McDonald's Web site.

"If they're saying there's wheat and dairy derivatives in the oil, as far as anyone with this disease is concerned there's actually wheat in it," said New York resident Jillian Williams, one of more than 2 million Americans with celiac disease, an autoimmune disorder triggered by gluten.

"They should have disclosed that all along," she said. "They should never have been calling them gluten-free."

It's not the first time McDonald's forthrightness has been called into question concerning what's in its famous fries.

The company paid \$10 million in 2002 to settle a lawsuit by vegetarian groups after it was disclosed that its fries were cooked in beef-flavored oil despite the company's insistence in 1990 that it was abandoning beef tallow for pure vegetable oil.

Last February, it paid \$8.5 million.

Please see **MCDONALD'S/2B**

