

Business

A. J. LeBlanc Heating named Family Business of the Year

DURHAM — A.J. LeBlanc Heating, Plumbing and Air Conditioning in Bedford has been named the 2015 Family Business of the Year by the University of New Hampshire Center for Family Business.

The company will be honored at the fifth annual Family Business Recognition Dinner on Tuesday at the Manchester Country Club. The reception begins at 5:30 p.m., with dinner at 6:15 p.m., and the keynote address and awards at 7 p.m.

LeBlanc Heating was founded in 1928 and has operated under three generations of the LeBlanc family. Today, members from the third and fourth generations are involved in day-to-day operations.

Lifetime achievement awards in recognition of years of commitment to excellence in family business will be presented to Raymond Boissoneau from Electropac in Manchester and Paul Henkel from Electronic Imaging Materials in Keene.

Keynote speaker for the evening is Kyle York, chief marketing officer at Dyn, an Internet performance company. York will share the lessons he learned growing up the middle of five sons in his family's business, Indian Head Athletics in Manchester.

Visit www.familybusiness.unh.edu/ dinner to purchase tickets for the dinner. Tickets are \$60 a person. Tables of 10 are available for \$550.

Gemr, Adored will face panel at entrepreneur forum

MANCHESTER — Gemr and Adored will be the featured companies Wednesday presenting their businesses to a panel of professionals at an Entrepreneur Forum organized by the New Hampshire High Tech Council. The event begins at 5:15 p.m. at FIRST Headquarters, 200 Bedford St. in Manchester.

The panel advising Gemr, an online community for collectors, includes: Margaret Donnelly, the cofounder and chief marketing officer at Align Revenue of Nashua; Gerard Murphy, mobile group product manager at TripAdvisor of Newton Upper Falls, Mass.; and Robert Pitard, founder of SmokinStangs.com.

Advising Adored, a smart-phone app used to support customer rewards program, will be: Tom Boucher, owner and CEO of Great New Hampshire Restaurants of Bedford; Salina McIntire, owner of Channel Co. in Portsmouth; and Laurence Stock, senior vice president of emerging technologies at Eastern Labs in Boston.

Gemr and Adored will each have 15 minutes to present their business plan and receive feedback from the panel of experts and the audience. The panel acts as venture advisers for an evening and provides potential solutions to challenges faced by entrepreneurial companies based on their own professional experiences and expertise.

In addition to the presentations, the event includes a cocktail hour with hors d'oeuvres and networking opportunities, as well as an opportunity to engage the evening's presenters in question and answer sessions. A second networking opportunity occurs between the two presentations, as well as a brief "sky dive" presentation by BevNow.

Entrepreneur Forums are held three times a year at FIRST headquarters at 200 Bedford St. in Manchester from 5:20 pm to 8:30 pm. The cost for the event is \$15 for Council members, \$30 for nonmembers and \$10 for students. To register, visit nhhtc.org.

6 compete in Startup Challenge on Tuesday

MANCHESTER — Six companies Tuesday will make their best pitches in an effort to advance in the 2015 Startup Challenge.

The semifinalists in the Manchester Young Professional Network's New Hampshire Startup Challenge are BevNow, ChartaCloud Technologies, Easier To Use (GoGlove), Pickup Patrol, TestNotice and VidFall.

From nearly two dozen submissions, these six business plans were chosen as semifinalists who will move on to the "Live Pitch" event at 5:30 at Alpha Loft, 844 Elm St., where they will make their best pitch to the judges and audience.

The Startup Challenge finalists will be chosen following the live-pitch event.

"We had a difficult task in choosing this year's Startup Challenge semifinalists because we received so many high quality entries from a diverse range of industries around the state," said Tim Paradis, Startup Challenge chair, in a news release.

Duke Energy pleads guilty to polluting rivers and faces a \$102 million fine

By DAVID ZUCCHINO
Los Angeles Times

GREENVILLE, N.C. — Duke Energy, the nation's largest electrical utility, pleaded guilty in federal court Thursday to nine criminal violations of the Clean Water Act for polluting four major rivers for several years with toxic coal ash from five power plants in North Carolina.

Under a plea deal that ended a federal grand jury investigation, the company is expected to be fined \$102 million and placed on five years' probation for environmental crimes when a federal judge imposes the sentence Thursday afternoon.

U.S. District Judge Malcolm J. Howard approved the plea agreement Thursday morning following a 90-minute court session in which a Duke Energy lawyer repeated the words "guilty, your honor" more than 20 times.

The nine misdemeanor charges were filed against three Duke Energy subsidiaries, and the lawyer responded for each charge against

each subsidiary. Howard found the utility guilty on all nine counts.

Environmentalists have complained for years that Duke has polluted waterways and groundwater with coal ash, and the company faces several civil lawsuits filed by environmental groups.

But coal ash pollution did not come to widespread public attention until February 2014, when a spill at a Duke coal ash lagoon dumped 39,000 tons of coal ash, and 27 million gallons of ash slurry coated the Dan River with thick sludge for 70 miles.

A federal criminal indictment said Duke "did fail to exercise the degree of care that someone of ordinary prudence would have exercised in the same circumstance with respect to the discharge of coal ash and coal ash wastewater." The \$50.5 billion utility was charged with the "criminally negligent discharge of pollutants" and failure to maintain coal ash treatment equipment.

Four of the nine charges involved

illegal discharges at the Dan River plant. Duke also pleaded guilty to coal ash discharge violations at power plants near Charlotte, Asheville, Goldsboro and in Chatham County in central North Carolina.

Duke will pay \$68.2 million in fines and restitution and \$34 million for community service and mitigation projects. The utility has said the money will come from shareholders, not customers.

Paige Sheehan, a Duke Energy spokeswoman, said outside the courthouse Thursday that the utility had immediately apologized for the Dan River spill. "And we said we would make things right. We have done that," Sheehan said.

In a statement, the utility said, "Duke Energy takes full responsibility for the Dan River coal ash spill and is taking the steps necessary to protect the environment at Dan River and all the communities it serves."

Federal prosecutors said they will comment on the case after sentencing Thursday afternoon.



In this Sept. 24, 2004, file photo, Everest's base camp is shown on the Khumbu Glacier.

NAWANG SHERPA/BOGATI/ZUMA PRESS/TNS

Tech professionals gravitate toward high-altitude mountaineering

By HEATHER SOMERILLE
San Jose Mercury News

SAN FRANCISCO — The slow slog through thin air atop a glacier-capped Himalayan peak is about the farthest you can get from Silicon Valley's fast-paced tech world, where digital screens are often the only view and the instruments for survival are lines of code.

And yet there is a small but determined band of tech workers who oscillate between the two worlds, spending one month hunched over computers and the next strapping on crampons and gaiters for a 20,000-foot ascent. Google engineer Dan Fredinburg, 33, who died last month on

Mount Everest in the avalanche triggered by a 7.8-magnitude earthquake that devastated Nepal and killed more than 8,000 others, was a member of this community of tech professionals who take weeks or months off their jobs to climb some of the world's tallest peaks. Fredinburg was joined on Everest by three other Google employees who survived.

"There are lots of people in tech who are drawn to mountains, and have the disposable income needed to go on a commercial Everest expedition," said Richard Bothwell, program director and guide at the Outdoor Adventure Club in San Francisco. "To some tech workers, climbing mountains is

a true passion. To others, it's the next trophy in their life; the next story to impress their friends."

In many ways, the overlap between the Himalayas and Silicon Valley makes sense, say expedition leaders: Tech workers can be meticulous people who like problem-solving, and few activities require these skills more than high-altitude climbing. Many ambitious tech workers have lists of the tallest peaks to conquer, their quest to "win" on the mountain drawn from working in the highly competitive tech industry, and their desire to share their stories of triumph fitting nicely within

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Aerospace, defense industry reps to meet for conference

CONCORD — Representatives of the aerospace and defense industry, one of state's fastest growing industry sectors, will meet June 10 at the McAuliffe-Shepard Discovery Center for their first-ever conference, bringing together some of the 350 companies in New Hampshire involved in aerospace and defense.

Building the Supply Chain for New Hampshire's Aerospace and Defense Export Markets is the theme of what organizer say will become an annual event. The New Hampshire Aerospace and Defense Conference is being organized by the New Hampshire Aerospace and Defense Export Con-

sortium; the New Hampshire Division of Economic Development and the New Hampshire Manufacturing Extension Partnership, with sponsorship by BAE Systems.

Paul Kling, deputy vice president of operations and supplier partnerships for BAE, is the keynote speaker. Two panel discussions will cover topics relating to export strategies.

"This conference will focus on the state's capabilities in aerospace and defense and provide a forum for the industry to come together to strengthen the local supply chain and increase our competitiveness in the global marketplace,"

said Zenagui Brahim, chairman of the NHADEC Board of Directors and president of NH-MEP, in a news release.

About 4 percent of New Hampshire's gross domestic product is aerospace/defense, Brahim said, the sixth highest in the nation. In 2014, exports in the aerospace sector increased more than 25 percent.

The event, which runs from 4 to 8 p.m. on June 10, is free, but registration is required at www.nhadec.com/nhad-conference.

A few exhibit spaces are still open. For more information about the conference, call Dawn Wivell at 836-4207 or email dwivell@nhadec.com.

Sally Beauty confirms data breach

By SAMANTHA MASUNAGA
Los Angeles Times

Sally Beauty Holdings Inc. confirmed Thursday that there was an "illegal intrusion" into its payment card systems, marking the company's second data breach in just over a year.

The Denton, Texas-based hair and beauty products retailer said there was "sufficient evidence" to confirm the breach, but that it would not "speculate on the scope."

The company said earlier this month that it was investigating reports of unusual activity involving payment cards used at its stores. Sally Beauty said it was working with law enforcement, its credit card processor and a third-party forensics expert. In a statement Thursday, the company said the forensic investigation is still ongoing.

"We are working diligently to address the issue and to care for any customers who may have been affected by the incident," Chief Executive Chris Brickman said in a statement. "Our customers are our top priority and we regret any frustration or inconvenience this illegal breach may cause them."

The company said customers would not be responsible for any fraudulent charges that are promptly reported.

Customers with concerns about their payment cards should call Sally Beauty's customer service hotline at 1-866-234-9442 or send an email to customerserviceinquiry@sallybeauty.com.

A data breach at Sally Beauty in March 2014 affected fewer than 25,000 cards. The breach occurred just months after high-profile data breaches at retailers including Target Corp. and Neiman Marcus Group Ltd.

Kerstyn Clover, managing consultant for the investigations department at the SecureState information security firm, said it's not uncommon to see repeat breaches. She said companies will sometimes patch one problem but not take a look at the entire security system.

"We're finally getting more mature as a whole, especially in the retail industry," Clover said. "But that also means that we're uncovering what's going wrong. It kind of has to get messy before it gets better."

Sally Beauty runs 4,900 stores around the globe, including several in New Hampshire.