

THE TICKER

Partners Q1 shows 'thin' profit margin

Hospital chain Partners HealthCare reported a "thin" first-quarter profit after booking a \$40 million charge — fulfilling a pledge to the state last year to help offset the cost of health insurance for small groups and individuals.

3-D mammogram wins U.S. approval

Bedford-based Hologic's three-dimensional mammogram device won approval from U.S. regulators as the first machine of its kind to screen for breast cancer.

Nokia, Microsoft vs. Apple, Google

Mobile-phone maker Nokia is teaming with tech titan Microsoft. Nokia will use the Windows Phone software as the main platform for its smartphones in an effort to pull market share away from Apple's iPhone and Android, Google's software for phones and tablets.

U.S. trade deficit widens to \$40.6B

The trade deficit widened by 5.9 percent to \$40.6 billion in December as rising oil prices pushed the value of imports up faster than U.S. exports, the Commerce Department reported.

THE SHUFFLE

■ **Donald Southard** joined InfraReDx Inc., a Burlington-based company developing cardiovascular diagnostic imaging technologies, as president and CEO.

■ Delaware North Cos., operator of the TD Garden, announced the addition of **Mark Kastrud** as director of corporate partnerships and **Matthew Silberman** as event operations manager.

— STAFF AND WIRE REPORTS

Not such a corny idea

By **DONNA GOODISON**

Mini Pops creator hopes to bag success for snack



NEXT BIG THING

ing whole grains of sorghum online.

"That's when the idea to bring this to market — to make it a conventional snack food in the U.S. snack food market — popped into my mind," Taube said. "I loved it. It was a crunchy snack, it tasted great, and it didn't have those corn hulls that can get caught in your teeth and gums."

Mini Pops recently won \$10,000 in gap funding from Northeastern University's Inter-Disciplinary Entrepreneurship Accelerator to buy an automated packaging machine, and Taube was a keynote speaker at its Northeastern Entrepreneurship Expo on Wednesday.

"They had a really good road map which basically outlined where their business was going, and they set up



STAFF PHOTO BY JOHN WILCOX

SNAPPY SNACK: Ari Taube with his Mini Pops, a popcorn alternative made from sorghum.

some clear milestones and really articulated how this funding would help them achieve

those milestones," IDEA CEO Michael Hans said.

Taube, laid off as a financial



planner for Merrill Lynch after the Wall Street meltdown, took the entrepreneurial plunge with his brother Reuben. Mini Pops started production in August in Stoughton and has eight organic, gluten-free flavors.

Taube is in talks with supermarkets to carry the brand, which can be ordered at myminipops.com. "The biggest challenge is to educate people about what it is," he said, rattling off sorghum's nutritional benefits.

Sorghum is used for food, animal feed, alcoholic beverages and biofuels and to make gluten-free flour.

"A few benefits of sorghum over corn is it's higher in protein as a grain, it's higher in calcium, and it's higher in iron," Taube said.

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Teachers' group sues State St.

By **JAY FITZGERALD**



THE DISTRICT

what it called "unfair and deceptive" currency-trade deals spanning more than a decade.

Though the suit doesn't say how much it's seeking, the Arkansas pension fund said the State Street's practices have netted the financial firm as much as \$500 million in annual profits from their numerous clients.

State Street, which has faced numerous lawsuits recently on other fronts including their investments in mortgage-backed securities, was digging in for a fight yesterday.

"We will vigorously defend the allegations made in the (Arkansas) complaint and we stand by our business practices," the company said in a statement. "State Street is firmly committed to providing its clients with quality service and transparency in meeting their (foreign-ex-

change) practices."

Asked if he believed State Street had wronged the pension fund, George Hopkins, director of the Arkansas Teachers Retirement System, responded, "The complaint speaks for itself in that regard."

An attorney for the pension system, which oversees \$11 billion in assets, said his Arkansas client is seeking class-action status and will determine later what damages it will demand.

A number of pension systems have complained that State Street routinely charged the most expensive foreign-exchange price of the day when a trade took place, then pocketed a profit if the actual rate it paid was lower.

Last year, then-California Attorney General Jerry Brown, now governor of the Golden State, lambasted State Street for its currency-trade deals that he said cost his state \$56 million.

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Groupon gets kudos for pulling its ads

By **THOMAS GRILLO**



RETAIL

A Hub ad expert said Groupon made a smart move by dismantling its "disastrous" Super Bowl ad campaign — including a spot that shifts jarringly from the plight of Tibetans to their ability to "whip up an amazing fish curry."

"Unfortunately, it was a combination of being tone deaf with the message, and the execution didn't leave you feeling good," said Grant Pace, executive creative director at Boston ad agency Conover Tuttle Pace.

Online discounter Groupon yanked the ads just five days after many Super Bowl viewers flagged them for an "offensive" penalty. The series of spots — mock public-service announcements by Hollywood stars Timothy Hutton, Elizabeth Hurley and Cuba Gooding Jr. — also made light of rainforest deforestation and

whale die-offs

"We hate that we offended people, and we're very sorry that we did," founder Andrew Mason wrote in his Groupon blog.

The controversy overshadowed Groupon's efforts to raise money for the causes. Mason said the company expects to net more than \$500,000.

"We thought we were poking fun at ourselves, but clearly the execution was off and the joke didn't come through," he said. "I personally take responsibility; although we worked with a professional ad agency, in the end, it was my decision to run the ads."

Pace noted that the agency that created the Groupon ad, Crispin Porter & Bogusky, also created the highly popular Volkswagen spot with the kid in a Darth Vader suit.



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