

Tech Startup Out To Teach Old Dogs A Few New Tricks



SDBJ INSIDER

Tom York

San Diego-based startup **CleverPet LLC**, which is developing a Wi-Fi-enabled device to help entertain, train and feed your pet when you're not home, launched a 33-day crowdfunding campaign to raise \$100,000 on **Kickstarter**. The startup says our pets spend more than 10 billion hours home alone, and the company's two co-founders hope to bite off a piece of the \$58.5 billion market for pet products in the U.S. ... Here's the skinny on how to achieve six-pack abs. The Kearny Mesa-based **American Council on Exercise** asked experts at the **University of Wisconsin's La Crosse** campus to evaluate whether alternatives to the traditional crunch really work. The researchers determined that devices such as the Ab Wheel and Ab Circle Pro and alternative tortures such as the side plank and front plank — as well as yoga's boat pose — didn't work as well as the age-old crunch. The Council on Exercise is the largest provider of certifications to personal trainers and other fitness professionals in the U.S. ... East San Diego-based wetsuit maker **Xterra** teamed with **Father Joe's Villages** to sponsor a donation campaign to support residents of St. Vincent de Paul Village. Xterra will donate 10 percent of wetsuit sales and \$50 from each paddleboard sold before the San Diego Triathlon on June 29. Participants can sign up for the triathlon at a discounted price during the campaign. ... The Kearny Mesa-based call center operator formerly known as Desert Call Connection changed its name to **Intelicare Direct**. Since CEO **Gabriel Bristol** has been at the helm the past 15 months, he's grown the business to \$11.5 million in annual sales, and it is projected to grow 30 percent this calendar year. He also manages the company's operations in Las Vegas. ... Investing veteran **Dave Titus**, president of the **San Diego Venture Group**, will share his nine rules for raising angel financing at the organization's next breakfast meeting May 22. Titus is a VC and has many close connections in the venture capital realm. He'll tell attendees how to find, pitch and manage investors. For details and to sign up, visit sdvg.org. ... The **American Society for Metabolic and Bariatric Surgery** recognized **Pomerado Hospital's** 107-bed acute care facility in Poway as a center of excellence. Here's a surprising stat: The center has performed more than 4,000 bariatric procedures, which are done to help morbidly obese patients lose weight, a hospital spokesperson said. ... Finally: **Richard Thomas**, probably most famous for his role in the long-running TV series "The Waltons," will appear one night only — June 9 — in **The Old Globe** theater's production of "A Distant Country Called Youth." Details are at oldglobe.org. Till next week.

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The Chief Executive Applauds Verdezynne Deal

BIOTECH: President's Presence Highlights Green Products' Status

By MEGHANA KESHAVAN

The recent \$48 million investment in **Verdezynne Inc.** involving a Malaysian corporation drew a couple of high-profile onlookers to the signing that closed the deal.

The attendance of President **Barack Obama** and Malaysian Prime Minister **Najib Razak** — who jointly applauded the Carlsbad industrial biotech's deal with multinational conglomerate **Sime Darby Berhad** in Kuala Lumpur — highlighted the growing prominence of the renewable specialty chemical industry.

Privately held Verdezynne invents new genetically engineered strains of yeast that convert plant-based feedstocks, such as palm oil waste products, into renewable industrial chemicals. Verdezynne, founded in 2005, has been strengthening its ties with Malaysia of late, using the country as its manufacturing hub.

The dignitary-studded deal signing "speaks to the significance of this agreement for the renewable chemicals space and strengthening ties between the U.S. and Malaysia," Verdezynne President and CEO **William Radany** said.

Obama learned of Verdezynne in February, when he toured the Michigan Biotechnology Institute in Lansing in advance of signing the farm bill.

Verdezynne has been ramping up its production processes, having recently announced it has produced more than



AP Photo / Carolyn Kaster

President Barack Obama and Malaysian Prime Minister Najib Razak, standing left, applaud as Verdezynne President and CEO William Radany, right, signs a commercial agreement with Seri Mohd Bakke Salleh, president and group chief executive of Sime Darby Berhad, in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia.

a metric ton of an acid used in nylon, lubricants and plastics with end products such as toothbrush bristles and fishing line.

\$11 Billion Market

Sime Darby said the product portfolio that Verdezynne is developing has a potential combined market size of about \$11 billion. The conglomerate has launched a new subsidiary, called Sime Darby Renewables that will focus on converting feedstocks into high-value commodities. And the money invested

will be used to accelerate Verdezynne's technology development in the U.S. and to support various collaborative projects with Sime Darby Renewables. Its partnership with Verdezynne is a key element in this segment's rollout, Sime Darby said.

The \$48 million financing round, led by Sime Darby, also includes existing investors **BP Alternative Energy Ventures**, **DSM Venturing BV**, **OVP Venture Partners** and **Monitor Investors**. While Sime Darby's exact investment wasn't

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CEOs Have a Blast Learning To Be SEALs

EDUCATION: Program Puts Co. Leaders Under Different Kind of Pressure

By BRAD GRAVES

Julieann Billings-Riordan kicked open the door and entered the house, coming face to face with two terrorist thugs. She felt for the safety catch on her rifle. The safety wouldn't budge.

So she did what most people would do when the unexpected happens. She froze. And by stopping in the doorway, she blocked three other members of her commando team from going through.

It was a botched entry. Fortunately, the stakes weren't all that high. The self-employed public relations agent and three other CEOs were playing SEAL team members in a drill overseen by five current and former members of U.S. special operations forces.

There are business lessons to be had here, said **Sharon Jenks**, who produces executive skills courses through her company. **The Jenks Group** previously offered such training in Salt Lake City, and brought it to **Stu Segall Productions** — aka **Strategic Operations** — in April. Military units and SWAT teams also

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<p style="text-align: center;">JUICE NEWTON BENEFIT CONCERT TO END SENIOR HUNGER</p> <p style="text-align: center;">SATURDAY MAY 24</p>	<p style="font-size: small;">GRAMMY WINNER "QUEEN OF HEARTS" "ANGEL OF THE MORNING" "SWEET THING I'VE EVER KNOWN"</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">V.I.P. TICKETS \$100 DINNER + ORCHESTRA SEATS</p> <p style="text-align: center;">CALL DEPOT (760) 599-7093</p>
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SEALS:

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practice at the Kearny Mesa movie set.

Two dozen CEOs and observers attended the April 30 exercise, which was a dry run for future programs.

The Jenks Group provided the curriculum. Strategic Operations provided the stage; the extras, including an amputee acting as if his leg had been blown off; and other special effects, such as nonlethal explosives.

The Jenks Group and Strategic Operations declined to say what they spent on the morning of training, and Sharon Jenks declined to say how much her company planned to charge for future sessions. **Terry Bruggeman**, a business turnaround consultant who attended, said he has heard of a similar program that takes place at Marine Corps Base



Tommy Hughes

A select group of local CEOs learned about business through the lens of simulated combat during a new training program produced by The Jenks Group and Strategic Operations.

Camp Pendleton, where organizers charge \$1,500 per person.

After the CEO groups tried to enter the room the best they could, four professionals demonstrated how they would do it. Their performance was as smooth and graceful as a Tchaikovsky

ballet.

“Slow is smooth, smooth is fast” is the special operations maxim that means haste makes waste. Companies will inevitably spend more rushing a project, said **Ed Jenks**, a business consultant and Sharon Jenks’ husband.

Ed Jenks said businesspeople need constant training — and discipline. The latter disappeared from U.S. business in the 1960s, he said.

Going over the entry exercise, Ed Jenks told the CEO participants that SEALs need speed, surprise and impact when facing down bad guys — just as executives need it in dealing with competition. The surprise deteriorated fast when Billings-Riordan hesitated in the doorway.

Fortunately, there are second chances. The principal of **JABR Marketing Solutions** said her team’s second entry went off without a hitch.

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