7-11 | Metro Detroiters are nation's top Slurpee fans

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loyalty. Classic flavors such as Coca-Cola Classic and Cherry Coke are the most popular. But contemporary and seasonal flavors are available, in addition to the option of individual combinations. Most flavors are certified kosher pareve and halal for customers' adherence to Jewish and Islamic dietary laws. The four drink sizes in metro Detroit range from 12 ounces at $1.15 to 40 ounces at $1.59, plus tax.

"We are committed to providing a quality experience," said Baronowski, 53. "It's a total program. It's not just about a flavor or a cup; it's a combination."

Viktorr Dedvukaj, the owner of a 7-Eleven located on Meadowbrook Road in Novi, said that the convenience of being open 24 hours per day plays a role as well.

"We know our customers, and we're attentive to their needs," Dedvukaj said. "And with strong branding compared to the average party store down the street, business is good."

7-Eleven aims to keep its brand strong. This summer, there has been a slew of promotions, more than ever before. With a target audience of customers 18 to 34 years old, the franchise has partnered with movie and videogame companies.

They're also hitting the road and handing out free samples of Black Ice, a Slurpee version of the Monster energy drink at the 2008 Vans Warped Tour. Warped Tour is a North American music and extreme sports festival sponsored by skateboarding shoe manufacturer Vans. The event typically draws younger crowds and runs from June 20 to Aug. 17.

Even so, 7-Eleven still attracts customers of all ages.

Sue Beck, 58, walked into a local 7-Eleven last Tuesday with two granddaughters visiting from Tennessee.

"There aren't any 7-Elevens there. So this is the first place they want to go to when they come here."

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REGINA H. BOONE/Detroit Free Press

Dale Bigelow, 34, of Taylor gets his daily 22-ounce Pepsi-flavored Slurpee Monday at a 7-Eleven on Monroe Street in Dearborn.

Evolution of the 7-Eleven Slurpee

The idea: When Omar Knedlik's soda fountain machine broke, he sold bottled frozen soft drinks at his Kansas drive-in hamburger restaurant instead.

The machine: In 1959, Knedlik went to see Dallas machinery manufacturer John E. Mitchell Co., about creating a machine for the frosty concoction. After toying with an automobile air conditioner, Mitchell refined it to make the "Icee machine."

The store: Despite a lack of sudden success, 7-Eleven saw potential and bought three machines in 1965. By 1967, there was a machine in almost every store.

The name: Agency director Bob Stanford noted how the Icee makes a "slurp" when drunk through a straw. The Slurpee was born.

The day: For 7-Eleven Day on Friday, stores gave away 7.11-ounce Slurpees. It began on the company's 75th birthday in 2002. This year, 7-Eleven turns 81.

Slurpee trivia

- Approximately half the drinks are purchased between 4 and 11 p.m.
- More than 11.6 million drinks are consumed around the world each day.
- Forty percent of Slurpees are sold during June, July and August.
- Enough drinks are sold each year to fill 12 Olympic-sized swimming pools.
- No. 1 Slurpee market in the world: Winnipeg, Manitoba.
- No. 1 store for Slurpee sales in the United States: Kennewick, Wash.
- No. 1 U.S. Slurpee market: southwest suburbs of Detroit.
- No. 2 U.S. Slurpee market: northwest suburbs of Detroit.
- The Detroit area sells more than twice as many Slurpees as the average U.S. 7-Eleven store.
- More than 150 Detroit-area stores sell an average of 230 drinks per day each — more than a million per month.

For more information: **www.slurpee.com** and **www.7-eleven.com.**

Frozen factoids

The BrainFreeze was coined by 7-Eleven in 1994. Slurpees are served at 28 degrees.

The scientific name of the BrainFreeze is sphenopalatine ganglioneuralgia. It occurs when something cold touches the roof of the mouth causing blood vessels to constrict. When vessels warm up, they enlarge and as blood rushes back, nerve pain signals travel to the front of the brain, creating what we know as the BrainFreeze.

The cure for a BrainFreeze, as suggested by 7-Eleven: Press your tongue against the roof of your mouth.

- CHRISTY DUAN

Banking regulators take over IndyMac

FREE PRESS NEWS SERVICES

The Office of Thrift Supervision says it has closed mortgage lender IndyMac Bank.

The banking regulator said Friday it has transferred IndyMac's operations to the Federal Deposit Insurance Corp. after determining the thrift is unlikely to meet depositors' demands.

IndyMac has been struggling to raise capital and stay in business as home prices tumble and foreclosures soar.

The move comes as Wall Street and Washington wrestled Friday with how to shore up mortgage giants Fannie Mae and Freddie Mac, two troubled pillars of the economy whose failure would deal a devastating blow to the already crippled housing market.

As investors grew more convinced that only some type of government bailout could rescue the firms, Treasury Secretary Henry Paulson said the focus was to support the pair "in their current form."

The government was considering giving Fannie and Freddie access to the Fed's emergency lending program, said Sen. Christopher Dodd, D-Conn., citing conversations with Fed Chairman Ben Bernanke and Paulson.

FORD | Automaker sues to recoup IRS overpayment

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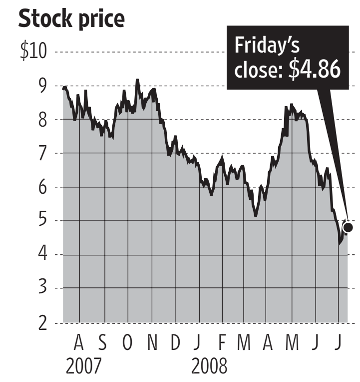
a simple matter of taking the tax underpayment ... and computing interest on that amount," the lawsuit says.

"Rather, the IRS recomputes the taxpayer's account for the specific tax year by sorting all of the transactions in order of the dates they are deemed to be effective and computing interest on the account balance as it is affected from transaction to transaction."

Evans said that Ford tried to resolve its dispute with the IRS with no success.

"Because of the size of the dispute, we thought we had no choice but to file suit," she said.

Ford Motor Co.
Stock price



Source: Free Press research Detroit Free Press

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BLUE CROSS | Official allows rate hike on 7 plans

From Page 8A

workplace. The ruling was a blow to Ann Arbor attorney Joe Aoun, who filed the rate challenge in 2006 for Ron and Ghada Abraham, of Livonia. Neither Aoun nor the Abrahams could be reached for comment Friday. They have 60 days to appeal the decision in Ingham County Circuit Court.

The Abrahams have a basic policy that provides mostly coverage for catastrophic illness that costs them $510.45 a month. They have no coverage for prescriptions or doctor visits.

Insurance commissioner Ken Ross' decision brought confusion, triggered by a statement from his office with the headline, "OFIR Commissioner Disapproves the BCBSM Rate Hike."

In the same statement, Ross was quoted as saying, "This decision reduces the rate hike request. In tough economic times, every little bit helps."

Ross' decision ignored many findings by Lansing administrative law judge David Lick, which called a $2.4-billion Blue Cross surplus fund "very high by any standard."

Lick's May 13 opinion said the size of Blue Cross' surplus was "a fact to consider in "whether or not the rates should be modified accordingly."

Insurance official Ken Ross

Lick also said that Blue Cross' administrative costs appeared high, and that the insurer should not require individual customers to pay a 1% subsidy for Blue Cross Supplemental Medicare and group conversion policies for those who once had Blue Cross coverage through former employers.

Ross, appointed earlier this year by Gov. Jennifer Granholm to head the insurance office, also denied another unspecified rate hike sought by Blue Cross, to make up for delays getting its increases.

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WENDLAND | Servers out of sync for iPhone 3G debut

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whom camped outside Apple and AT&T stores all night.

The activation process was supposed to have been done at the stores. For a while, it worked fine. But by 9 a.m. or so, long delays in making the connection to activate through Apple suddenly cropped up.

Perplexed, Apple and AT&T representatives locally and across the country began to suggest customers go to their home or work computers to complete the process.

Again, for the first hour or so, that worked. But by 11 a.m., attempts to reach the Apple activation site stalled out. The new phones were simply unable to connect with Apple and became basically useless.

At the AT&T Troy store where I bought mine, service reps were as frustrated as customers. The problem was all on Apple's end, they explained. The iTunes store just couldn't handle the initial demand.

But it wasn't just new purchasers who had problems.

Visit freep.com to read Mike Wendland's iPhone reviews.

Users of older iPhones who hoped to get the software update had trouble connecting.

Blame it on over-ambition.

Releasing a new phone, sending out a massive firmware and software update, opening a new App Store to sell programs and switching the .Mac Web portal to a beefed-up MobileMe service — all in a day — was overwhelming.

MIKE WENDLAND *is the Free Press Technology Columnist. Check out his daily tech blog at* **freep.com/wendland**

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