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Volume 18, Number 23

THE COMMUNITY OF BUSINESS™

November 11 - 24, 2013 • \$4.00

Up Front



Si Robin may be 85, but he'll beat you to the finish line. **PAGE 3**

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Profile



Karenjo Goodwin and Michael Crump are a couple ... of CEOs. **PAGE 6**

SPECIAL ISSUE FASTEST GROWING PRIVATE COMPANIES



Bagging It: Avetis 'Avo' Minasyan holds infusion bag at TNH Pharmacy II in Van Nuys.

PHOTO BY DAVID SPRAGUE

GROWTH INFUSION

Specialty pharmacy TNH tops fastest growing list.

By **JOEL RUSSELL** Staff Writer

Small businesses can flourish when they fill overlooked niches in the marketplace. And if that niche starts to expand, the growth can be fantastic. So it is with **TNH Pharmacy II**, which distributes drugs not available at retail drug stores, typically for patients with serious health problems such as cancer, multiple sclerosis, HIV/AIDS and rejection issues after organ transplants.

The Van Nuys company's revenue hit \$37.4 million last year, a 580 percent growth rate since 2010, making it No. 1 on the Business Journal's list of

fastest growing private companies.

So what's generating all that cash? Well, it's not a steady stream of refills for asthma inhalers, Viagra or cholesterol drugs. Instead, its low-volume but high-cost drugs that are priced \$5,000 on average and as much as \$100,000 or more. For example, a bottle of Sutent, an oncology pill, costs between \$8,000 and \$11,000.

TNH is also unlike a typical retail pharmacy as it doesn't have a storefront. All its products are distributed by mail or private courier services. In addition,

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Economy Boosts Financing Options

By **MARK R. MADLER** Staff Reporter

Accounting software developer **Blackline Systems** had reached the point where its organic growth could not finance future expansion plans. In August, the Woodland Hills company found a solution by having its founder and Chief Executive **Therese Tucker** sell off a majority stake to **Silver Lake Sumeru**, a private equity firm in Menlo Park investing in middle market technology companies.

While Tucker would not disclose the amount added to Blackline's balance sheet from the sale,



Tucker

the company is in a better position to add staff to its London office and its Los Angeles technology team. It also plans to bring on new consulting, technology and outsourcing partners.

"We have a lot of ways to spend this money," Tucker said.

The Blackline deal shows why California remains one of the top states for private equity deals even if the volume remains below what it had been pre-recession.

Blackline's track record of multiple years of

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Broker Deals Lower on IPO

REAL ESTATE: Calabasas firm grosses only \$72 million.

By **ELLIOT GOLAN** Staff Reporter

It was hardly a stellar performance, but at least the greater Valley has another public company.

The initial public offering of **Marcus & Millichap Inc.** raised just \$72 million, far less than the \$104 million the commercial real estate brokerage had hoped to raise when it first filed a prospectus in September.

But the Calabasas company and its underwriters got this much right: they nailed the stock's pricing. Going to market at \$12 a share on Oct. 31, the stock jumped almost 12 percent on its first day of trading, but has leveled off

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Project Wakes Bedroom Town

DEVELOPMENT: Builder wants 450-unit complex in Camarillo.

By **ELLIOT GOLAN** Staff Reporter

A plum industrial parcel in Camarillo may soon be converted into a 450-unit apartment complex as demand grows in the small Ventura County city for larger multifamily buildings.

Fairfield Residential Co. LLC, a San Diego developer, is seeking final approval next month to build its Village Gateway complex on 20 acres that was the site of a computer-data and storage



McCoy

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East Coast Firm Takes Charge of Battery Maker

By **MARK R. MADLER** Staff Reporter

When battery manufacturer **EnerSys** was looking for a way to get into the medical device market and get a bigger share of the satellite market, the company found what it was looking for in the San Fernando Valley.

The Reading, Pa. firm is acquiring **Qualion LLC** in Sylmar, one of the largest makers of lithium ion batteries in the country and part of the technology portfolio of billionaire **Alfred Mann**. The deal is valued at \$30 million.

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Saber Rattling: Tim Weske and crew at his Jedi Academy in Burbank.

Taking Risks With The Force

Fencing studio runs Jedi Academy under Disney's nose.

A year ago, **Walt Disney Co.** acquired the rights to the legendary "Star Wars" movies, and though the studio is not expected to release a new installment until 2015, one Burbank fencing studio is already riding the Jedi force.

Tim Weske, 56, is the

owner of **Swordplay Fencing Studio Inc.**, where he teaches fencing and runs a "Jedi Academy" class that helps attract children to the sport.

"For children younger than seven, they are developing in such a way that fencing is too difficult for them to understand and do," said Weske. "(We) trick them into fencing in a Jedi Academy — they do fencing movements, but do it as a Jedi to understand it, and not with heavy equipment."

But riding the force could be trickier than all that, given that Disney spent \$4 billion to ac-

quire Star Wars creator **George Lucas' Lucasfilm Ltd.**

Consider that last month **Warner Bros.** in Burbank sued **Whimsic Alley**, a Miracle Mile shop that sells wands, books and other objects related to Harry Potter, claiming the store infringed on its valuable intellectual property.

But Weske is not worried that Lucasfilm will bring down its wrath on his studio, which operates at 416 S. Victory Blvd. and at a second location in Granada Hills.

In New York, **Flynn**

Michael has been running **New York Light Saber** and the **New York Jedi Academy** for several years without any problem.

In order to avoid intellectual property issues, Michael calls the weapons in his academy by the two words "light saber" instead of the one word "lightsaber" used in Star Wars books and other memorabilia. He notes the saber is a classical weapon in fencing.

"We have 15 to 20 regular students, and we don't adhere to Lucasfilms' official costumes," Michael said.

Weske is optimistic he won't have any problems with Disney, despite his reliance on the Star Wars name to attract students to his Jedi class, which averages 40 students and costs \$17.

The cost covers both the instruction and equipment, such as a light saber and paintball masks. Children also learn the "way of the Force" by having to keep a Jedi journal.

"We're not selling any Jedi merchandise. We take a kid and let him live his fantasy. We let them get involved with Star Wars; it keeps the dream and fantasy alive," he said.

So far, no word on whether the Disney empire agrees. The company did not return repeated calls for comment.

— *Jacqueline Mejia*

Don't Have An MBA? Try The SBA.

Valley business people graduate from intense training program.

Although her company has been around for 28 years, **Taraneh Markazi** figured she could learn some new tricks to help it grow in the aftermath of the Great Recession.

So the president of **Atelier 21 International**, a construction and remodeling firm in Woodland Hills, signed up eight months ago to participate in the Small Business Administration's Emerging Leaders Initiative.

It was the first time the SBA had held the class in Southern California, and besides Markazi, there were 16 other chief executives from the region in attendance.

"As small business owners, we need any help we can get because we handle everything ourselves," she said.

"It's good to find out what we're doing right and wrong." And it was no cake walk. The course involved more than 100 hours of classroom

time, starting with an evening session every other Tuesday at USC.

During the off weeks, Markazi met with about five other students to discuss issues and receive coaching from SBA instructors. Each session concentrated on a specific skill, such as marketing, finance or human resources. "I would recommend it to anybody," said Markazi, 60, who discovered that she needs to focus on her strengths and let her 10 employees take over more responsibilities.

"I will try to delegate tasks to other people so I can do what is important. There are tasks that others can do easily so I can concentrate on marketing and contracts — the things I do best."

More than 60 percent of the nationwide graduates of the 2011 class have grown company revenue, according to the SBA.

"The program creates a learning environment to accelerate the growth of high-potential small businesses, stimulates job creation and helps drive economic development," **Ellen Thrasher**, the SBA director of entrepreneurial development, said in a statement.

— *Joel Russell*



Markazi

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