

Kid Power meets horsepower today as Ford and Nickelodeon announce a three-year child safety ad campaign starring "Blue," animated star of Nick Jr.'s hit series *Blue's Clues*. Ford will be the first auto advertiser on the kids cable network. As part of the deal, Blue becomes "spokespuppy" in ads for Ford's Windstar minivan.

Honda to import more hybrids

Honda says due to strong demand for its Insight gas-electric hybrid coupe it will import and sell 63% more than planned in the USA. That would put sales this year at 6,500 vs. 4,000 projected. The \$20,000 two-seater is rated 61 miles per gallon in town, 70 mpg on the highway. Toyota introduces its Prius gas-electric hybrid sedan this summer, priced about the same.

Allen's market timing is good

Microsoft co-founder Paul Allen sold 24 million Microsoft shares last month for about \$2.3 billion. Had Allen waited until Monday, he'd have gotten only \$1.8 billion. According to a Securities and Exchange Commission filing, Allen sold in the first week of March for \$90 to \$98.44 a share. Microsoft shares plummeted April 3 when a federal judge ruled the company had broken antitrust laws. Shares went on to hit a 52-week low on Friday, but closed Monday up \$1.75 at \$75.88. A spokeswoman said the sale was part of Allen's ongoing plan to diversify.

A Britannica in your Palm

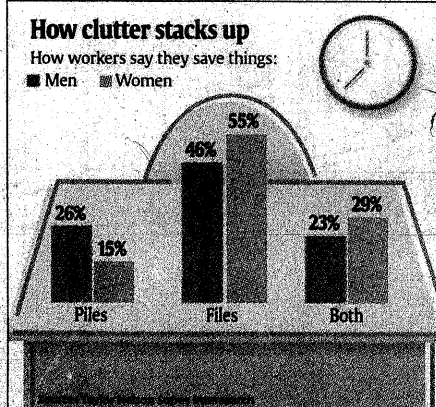
Free software from Encyclopaedia Britannica will give Palm VII hand-held computers access to all of its 44 million words. Britannica Traveler, via a wireless connection to Britannica's Web site, enables searches and access to specific articles. A feature called "Get Local" also uses Palm VII's geographical positioning capabilities and Britannica's database to offer local information on the city the user is in. The download is free at Britannica.com or at Palm.Net Service.

New McDonald's ad starts June 30

At its convention in Orlando, McDonald's unveiled an employee-focused ad strategy with the tagline, "We love to see you smile." A source told The Associated Press the ads would start June 30. The service-focused theme, created by DDB Needham Worldwide, replaces the 3-year-old "Did somebody say McDonald's?" McDonald's squeaky-clean message contrasts with rival Burger King, which last week launched steamy ads featuring husky-voiced actress Kathleen Turner asking, "Got the urge?"

By Anne R. Carey from staff and wire reports

USA TODAY Snapshots®



SP2



By Brad Mangin for USA TODAY

'Happy girl': Jane Doherty, whose business caters to dot-com workers, says now that dot-coms are taking a hit in markets, she doesn't feel so bad about not getting in on the feeding frenzy.

Cover story

Dot-com dodgers laugh all the way to the bank

Investors who avoided Net stocks say playing it safe paid off this time

By Stephanie Armour
USA TODAY



By Todd Piller for USA TODAY

McDonough: Federal Reserve Bank of New York president.

Voices of the Fed

In the third installment of a series of interviews with top Federal Reserve officials, William McDonough, president of the Federal Reserve Bank of New York, shares his insights on inflation, interest rates and the economy. **Interview, 3B**

For anybody who's ever felt left out of the Internet bonanza, now's the time to gloat.

Technology stocks have been slumping, investors are ditching Internet companies in droves, and high-tech is becoming synonymous with high anxiety. Feelings of dot-com envy are fast being replaced by sighs of relief.

"Sometimes the turtle does beat the rabbit," says Tom Ketchum, 52, a Wausau, Wis., insurance agent, who has eschewed high-tech stocks because he feels they're too risky. "I selfishly took a great deal of satisfaction when the (stock market) slid. . . . For months, I had been listening to my associates brag about their newfound wealth while my investments were plodding along. The revenge was sweet."

While Monday's record point gain for the Nasdaq composite index may have soothed

some frayed nerves, it didn't go very far in repairing damage from the bloodletting technology stocks the past month. After Monday — when the Nasdaq gained 13 points, or 6.6%, to 3539 — the tech-heavy index still is 30% off its March peak and down 13% for the year. (Story, 1) USA TODAY Internet 100 index is 31 March 27 high and down 10% for 2000.

But the dizzying losses means the Internet mania now is sweeping up in the Internet mania now, sweeping up in the Internet mania now, sweeping up in the Internet mania now.

► **Among investors.** Carrie Coghill, senior vice president and financial adviser at D.B. Root in Pittsburgh, remembering left out while placing her money in traditional — but less sexy — investments.

"When I placed the trade, I thought it was boring. It's not what's happened. It's doing very well," Coghill says. "I have complete confidence this Internet would have to come back to reality. Others to get out, that it wasn't going to last."

► **Among CEOs.** Just a few weeks ago Steven Braman was grousing about agents with no business savvy who were making thousands of dollars in commissions.

Please see COVER STORY next

Dodging rental-car parking tickets can

Some companies tack on hefty fees if they pay your fine

By Salina Khan
USA TODAY

If you're going to pay a parking ticket late, make sure you didn't get it while renting a car from Budget.

Budget charges customers \$25 for not paying a ticket on time, on top of the parking fine and late fees.

Budget's policy is a leader in rental companies' newly aggressive campaign against scofflaws. They say municipal-

ities contact them about thousands of unpaid tickets monthly.

Most companies tack a fee to the bill if they pay the fine and late fees for a customer. Budget is the only major company to charge a fee if they just help a government find the customer.

"The customer is the one who made the decision to park illegally," says Kimberly Mulcahy, a Budget spokeswoman. "You know you got it because there's a ticket on your windshield."

Budget says its \$25 charge covers time spent identifying the renter and relaying that data to the municipality.

Rental companies have charged parking-ticket fees since the mid-1990s, but better computer systems may have improved their collection rates. Companies

now keep better records, can identify violators and contact them sooner. Rental-car industry consultant Abrams in Purchase, N.Y.

USA TODAY Road Warrior Glynman says he was surprised that he discovered his unpaid \$5 parking from a national park in Kansas.

A month after he got the ticket, sent him a \$60 invoice, which carried penalties for paying late and appearing in court and Hertz's fee.

"Pay the 5 bucks," says Thorn Osceola, Wis. "They have the tin will track you down."

Some companies recoup costs by charging renters' credit cards. Customers warned in the rental agreement.

Avis' administrative fee is \$15.