



By Stewart S. Miller

Tech Savvy

TV outside the box

My latest technology acquisition will undoubtedly revolutionize television. But before I tell you about it, let me ask you a question: What if you could watch live television no matter where you go — no television, cable box, or satellite dish required?

A new product called SlingBox by SlingMedia (www.slingmedia.com) turns your desktop, laptop, PDA, or smart phone into a TV.

SlingBox introduces the concept of "place-shifting" the television signal from your source media device to your computer screen. It doesn't matter if your computer is down the street or thousands of miles away. The SlingBox acts as a relay, taking the TV signal and sending it through the Internet to virtually anywhere you want to be.

Not only can you watch television anywhere, you can control it as well. This means that you can view cable TV programs when you are on vacation or even watch a show recorded on your TiVo from a friend's house halfway across the world.

The Internet has evolved to include wireless networking technologies, which is why SlingMedia's Sling-Player Mobile is designed to work on either your local wireless handheld device or a PDA SmartPhone through high-speed mobile Internet companies like Sprint PCS and Verizon



Kathie Frazier, of Escondido, waits in her car Friday while drive-thru cleaner owner Kevin Tahbaz delivers her clothes. Tahbaz's service is one of many drive-thru businesses that keep customers in their cars while taking care of their daily errands. Sean DuFrene | sean@thnews.net

Convenience behind the *wheel*

Drive-thru services are part of American cultural landscape

By Ondine Brooks Kuraoka
Special to Today's Local News

A desire for convenience is

Loma in 1965. In the 1980s, one-hour photo services stamped out the need for one-day services. By that time, the

fast food. Drive-thru beverage centers, bagels, scones, shish-kabobs and dairies can be found throughout the

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FreeGasHelp.com hosts event

Wireless. Now you can be sitting on the beach and still watch your favorite show from home.

The SlingBox is easy to set up because it has the ability to discover automatically the media devices to which it is connected. Unlike cable companies that charge for extra TVs connected throughout your home, you can connect several computers to your SlingBox because all that is required is for you to install the SlingPlayer software on each machine connected to your network.

With the SlingBox you pay no subscription fees. Since you own the box, you don't pay for any pay-per-use charges because you are simply "place-shifting" the media signal from the media device you've already paid for to a computer or PDA that you already own. As long as you have an unlimited-use Internet connection, you don't pay for the connection time, either.

SlingBox works well with Windows XP (Service Pack 2) and Windows 2000 (Service Pack 4) and with many PDA devices running Windows Mobile 2003 Second Edition and Windows Mobile 5. SlingMedia is working on a Mac version of its SlingPlayer.

The SlingBox connects to your network via a standard RJ-45 ethernet cable. You can use a wireless game adapter or bridge to convert that wired Ethernet connection into a WiFi connection. This may be a necessary add-on if your media devices are far enough away from your network router.

Overall, the concept of using your computers as extra televisions is a fantastic concept. SlingMedia even has a special section of their site called "eXtreme Sling" (www.sling-media.com/extreme) that shows you how to use the SlingBox in more inventive ways.

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a defining factor of American culture. Over the years, retailers have come up with different ways to cater to consumers' convenience from the drive-in restaurant to the current trend of drive-thru anything.

Rally's fast food drive-thru garnered the 2005 title for Best Drive-Thru in the QSR Magazine (Quality and Speed for Restaurant Success) Drive-Thru Study, unseating three-year champion Chick-fil-A. Bob Barrios, owner of Rally's on East Valley Parkway in Escondido, described the Rally's/Checkers corporate GO program.

"GO stands for guest-obsessed. When a customer comes in, we stop whatever we're doing — it's GO time; we focus on serving our guest. Everything is fresh so we have to get the food out fast," Barrios said.

Fast food epitomizes the drive-thru industry; the largest company being McDonald's Corporation, with 14,000 U.S. restaurants.

Eating in the car is an American habit, and so is banking from the car. According to Credit Suisse Emagazine, the first drive-thru bank was opened in Dallas, Texas in 1938. An oddity in many countries — Switzerland discontinued use of drive-thru banking years ago — American consumers continue to rely on banks that allow them to conduct transactions from the car.

Some drive-thru services idled into oblivion through changes in technology. Fotomat's one-day photo finishing franchise opened its first drive-thru kiosk in Point

gold-roofed Fotomat islands — more than 4,000 nationwide — had become neighborhood mascots.

Drive-in establishments, such as diners and theaters, achieved large-scale success in the U.S. before fading in popularity.

According to "America Eats Out: An Illustrated History of Restaurants, Taverns, Coffee shops, Speakeasies, and Other Establishments That Have Fed Us for 350 years" by John Mariani, the drive-in eatery was created by J.G. Kirby, a Dallas tobacco and candy wholesaler. In 1921, Kirby and Dr. Reuben Wright Jackson opened the Pig Stand, a drive-in pork barbecue on the Dallas-Fort Worth Highway.

A&W opened its first drive-in restaurant in 1923. The drive-in diner phenomenon grew through the 1950s and the "cruising scene" era of car culture. Trays of burgers and soft drinks were hooked onto car windows by car hops who bused the orders.

Over the years, the novelty of the drive-in dining experience gave way to consumers' preference for quick service and commuting meals. North County is no exception. The Escondido Drive-In Theater and Oceanside's Valley Drive-In closed in the 1980s. The defunct Escondido theater grounds are now used for swap meets. The remaining drive-in theaters in San Diego County are in Santee and South Bay.

Even as the novelty of the drive-in dining experience fades out, drive-thrus are drawing a wider customer base. Drive-thru eats and drinks are not confined to

country. The closest drive-thru dairy is D & L Dairy in Orange County, and Carlsbad has a drive-thru donut shop, Super Donut, on Grand Avenue.

Tim and Julie Deming opened Java Hut, a drive-thru gourmet coffee kiosk, more than 10 years ago. Java Hut sells gourmet coffee, blended coffee drinks, tea and smoothies at its two Vista locations. Tim Deming explained that a coffee kiosk's success depends on convenience and easy access.

"Business has gotten better each year — it's all word of mouth. We're busy from the moment we open at 5:30 a.m. until we close at 5 p.m. Our original customer, Robin, who gave us our first dollar bill, still comes to us," Tim Deming said.

Drive-thru pharmacies, such as the Say-on pharmacy on South Centre City Parkway in Escondido, are attracting more customers. Wal-Mart is adding the service wherever space permits at its more than 3,000 Supercenters.

Escondido residents have patronized the drive-thru dry cleaning services at 1378 E. Grand Ave. for 30 years. Lovett's 1 Hour Cleaners (previously Mr. Terry's 1 Hour Martinizing) has been owned by Kevin Tahbaz for the last 12 years. Tahbaz explained that the business will relocate within Escondido in the next few months but will continue as a drive-thru.

"People love it. Parents with kids in the car or people on their way to work are in a hurry; they don't want to come inside," Tahbaz said.

OCEANSIDE — North County residents can go to Escondido Saturday to get relief from high gas prices. FreeGasHelp.com, a specialty advertising company based in Oceanside, is holding a promotional event where consumers can sign up to carry advertising on their vehicles in exchange for free gas cards.

The event is from 11 a.m. to 1 p.m. at Pizza & Fun, 2315 E. Valley Parkway. Consumers may want to arrive early as registration is limited. For information visit www.freegashelp.com or call Mel Jacob, (888) 88-GASAD (42723).

— Heather Chambers

Chamber receives accolades

OCEANSIDE — The Oceanside Chamber of Commerce Education Committee will honor its educators at an Operation Thanks breakfast at 7:30 p.m. April 6 at the Flying Bridge restaurant, 1105 N. Coast Highway in Oceanside.

Thirty-one individuals from various schools within the city of Oceanside have been nominated as most outstanding classified employee, administrator and teacher of the year. Each will be recognized at the breakfast, and the winner of each category will be announced. The cost is \$15. For information contact the Chamber, (760) 722-1234.

— Ruth Marvin Webster

	>CARLSBAD	>ESCONDIDO	>OCEANSIDE	>SAN MARCOS	>VISTA
LOW GAS PRICES IN OUR AREA	\$2.60 Arco 1991 Palomar Airport Rd	\$2.60 Arco 100 Terraza Blvd	\$2.64 Arco 3804 Plaza Drive	\$2.56 Texaco 145 Via Vera Cruz	\$2.69 76 636 Sycamore Ave.
CHEAP GAS	*Prices as of yesterday. The gas stations listed include most of the major brands in any selected community. Some major brands have chosen not to be included. The data are gathered by analyzing credit card purchases of gasoline. Gas stations that do not take credit cards are not included. Source: Automobile Club of Southern California (AAA) Daily Fuel Gauge Report.				