



SUBMITTED PHOTO

Our House Designs recently donated to Operation Freedom Ballot.

Company supports veterans initiative

HICKORY — Our House Designs, which manufactures upper-end leather upholstery, recently made a donation in honor of its associates to Operation Freedom Ballot. Operation Freedom Ballot honors families of service members killed in Iraq with an official ballot from the 2005 Iraq election. The Iraqi ballot signifies freedom and the price paid for that freedom. The ballots give each Gold Star family a small feeling of peace by reminding them that

their son or daughter's death gave others a chance at freedom. Although Operation Freedom Ballot's original focus was honoring fallen Marines, the response was so positive, additional resources were tapped to award Iraqi ballots to Gold Star families who have lost loved ones in Iraq regardless of military branch. Russ Meade of Hickory is a Marine veteran and founder of Operation Freedom Ballot. He served in the Marine Corps for eight years before

re-enlisting to be a part of Operation Iraqi Freedom. Deeply moved by the Corp's positive impact on Iraq's first free election, Meade returned home with an official Iraqi ballot. Months later, after being prompted by a Gold Star father, Meade realized the significance of the ballot to Gold Star families and Operation Freedom Ballot was born.

On the Net:
www.operationfreedomballot.com

Parkway Bank names new staff members

LENOIR — James E. Sponenberg III, president and chief executive officer of Parkway Bank, announced three additions to the staff.

Teresa Peters joins Parkway Bank as the customer service manager for the Lenoir office. She has 15 years of experience in the banking and finance industries, and earned an Associate Degree in Business Administration from Western Piedmont Community College. Peters and her husband, Stanley, have two sons.



Peters

Julia Colvard is the new customer service representative at Parkway's Hudson office. She brings 22 years of banking experience as a teller, assistant head teller, note teller, customer service representative, annuity specialist and IRA specialist. Colvard and her husband, Tim, have one son.



Colvard

Laurie Ellsworth is a new teller in the Lenoir office. She has nine years of banking experience as a teller and senior teller. Ellsworth and her husband, Michael, have two daughters. They also have one granddaughter and one grandson.



Ellsworth

On the Net:
www.parkwaybanknc.com

Sleep with your iPhone? You're not alone

The Associated Press

NEW YORK — You gave it a pet name. It knows more about you than your mother does. Sometimes you even sleep with it. In fact, you're so attached to it that being separated for only a few minutes could send you into a panic.

While smartphone users worry about mobile hacking and other security threats that are making news these days, psychologists and others are concerned about another equally troubling issue: the growing obsession among people who would much rather interact with their smartphones than with other human beings.

"Watching people who get their first smartphone, there's a very quick progression from having a basic phone you don't talk about to people who love their iPhone, name their phone and buy their phones outfits," said Lisa Merlo, director of psychotherapy training at the University of Florida.

The increasing dependence comes as more Americans ditch their iPods, cameras, maps and address books in favor of the myriad capabilities of a smartphone. After all, companies have rolled out thousands of applications that do everything from track your heart rate to guide you through the streets of New York City.

While smartphones have made life easier for some, psychologists say the love of them is becoming more like an addiction, creating consequences that range from minor (teenagers who communicate in three-letter acronyms like LOL and BRB) to major (car accidents caused by people who text while driving).

Merlo, a clinical psychologist, said she's observed a number of behaviors among smartphone users that she labels "problematic." Among them, Merlo says some patients pretend to talk on the phone or fiddle with apps to avoid eye contact or other interactions at a bar or a party. Others are so genuinely engrossed in their phones that they ignore the people around them completely.

"The more bells and whistles the phone has," she says, "the more likely they are to get too attached."

Michelle Hackman, a recent high school graduate in Long Island, N.Y., won a

\$75,000 prize in this year's Intel Science Talent Search with a research project investigating teens' attachment to their cell phones. She found that students separated from their phones were under-stimulated — a low heart rate was an indicator — and lacked the ability to entertain themselves.

Most of the teens at Hackman's affluent high school own smartphones, she says, and could even be found texting under

their desks during class. For some, the anxious feeling that they might miss something has caused them to slumber next to their smartphones. More than a third of U.S. adults — 35 percent — now own a smartphone, according to the Pew Research Center, and two-thirds of them sleep with their phones right next to their beds.

Michael Breus, a psychologist and sleep specialist, said in his clinical practice, his patients often

describe how they answer emails, text and surf the Web as they're trying to wind down at night. He says this is a bad idea.

"This behavior can increase cognitive arousal," he says, "leading to the No. 1 complaint I hear: 'I can't turn off my mind and fall asleep.'"

Some people also are willing to do almost anything to feed their addiction, including spending more money for the data plans than they can afford.

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