

BIZfact**\$22,880**

Median annual wage
of Long Island's
4,500 manicurists
and pedicurists

Source: State Labor
Department

**GROUP SEEKS RECALL
OF KIA, HYUNDAI CARS**

A nonprofit auto safety group is demanding that Hyundai and Kia recall 2.9 million cars and SUVs in the United States due to consumer complaints that they can catch fire.

The Center For Auto Safety said Friday there have been more than 220 complaints to the U.S. government since 2010 about fires and another 200 complaints about melted wires as well as smoke and burning odors.

The complaints involve the 2011 through 2014 Kia Sorento and Optima and the Hyundai Sonata and Santa Fe. Also included is the 2010 through 2015 Kia Soul.

The fires are being investigated by the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration as part of a 2017 probe into Hyundai and Kia engine failures.

"The volume of fires here make it appear that Hyundai and Kia are content to sit back and allow consumers and insurers to bear the brunt of poorly designed, manufactured and repaired vehicles," Jason Levine, the center's executive director, said. The fire reports have come in from across the country, including a death in Ohio in April of 2017, he said.

Hyundai says it monitors safety concerns and acts quickly to recall defective vehicles.

Kia said it is using company and third-party fire investigators to determine what caused the fires so it can address them. — AP

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CAPITALIZING on the sun

LI solar power company reaps business as big leasing outfits exit the market



Scott Maskin, president of SUNation Solar Systems, enjoys the rays by a rooftop array of solar panels his company installed on a warehouse in Ronkonkoma.

NEWSDAY / JOHN PARASKEVAS

BY MARK HARRINGTON
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The exodus of several large solar-leasing companies from the Long Island market over the past three years provided an opportunity for one local market player to grow amid the rubble.

With the departures of Level Solar, SunEdison and Direct Energy during that time, more than 4,000 local solar customers — around 10 percent of Long Island's installed base — had to look elsewhere for the occasional service and repair the systems need. For SUNation Solar Systems of Ronkonkoma, which negotiated pacts with those companies to take on the customers without the corporate liabilities, it was a chance to grow its sales volume.

The decision to take on that business was particularly ironic for SUNation, which two years ago was in talks to be bought by one of the region's then-largest solar leasing companies, NRG Solar.

Scott Maskin, chief executive of SUNation, said the company today is glad it walked away from that deal, which would have enriched the owners but led to cutbacks and an uncertain future for SUNation. NRG quit the home solar installation business on Long Island and elsewhere shortly thereafter.

"I knew the black eye was coming," Maskin said, referring to the exodus of leasing companies from the business amid customer complaints of hard-sell tactics, shoddy installations and accelerating payments, detailed in a Newsday

FAST FACTS

- **Company:** SUNation Solar Systems, Ronkonkoma
- **CEO:** Scott Maskin
- **Employees:** 140
- **Systems intalled per month:** 70 to 100
- **Systems serviced:** More than 9,000
- **Estimated 2018 revenue:** \$30 million

report in August.

NRG spokesman Dave Schrader declined to discuss the proposed offer to acquire SUNation, saying the company doesn't disclose "information about deals that didn't happen." NRG's former Long Island customers are serviced by several contractors, Schrader said, but NRG remains their primary con-

tact. "We have employees who take service requests," he said. "Some of the actual work may be done by vendors, but we remain the primary contact."

Schrader declined to name which vendors service NRG's Long Island accounts. SUNation isn't one of them, Maskin said.

Another large Long Island company, EmPower Solar of Island Park, services customers from NRG, said Tara Bono, EmPower marketing manager.

SUNation, in its biggest pact to date, last year took on more than 3,000 solar-leasing customers from Level Solar, a Manhattan-based company that ultimately filed for bankruptcy protection, in a service-only deal that leaves SUNation

See SOLAR on A28

Tenants lining up for new mall in Centereach

LI BUSINESS



RETAIL ROUNDUP

Tory N. Parrish

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Long Island might get its first crack at Wingstop's chicken wings in the spring, but the Dallas-based chain isn't talking.

A planned Wingstop franchise will be among four businesses — the first confirmed tenants — headed to New Village Plaza, a shopping center under construction in the 1700 block of Middle Country Road in Centereach, said Jason Sobel, an agent who works in the Jericho office of Ripco Real Estate Corp.

Manhattan-headquartered Ripco is overseeing leasing on behalf of the shopping center's owner, MVC Properties LLC in Bayside.

Three other planned tenants are fast-food eatery Arby's, meal prep and delivery business Swole House, and Middle Country Wines & Liquors, Sobel said.

Middle Country Wines & Liquors is awaiting a liquor license from the New York State Liquor Authority, the agency said.

New Village Plaza, which replaced "an old shopping center with illegal cars stored on the back of the property," will have 75,013 square feet of space spread across three buildings when it's finished, Brookhaven Town spokesman Kevin Molloy said.

The project is being built in two phases, the second of which should be done by the end of 2019, Sobel said. The site plan for the project shows building spaces for 22 tenants, but some of the spaces could be combined.



New Village Plaza, being built on Middle Country Road, has two eateries planning to open April 1.

"We have a lot of interest from strong national and local retailers. And we believe it's going to be a great addition to the community," Sobel said.

Arby's and Wingstop are expected to open on the property by April 1, Sobel said.

Wingstop Inc. operated and franchised 1,188 aviation-themed restaurants in seven countries, 90 percent of which were in North America, as of June 30, according to the publicly traded company's latest earnings report. It has 11 locations in New York State, though none are on Long Island.

The company, founded in 1994, did not return calls or emails for comment about the 1,500-square-foot location planned for New Village Plaza.

Wingstop is listed as one of the incoming tenants on a sign at the shopping center and on the Ripco website marketing the property, so the cat is out of the bag anyway.

In August I wrote about Arby's Restaurant Group Inc., which is owned by Atlanta-based Inspire Brands Inc., and its plans to take over the metropolitan area, one roast beef sandwich at a time.

A Roslyn Heights-based Arby's franchisee, Long Island Roast Beef Group LLC, will operate a 2,500-square-foot drive-thru in New Village Plaza, said Barry Lubman, managing partner.

The location is one of four planned Long Island Arby's that are under construction or in ad-

vanced stages of development through franchise deals, Greg Vojnovic, chief development officer at Inspire Brands, told me in August. The others are in Farmingdale, Freeport and Hempstead.

There are nearly 3,300 Arby's locations in the United States, including five on Long Island.

Swole House is a locally based operation slated to open in six to eight weeks in a 1,750-square-foot space at the shopping center.

New digs for sign company

It's a sign of the times.

Signs By Tomorrow East Northport, a 15-year-old franchise, relocated from Commack to the Hauppauge Industrial Park in September and is now known as Signs By Tomor-

row Commack-Hauppauge.

"We wanted to relocate to a place . . . that's closer to the corporate customers that we do business with," franchise owner Ronald Facchiano said.

Using in-house graphic design services, the store designs banners, business cards, postcard mailers, brochures, graphics displayed on vans and box trucks, indoor and outdoor signs, electronic signage and other products.

"We basically do high-end signage for corporations. . . . We're really branding specialists," Facchiano said.

The local franchise was founded in 2003 in East Northport and relocated in 2011 to a freestanding building on Jericho Turnpike in Commack, he said.

The Commack store had been seeing a lot of walk-in customers, but Facchiano wanted to focus more on corporate clients, which is why he made the decision to relocate to the industrial park, he said.

The new, 2,500-square-foot store employs five people and is in leased space at 175 Commerce Dr., unit C, in Hauppauge.

Signs By Tomorrow is a brand that was founded in 1986 and is owned by Plymouth, Michigan-based Alliance Franchise Brands. It has 90 locations in 30 states, but the Commack-Hauppauge store is the only one on Long Island.

RETAIL ROUNDUP is a column about major retail news on Long Island — store openings, closings, expansions, acquisitions, etc. — that is published online and in the Monday paper. If you have news to share, please send an email to Newsday reporter Tory N. Parrish at tory.parrish@newsday.com.

Solar power company growing in wake of lease firms' exit

SOLAR from A27

with no debt or liability, Maskin said. The deal also brought SUNation into the lease-payment servicing business, processing thousands of customer payments per month.

PSEG Long Island said SUNation's move helped prop up the local solar market. "We're pleased that SunNation stepped forward to continue serving solar customers who previously were served by Level Solar, allowing continued

production of clean energy, and helping customers to save."

SUNation has also taken on another thousand leasing customers from companies such as Direct Energy and SunEdison as they left the local market, Maskin said.

During the past three years, SUNation's workforce has more than doubled, to 140 from 58. Around 25 are dedicated just to the service business. The company installs from 70 to 100 systems a month, and services more than 9,000 rooftop

systems, just under half of which it installed for its own customers. SUNation doesn't lease systems.

Maskin said he wrote a memo to LIPA in 2012 predicting much of what happened as big leasing companies flooded a Long Island market that had long been dominated by local installers who sold rather than leased systems to customers.

He and consumer watchdog groups say the area saw an influx of bad deals and low-quality installations. "It was all a

race for the federal tax credits" and the LIPA rebate, Maskin said. The rebate has since been discontinued after leasing companies largely gobbled up that \$40 million pot. The federal tax credit continues but decreases in increments through 2021.

Revving up its business has helped SUNation increase its volume to an estimated \$30 million in revenue this year, double that of five years ago. It has installed around 33 megawatts of solar across the Island since its founding in 2003, Maskin

said. One megawatt powers around 175 homes in New York, according to the Solar Energy Industries Association.

He predicts there could be further market consolidation in the solar leasing market, and said he's prepared to take on servicing of those customers. "I think there are going to be more casualties," he said, and he's got the infrastructure in place to take on more. "I would love to take over 9,000 solar systems, as long as somebody else owns them."