

Preying on the lonely

Scammers find way to bank account is through the heart 6A

NEWSLINE



FRANCO ORIGINA GETTY IMAGES Pope Benedict XVI leads Ash Wednesday service at St. Peter's Basilica.

Pope's tearful, final public Mass

Benedict tells thousands that he resigned "for the good of the church." Story at **usatoday.com**

Former L.A. cop was hiding right under their noses

As authorities await autopsy results, details emerge on where, how cop hid for five days. 3A

Carnival sends 3rd tugboat, books hotels, flights

Cruise line executive acknowledges conditions on crippled ship are "challenging." 🔼

'Yippee ki-yay'



Twenty-five years after first 'Die Hard,' Bruce Willis still finding himself in trouble. "No one could

predict this," actor says. **9B**

Bruce Willis

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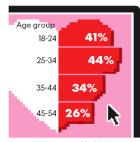
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USA SNAPSHOTS® Virtual love

Adults who planned to send romantic images via e-mail, text or social media on Valentine's Day



Source MSI International for McAfee sur of 1,182 adults ages 18-54 in December

Q&A: HOW THE MERGER WILL AFFECT YOU, 8A

LINES AGR **TO BE VALENTINES**

American, US Airways vote to be world's biggest



SOUTHWEST 2

DELTA

112.5 million

98.1 million

UNITED³

1 - 12 months ending October 2012; 2 - includes AirTran; 3 - includes Continental Source: MIT analysis of Bureau of Transportation Statistics data

Charisse Jones @cnarissejoi USA TODAY

American Airlines, a storied but struggling carrier that sought bank-ruptcy protection, has agreed to merge with US Airways to create the

merge with US Airways to create the world's largest airline.

After weeks of discussion and speculation, the boards for the two carriers voted on Wednesday to combine, a person close to the discussions but who was not authorized to speak publicly told USA TODAY.

The deal, the particulars of which weren't disclosed, will be announced today. It would still need the approval of the bankruptey court overseeing

al of the bankruptcy court overseeing American's restructuring, as well as federal regulators. American Airlines spokesman Mike Trevino said the carrier had no comment. US Airways spokesman

Mobile devices are remaking love in America. Whether your dating needs are sacred, sexual or something else. there's an app for it.

Melissa Arseniuk, 30, isn't leaving her dating life to chance.

her dating life to chance.

She's a paying member of the dating website HowAboutWe and also uses the mobile app Singles AroundMe. Arseniuk, a freelance writer in New York, plunged into both about six months ago after the end of a three-year relationship.

She says the phone app is particular-

"I could be at a coffee shop or meeting a girlfriend and she's run-ning late, so I could fire up the app and see who's around," she says. "It's

kind of a good supplement to the more traditional Web-based dating sites. It's about exploring all avenues

level, remaking an industry that's expected to reach \$1.2 billion this

year. The mobile dating segment is

and putting yourself out there As online dating revolutionized romance in America over the past decade, the proliferation of dating apps is now taking love to a whole new layer propagation of the control of the contro

Sharon Jayson

ly handy "I cou

Todd Lehmacher also wouldn't If approved, the marriage of US

Airways and American would repre-An ways and American would represent the last significant merger in the U.S. airline industry.

Delta and Northwest, United and

Delta and Northwest, officed and Continental, and Southwest and Air-Tran all paired up in the past five years. A union of US Airways and American would mean that four mega-size carriers control 87% of the US. airline industry's seats, says Seth

U.S. airline industry's seats, says Seth Kaplan, an analyst for Airline Weekly, an industry trade publication.

Less competition may lead to higher fares in some markets, some industry observers say.

"For consumers, you have a smaller, less competitive industry with somewhat higher fares than you would have had the mergers not happened." Kaplan says.

pened," Kaplan says. But "on the other hand, you have

The end of 'online dating'

airlines that can now invest in their product," like roomier seats in the

product," like roomier seats in the premium cabins or better entertainment, he says. "For years U.S. airlines were just trying to get through the day. They didn't have money for those types of things."

US Airways CEO Doug Parker has said a combined airline would keep American's iconic name and locate its headquarters in American's hometown of Fort Worth.

Passengers on a merged American

hometown of Fort Worth.

Passengers on a merged American would be able to fly across a vastly expanded map that would likely include US Airways' East Coast hubs of Charlotte and Philadelphia and American's strong international presence across the Atlantic and in Latin America.

The new carrier also would likely stick with American's frequent-flier program, the industry's oldest and one of its most popular.

Melissa Arseniuk, 30, of New

York City is a big fan of the mobile app SinglesAroundMe, which identifies other singles

TOP 5 DATING APPS

Total unique visitors ages 18 and up: POF (PlentyofFish) sites 1,698,000

1.397.000

535,000

Melissa Levine. met online via JDate, a niche site for Jewish singles. They are

getting married in March.

who are nearby.

Skout.com

Zoosk.com eHarmony

SOURCE: COMSCORE, DEC. 2012

Drug prices again

Rise defies trend of other health costs declining

Dennis Cauchon

Prescription drug prices are taking off again as other health care costs are flat or falling.

After dropping during the recession, drug prices have reignited in the past four years, returning to growth rates of a decade ago. In 2012, prescription drug prices rose 3.6%, twice the 1.7% inflation rate, Bureau of Economic Analysis data show. The trend is in sharp contrast to other health costs. Prices for a doctor's visit, lab test and nursing home room all fell below the rate of infla-

room all fell below the rate of infla-

PRESCRIPTIONS ARE PRICIER

Prescription drug prices are rising faster than other health care costs:

Price change, 2012 Prescription drugs Non-0.7% prescription drugs Physician Medical o Medical **o** instruments

Sources Bureau of Ed USA TODAY analysis

tion for the past two years.

What's driving drug costs up: brand-name drugs paid for by insurance and often heavily advertised.

The price escalation on patented drugs has offset enormous savings that have occurred simultaneously from the growing use of inexpensive generic drugs. Generic drugs can be made by multiple companies, which compete on price. Four of every five prescriptions are for generics, which can cost one-fourth or less than the brand name version.

can cost one-fourth or less than the brand name version.

This blend — expensive brands and cheap generics after patents expire — lets consumers buy drugs at low cost while providing profits for drug research. The Food and Drug Administration has approved 70 new drugs in the past two years, including a breakthrough treatment of cystic fibrosis and the first drug for a common form of skin cancer. mon form of skin cancer.

mon form of skin cancer.

The top-selling drugs reflect the strategy of the \$310 billion annual drug industry:

▶ No. 1 Nexium, a heartburn drug, had a 7.8% price hike to a \$262 average prescription in the first nine months of 2012, IMS Health reports.

▶ No. 2 Abilify, for bipolar disorder, increased 10.4% to \$642 per prescription.

prescription.

No. 3 Crestor, a cholesterol-lowering drug, went up 9.7% to \$193 per prescription.

"Pricing decisions are based on

many factors that reflect our obliga-

tions to patients and shareholders," says Stephanie Andrzejewski of As-traZeneca, which makes Nexium. "This price system is a blessing as

well as a frustration," says N. Lee wen as a instruction, says N. Lee Rucker, a pharmaceutical expert at AARP, which represents seniors. High prices create a robust market for innovative drugs, she says, but the patents can be too long and physi-

cians may be poorly informed about a drugs cost and effectiveness. Most consumers are protected from rising drug prices. The Medi-care drug benefit, started in 2006, means the government pays most costs that once fell on seniors.

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COVER STORY CONTINUES ON 24

projected to double its revenue over

searching for love are tethered to laptops or those other technological

relics: desktops. Just as other indus

tries have watched online traffic and

thes have watched offme traine and business migrate from the Web to mobile devices, the dating industry has been rolling out apps that are connecting hearts, and breaking

them, in surprising new ways and

splintering an audience once cap-tured almost exclusively by the goliaths of online dating. "I see the industry breaking off

into a billion different directions," ays Marc Lesnick, founder of iDate n annual trade show for the online

If you have a specific dating need

dating industry.

This Valentine's Day, fewer singles

Mobile apps tap the popularity of online dating

to be fulfilled — from the sacred to the scandalous — there's probably a the scandalous — there's probably a site for you, many with their own apps as well. The niches range from ethnic, religious or age-based to sites for occupations (FarmersOnly.com) or eating preferences (VeggieDate.org). For gay men, there's Grindr.com and a site launched in December called Stagg.

"I love the site DateMyPet. The idea is you like pets and I like pets. That's the level it's gone," Lesnick says. "It's everything you can imagine

says. "It's everything you can imagine now. That's where it's heading."

now. That's where it's heading."

Among the satisfied customers are
Melissa Levine, 27, a physician assistant, and Corey Pew. 29, an engineer.
They met on the niche site JDate, for
Jewish singles, and will marry next month.

"As an engineer, you don't meet a whole lot of girls on a daily basis, whole lot of gurls on a daily basis, says Pew, a graduate student in me-chanical engineering at the Univer-sity of Washington in Seattle. In 2010, he moved to Austin. Lev-ine was moving there as well and started looking online for Austin dat-ers. She had tried JDate after college graduation and "ended up going on

graduation and "ended up going on horrible dates."

horrible dates."

"One guy was talking about the mating of bees for three hours straight," says Levine, now also of Seattle. "Most of my friends — when they would tell me stories, they are not good stories about dating online. Weird, weird guys."

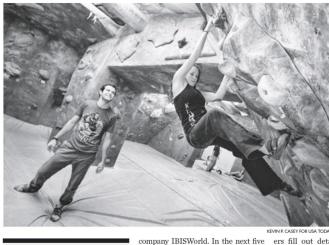
Until Pew. "I met him three days after I moved to Austin. I was talking to two guys on JDate at the time and

to two guys on JDate at the time and planning on meeting both. I went on the date with Corey first and can-celed the other date," Levine says.

EXPONENTIAL GROWTH

In less than two decades, online dat-ing has soared and is "in the growth phase of its economic life cycle," says a report from IBISWorld, a market a report from IBISWorld, a market research organization. Though 18- to 29-year-olds make up the biggest chunk of users, with 30- to 49-year-olds next in line, demand is expected to rise with the north-of-50 crowd, too. More than one-third of Baby Boomers are unmarried, and as more migrate to digital, the industry is be-ginning to target this unattached and ginning to target this unattached and largely underserved market.

Just as the social stigma of online dating has begun to fade, the name itdating has begun to fade, the name itself might also go the way of dial-up Internet service. With the dating industry moving so rapidly, the phrase "online dating" will soon disappear from the lexicon, says Sam Yagan, CEO of Match Inc., which oversees sites such as Match.com, Chemistry.com and all online dating



MOBILE DATING TAKES OFF Revenue from mobile dating in the USA is expected to nearly double in the next five years. (Revenue in \$415.3

millions): \$300 \$212.6 \$100 \$43.0

Source IBISWorld Inc. June 2012

erations for the global operations

(🗆)

operations for the global operations of its parent company, IAC.

"It's all converging so quickly that the idea of differentiating online and offline in five years will be anachro-nistic" be save

stic," he says. Whether it's an app for a dating

Whether it's an app for a dating website or a dating app alone, mobile is "leading the industry's growth," says Caitlin Moldvay, a senior industry analyst at IBISWorld, based in Santa Monica, Calif.

It's also heading to even bigger money. Last year, the mobile dating market reported revenue of almost \$213 million, up 29% from the previous year, according to market research

years, revenue is projected to nearly double to more than \$415 million. Nielsen reports that the number of

Americans using apps or a mobile version of a dating website was 13.7 million in November 2012, more than

non in November 2012, more than double the previous year's 5.8 million. "We're trying to mirror real life as best we can," says Chris Klotz, 46, founder of SinglesAroundMe, one of the first location-based mobile dating apps for smartphones, launched in 2010. "It's a natural evolution of online dating." line dating.

As the focus has shifted to apps As the focus has shifted to apps, the online dating website category has seen a drop in visitors. About 22.9 million people visited dating websites in January 2012, down from 29.3 million in January 2011, according to ComScore, which tracks website traffic from computers separately from mobile devices.

But the shift is a sign of strength rather than weakness, experts say.

rather than weakness, experts say The goal of dating sites is to even-"The goal of dating sites is to even-tually meet in person with another person. That makes it inherently lo-cal and mobile," says Yagan, 35, of New York, who co-founded the free dating site OkCupid, which launched in 2004 and is now part of IAC. Last month, OkCupid launched Crazy Blind Date, a mobile any that ar-Blind Date, a mobile app that arranges blind dates with just a few hours' notice and allows singles to provide real-time feedback

MATCHMAKER, MATCHMAKER

MATCHMAREK, MAICHINGS.

Mat happens after people are connected via apps or dating sites is more difficult to quantify. Some sites, such as eHarmony, do more than collect profiles of singles. They have us-

ers fill out detailed questionnain about their personalities and what they want in a potential match. The site pairs them up using proprietary compatibility algorithms

Although research published last year found "no compelling evidence" year found "no compelling evidence" that such matching software better predicts compatibility, one can't help but wonder how many online match-es actually lead to the altar. Sociologist Michael Rosenfeld of Stanford University set about to an-swer this question. His new analysis of nationally representative data

of nationally representative data found that of 926 unmarried couples followed from 2009 to 2011, those followed from 2009 to 2011, those who met online were twice as likely to marry as those who met offline, with a yearly marriage rate of 13%, compared with 6%. Rosenfeld's earlier research found that about one in five new relationships began online.

The eHarmony site touts that, on average, 542 Americans get married each day after meeting on its site.

each day after meeting on its site; that represents almost 5% of all new that represents almost 5% of all new U.S. marriages. The findings are based on a 2009 Harris Interactive online survey of 7,994 adults ages 20-54 married between January 1, 2008, and June 30, 2009.

Founder Neil Clark Warren, 78, acknowledges a "significant lag" in business over the past few years, but he hones to rejuvenate e Harmowy by

he hopes to rejuvenate eHarmony by he hopes to rejuvenate eHarmony by transforming it into more of a "rela-tionship site" that will help sustain couples who met on eHarmony. The company's mobile app, launched in 2010, is key to this revival.

"We started losing subscribers at a rapid rate," Warren says. "We've turned that around now and are go-ing to gain those people back again."

ing to gain those people back again.

The challenge for the industry long term, experts suggest, is that its goals — making money and growing an audience — are somewhat at odds with those of its customers. "It is kind of a weird category,"

"It is kind of a weird category," says Peter Farago, marketing vice president at Flurry Analytics, a firm that analyzes smartphone and app activity. "Success for the consumer is they pair off and meet someone and no longer use the service."

Lesnick says the typical online dater stays with a service two to four parties. The property of \$200. months — paying an average of \$20 a month (some as high as \$60) — and

"They'd love to keep them all year long, but the reality is they've either found someone and they don't need the service anymore, or they didn't find anybody and are frustrated with it' Lesnick says "That's been a probit," Lesnick says. "That's been a prob-lem since Day 1. How do we extend

lem since Day 1. How do we extend that time period?"
Valeri Ziegler, 54, of Santa Paula, Calif., who was married 23 years before her divorce in 2009, has tried online dating off and on. She has tried free sites and paying sites and now says, "I just don't have the energy for it." But because she still gets email from HowAboutWe and weekly updates from Plentvoffish, she pays updates from PlentyofFish, she pays some attention.

"You get to say if you're intrigued or interested, and that's about the exor interested, and that's about the ex-tent of my looking now," she says.

As with other world-changing technologies, part of the appeal of these dating apps is speed.

"People should try to get to that

face-to-face meeting as soon as they

face-to-face meeting as soon as they can," says psychologist Paul Eastwick, an assistant professor of human development at the University of Texas-Austin. His research found that the wish list of traits when searching online for romance doesn't matter as much as you might think.

Once you've met in person, you stop using your wish list to evaluate the person, he says, citing a 2011

the person, he says, citing a 2011 study he co-wrote that was published in the Journal of Personality and So-

in the Journal of Personality and So-cial Psychology.

"When you meet somebody, you have a gut reaction to that person, and that drives whether we pursue somebody romantically," Eastwick says. "Chemistry — you can assess that in four minutes. That is the thing driving your responses." thing driving your responses. Mark Brooks, a consultant who

has studied the industry from its inhas studied the industry from its in-fancy, says the online and mobile dat-ing industry is more than just a business: "Coing from where it is now and where it's going to be in the next 20 or 30 years time, I'd be hard-pressed to think of a business — out-side of the medical industry — that will have more impact or society." will have more impact on society.