

THE NEWS MAGAZINE OF THE ALAMO PC ORGANIZATION

PC Alamode

SECURITY ISSUE

www.alamopc.org
February 2008
\$5.00

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page 32

Great things happening at Corona Visions
page 37

How Aware Are You of the Dangers of the 'Net?
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Alamo PC Organization

Alamo PC Organization is a non-profit organization whose mission is to increase its members knowledge and effective use of personal computers through presentations, instructional programs, other membership services and access to the expertise of other members.



To register for a Class, Study Group or Sr. Comp classes call:

Registration number **210-736-0080**

If you **didn't receive your issue** of *PC Alamode* or have questions about your **membership** e-mail:

membership@alamopc.org

If you have questions about Alamo PC call:

Learning Center number **210-736-0700**

If you have comments about classes call

Linda Bianchi **210-561-2278**

If you have questions about advertising call

Joseph de Leon
send e-mail to editor@alamopc.org

Please send change of address and other correspondence to:

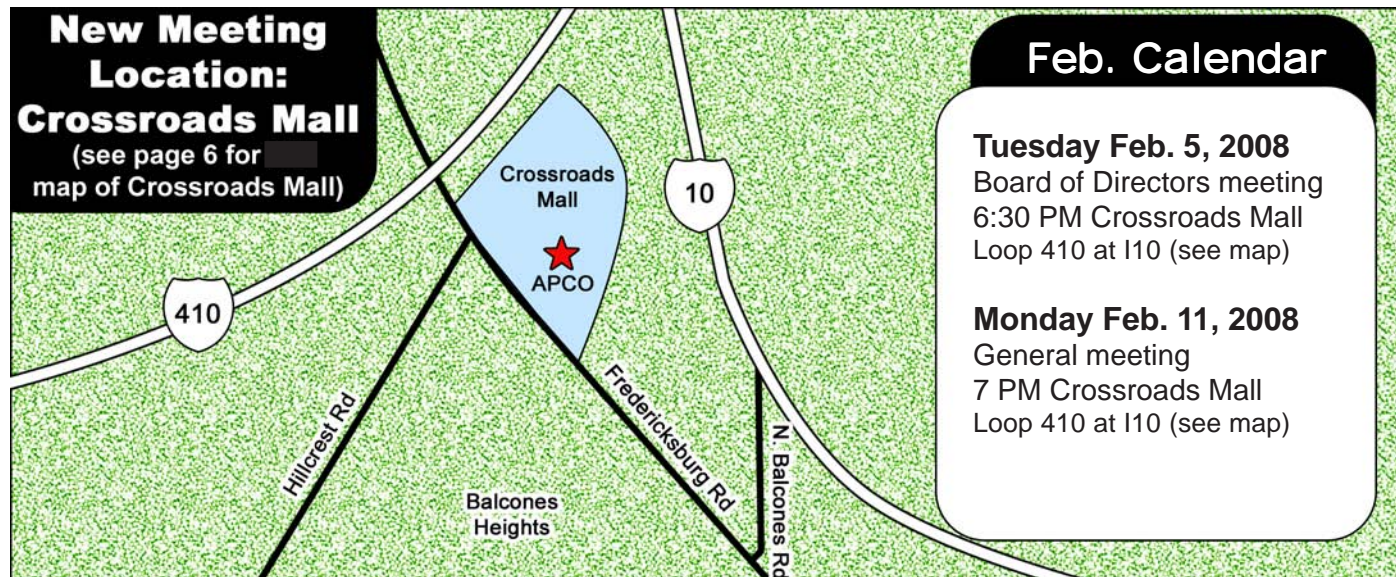
Alamo PC Organization
PO Box 65180
San Antonio, TX 78265-5180

Meetings

Monthly program meetings are normally held the second Monday of the month. Meetings are held at the Crossroads Convention Center (across from the Learning Center) located in the lower level of Crossroads Mall, Loop 410 at the intersection with I-10 starting at 7:00PM. Open to all members and the public.

The Board of Directors meets normally on the Tuesday prior to the monthly General Meeting. The BoD meets at the Alamo PC Learning Center located in the lower level of Crossroads Mall, Loop 410 at the intersection with I-10 starting at 6:30PM. Any changes will be announced via the Voice Mail/Hot Line (736-0700) and on the Calendar of Events. Open to all members.

New Meeting Location:
Crossroads Mall
(see page 6 for map of Crossroads Mall)



Feb. Calendar

Tuesday Feb. 5, 2008
Board of Directors meeting
6:30 PM Crossroads Mall
Loop 410 at I10 (see map)

Monday Feb. 11, 2008
General meeting
7 PM Crossroads Mall
Loop 410 at I10 (see map)



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PC Alamode

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PC Alamode (ISSN 1065-3708) is published monthly by the Alamo PC Organization, Inc., PO Box 65180, San Antonio, TX 78265-5180, an independent association of personal computer users, founded in January 1983, and incorporated in January 1984 as a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization. COPYRIGHT © 2008 by Alamo PC or the author. All rights reserved. No part of *PC Alamode* may be reproduced or transmitted in any form or by any means — mechanical, electrical, or otherwise — including, but not limited to, photocopying, recording, or information storage/retrieval, without express written permission from Alamo PC. However, unless otherwise indicated, articles may be reprinted by other user and education groups provided the articles are reprinted unaltered and the publication acknowledges the author thereof and *PC Alamode*. Articles, programs, reviews, and advertisements are compiled without verification of accuracy or applicability to a specific task, computer, or other equipment. Comments or claims are made solely by the individual author and do not necessarily represent the views of Alamo PC or of any other Alamo PC member. Trademarks have been used at random within the publication and are hereby recognized as such.

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PUBLICATION SUBMISSIONS: Please check with the editor regarding submitting ads. **Deadline for submissions is the first of the month preceding publication,** e-mail to:

editor@alamopc.org

Joseph de Leon, Editor, PC Alamode
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*Consecutive months

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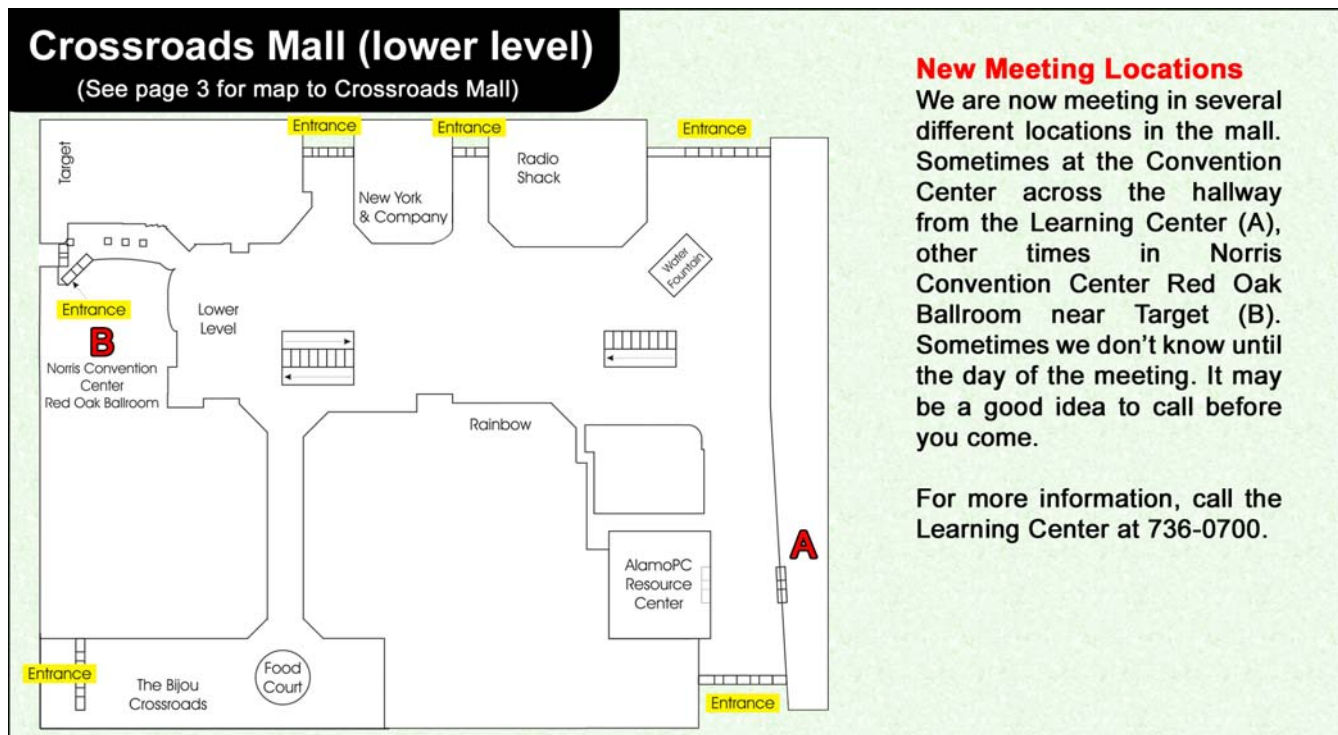
Learning Center, Crossroads Mall

736-0700

FAX 736-0032

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For Study Groups and Classes, phone: 736-0080 or 736-0700



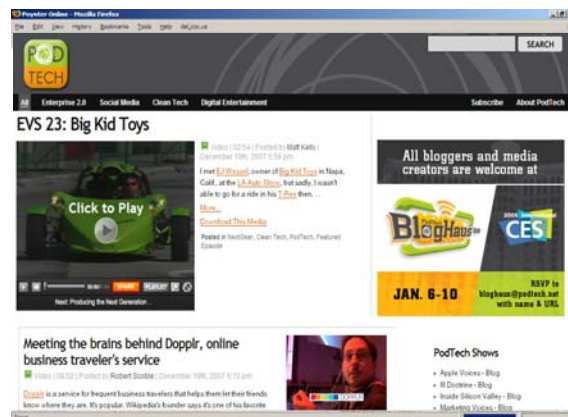
PC Alamode Links List



HubDog

<<http://hubdog.com/>>

Hubdog delivers audio content directly to your cell phone. With automatic notification, the content is always fresh; it's great for news, finance, and sports programming. Hubdog doesn't require a data plan or a smart phone.



PodTech

<<http://www.podtech.net/>>

PodTech is the leading online video network that features proprietary technology and original digital entertainment programming for everyone.

enter

I'm sorry to share sad news about two of our organization's valued volunteers. There is a very real need for volunteers to work at the Resource Center front desk. What better way to honor Barbara's and Mary's memory than to volunteer at Alamo PC the same way each did for years. Below are submissions from two people who knew Barbara and Mary well.

"I need to let you know, and ask you to forward it to the volunteers that knew her. Barb Whaley died early [January 19]. She was in a nursing home and we had hoped to build up her strength so she could come home, but the pain was too great to allow this, so she was transferred to Christus in-patient Hospice. They gave her all the pain med she needed starting on Thurs afternoon. She slept well all Fri and early Sat morn we were called to her bedside, where she had already died. We know how much she enjoyed being a volunteer [at Alamo PC] and all the friends she made. We will all miss her.

Her body was sent to a medical school in Arizona, There will not be a memorial service, and we opted to tell all her friends rather than have an obit in the paper."

-- Hannah Margolis <hmargolis@satx.rr.com>

"Mary Tello died in early December after an operation. Barbara has been working the Resource Center desk for many years. When a member told Barbara or Mary that there was a problem, both of them would pass that information to the correct person to get the quickly resolved the problem thereby significantly helping to satisfy that member. They gave out much needed information and literature. Answered so many questions that the public wanted to know about the Alamo PC Organization. Barbara and Mary signed up many members at the Resource Center. Mary and Barbara will be missed greatly by our Organization. When I'm working late at the center, I remember seeing their names on an application form and at a time or two see a note describing a problem to fix. Already, I miss hearing their chatty cheerful voices, when I would call them to get clarification on something they wrote. When I saw them two weeks later they would tell me thank you for fixing some problem that I forgot about."

-- Stephen Tech, Jr.

Joseph de Leon, Editor

<editor@alamopc.org>



Joseph de Leon, Alamo PC

Joseph has worked in the graphics industry for 9 years and teaches graphics and web classes at San Antonio College.

President's Message

Bill Klutz

"February" - Mardi Gras, Chinese New Year, Hearts & Sweets

This month has a few more things of interest than is usually the case: 2nd - Groundhog Day: (Not the movie) when the animal makes a prediction on weather based on seeing or not seeing his shadow; 5th - Mardi Gras: start of the raucous time in New Orleans, LA; 6th - Ash Wednesday: the beginning of segment of religious days for many; 7th - Chinese New Year: something to consider as China becomes more of a prominent world economy; 12th Abraham Lincoln=s Birthday: President during this countries internal civil war; 14th Valentine=s Day; Hearts and candies; 18th President=s Day: to honor all presidents of this country, present and past; 22nd George Washington=s Birthday: The first president of this country..

January almost marked three in a row: the November & the December Board of Directors (BOD) meetings. In addition, the November & December General Meetings (GM) were marked as Anon events@ (although planned, they didn=t happen as usual). Only two Board members were present for each of the BOD meetings (minimum of three required for an official meeting), and the presenter for each of the General Meetings cancelled at the last minute. [A local presentation was available for the Dec GM, through David Steward=s efforts in obtaining a prepackaged PowerPoint presentation from the Association of Personal Computer User Groups (APCUG) website.] The January BOD meeting had three directors and one officer, but the GM did not have a scheduled presenter since the corporate presenters had just returned from the 2007 Consumer Electronics Show (CES), in Las Vegas, NV. David Steward discussed his perspective of CES, which he attended, for the approximately 20 people who came to the Learning Center.


Keep in mind the following extract from the APCUG, fourth Quarter 2007 issue of Reports, [an article from the Rancho Bernardo Community Computer Club (RBCCC), San Diego, CA]. AIn years past, marketing departments of software publishers and hardware manufacturers would send professional guest speakers with free samples to computer groups, hoping to reach potential customers. But when more competition caused a drop in prices for hardware and software, marketing budgets for free speakers and free samples also dropped. Now, education programs of local computer user groups need more help from volunteer speakers. Good volunteer speakers are in short supply so neighboring computer user groups share what they have.@ (The sharing generally occurs in larger cities where more than one user group is present. But, with coordination it might work in smaller cities or in cities with only one user group.) Another thing which may be something more groups may have to use, is an Internet presentation. Basically the presenter stays at his/her office, user group members are at their location and the internet allows the audio and PowerPoint presentation to be made, with Q & A through Achat@ or phone. (Two-way audio could be available if other presentations require this type of setup.)

Recently, I read that major software developers are considering (which means it will eventually happen) not putting software in boxes and selling it through retailers. Individuals wanting the software will pay the manufacturer directly, then be able to download the software and associated manuals. Probably a few years away, but the concept appears to put more money in the pocket of the developer and since most things are about the money, it will happen.

Currently (late January), we are working on securing a presenter for the February meeting, and hope to have an announcement soon. Since things can change, check the website. On the day of the meeting, call the Learning Center for the latest information on location and presenter.

I continue to ask current members to consider what this organization has to offer, what it has done for you, and what it can do for others. You are our best source of free advertising. Perhaps by thinking about it, you will be prompted to renew your membership and provide some much needed support, at various levels in the organization - marketing, advertising & sponsors, software for evaluation, general meeting set-up & tear-down, presenter, trade shows, Learning Center volunteer, a class teacher, etc. Please remember for this organization to survive WE must each continue to be a supportive member, through renewals and participation at some level (especially at the board level).

Continue to consider some of the following items available to members (and please talk to others about them): free class benefit - enroll in one or more of the classes; the "Wish List" - if a class you would like is not on the list, make it known to the people at the Learning Center so they can put it on the list of classes that people have requested; one membership for the family - entitles one family member to vote, but it entitles each family member, in the household, to enroll in free classes during, the time the membership is current; "The Dr. Is In" - Friday AM hands-on help with computer problems, at the Learning Center; monthly presentations about current issues in the computer hardware and software; etc.



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Continued on page 9

We continue to review member requested classes to determine if and when a new area of study should be scheduled. If you have a suggestion, let the Director of Education know <education@alamopc.org>. That is how several classes have been started, including the one in the next paragraph. Once it is determined that a class should be started, finding a teacher is usually a daunting task.

Recently we lost our teacher for the popular Digital Camera & Photography classes (four different levels, each repeated once during the year). We are desperately seeking one or more individuals for the classes, as personal issues may not allow the former teacher to return to the classroom until 2009.

We are still trying to improve member retention. Although new members have almost been sufficient to offset non renewing members, the total number of members continues to slowly decline. (At present, almost all of our new members are derived from "walk-in traffic" at the Learning Center.) We want membership to continue to "grow" through each member renewing and trying to encourage others to join. (Please remember that you can help someone to join through the online process. They don't have to come to the Learning Center.) If you do not choose to renew, send a comment or two as to "Why?" to membership@alamopc.org, with a copy to me (president@alamopc.org or privately wlklutzjr@juno.com). I appreciate all communications, especially those on how we can improve the Alamo PC Organization and increase member interest!

As, I have said before, the future of OUR organization will always rest in the hands of its members. Whether WE continue (or not) depends on OUR interest and involvement. But, it primarily depends on membership renewals and/or financial support. Without those, we will not be able to meet our financial obligations and 'business decisions' will have to be made that will affect everyone."

I look forward to seeing members and guests at the January General Meeting. I hope everyone had a good holiday period and can begin the New Year with rededicated efforts in all areas.

February Program

Bill Klutz

Currently, I have not been informed that our February General Meeting has a Corporation representative scheduled. We hope to secure someone from a local company or have someone from the Alamo PC Organization speak at the General meeting. Where the meeting will be held (Norris Conference center, across from our Learning Center, or in our Learning Center) will be determined by the speaker we hope to secure and the anticipated attendance. Since things can change at the last minute, check the Alamo PC web site (www.alamopc.org) for information on presenter and meeting location, BUT on the meeting day please talk with one of the Learning Center desk personnel (210-736-0700 or 210-736-0080). Make plans now to come and bring some friends, as we hope to have an interesting speaker.

Volunteer of the Month

Billy Samples



Computer Buffet

With Dr. Herb Goldstein



SHELLEXVIEW

This tool lets you remove pesky programs and their remnants (including menu items) from your system. ShellExView, a freebie, lists almost all menu items (my PC had 300) and disables them so they won't appear when you right click on a file.

www.nirsoft.net/utis/shexview.html

Dr. Herb Goldstein is SPCUG's Software Evaluation Chairman and Review Editor for the Sarasota PC Monitor. Herb is an avid researcher on all things computer and passes on his acquired knowledge each month. <reviewseditor@spcug.org>

The Doctor is In



Each Friday from 9:00am until 12:00 noon

Diagnose your software and hardware problems

Trouble shoot major applications

Run tests

Solve Operating System mysteries

For information call 736-0700



Owner must stay with computer during repairs

Volunteers Wanted

Call the Learning Center to volunteer to assist ongoing classes. For more info, call 736-0700.

STUDY GROUPS

Call the Learning Center for schedule information 736-0700 or see page 59-63.

ComputerFest is a collection of local and statewide dealers under one roof offering rock-bottom prices on all your computer needs. All of our dealers are independent wholesalers, so each conducts business separately. Most of the dealers will accept credit cards, but with cash you can usually get the best deals. And new products are almost always backed up with a warrantee, so you and your wallet can always feel comfortable with your purchases.

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Diagnostic Equipment
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Computer Related Books
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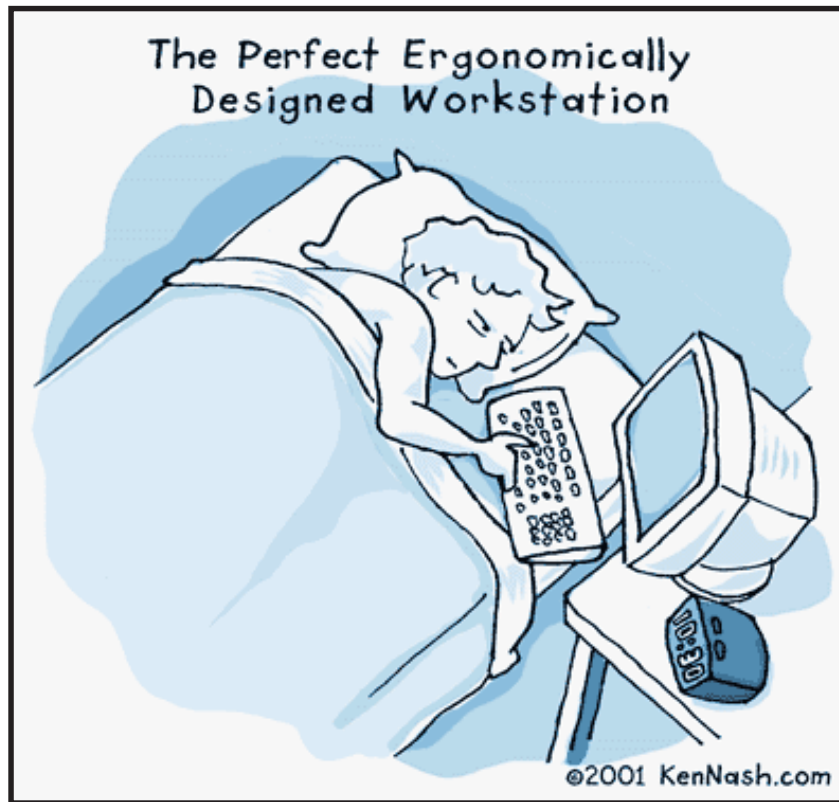
Show Dates:

March 8, 2008
May 10, 2008
August 9, 2008
November 8, 2008
December 13, 2008



Funny Bytes

Ken Nash & Randy Glasbergen





Odds and ends

Shane Hicks, (certified certifiable)

Shane uses a PC. E-mail him at <shane@vpwn.com.>

WiebeTech Mouse Jiggler

Are you concerned about your screen saver going on when you step away from your computer? WiebeTech created a device to solve your problems. It's a USB device that causes your mouse cursor to "jiggle" nonstop. You can buy this device from <http://www.wiebetech.com> for around \$30.

Will Blu-Ray overtake HD DVD?

Blockbuster believes it knows the answer to the question above. The video rental chain has removed HD DVD options from its shelves, providing Blu-Ray as the only option for renters (though both formats are available online).

AT&T DSL deal

AT&T actually has a \$10-a-month broadband Internet service. If you haven't heard about it, that's because they aren't advertising the option. AT&T is required, by the FCC, to offer this option as part of its agreement in being allowed to merge with Bell-South. This service provides up to 768Kb/s downloads and 128Kb/s uploads (just like the \$19.95 plan). This service is available only in the 22 states that have never had AT&T or BellSouth broadband in the past.

Do you still want to play DOS games in Windows?

If you still have some old DOS games that you want to blow the dust off of and play them in current versions of Windows, then you need to look at a program called DOSBox (<http://dosbox.sourceforge.net>).

This program is a FREE DOS emulator, and thus, command-line based. If you are uncomfortable with this interface, you can add a GUI by downloading D-Fend (<http://members.home.nl/mabus>).

If you have problems getting your games to work, try the following:

1. If the DOS window closes too fast for you to see error messages, press F3 to open the Configure Defaults dialog box. Click on the General tab and uncheck "Close DOSBox after game exit."
2. If your game won't launch, right-click on your game profile and Edit the profile. Check "Game needs loadfix."
3. If you have other problems trying to play, you can always view the official forums at <http://vogons.zetafleet.com>.

Automate Backups to a Thumb Drive

If you need to copy files from your computer to your thumb drive, you most likely do this manually. However, with a small piece of software, you can automate this task for files that you backup to your removable device on a regular basis. Simply install the FREE version of GoodSync from <http://www.goodsync.com>. This software allows you to synchronize your portable device with any folder on your system. Give it a try!

Continued on page 14

The Doctor is In



Each Friday from 9:00am until 12:00 noon

Diagnose your software and hardware problems

Trouble shoot major applications

Run tests

Solve Operating System mysteries

For information call 736-0700



Owner must stay with computer during repairs

Disable User Account Control (UAC)

Are you tired of those pop-ups that ask you to Allow or Deny some common task that you used to be able to do without a problem? Microsoft had good intentions when they enabled User Account Control (UAC) in Windows Vista. The idea was that your User Account would need to be granted elevated privileges to install any new programs or perform potentially harmful system changes. UAC is there to warn you before these changes take place. Unfortunately, the warnings appear so often that users automatically click Allow on any warning they receive. So, the annoyance of the pop-up ends up outweighing the benefits of the warning.

You can turn off UAC by altering your User Account Profile. Simply select User Accounts from Control Panel and click on Turn User Account Control on or off. You'll get some Security Center warnings telling you that UAC is no longer enabled, but you won't get those annoying Allow or Deny messages anymore.

Tomato Firmware

If you aren't happy with the current functionality of your router from either Linksys or Buffalo, you now have options. A company called Polarcloud (<http://polarcloud.com>) has created an open source custom BIOS for these routers. Their BIOS enables a large set of configuration options not available from the manufacturer. For instance, their BIOS can track Internet usage. It can also allow you to tweak QoS (quality of service) settings to give certain applications priority over others. You can even use this BIOS to save small files. It even has a function for viewing neighboring wireless networks.

All you need to do is figure out what your router's model number is and verify compatibility with Tomato. As of this writing, supported models from Linksys include both the WRT54G and WRT54GS up to version 4, WRT54GL versions 1 and 1.1, and the WRTSL54GS. Compatibility with Buffalo includes their WHR-G54S and WHR-HP-G54 models.

Download the latest firmware from their website. Then, if you own a Linksys, open your browser to 192.168.1.1. If you haven't changed your defaults, type admin for the user name and password. Once logged on, go to the Administration tab and click the Firmware Upgrade heading. Select the .bin file that you downloaded and click Upgrade. That's all there is to it.

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A lot of electronics end up overseas in developing countries where it is harmful to the environment and people as well.

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WWW.CORONAVISIONS.COM



Internet XIII

Win9x/Me/XP Computer tips & tricks

Bill Beverley, Alamo PC

Bill is retired military and an intermediate computer enthusiast who has been an APCO member for seven years. He has contributed for the past six years.

ALAMODE COLUMNS

When visiting a Web site, you probably just type the address in your browser's address bar and don't worry about how your browser tracks down the site. Each site on the Internet is assigned an Internet Protocol number, or address. A DNS (Domain Name System) server translates the address (such as www.mapquest.com) you type to the correct IP number. There are many DNS servers on the Internet. You can change your DNS server by changing your computer or router's settings. OpenDNS provides improvements over other DNS servers. It offers protection against phishing attacks. Plus, it will correct spelling mistakes you make when typing addresses. At the OpenDNS site, you can learn more about the benefits of OpenDNS. Then, to help get you started, there are instructions on setting it up.

Bookmarks and Favorites

There are countless pages on the Internet and it can be difficult to find a page you visited in the past. With Favorites and Bookmarks you never have to worry about forgetting a Web address again. You simply click the link in your browser. Favorites and Bookmarks pose different problems. For example, a site can shut down or you can have duplicates. That makes it tough to sort through your favorite sites. If your Favorites and Bookmarks are out of control, try AM-DeadLink. It will get them cleaned up in a jiffy! It works with both Firefox and Internet Explorer.

Free Directory Information

If you need to know the number of someone, you should consider using 1-800-FREE-411 www.free411.com. The only downside to this free service is that you may have to listen to two 15 second ads, one at the beginning of the call and the other before you get your number. You can either have the number read to you or texted to you.

Internet Search Warning

McAfee released its State of Search Engine Safety report. The report concludes that about 4 percent of search results lead to risky sites. Given the size of the Web, 4% represents a significant number of sites. McAfee also listed the search terms that are most likely to lead you to malicious sites. The riskiest search terms relate to music and technology. Frequently downloadable programs contain spyware or unwanted toolbars. Be careful of what you look for on the Internet and stick with sites you trust.

Internet Security Tips

Lack security efforts can cause a computer user many unnecessary problems. If you follow the following tips, the chances of your getting into same unwanted security situation will be greatly reduced.

1. **Activate protection.** If your operating system (OS) or software has a firewall, spam blocker, or other built-in security application, you must turn it "on."
2. **Update and renew.** You should set your OS and security software to update automatically.
3. **Upgrade your computer and browser.** If you're running WinXP or earlier OS versions, you should consider upgrading to the more secure Win Vista.
4. **Install a toolbar with security features.** The EarthLink Toolbar www.earthlink.net/software/free/toolbar incorporates a scam and popular blocker spyware scan, and home page protection. The Netcraft antiphishing tool bar toolbar.netcraft.com warns about known phished sites. Those are just several examples.
5. **Shut off your computer.** Turning off your computer when not in use can reduce the opportunity a malicious remote computer will access it.
6. **Use public computers with care.** Avoid using computers at libraries, hotels, or airports for conducting financial or other personal business.
7. **Consider a Mac.** Although Mac owner's face the same problems with spam and phishing as Windows users, they have far less to fear from viruses and spyware.
8. **Watch what you download.** Even though the many free utilities, games, and other software on the Internet can be useful to you, many are laden with viruses and spyware.
9. **Consider a suite.** Install an anti-virus software program on your computer.

Continued on page 16

10. **Run antivirus software.** Make sure you run and use anti-virus software problems put on your computer.
11. **Run two antispyware programs.** Because spyware is so insidious and often difficult to detect it, this situation warrants double protection. Set the better of the two programs to block spyware in real time. Use the other to scan whenever you suspect something might have escaped the first program.
12. **Use ‘disposable’ e-mail addresses to thwart spammers.** If you experience spam, use disposable addresses for different purposes, such as buying online, etc.
13. **Use a credit card.** Credit cards offer better protection than other options when shopping online.
14. **Don’t assume a certified site is safe.** Although it’s vital to have a secure connection when sending personal information online, it’s no guarantee that the Web site is reputable.
15. **Guard personal information.** Never respond to e-mail requesting your passwords, user names, Social Security number, or other personal information.
16. **Avoid using hyperlinks in e-mail.** Hyperlinks can show one address but take you to another. Before clicking on links in Web pages, hover your cursor over the URL and see whether the address that appears at the button of your browser looks as if it’s related to a page or site you expect to visit.
17. **Type carefully.** Tricksters sometimes create look alike sites that use common mistypings of popular URLs.
18. **Report phishing.** If you receive a phishing e-mail, forward it to the Anti-Phishing Working Group (reportphishing@antiphishing.org), the Federal Trade Commission (spam@uce.gov) and the company or organization that is being impersonated by the URL. You can also file a complaint with the FBI’s Internet Crime Complaint Cent at www.ic3.gov.
19. **Review your accounts regularly.** Review your credit card and bank statements as soon as you receive them. You should report suspicious charges or withdrawals immediately.

Internet Connection Speed

Testing the speed of your Internet connection may be of interest to you. There are many broadband speed testers online. Most test both your download and upload speeds. If you’re given a single number, that’s usually download speed. A typical tester can be found at www.Speedtest.net. This flash-based tester measures both upload and download speeds. It features an interface with revving speedometer and progress meters. You can choose to test from dozens of servers around the globe. Speedtest suggests using the server closest to you for best results. Technically, a broadband connection is defined as anything faster than 256Kbps. The DSL download range is advertised from 256Kbps to 7Mbps. In reality, it’s roughly between 500Kbps and 1.5Mbps.

Cable is sometimes advertised as being able to reach 30Mbps. Again, the reality tends to be lower, between 1Mbps and 6Mbps. Reading the results of a speed test can be tricky. Speed varies and many things can affect your connection. It’s unrealistic to expect the absolute high-end of performance. But if you’re getting below average numbers, something may be wrong. Diagnosing what’s slowing down your connection can be difficult. If you make a change in your setup, retest. If you try surfing at a different time of day, retest. Cable and DSL can be affected by completely different things. We’ll look at DSL first.

It delivers the Internet through a phone line. If you’re getting bad service, distance may be the culprit. The further away from a phone company hub, the worse the service. If you are far away from a hub, you’re out of luck. You are always going to have degraded DSL service. Switching to cable may be your only option. Cable Internet service faces a different problem. The Internet usage of your neighbors can slow you down. Cable service uses a shared line for homes in the same area. Cable has more bandwidth, but you must share it with your neighbors. If you all jump on at once, you’ll see some slowdown. There are smaller problems in your home that affect cable and DSL. There are several components to your home network.

If some are not working properly, you can lose speed. You may not have enough Wi-Fi coverage in your home. And be sure you have a good router that is working properly. You may also have spyware issues. Spyware hides on your computer and collects your information. Then it uses your Internet connection to report back to its maker. A lot of spyware can use a good chunk of your bandwidth. This can slow your whole computer, as well as Internet speed. Make sure you have good anti-spyware software.

National Do Not Call List

If you registered by phone or Internet about five years ago to put your name and phone number on the National Do Not Call List to prevent telemarketers from calling you home, The Federal Trade Commission, which oversees this list, says you must register every five years. You can register and/or register to get your name/phone number on this list by going online at www.donotcall.gov or by calling (888) 382-1222. Log on to www.gonotcallo.gov and click on the “Verify a Registration” Button. Next enter the phone number and an e-mail address and a verification e-mail will be sent with the expiration date. This list was initiated on 27 June 2003. Since then, 122 million phone numbers were registered on it. For just fiscal 2006, 25 million new registrations were added to the list.



Tables

The Lazy Webmaster

Susan Ives, Alamo PC

Susan Ives is a former president of Alamo PC. She archives these columns on her Web site, www.susanives.com/. If you visit, you can cut-and-paste the code instead of retyping it from the magazine – the ultimate in lazy Webmastering!

If you've spent just five minutes looking at the World Wide Web you've seen tables in action. Tables are intended to organize data - like a spreadsheet organizes data - but are most commonly used to specify the layout of a Web page. The basic of tables are deceptively easy, but, as you will see, a lot can go wrong, or at least not the way you expected. I'm going to spend the next few months deconstructing tables. This month, we'll address the lines.

From a design standpoint, I find lines useful if I am presenting tightly packed tabular data: a phone list, for example. Lines help keep connected information together. Generally, however, lines look fussy and if you are using tables for layout they are better omitted.

The tag pair for a table is `<TABLE> </TABLE>`. This in and of itself doesn't do anything except alert the Web browser to render everything between the tags in a tabular format. Next come `<TR></TR>`. This indicates a table ROW. Finally, there will be `<TD></TD>`. This is table DATA. Anything placed within this tag is what will show up on the screen.

The code below shows a typical use for a table. Here is a slightly stripped down coding for this table:

```
<TABLE border="4">  
<TR>  
<TD>ESCHER EYE (1946)</TD>  
<TD></TD>  
</TR>  
<TR>  
<TD>< img src="eschereye.jpg"></font></TD>  
<TD>In this piece, Maurits Cornelis Escher (Dutch, 1898-1972) has drawn his own eye, which was greatly magnified by a  
convex shaving mirror. In the center of his pupil is, Escher teases, the one who watches us all.</TD>  
</TR>  
</TABLE>
```

Let's deconstruct it.

I've added one parameter to the table tag - border - and specified that it be 4 pixels wide. This is the big black border around the outside of the table, properly called the external frame. The interior lines (technically called vertical and horizontal rules) are the default: they show up automatically if I specify a border size.

Most of the tables that are used for layout do not use a border tag at all: the table acts as an invisible grid. If I were to omit the border parameter all together - `<TABLE>` - or to specify that the border should be zero - `<TABLE border="0">` - all of the lines will be removed. If I were to specify `<TABLE border="NONE">` the exterior frame will be eliminated but all of the interior rules will remain.

Here are some parameters that will help you determine where the lines appear:

FRAME:

This attribute specifies which sides of the frame surrounding a table will be visible. The format is `<TABLE frame="vsides">`; figure 2 shows the results of using the `TABLE frame="vsides">` variable. The possible values are:

- * void: No sides. This is the default value.
- * above: The top side only.
- * below: The bottom side only.
- * hside: The top and bottom sides only.
- * vside: The right and left sides only.
- * lhs: The left-hand side only.
- * rhs: The right-hand side only.
- * box: All four sides.
- * border: All four sides.

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RULE:

This attribute specifies which rules will appear between cells within a table. The format is `<TABLE rules="rows">`; figure 3 shows the results of using the `TABLE frame="rows">` variable. The possible values are:

- * none: No rules. This is the default value.
- * groups: Rules will appear between row groups.
- * rows: Rules will appear between rows only.
- * cols: Rules will appear between columns only.
- * all: Rules will appear between all rows and columns.
- * groups: Rules will appear between row groups (we'll discuss groups at a later time!)

You'll notice that the exterior frame around figure 1, the Escher Eye, is flat and black while the exterior frame around figure 2 has a 3D, shaded look. I find the 3D effect old-fashioned and unappealing, but this is, alas, the default.

Here's a work-around:

```
<table border="5" bordercolor="#000000" bordercolorlight="#000000" bordercolordark="#000000">
```

If you deconstruct how the external frame is made, it is actually three shades of gray; a base color, a lighter color and a darker color. The coding above makes all of the shades the same color: black. This eliminates the 3D effect.

I hear your brain cells clicking. If you can make the border all black, could you make it red or blue? Of course you can! Just exchange the RGB code for black (000000) with the code for the color of your choice. Red would be FF0000. Chartruese would be 7FFF00. Get a complete list of the color codes.

You can use these same variables within the `<TR>` and the `<TD>` tags, which will change the colors of the vertical and horizontal rules.

Look back at figure 1 and review the code for this table. You'll notice in the first table row specified in the first `<TD>` that `COLSPAN="2"`. This table has two columns and two rows. By specifying that the first data element, `<TD>`, in the first row, `<TR>`, spans two columns, I eliminate the horizontal rule that would normally appear in that top row. Figure 4 gives you an idea what it would look like without this refinement. Combining table rows (it works with columns too!) has additional advantages: I could center the "Escher Eye" text over both columns, for example.

Here's your assignment for this month. Copy the code below into Notepad:

```
<table border="5">
<TR>
<TD><font size="+3">ONE</font></TD>
<TD><font size="+3">TWO</font></TD>
</TR>
<TR>
<TD><font size="+3">THREE</font></TD>
<TD><font size="+3">FOUR</font></TD>
</TR>
</TABLE>
```

I made the font sizes bigger so that you would have a table big enough to see the results. Next, play around with EVERY parameter. Eliminate interior rules. Change the colors. Expand the size. After a half hour you'll know more about lines than half of the world's Webmasters.

Tables are key to attractive Web design. In succeeding months we'll learn how to control the table size, about cell padding and cell spacing, how to nest tables, the secret of the transparent pixel, how to add color to tables: in fact, we'll turn into the Lazy Tablemaster for a while.

Volunteer at the Alamo PC Learning Center

We need volunteers!

Call the Learning Center to volunteer to assist ongoing classes or help keep day-to-day tasks under control. Your computer user group can't function without volunteers.

Please call (210) 736-0700



From the Deals Guy

Bob (The Cheapskate) Click, Greater Orlando Computer Users Group

This column is written to make user group members aware of special offers or freebies I have found or arranged, and my comments should not be interpreted to encourage, or discourage, the purchase of any products, no matter how enthused I might sound. Bob (The Cheapskate) Click <Bobclick@mindspring.com>. Visit my Web site at <<http://www.dealsguy.com>> for past columns and some interesting articles.

I've used FedEx twice and it was a complete disaster. The first time, a few months ago, they delivered the packages I sent my son to the wrong house, which was actually unoccupied, but the tracking said it was delivered. Luckily he found them three days later when checking that house (he owns it).

I recently sent two more packages to my son's home. I tracked the packages on the Web site and when it showed the packages on the truck for delivery, I called to make sure their gate was open that day. They live a quarter-mile back from the road with a gate at the entrance. The package was not delivered that day, but at 6:46 PM the tracking showed it would be delivered the next day. At 8:30 PM the next night and no change with the Web site tracking, I called FedEx to see why it was not there and was told they had no way to communicate with the driver, but the package would not be delivered that late. My son closed the gate.

FedEx called me the next morning to give an approximate delivery time, but discovered that the delivery was actually made the night before at 9:06 PM. My son hurried to look, but the packages couldn't be found. My son's house is not visible from the gate at night because it's back down the drive, so obviously with the gate closed, the packages were left beside the road, but there is a large sign on the gate with the address and phone number to call. Why can't they communicate with their driver? They said that because I didn't request a signature, I am out of luck. Actually, they are out of luck from now on with my money. I submitted a claim anyway.

Problem resolved

Last month I mentioned a reader had tried the free Advanced WindowsCare Personal (from my November column), but in order for it to fix the problems, he needed to upgrade to the pay version, so he stopped there. I later received a message from Ira Wilsker telling me it worked fine without upgrading, and that he had demonstrated it to their group. My proofreader also tried it with no upgrade demand, so I downloaded it and it removed what it found without upgrading to the pay version. I don't know where my reader went wrong, but he's going to try it again. Sorry for the mixup.

*No Operating system? What's a Hypervisor?

I saw this article <<http://www.informationweek.com/news/showArticle.jhtml?articleID=202401578>> about using servers without operating systems. This doesn't affect home users, but could it in the future? I found it interesting.

I severely edited the items below so thoroughly check their Web sites for full information. I have not tried them.

*A Firefox Add-on

iMacros for Firefox was designed to automate online activities within the Firefox web browser. With iMacros, users can create macros to automatically check the same sites every day, remember passwords, complete web forms, and upload or download files, among other activities. They say, "Whatever you do with Firefox, iMacros can automate it." Notable examples include stockbrokers who create macros to extract online stock quotes, shoppers who use them to automatically compare prices at online stores and website owners who use them to get daily downloads of their page rankings.

iMacros for Firefox allows users to share macros and scripts in a way similar to how they share bookmarks on the many social book marking websites. After creating a new macro, users can use just one click to share it with their friends as a link, or by distributing the link via e-mail and social book marking websites. Also, by embedding it in a website or by blog for public access. Script sharing is now so popular that iOpus has even created a special site for script-sharing on <del.icio.us>.

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David's Essential Domains



Website Hosting Starting at \$3.95/month!

Economy	Deluxe	Business
\$3.95/mo.	\$9.95/mo.	\$29.95/mo.
50MB storage	1GB storage	2GB storage
1 GB transfer	15 GB transfer	30 GB transfer
50 e-mails	unlimited e-mails	unlimited e-mails

Domain Names

.COMs starting at \$7.85!

FREE with every domain:

- FREE! Change of Registration
- FREE! Parked Page w/ Domain
- FREE! Domain Name Locking
- FREE! Status Alerts

Website Tonight

Click 'n build your site online, in minutes!

- Hosting is built in
- 5 Page Site - \$4.95/mo
- 10 Page Site - \$8.95/mo
- 20 Page Site - \$12.95/mo
- 100+ professional templates



SECURE SSL Certificates

Build trust, build confidence, and build your online business—with a Secure SSL Certificate!



TRAFFICBLAZER™

Prepare your site so the search engines find it!

<http://www.davidsessentialdomains.com>

The iMacros for Firefox software is free for personal and commercial use. Users may opt to upgrade to the business version with guaranteed response times and advanced features. Additional information and the software download link are available online at <<http://www.iopus.com/imacros/firefox>>. Alternatively, the software may be downloaded directly from the official Mozilla site for extensions at <<https://addons.mozilla.org/en-US/firefox/addon/3863>>.

*Help For Your Video File Conversion

Video Mobile Converter v1.0 supports digital video files in the following formats: .AVI (audio video interleave), .ASF (advanced systems format), .MOV (QuickTime movie), .MPG/MPEG/MP4 (moving pictures experts group) and .WMV (windows media video). Once you choose a video, Video Mobile Converter loads the video and lets you define how much video to convert. Users also have control over the video and audio quality during the conversion process. Users control the height and width of the video, its frame and bit rate as well as its overall quality. Users also control the sample rate, bit rate and overall quality of the video's converted audio, along with the option of splitting video files during the conversion process enabling very large video files to become smaller and more easily managed.

Lastly, Video Mobile Converter can output the converted video in the following formats: .3GP and .3G2 (for use on 3G network mobile devices that use GSM or CDMA network protocols), .MP4 (for use on mobile devices, such as iPods classic, iPod nano, iPod touch, iPhones, cellular phones and other mobile devices), and .PSP (for use on Sony PlayStation Portables).

Video Mobile Converter v1.0 runs under all versions of Microsoft Windows, including Vista and costs \$29.95 (USD) for a single-user license. User group members get a 20% discount. For some reason they didn't respond to my request for the special ordering procedures so, you can e-mail Michael Kaba <<mailto:sales@geovid.com>>. Could be the because of the holidays. Licensed users are entitled to the fully functional copy of the software, and free updates. Further information, as well as a free, fully functional evaluation copy is available from <www.videomobileconverter.com>.

For more information: <www.geovid.com>.

Download link: <<http://www.videomobileconverter.com/download/videomobileconverter.exe>> (9.3 MB)

*Help For Your Web Site

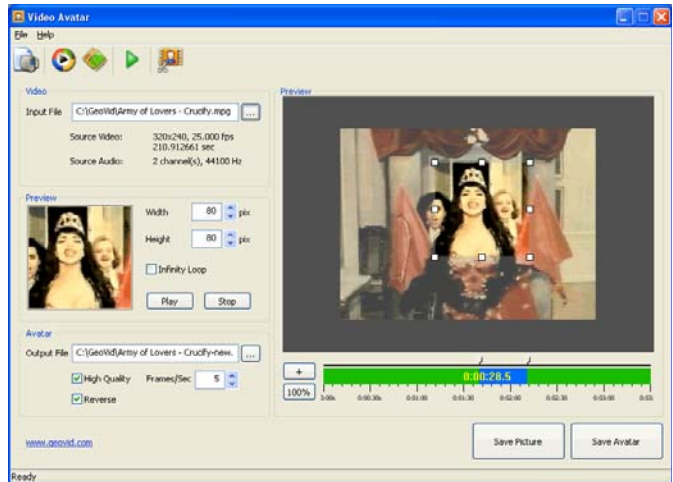
Our software package, SeoAdministrator, is a popular professional tool for webmasters and SEO specialists. We released a new module called "Site Analyzer" that will be of interest to all webmasters including those who look after personal websites. The new module helps you to keep a website free of errors such as broken links. Regular use of Site Analyzer will ensure that problems are quickly and easily spotted so they can be fixed. Download a free demonstration of our easy-to-use tool from here. <www.seoadministrator.com/seoadministrator.exe>

Site Analyzer, Developed by by FlamingoSoft of Vancouver, BC, is designed to automate the vital web management task of monitoring and improving web site performance.

Site Analyzer performs comprehensive scans of a specified website and alerts web managers to a range of common problems including broken links, faulty image links, errors in HTML code and missing meta tags using a variety of report formats. Site Analyzer can also create sitemaps in both human and machine formats ready for uploading. The link vendor will be able to see which pages are "overloaded" with external links and perhaps suspend link sales on those pages. System Requirements: Windows 95/98/ME/2000/XP/Vista

Priced from \$70 (Standard) to \$150 for Expert edition, we are offering this great software to user group members at 50% discount (\$75 instead of usual price of \$150) which includes lifetime support and free upgrades. Use this link <<https://usd.swreg.org/cgi-bin/s.cgi?s=1613&p=1613seo&v=3&d=0&q=1&t=>>> for the 50% discount. Check their Website URL for full info. <<http://www.seoadministrator.com/>>

Pacific Business Centre
Att: FlamingoSoft
#101 - 1001 W. Broadway
Suite 381
Vancouver, BC V6H 4E4
Canada



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*Easier Way To Remove USB Devices

USB Safely Remove enhances the native Safely Remove function in Windows and enables you to remove and unplug any USB removable device in one mouse click or hotkey. It can give correct names to the devices, lets you rename them and find out what application or process is locking the USB device, preventing it from safe removal. It's easy to unplug the wrong one by mistake because many of them have the same name. Unlike the native Windows option, USB Safely Remove shows all USB devices currently plugged into the computer and lets you remove any of them and the program gives correct names to the devices on its menu. The software is primarily aimed at those users who have more than one USB device.

USB Safely Remove 3.2 runs under Windows 2000, XP, 2003, Vista and is available immediately for \$20 (US) from SafelyRemove.com. User Group members can purchase the program at a 25% discount. Use the coupon code: CUG25 on the Buy Now page. Licensed users get unlimited functionality without nag screens, free technical support by e-mail and free lifetime upgrades. More information on the product, as well as a free trial copy is available from <<http://safelyremove.com/ug>>.

Download link: <<http://safelyremove.com/usbsafelyremovesetupug.exe>>



Computer Buffet With Dr. Herb Goldstein



THE PC DECRAPIFIER

The PC Decrapifier attempts to remove all of the crap on your PC that you never asked for or wanted. To manually remove all of this stuff by hand can take at least an hour (depending on the severity of the infestation.) The PC Decrapifier will detect the 'crap' on your system, you choose what to uninstall, then sit back and let the PC Decrapifier work its magic. All of this stuff is placed on your new PC because the big companies like Dell, HP and others sell advertising space on your PC to put more money in their pockets at the expense of your time and frustration. The PC Decrapifier is a program free for personal use to help the average computer user combat this problem.

<http://pcdecrapifier.com>

Dr. Herb Goldstein is SPCUG's Software Evaluation Chairman and Review Editor for the Sarasota PC Monitor. Herb is an avid researcher on all things computer and passes on his acquired knowledge each month. <reviewseditor@spcug.org>

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Can you help teach?

We're looking for someone to teach one or more of the following classes:

Digital Camera; Photo Editing; Movie Maker; Microsoft Digital Image 2006

Please call (210) 736-0700

Volunteers Wanted

Call the Learning Center to volunteer to assist ongoing classes. For more info, call 736-0700.

STUDY GROUPS

Call the Learning Center for schedule information 736-0700 or see page 59-63.

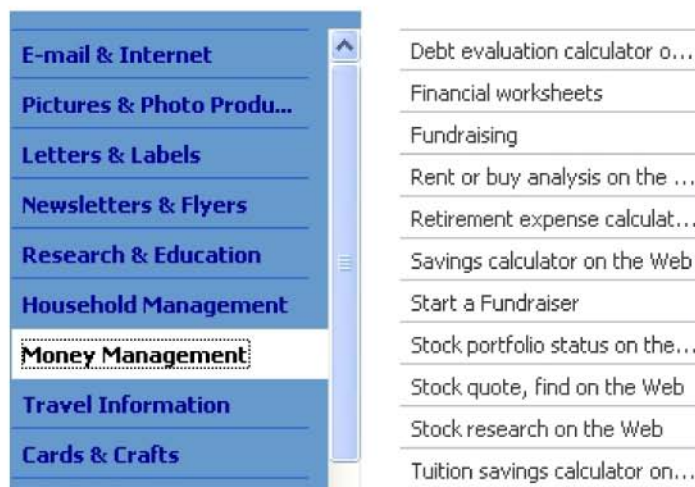
PC 101

Microsoft Works - Money Management

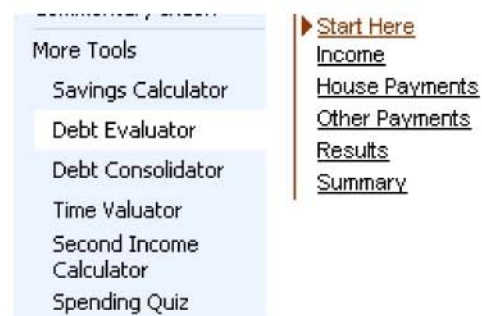
Ron Ingraham, Space Coast PC User Group

Ron is a member of Space Coast PC Users Group. Instructions in this column were created on a Windows 98 system. E-mail Ron at <ringram728@earthlink.net>

Next in the Tasks list is Money Management. I imagine all of us could make use of at least parts of this function. As you can see below, there is a wide range



of financially related subjects covered. First on the list is the Debt evaluation calculator online. Clicking on this item opens the MSN Money web site. The available resources



are shown at the left. As you can see there are a number of options in addition to the Debt Evaluator. Clicking on Income opens a query as to your household monthly gross income. From there it progresses through various expense areas and finally comes up with an analysis of your situation. I don't know how helpful this might be. In my case I didn't agree with their answer, mainly because I may not have understood how to enter proper information. I also don't know how ones privacy may be protected when entering this type of information online. I saw no mention of this on the web page, but may have overlooked it.

Moving on to Financial Worksheets, you are offered once again, a choice of topics with appropriate format worksheets. The areas addressed are Car Loan

Worksheet, College Cash Flow, Conventional Mortgage Qualification, Investment Projections, Loan and Credit Planner, Monthly Home Budget, Personal Budget, Purchase Analysis, Standard Loan Analysis, and a Treasurer's Financial Report. Each of these is a template for a spreadsheet appropriate to that subject. As with previous tasks, when you begin working with a spreadsheet, you're provided a wizard to guide you in

Create a Spreadsheet with the Spreadsheet Wizard

The Spreadsheet Wizard has created a spreadsheet with the choices you made.

You can now perform the same tasks that you would in any spreadsheet. You can type text or numbers to create a list, use the information to create a chart, and perform calculations.

Before you start working, it's a good idea to name and save the spreadsheet. Then, you're ready to start working.

If the spreadsheet contains any sample text or numbers, you can make changes or additions. Just click the cell that contains the information you want to change, and then start typing.

Related topics

[About using templates and wizards](#)
[Start using the Spreadsheet](#)

completion of the task. Once again I suggest that you open the program and follow along as I discuss the various features. In order to follow the suggestion to name and save the spreadsheet before starting work, you should use the File dropdown menu and

"Save as" wherein you pick a desired location and name for the file. The template provides a suggested format with cells highlighted where entries are required.

I don't know how many of you are involved with Fundraising. This area includes a very comprehensive set of spreadsheet templates ranging from Action Items to Pledge Logs.

The Rent or buy analysis on the Web link is no longer active. Once again it takes you to MSN Money, but the specific analysis would have to be searched out since they have divided the page into two separate pages.

The Retirement expense calculator might prove helpful to those of you who are approaching that status. This is also on MSN Money, and is similar to the

Continued on page 23

Debt Evaluator we've already looked at.

"The retirement expenses calculator will help you determine how your annual living expenses are likely to change after retirement. While it is difficult to estimate exactly how much retirement life will cost, the following questions will highlight certain important expenses that you may not have considered when thinking about retirement."

If your interests run to Stock portfolio management, MSN Money offers to help out here as well. However, you should note that in this case you are required to establish an account with Microsoft. I went through the process up until agreeing to the terms. They refer to payment and charges, but I didn't see specifically which services might charge a fee. I did see a reference to various free trial periods, so apparently you wouldn't be obligated to sign up for fee services unless you choose to do so after a trial period. This is all part of the Microsoft Passport program.

Stock quotes are available without signing in as is Stock Research.

Google Inc. (GOOG)

GOOG quote		Real-time quotes
After Hours: 352.56 -10.05 / -2.77% Vol. 505,876		
362.61	▲ +3.84	+1.07%
Volume	15.22 Mil	GOOG Intraday Chart 
Avg Daily Volume	12.02 Mil	
Day's High	364.50	
Day's Low	353.14	
fyi Open	361.95	NASDAQ Exchange 5d 1m 3m 1y 3y 5y 10y Data Source: CSI 12:29 PM ET Quotes delayed 15 minutes
Previous Close	358.77	
Bid	0.01	Current Div. Yield NA Market Cap. 107.2 Bil Tot. Shares Out. 295.5 Mil Forward P/E 41.60
Bid Size	100	
Ask	9,000.00	Sales 6.139 Bil Return on Equity 16.70
Ask Size	100	
52 Week High	475.11	
52 Week Low	172.57	
Instit. Ownership	51.0%	
fyi P/E	72.20	
Earnings/Share	5.02	

Above is a quote result for Google on February 12th.

Research on the Yahoo Inc. produces a very com-

plete look at the company, although I am not qualified to judge the accuracy of their analysis. Here is the beginning paragraph on the Fundamentals page.

What does the company do?

Yahoo! Inc. together with its consolidated subsidiaries, is a global Internet brand. The Company provides Internet services that are essential and relevant to users and businesses through the provision of online properties (the Yahoo! Network) to Internet users and a range of tools and marketing solutions for businesses to market to that community of users. The Company is focused on extending the marketing platform and access to Internet users beyond the Yahoo! Network through the distribution network of third-party entities (affiliates) that have integrated the sponsored search offerings into their Websites. Many of the services are free to the users. It provides services that allow businesses to list information on properties on the Yahoo! Network. The offerings to users and businesses fall into three categories: Search and Marketplace; Information and Content, and Communications and Consumer Services.

They go on for some six pages where they look at Sales and Earnings; How fast they are growing; How profitable they are; How is their financial health?; How well has the stock performed over 3, 6 and 12 months; Where is the stock's support and resistance?; What is the best guess for the stock price in 1-2 years? What is the best guess for the stock if it were valued like its peers?

They go on to look at factors which will change an investor's opinion of the stock, with a list of five links to Yahoo activity such as company announcements, Filings with the SEC, Insider stock purchases and sells, Advisor FYI alerts, and their StockScouter rating.

Finally, they offer a tuition savings calculator to help you determine how much you must save to be able to put your children through college. Find out what you need to do to make sure you can cover the expense.

This pretty well covers the Money Management aspect of the Works Tasks list. Next in line will be Travel Information.

Last month I wound it up with a request for comments from any of you regarding the value of this article to you, and any suggestions you might have regarding how it might be improved. I haven't heard a peep from anyone, which makes me wonder if anyone actually reads it.

Please take a minute to send me an email with your comments. I need to know if I'm wasting my time.



Pew

Berry Phillips, Computer Club of Oklahoma City

Barry is a member of the CCOKC and a regular writer for the CCOKC website and the eMonitor

Computer Hysteria

Pew could conjure up several images in your mind. For example, you might think of a human expression uttered upon inhaling the exotic perfume of a skunk! Perhaps you might think of an aching back from that hard wooden pew at church! What does pew have to do with computing? Perhaps nothing caution because you are reading in the CHZ, the Computer Hysteria Zone!

The Pew Charitable Trusts, an independent nonprofit, was established between 1948 and 1979 by the children of Sun Oil Company founder Joseph Pew and his wife, Mary Anderson Pew, with the creation of the Pew Memorial Foundation honoring their parents' memory. In 2005, the foundation invested \$177 million to fund the various trusts including the founding in 1999 of The Pew Internet & American Life Project which studies the social and civic impact of the Internet, often considered the most far-ranging, behavior-changing communications innovation since the invention of printing.

The Project produces reports that explore the impact of the Internet on families, communities, work and home, daily life, education, health care, and civic and political life. The Project aims to be an authoritative source on the evolution of the Internet through collection of data and analysis of real-world developments as they effect the virtual world.

The basis of the reports are nationwide random digit dial telephone surveys as well as online surveys. This data collection is supplemented with research from government agencies, academia, and other expert venues, observations of what people do and how they behave when they are online, in-depth interviews with Internet users and Internet experts alike and other efforts that try to examine individual and group behavior. The Project releases 15-20 pieces of research a year, varying in size, scope, and ambition.

Latest trends from the project reports show the number of adult users are now almost equally divided between men and women representing 73% of American adults who use the Internet which currently represents approximately 147 million people. Here is what we do online: Send e-mail (91%), use a search engine to find information (91%), search for a map or driving direction (84%), look for health/medical information (79%), research a product or service before buying it (78%), check the weather (78%), look for information on a hobby or interest (77%), get travel information (73%), get news (68%), buy a product (67%), surf the web for fun (66%), buy or make a reservation for travel (63%), look for political news/information (58%), and for lesser percentages of use on online activities visit www.pewinternet.org whose website was used to research this article with my appreciation.

While researching this Pew article, I began wondering if the article might be good enough to be submitted to win a "Pewlitzer" Prize! On second thought that would be just plain "pewlish!"

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It's inevitable

Elizabeth B. Wright , Computer Club of Oklahoma City

Elizabeth is a member of the CCOKC and a regular writer for the eMonitor

Yes, your computer can and will die. My computer started doing really strange things a few weeks ago. The screen on my monitor started twitching. Not blinking, just making rapid sideways movements. It would kind of clear up when I changed tasks, but then it started to melt. At least the picture looked like it was melting, similar to watching the landscape through a window while it is raining. Everything distorted and liquid looking. Naturally I suspected my beautiful almost new monitor. But I found that when I used my alternate computer the monitor magically cleared up.

So I had it figured out. Something was wrong with my computer. But I had far too many things to do than fiddle with trying to track down the problem. Among those chores was writing my article for this month's eMonitor. And no, I had not saved it to a floppy or anything else in case of disaster. Well, another lesson learned. A second recent project was a business transaction with an individual whom I have never met. She doesn't know if I am good for the money or not. She had just sent me her mailing address via e-mail when the computer died. Fortunately I knew how to get back to her via a website, so when I got connected using my alternate computer, I quickly fired back an e-mail explaining the problem. Within seconds I had a repeat of her address on my new computer. Guess what??? I copied it onto a piece of paper. So much for paperless society.

Now the next step is to actually get the first computer repaired. It will be interesting to find out what happened and I will let you know.

Most everyone has been to at least one graduation exercise in May. Children, grandchildren, friends. It is always such a wonderful occasion to see the transition from the completion of one of life's journeys into a future filled with the unknown. The excitement of the graduate and the bursting pride of the family and friends is such a joy. We were able to have our entire family (not that it is very big) in one place for our second granddaughter's high school commencement. This could be the last time we will have the opportunity to have all of us in one place at the same time as we live in different states and the grandchildren are beginning to disperse. And how does this tie in with computers? Well, wouldn't you know it would be digital cameras?

My son and I each had our cameras at the ready when we grouped together for our "Big Picture". Our son's mother-in-law agreed to take pictures with both cameras. And with a large memory card in each camera, we instructed her to take multiple pictures with each. And it's a good thing we were able to do that. Our two youngest grandsons (six and seven) were not being particularly cooperative. Out of the many versions of the picture, we may get a composite that will show the best of everyone.


Since we were outdoors, the sun was a factor. In some pictures our daughter is squinting; in others "Papa" is valiantly trying to get the two boys to ignore each other and face the camera. Older brother in the back is alternately looking at the camera and looking down, trying to figure out if he can help with the boys. As for me, mostly good, but one with my eyes tightly closed. And that is one of the better pictures of everyone else. Yes, I know, if we were going to do this we should have hired a professional. But hey, look at the memories these pictures hold. We will all remember the day with happiness in our hearts.

For some of you, there are still graduations to come in June. If you haven't gotten your digital camera yet, now is the time to do it.

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Excel-Fill in the Blank Forms-On Demand

James D. Duncan , Computer Club of Oklahoma City

James is a member of the CCOKC and an expert in Access and Excel.

We use Excel to accumulate data and extract answers. This month I want to explore the goal seeking function. This is a part of the suite of commands called what-if analysis. I took a quick look in the spreadsheet help and searched for “goal”. This gave me a very abbreviated explanation of the command. I then clicked on help and Office on the web.

On the Microsoft site I search on “goal” and found 53 matches. From this page I chose “About Goal Seek”. I am sure each selection would have taken me to a fascinating explanation of more features that I would like to use. But, let’s look at the goal section.

This has explanation and a sample. Click on the Show All and get the full verbiage. This always gives insight and more explanation into the theory and workings of the system.

Let me give you the sample that Microsoft has. The goal is to determine (seek) what the interest rate would be on a \$ 100,000 loan for 180 months with payments of \$ 900. Input the following information. The PMT function gives us a payment of \$ 984.74. We can play with this or use the Goal seek function.

	A	B	C
1	Loan Amount	\$100,000.00	
2	Term in Months	180.00	
3	Interest Rate	8.50%	
4	Payment	(\$984.74)	
5			
6			
7			
8			
9			
10			
11			
12			
13			

Only changes other than plain text are that B1 and B4 are formatted for currency. B3 is formatted for percentages. The formula “=PMT(B3/12, b2,b1)” is entered in B4.

Now let us do the magic part. Click on Tools, select “Goal Seek...” and you will get an input box to fill in. Let me show you what I did first time. I sure did not get what I wanted. I had to study what the PMT formula was asking for and what I had input. Here is my input. Made sense to me.

And the result was not correct. The Goal Seek Status window displays the following.

Goal Seek

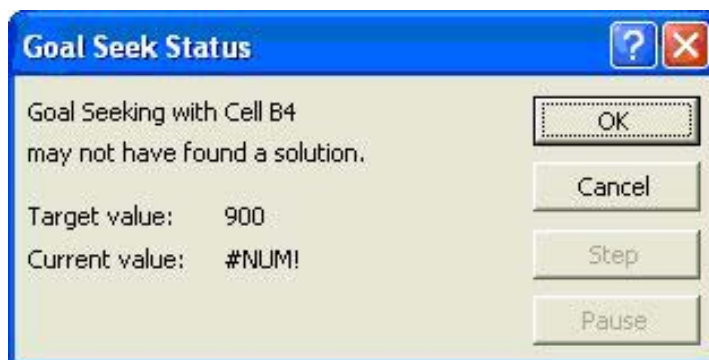
Set cell:

To value:

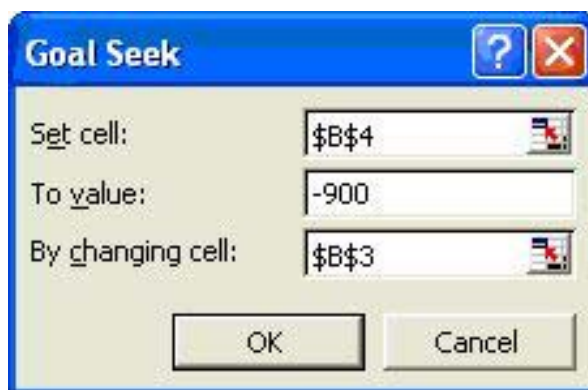
By changing cell:

OK Cancel

Continued on page 27



The spreadsheet interest field and payment field were filled with errors indicating data problems. When I clicked on cancel the original information comes back.. I tried the goal seeking again. What I had failed to understand was that the “PMT” formula wanted the payment in negative format. The “To Value” for cell B4 should be –900 not a +900. The payments are of descending values. Get help on the “PMT” function and it will show you that the payment value is to be negative. As my friend Boyd says, push it back to the top of the hill.



Now we have the payment of \$ 900 and the answer for an interest rate is 7.02%. Just way cool as they say.

The screenshot shows a Microsoft Excel spreadsheet titled 'Scratch.xlt.xls'. The spreadsheet has three columns labeled A, B, and C, and rows numbered 1 through 13. The data is as follows:

	A	B	C
1	Loan Amount	\$100,000.00	
2	Term in Months	180.00	
3	Interest Rate	7.02%	
4	Payment	(\$900.00)	
5			
6			
7			
8			
9			
10			
11			
12			
13			

The status bar at the bottom shows 'Ready' and 'NUM'.

That is it for April 2006. I always get tickled when someone says; “I can’t believe it is April already”. My thought is, April? What happened to 1987? Well, time goes so fast when you are having fun. Get out there and have some fun. Volunteer to help an organization, help your friends, and if you are not helping at least one new organization a year.....say yes to the next place that asks you. Sure, put a time limit on it, do not do it again if it really cramped your schedule...BUT just do it!!!



Occupational health in the U.S.

John R. Chait D.C. , Sarasota PC User Group

Dr. Chait is a practicing chiropractor in Sarasota and is the SPCUG ergonomic consultant. As an avid computer enthusiast, Dr. Chait knows first hand how important proper interaction between the user and their PC can be. He stresses this in his ergonomic tips column and his lectures. <drchait@hotmail.com> For more ergonomic tips, visit <<http://chaitchiropractic.com/links/Ergonomics/>>

Work-related musculoskeletal disorders result when there is a mismatch between the physical capacity of workers and the demands of the job. Each year thousands of workers in the United States report work related injuries such as tendonitis, epicondylitis, carpal tunnel syndrome, and back injuries. Many of these are caused or aggravated by work related stressors such as lifting, reaching, pulling, pushing, bending and working in awkward postures. Many of these injuries are treated successfully with Chiropractic care. Companies, both large and small, have developed ergonomic programs that use a logical approach to identify and solve their ergonomic problems. While helpful, outside consultants or experts are not necessary. The majority of ergonomic problems can be satisfactorily addressed by low cost interventions utilizing in-house resources and proper use of equipment.

Over the past 20 years ergonomic injuries have gained recognition as a major factor in occupational health. About one-third of all work related injuries and illnesses stem from over exertion and/or repetitive motion. Cost to the United States in direct work's comp costs range as high as or exceeding \$20 billion. Several high profile studies have been conducted over the last few years by respected scientists from the National Academy of Sciences, the National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health and others.

Here are a few key ways to determine if there are ergonomic problems at the workplace:

Observe operations to see if any of the previously listed risk factors are present, such as heavy lifting or repetitive motions.

Analyze injury records to see if higher injury rates occur within certain departments or job classifications.

Be aware of common problems within industry or job classifications. If other companies in the same industry have ergonomic-related problems, then it is possible these potential problems of concern.

Also, be aware that if every body does their part, a lot of ergonomic injuries can and will be prevented.

Most people are surprised to learn that misusing the telephone can lead to shoulder, neck pain, headaches and other physical problems. If you use a telephone while you work at your computer, you probably occasionally cradle the telephone between your head and your shoulder.

Working with this posture can result in a spasm or contracted muscle on the phone side that restricts blood supply and becomes very irritated. Elongated muscles on opposite side may also cause pain while being stretched.

The correct positioning of the base of a corded telephone relative to your position depends on how often you use it. If you frequently place or answer calls from a phone with a cord, it should be positioned in normal reach.

To determine the area covered by your normal reach, put each arm out to the side of your body and move them from this position until the hands meet at the center of your body in front of you. Your phone, along with everything else you use frequently should be within this zone.

If you frequently make calls, consider using a cordless phone or one with the numeric pad on the receiver rather than the base. This will avoid having to extend your reach to dial a phone number.

Continued on page 29

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Owner must stay with computer during repairs

However, if you often make calls within voice mail and other automated systems, using a phone with numeric pad on its base will be more convenient.

Learn how to hold your phone in a proper position against your ear. Your head should remain straight and your shoulders in a relaxed state. Your shoulder and head can be bent slightly to one side to cradle the phone, though preferably not for prolonged periods of time to prevent any cramping. If you tend to use the phone for long periods, consider changing ears and supporting the hand on a regular basis. If your calls tend to be shorter, consider switching ears and your hands every other call.

Using a Headset allows hands-free conversations and will reduce the risk of any discomfort or injury associated with improper phone use. This is superior to a speakerphone because it will work well in a loud environment or with private conversations. If you use the phone frequently most of the day, a headset is your best option. Headsets can be purchased at most office supply stores for a price ranging from \$20-\$250. They are easily installed on any phone. If you do use a headset with a single earpiece, consider switching ears to eliminate any pain that may be caused by continuous pressure on only one ear.

Using a speaker phone permits hands-free telephone conversations, eliminating the risk of any pain discomfort or spasm associated with improper phone use. Speakerphones do have practical limitations. Generally, they won't work well in a noisy environment or for private conversations, and may sometimes hinder the sound quality of the conversation.

If your computer has a microphone and a sound card, and connects to the Internet, you can use one of the Internet-based phone Websites such as Dialpad.com. Using your computer as a phone has the same limitations as a speakerphone. It won't work well in a noisy environment or for private calls. The sound quality can be very disappointing if you do not have a good connection. As technology improves, the sound quality available for phone calls over the Internet will improve.

Computer Buffet With Dr. Herb Goldstein



MediaMonkey

Not happy with Windows Media Player or your current media player, or are you just looking for an alternative? Then give the free MediaMonkey a try. It's an excellent tool for playing media, organizing your media library, and ripping and burning music. It'll play pretty much every music file that's out there, will synchronize with your iPod and MP3 player, and includes a tag editor. It will also automatically find album art for the file you're currently playing as well. MediaMonkey organizes your music in multiple ways, including by artist, title, album, genre, year, rating and so on. Unlike Windows Media Player, it loads fast. Fans of Internet radio will like this program as well; it automatically connects you to the Shoutcast and Icecast online radio directories, and plays any stations you want <www.mediamonkey.com/>

Please also note: Most of the software mentioned here is freeware. It is gathered through researching usually reliable sources. I do not personally try most references, time being the obvious factor.

Dr. Herb Goldstein is SPCUG's Software Evaluation Chairman and Review Editor for the Sarasota PC Monitor. Herb is an avid researcher on all things computer and passes on his acquired knowledge each month. <reviewseditor@spcug.org>



Evaluating your antispyware program

Vinny La Bash , Sarasota PC User Group

Vinny (SPCUG President in 1996-97-98) is a retired IBM'er and teaches computer part time at the Sarasota Vocational Technical Institute. <labash@spcug.org>

For many years the most acute danger to your computer was some kind of destructive virus. Today the danger has shifted from software that is programmed to destroy files, corrupt programs, and disable systems to something more insidious, and perhaps even more treacherous. This threat comes in two broad categories known as Spyware and Trojan Horses.

Spyware started out as a stealth program surreptitiously installed on your system to track your web surfing habits. The developers of spyware didn't want to damage your computer. They wanted only to sell you something. That may be annoying, but there is nothing criminal about it.

A Trojan Horse is a program that pretends to be something other than what it really is. For example, a screensaver could be designed to install a program that will take over your system to forward spam to other machines. Trojan Horses have been used to initiate denial of service attacks, where the target such as a bank, credit card service or other high profile web site becomes so saturated with external requests that it cannot respond to legitimate traffic.

When selecting an anti-spyware program, start out by selecting one with a comprehensive signatures database. The best anti-spyware programs have databases that can recognize more than 750,000 different kinds of spyware and Trojan Horse programs. Read the documentation or call the company. This is important.

The best signatures database won't do you any good if it isn't updated frequently. The bad guys never seem to rest. They release new poison daily. Don't buy any solutions that require manual updates. You have better things to do. Insist on automatic updates.

Another important capability is active monitoring of your system. Wouldn't you rather prevent a malicious program from installing rather than removing it after the damage has been done? Avoid any program that removes infections found only after conducting a manual scan. This probably means avoiding some otherwise adequate free programs. There's an old saying about getting what you pay for. The best anti-spyware programs prevent spyware and Trojan Horses from ever being installed on your system.

Go for a program that allows you to customize your scans. We don't all use our computers in the same way. Some people require more comprehensive scans than others. If you are constantly browsing the internet, you are likely to benefit from a daily scan that checks active memory, system folders, the registry, and all hard drives. If you rarely use the internet or find yourself visiting the same six sites over and over, a weekly scan may be all you need.

You should be able to schedule unattended updates and scans. Your machine should be yours to use as you wish. Any decent anti-spyware program should be able to run in the background unattended, and not require interrupting your activities. The program should work according to your preferences, not the other way around. Choose a program that permits unattended maintenance and administration.



Continued on page 31

It's also important that an unattended scan can quarantine infections without requiring intervention from you. Why do some anti-spyware programs ask if you want to remove infections? Of course you do! Of all the features in anti-spyware programs, that is the dumbest.

There are innumerable derivations and iterations of spyware being created. This makes it difficult for even the best anti-spyware programs to catch and destroy them. If you open the Processes tab in Windows Task Manager, you will observe the Process Manager in action. You will see a list of objects running on your system. Some of them are applications like word processors. Others are mysterious entities that don't provide a clue as to what they do, but you can't run Windows effectively without them. Among them would be Windows Explorer, Internet Explorer, Media Center, Windows Mobile Control Center, and many others.

Beyond shutting down a process or resetting its priority, there isn't much a non-specialist can do with this feature. Clever programmers can create spyware that won't show up in the Process Manager. Any decent anti-spyware program has to have its own built-in process manager that will recognize, track down, and eliminate malevolent software that may not even be in the signatures database.

Anti-spyware programs should be able to monitor programs that load when Windows starts up. There are many very sophisticated spyware programs that do not show up in the Process Monitor or in Control Panel's Add/Remove section. If your anti-spyware program lacks this capability, find another one.

Assuming your anti-spyware program has the capabilities mentioned above, it is an excellent choice for individuals. However, businesses or organizations with multiple computers will require even more. Whoever is in charge of PCs will not have time to manually monitor or administer individual machines. It is simply impractical in a large organization for support staff to visit every workstation, apply updates, schedule scans, and ensure that infestations are removed. If this applies to you, look for a program with a centralized administration console. This capability has the unfortunate drawback of being quite expensive, but the time saved generally justifies the cost.

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Tech Issue : Security



Free PC Security Software from Grisoft

By Ira Wilsker

Many of you may be aware already of an excellent but free antivirus program from the Czech Republic commonly referred to with the initials "AVG". What you may not be aware of is that Grisoft, the publisher of the very popular AVG Anti-Virus Free, also publishes free companion software to round out the offering. The other free products by Grisoft are its AVG Anti-Spyware Free, and its recently born sibling AVG Anti-Rootkit Free.

Continued on page 33


The first thing that comes to mind is why would a prominent European software publisher, with corporate offices in New Jersey and Cyprus, give away highly rated software, for free. The apparent reason is that as millions of users download and use the free software, and become familiar with it and learn to trust it, then a portion of the users will upgrade to the more full featured and powerful commercial versions of the software. There may also be an altruistic component to this marketing plan in that there may be a belief that everyone needs basic protection from malware regardless of their ability to pay for it. Whatever the reason or rationale, Grisoft has made a notable contribution to computing safety and security by releasing these free software titles.

The best known and most widely used of the free Grisoft utilities is its AVG Anti-Virus Free. Considering the fact that millions of users around the world depend on this software for basic protection against the myriad of viruses, worms, and Trojans currently in circulation and attacking

our computers, these users of free software are not sacrificing anything in the quality of the protection. The AVG Anti-Virus Free has had generally excellent reviews in the media, and has certifications of excellence and performance from testing services and agencies such as the "100% Detection Rate" from the Virus Bulletin, the "Check Mark" rating from West Coast Labs for its "Level 1, Level 2, and Trojan certification", and the ICSA Labs "100% detection rate of AVG Free for Windows System is continuously certified by independent ICSA laboratories." While lacking the automated features and free 24/7 technical support of its commercial incarnation, users of the free version may feel reasonably well protected from computer virus infections.

Lesser known is Grisoft's AVG Anti-Spyware Free software. While not as widely used or known as its antivirus product, the anti-spyware product is also depended upon by millions of users to protect their computers from the hazards of spyware and related malware. This free version offers an easy to use product with daily database updates, heuristics to detect unknown threats, and an automatic cleaning engine to remove malware from the computer. What is not included with the free version, that is included with the commercial version, are automatic online updates, real-time monitoring of the entire system, and self-protection at the kernel layer guaranteeing gapless monitoring and protection from malware. The free version is only licensed for private, non-commercial, home computer use. Any other use will require the purchase of the more substantial commercial version.

Virus and malware writers are becoming more sophisticated and are pouring out new threats designed to penetrate the traditional PC defenses. One method that has only recently evolved from a concept to reality is a type of threat called a "rootkit". Unlike traditional viruses and other forms of malware which infect a variety of data files or are free standing, rootkits are typically hidden deep in the computer registry, making it difficult or impossible for traditional virus scans to detect and remove them. Since they are often concealed in the



Get AVG Anti-Virus Free

AVG Anti-Virus Free is a powerful tool with state-of-the-art technology for detection and removal of viruses, worms, and Trojans. Rootkits are used to hide the presence of a malicious object like trojans or keyloggers on your computer. If a threat uses rootkit technology to hide itself it is very hard to find the malware on your PC. AVG Anti-Virus Free gives you the power to find and delete the rootkit and to uncover the threat the rootkit is hiding.

Important notice

AVG Anti-Virus Free protects you against a certain kind of threat: Rootkits. To be protected in realtime against all kind of threats that could harm your computer it is recommended to have a look at AVG's fully integrated solutions.

[Go to product overview](#)

Highlights

- Powerful cleaning due to advanced cleaning driver
- Easy to use interface
- Fast and efficient detection (even for NTFS-ADS objects)
- Special interface for visually impaired people

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Support & Licensing

- No support can be provided for AVG Anti-Virus Free.
- AVG Anti-Virus Free is freeware and available free of charge.
- This tool may be used according to the license

Latest Update

AVI 269.2.0 / 757
Added detection of new variant of **I-Worm/Stration**, **Worm/Agobot**, new variant of trojan **PSW.Banker**
April 11, 2007


PROGRAM
7.5.446
April 4, 2007
7.5.45
April 4, 2007



100% detection rate in Virus Bulletin tests.



West Coast Labs Checkmark Level 1, Level 2 and Trojan certification.



Get AVG Anti-Spyware Free

AVG Anti-Spyware Free is a free anti-spyware protection tool developed by GRISOFT for home use. We invite you to join the millions of satisfied customers worldwide who have downloaded the software and now enjoy the benefits of AVG Anti-Spyware Free.

What you get with AVG Anti-Spyware Free

- ✓ Easy to use
- ✓ Daily database updates
- ✓ Heuristics to detect unknown threats
- ✓ Automatic Cleaning Engine
- ✓ And most of all ... great customer satisfaction!

What you do not get

- ✗ Automatic online-update
- ✗ Real-time monitoring of the entire system
- ✗ Self-protection at kernel layer guaranteeing gapless monitoring
- ✗ Consent for commercial use

Available only with commercial versions


[Download free version](#) [Download commercial version](#)

This setup contains the free as well as the paid version of AVG Anti-Spyware Free. After the installation, a free 30-day trial version containing all the extensions of the full version will be activated. At the end of the trial, these extensions will be deactivated and the program will turn into a feature-limited


Latest Update

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100% detection rate in Virus Bulletin tests.




West Coast Labs Checkmark Level 1, Level 2 and Trojan certification.

Continued on page 34


registry, this malware may be automatically loaded whenever the computer is booted allowing it to perform its vile functions. To help secure and protect PCs from this new and rapidly evolving threat, Grisoft recently announced the latest in its trio of free protective software, the AVG Anti-Rootkit Free. Unlike traditional virus and spyware detectors, Rootkit Free may be able to detect and neutralize rootkits overlooked by more traditional products. This is a worthwhile download for all PC users, even though they may already have virus and spyware protection on their computers.

Grisoft fiscally supports the free software with sales of its commercial products, the flagship product being its AVG Internet Security (\$53 retail), a comprehensive, integrated, and full featured antivirus, anti-spyware, anti-spam, and firewall suite of software. Other commercial software from Grisoft for personal computers includes AVG Anti-Malware (\$34), and AVG Antivirus Professional Edition (\$30). Grisoft also produces software for comprehensive network protection, file server protection, email servers, and Linux machines. Grisoft offers as a demonstration of its social responsibility substantial discounts on its commercial software for schools, charities, churches (and other religious groups), municipal agencies, and other government organizations.

The free Grisoft software can be found and downloaded from free.grisoft.com while the commercial software can be found at www.grisoft.com. For those lacking current protective software, and who are otherwise eligible for a free license, the Grisoft free software may be quite a viable alternative to expensive commercial software. For those who want the automation, 24/7 technical support, and enhanced functionality, users should consider the commercial builds by Grisoft.



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Get AVG Anti-Virus Free

AVG Anti-Virus Free Edition is one of the most popular solutions to provide basic security protection on home and non-commercial PCs. We invite you to join the millions of users around the world who rely on AVG's unique award-winning detection methods by downloading AVG Anti-Virus Free Edition.

Product comparison

However, if you require more **complete internet security protection** with added benefits including **free 24/7 technical support** and **high-speed downloads**, then why not select one of our commercial products such as AVG Internet Security.

	Internet Security	Anti-Virus Pro	Anti-Virus Free
Free 24/7 technical support	✓	✓	✗
High-speed downloads	✓	✓	✗
Consent for commercial use	✓	✓	✗
Anti-Virus	✓	✓	✓
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Latest Update

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Added detection of new variant of **I-Worm/Straton**, **Worm/Agobot**, new variant of trojan **PSW.Banker**
April 11, 2007

PROGRAM

7.5.446
April 4, 2007
7.5.45
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Continued on page 35



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Advanced WindowsCare Personal Edition – FREEWARE

By Ira Wilsker

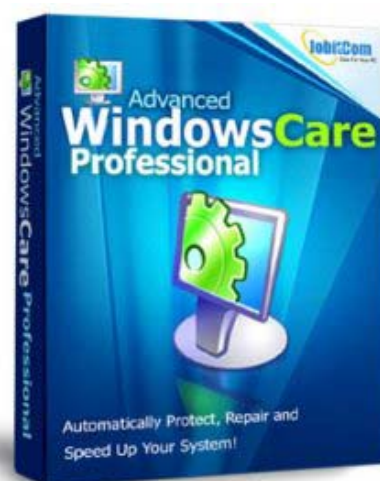
A lot can go wrong with the software and operating systems on our computer. Just like a car, if maintenance is ignored or infrequently performed on Windows, problems can occur that can impair the execution of software on our computers. To help us perform the software maintenance on our computers, a small software company IOBIT has released a freeware version of its Windows repair utility, Advanced WindowsCare Personal Edition. For those concerned about the safety and security of free software, this product is free of any spyware or adware.

Available for free download from the publisher's site, www.iobit.com, or the alternative popular mega sites including download.com, and tucows.com, Advanced WindowsCare Personal Edition is a comprehensive suite of utilities that can identify and repair many of the common system problems that plague Windows users. Advanced WindowsCare will run on Windows 2000, XP, and Vista. For those who may desire an even more powerful and sophisticated suite, IOBIT also has an upgrade available, Advanced WindowsCare Professional, which sells for \$29.95 (15 day free trial available). The free Personal Edition has been very successful, with over four million downloads, including over two million from download.com alone. C-Net, the owner of download.com, calls this software, the "#1 most popular system utility in download.com", where it has received a five star rating. Tucows has given this software a "five cows" rating, while ZD Net has awarded it five stars, as well as given it its coveted "Editors' Pick" award. Softpedia, another well known resource, rates Advanced WindowsCare Personal "Very Good", and gives it a four star rating. Obviously, this appears to be some good software that can make a valuable addition to anyone's software collection.

Advanced WindowsCare Personal Edition is very easy to use, and offers a "1 click" option where all of the major utilities are automatically run, which subsequently gives a detailed report to the user, and offers the options to either automatically or selectively repair any problems found. Personal Edition is also very fast, with most scans being completed in about one minute.

One useful feature of this software is a spyware scan that searches the computer for spyware and adware, using periodically updated signature files. Any such malware that is found can be selectively deleted by the software. For users concerned with privacy, the software can also erase all history files on the hard drive.

The registry is a complex database containing information on all of the software and hardware installed in the computer. Often the registry becomes bloated with obsolete information, and corrupted data, which can create a serious performance drag on the computer. Good PC hygiene dictates that the registry should be periodically scanned for errors and cleaned, and this software does an excellent job of this. One nice



Continued on page 36

feature is the ability to recover any changes made with an integral restore feature. As a demonstration of its capabilities, as a test, I purposely ran other registry cleaning and repair utilities prior to running this one. As an extra precaution, I used my Windows system restore feature to back up my critical files prior to the test. I ran three of the other registry repair utilities, and dozens of registry defects were identified and repaired; I then ran Advanced WindowsCare Personal Edition, and hundreds of additional registry errors were found and repaired, that the other programs missed. There was no need to restore my files, because the system ran very well after the serial repair. This software is capable by itself to repair the registry, and the other registry repair utilities are no longer needed; this software did it all.

Our hard drives become cluttered with a variety of junk files, such as obsolete cache and temporary files. These useless files may waste countless megabytes on our drives, and slow down the ability of the hard drive to find data. If useless data is deleted from the hard drives, computer performance can be enhanced. Advanced WindowsCare Personal Edition contains a very efficient junk file removing utility. As a matter of personal choice, I prefer to look over the list of files found and decide which to delete, but it is fairly safe to delete what the software finds. As a matter of practice, after useless files are deleted, it would be a good idea to run Windows integral defragmentation utility, or a third party disk defragmentation utility, to further improve hard drive performance.

Another feature built into the software gauges Windows and internet performance, and offers options to improve the speed of the system. This helps give us the performance that we paid for when we originally purchased our systems, and helps to maximize our internet throughput.

As our computers age, we are often plagued with slow startup and shutdown problems. This occurs because as we install software on our computers, many of the programs place items in the system startup by default, which forces the software to load when the computer is booted; more items in the startup means slower and longer boot times. Advanced WindowsCare Personal Edition contains a powerful but simple startup manager which displays the contents of our startup, and allows for the easy management and control of what loads when we boot. Fewer items loaded at boot means that our computer comes up faster, and runs faster because there is less demand on system resources. Because there are fewer items running, shut downs are also faster.

I have used this software for about a month and found it very useful and reliable, and can recommend it to all PC users with Windows 2000, XP, or Vista.

One of the most frequent questions asked on my weekly radio show on KLVI is how to improve computer performance and speed. Advanced WindowsCare Personal Edition is a valuable free tool that does much to improve performance, clean up the registry and startup, delete useless files, and otherwise provide benefits to the user.

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Great things happening at Corona Visions

By the staff of Corona Visions

Global warming, going green and reducing carbon footprints are topics of major concern internationally. Concerned citizens are asking where to recycle electronic equipment. There is a simple answer to this question – Corona Visions, the only responsible choice for recycling in San Antonio.

Recent news articles exposed the shipping of e-waste from San Antonio to China and other developing countries. We want you to know that Corona Visions is not like any other electronic recycler in the San Antonio area. At Corona Visions there is a strong commitment to customer service and to serving the community.

Vandell Norwood, the president of Corona Visions, is committed to recycling the right way – right for himself, his family, his employees, the community and the planet. Norwood was quoted in the January 2008 National Geographic article about high tech trash being sent overseas and the hazardous conditions for men, women and children in developing countries. Norwood tells how easy and profitable it would be to send e-waste overseas like many of his competitors, but his conscience won't allow him to do that. It's just not the right thing to do. Norwood's message is simple. We must be wise enough to make proper use of this world's treasure. That means recycling.

To help spread the message, Corona Visions will be unveiling a new mascot, The Prospector. The idea of a prospector brings to mind the image of the California Gold Rush and old-timers panning for gold along river banks. Panning was the most commonly used form of prospecting and the least expensive method for separating gold from the silt, sand, and gravel of the stream deposits. This preserved the environment while extracting the gold. At Corona Visions recyclers are considered prospectors because they lay hold of treasures in the environment around them. They are not wasteful but rather find the value in every day items and products in a way that preserves the environment.

To come up with a design for their mascot, Corona Visions sponsored an art contest open to San Antonio area college and high school art students. The prizes were \$500 for first place, \$250 for second place and \$150 for third place. A total of 20 artists participated from schools such as the University of Texas at San Antonio, Northwest Vista Community College, San Antonio College, Burbank High School, Por Vida Academy, and Wagner High School. All of the winners attend Wagner High School. The first place winner was Vincent Marotta, second place Azaneth Arellanes, and third place Allison Meraz. The prizes were awarded Thursday, January 24th and a meeting with the principal and Judson ISD superintendent present. (Prospector Winning Entry Image)

Corona Visions is a zero waste stream recycler, striving for a landfill free environment. Corona Visions accepts all used electronics regardless of their condition and makes sure the lead is extracted safely, the glass is recycled, and the metals and plastic are also separated and recycled. In addition Corona Visions protects the identity of our customers by erasing all memory devices using the same technology as the U. S. Department of Defense. Corona Visions also provides a certificate of indemnification releasing the customer of liability.

Unfortunately, there is cost associated with recycling the right way. Other companies may accept electronics free of charge or offer to pay for equipment. Many of these companies pack and send containers of retired electronics to developing countries where environmental laws are lax and poorly enforced. Corona Visions is the only electronic recycler in San Antonio that has signed the Electronic Recycler's Pledge of True Stewardship sponsored by the Basel Action Network, the world's only organization focused on confronting the global environmental injustice and economic inefficiency of toxic trade.

Cheryl West
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Continued on page 38

Bot-Nets

by Brian K. Lewis, Ph.D., bwsail at yahoo.com, www.spcug.org

Keeping your computer safe while connected to the Internet is becoming more and more difficult. The "attackers" are becoming more sophisticated and are sharing more ways to get their software into your computer. Business Week recently ran an article on the major security problems expected in 2008. Unfortunately, most of them arrived long before the new year started. We have been warned for years that it was possible to recruit unprotected computers into networks that could be controlled by an external source. This recruitment network problem has gotten much worse over the past few years. It is estimated that 7% of the computers connected to the Internet have been infected with a Botnet program. So what is a "Botnet"?

A robot or "bot" software program allows a computer to be remotely controlled without the knowledge of the computer's owner. When you have a number of "bot" controlled computers it is referred to as a "botnet". All of the computers in the botnet carry out commands issued by the network controller. Just one example of what can be done with a botnet is the sending of spam. The controller can easily have 100,000 computers in its network. So the botmaster will contract to send out one million e-mail messages. The network can then send ten messages from each of the compromised computers. With the constant connection to the Internet using cable or DSL the computer owner will have no idea that his/her computer has been the source for ten spam messages.

Now you might say that the idea that someone can control 100,000 computers in a botnet is ridiculous. However, as of October 2007 a major Internet security service had the IP addresses of over 12 million computers that were infected with bot software. There is also a newer threat called the Storm Worm botnet that has infected millions of computers just this year. In addition to its computer recruiting ability, it has built-in defenses that are preventing security services from analyzing it. In an E-Week article it was noted that "... Storm worm is sending DDoS attacks to not only the researchers looking into it but to anybody on their subnet, within 5 seconds of (their) initiating efforts to fight it or examine it". A DDoS attack is a "distributed denial of service" which can bring down a computer system or network by overwhelming it with messages. A very large volume of messages are sent by the botnet in a very short period of time. It is estimated that the Storm net controls over one million computers. This would make it the most powerful supercomputer in the world, exceeding the computing power of all previous computers.

People frequently wonder why anyone would want to produce viruses, worms and other kinds of Internet attacks. Years ago it was primarily because "they could do it". Today, it has become a real source of financial gain. Let's take a look at one financial resource created by controllers of botnets. On many web pages you find ads of various types that are sponsored by Google. When these ads are clicked, the advertiser pays Google who, in turn, pays the owner of a web page, usually 80% of the fee. So the botmaster sets up a web page and contracts with Google to display ads. Then, using the botnet, sends commands to the computers in its net to click on the ads. This results in payments to the botmaster. So even with a small botnet of say 5-10,000 computers, the botmaster can easily obtain \$15,000-\$20,000 per month in fraudulent payments. When you consider that the known botnets all have more than 100,000 compromised systems, you get a better idea of the scale of the fraud involved. This type of click fraud has been estimated to make up 5-20% of the payments made by search companies.



Continued on page 39

Another use of large botnets is extortion. The botmaster can send an e-mail to a corporation warning that a DDoS will take place at a specific time unless a payment is made. As I mentioned earlier, spam e-mail contracts are also a source of revenue for botmasters. As these networks proliferate, the sale of the IP addresses of robotically controlled computers is also favored as an income source.

So far it would appear that the only persons affected by botnets would be corporations. However, if your computer is infected, everything you do can be reported to the botmaster. Bots can incorporate "keylogger" software. That will record keystrokes, especially any related to passwords, user names or other desirable information. Another function of bot software is screen capture. It can record an entire screen and transmit the data to the botmaster. A compromised computer can also be used as a base for finding other unprotected computers to be recruited into the net. Another consideration is that the largest number of computers are those in the hands of private individuals. So you may be a major part of the problem if your computer is infected by a bot.

Once a computer has been compromised, the bot software is usually designed to hide and protect itself. For example it will search for and disable any other malware located on the computer or its associated network. It may also hide itself by means of a rootkit. It may also block updates of any anti-virus or anti-spyware software. It may even fake the process so the user believes that an update has taken place. One of the most common modifications involves changes to the Windows host file or by changing the location of the host file and altering the registry.

There are also some traps on the Internet that can lead a user to download bot (Trojan) software without realizing it. Phishing e-mail can lead to web pages that have automatic download links for bot software. Web pages can be hijacked and links added to lead the viewer to web sites that contain "free" software links that are actually hidden bot programs. Bot programs are incorporating "social engineering" functions which serve to entice users to unknowingly download malware. People are the weakest link in the security chain. E-mail, web pages, instant messaging, social contact web sites are all used by bot malware as a means of collecting information and linking to compromised computers.

Many times the actions of a computer user are governed by visual clues. An attacker may take advantage of this by providing false visual clues on a web page or a pop-up. If the dialog box or pop-up is intrusive the user may click inappropriately just to get rid of the intruder. This can lead to the download of a bot.

So how do you know if you've been infected? The easiest way to tell is related to how you have been protecting your computer from infection. Do you have all of the following?

- a. hardware firewall.
- b. software firewall that checks both incoming and outgoing messages.
- c. anti-virus software that is updated at least daily.
- d. anti-spyware software that you either run weekly or that runs in RAM constantly.
- e. keep your Windows software patches up to date.

If you don't use any of these safety mechanisms, then your machine is almost 100% guaranteed to be compromised. Even if you have taken all of these precautions, you can still be infected. However, the most effective mechanism for dealing with bots is to prevent their getting into your computer. So you have to keep the software up to date and you have to use it.

Ideally, your firewall hardware/software combination should keep you invisible on the Internet. Bot programs are constantly searching for unprotected computers with open ports. You may not be aware that your computer has over 64,000 port that can be used for communication. The most common usage are the ports in the lower range, under 1,024. However, some bots use high end ports (>60,000) for transmission of commands. One place you can check your computers port and its invisibility on the Internet is www.GRC.com. The Gibson Research site provides a free port scan and much good information on interpreting the findings as well as how to protect your system.

Ideally the anti-virus and anti-spyware software would be able to find and remove any bot software that made its way onto your computer. However, this software needs to know the "signature" of the malware in order to identify it. So the producers of the malware are always a step ahead of the good guys. The security services have to find and disassemble the new malware before they can devise the protection against it. So it is up to the user to keep the security software as current as possible to reduce the chances of infection. Like it or not, security on the Internet is a never ending battle.

Dr. Lewis is a former university and medical school professor of physiology. He has been working with personal computers for over thirty years, developing software and assembling systems.

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With Dr. Herb Goldstein



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Dr. Herb Goldstein is SPCUG's Software Evaluation Chairman and Review Editor for the Sarasota PC Monitor. Herb is an avid researcher on all things computer and passes on his acquired knowledge each month. <reviewseditor@spcug.org>



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Fake Check Scams on the Internet Explode

By Ira Wilsker, APCUG Director; Columnist, The Examiner,
Beaumont, TX; Radio & TV Show Host; Iwilsker@apcug.net

WEBSITES:

<http://fakechecks.org>

<http://fakechecks.org/prevention.html>

You may remember the recent case of a local woman who responded to a “work at home” opportunity where she would accept payments from the customers of a business, deposit the checks, deduct her generous commissions, and then wire the balance elsewhere.

Recently, in my High Tech Crime Consortium (HTCC) listserv, an investigator posted the following inquiry (redacted): “Is anyone working a case involving a fraudulent check from XXX Bank on the account of YYY Financial Trust Company, a supposed winner of a drawing scam. My victim received this letter and check, deposited it and XXX BANK told her it was good so they put the money in her account. Turns out it was not. She of course was told to wire “taxes” in the amount of \$4425.00 to a subject XXXXX in Houston, Texas, but the money gram was picked up in XXXXX.”

Recently, (October 3), the Reuters news service ran a story “Spam-scam crackdown nets \$2 billion in fake checks”. The story goes on to explain, “An international crackdown on Internet financial scams this year has yielded more than \$2.1 billion in seized fake checks and 77 arrests in the Netherlands, Nigeria and Canada, U.S. and other authorities said on Wednesday. The scammers, often West African organized crime groups, use ploys such as “spam” e-mail offering to pay recipients “processing fees” for depositing checks, which later turn out to be phony, and sending the ostensible proceeds to the scammer, authorities said.” Demonstrating how prevalent this scam is, the Reuters article goes on to say, “Two-thirds of Americans said they received at least one potential scam contact per week, and 18 percent said they or a family member had fallen for one, in a survey conducted for an alliance of banks, consumer groups and the U.S. Postal Service. Grant said complaints to her group about fake checks have risen 60 percent this year, and the average victim loses about \$3,000 to \$4,000.”

In a parallel news story at FoxNews.com (October 3), “Postal Service Declares War on Nigerian Scam”, in discussing the same seizure writes, “So far this year, an average of more than 800 people a month have filed complaints about such scams. Hoping to stem the losses, the U.S. Postal Inspection Service announced an international crackdown Wednesday in which more than

540,000 fake checks with a face value of \$2.1 billion have been seized.” The financial and emotional impact of being a victim can be disabling, “Retired people have lost their nest eggs and young families have been defrauded of their savings for a home.”

If 800 people a month report losses to the Postal Inspector, one may wonder how many other victims are too ashamed or embarrassed to report the crime which victimized them.

You may have noticed some TV commercials warning about these scams, another indication of the degree of the threat. The commercials are promoting a consumer education website fakechecks.org, a creation of the National Consumers League, and sponsored by groups such as the American Bankers Association, American Express, Capital One, JP Morgan Chase, Visa, Western Union, and the United States Postal Inspection Service. The meat of the website is a curt warning that says, “There is no legitimate reason why anyone would give you a check or money order and ask you to wire money in return.”

Continued on page 42

The major types of scams that use these methods are foreign business offers, rental schemes, love losses, sudden riches, overpayment, and work at home scams. The common thread in all of these is that in response to an email, phone call, or letter, the victim received certified or cashiers' checks, or money orders, and was directed to deposit them in their personal bank accounts. Immediately after depositing the instruments, the victim was directed to deduct his commission or fee, and then wire the proffered balance (often via Western Union) to the crook. The checks and money orders would bounce as they were typically counterfeit, forged, or otherwise phony, leaving the victim with the financial loss for the amounts wired to the crook. The proceeds of the wired funds are often picked up overseas, and not at the address stated in the original offer.

Many of us have received the ubiquitous Nigerian 419 scam from the relative of some oil minister who was killed in a plane crash, and the widow needs help in investing the money. In the original scam, still circulating by the millions, the victim is to wire money to Nigeria or some "barrister" in London in order to pay the taxes and fees to release the funds, for which the victim is to receive a generous commission. In a new iteration of the scheme, the victim receives an email or letter that alleges that the crook claims to have a check which can be used to pay the taxes and fees, and in exchange for depositing the check and wiring the net proceeds to a third party, the victim can withhold a generous commission. Of course, the check is worthless.

In another version, also distributed in the millions, the victim receives an email, letter, or fax claiming that they have won an international lottery. In the past, the victim had to come up with the taxes and fees on his own, and wire the money to the crook in order to collect the winnings. Now the scheme sends the victim an authentic looking check which is to be used to pay the foreign taxes and fees on the prize winnings. The victim deposits the check, which may also include a small percentage of his winnings, and wires the taxes and fees to a third party. The check bounces, and the victim is out the proceeds, often in the \$3000 to \$4000 range.

I have actually had students who advertised their cars online, and received a call or email from a barrister in London representing a client who wanted to buy the car for the full asking price. They would then overnight a certified check to the seller for more than the selling price of the car, and ask the seller to wire the balance back to London, sometimes after deducting a generous fee or bonus. A bonded courier will be by to pick up the car. Of course there is no courier, and the check is no good, leaving the seller with his car plus a several thousand dollar loss.

Another student recently brought me an email where she could make hundreds of dollars a week by accepting checks and money orders from a seller that needed an American presence, asking her to deduct her 20% commission, and then wiring the proceeds to some distant place. The scam is obvious.

Greed and gullibility can affect all races and religions. The website fakechecks.org may provide a valuable warning to those who might fall victim. If the Postal Service can seize 540,000 fake checks worth \$2.1 billion, one may wonder how many were not seized, and made it to the victims. One can only wonder how much more was lost by the victims, often those who can least afford it.

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FBI Asks “How Aware Are You of the Dangers of the ‘Net?’”

By Ira Wilsker, APCUG Director; Columnist, The Examiner, Beaumont TX; Radio and TV Show Host; Iwilsker@apcug.net

WEBSITES:

<http://www.fbi.gov/page2/nov07/cyberspeech110607.html>

<http://www.fbi.gov/pressrel/speeches/mueller110607.htm>

<http://www.debka.com/headline.php?hid=4723>

<http://housecall.antivirus.com>

<http://safety.live.com>

http://www.gcn.com/online/vol1_no1/45386-1.html

This is not the column that I had originally prepared for publication this week. As regular readers may know, I frequently lecture on computer security topics, and have written numerous columns on security topics over the years. While many of us surf the net oblivious to the online threats that face us, many others are aware of the threats, and sadly, many have learned of the threats the hard way. The online threats that we face on a regular basis have not been lost on our federal government leadership.

FBI Director Mueller recently gave a speech at Penn State University where he warned about the cyber threats that we all face. He started his speech talking about the recent World Series, where the tickets for the Rockies' home games were initially unavailable online because some hacker had made the website inaccessible. He referenced the cyber attack against the country of Estonia last spring, where a coordinated attack from computers around the world, "... shut down banks and emergency phone lines, gas stations and grocery stores, newspapers and television stations, even the prime minister's office." Director Mueller went on to explain the effect of a similar attack here in the United States, "If we lose the Internet, we do not simply lose the ability to e-mail or to surf the web. We lose access to our data. We lose our connectivity. We lose our intellectual property. We lose our security. What happens when the so-called 'Invisible Man' locks us out of our own homes, our offices, and our information?" This brings up the question, "...given the growing presence of the web in our personal and professional lives, how aware are you of the risks of attack via the Internet?"

In his speech, Director Mueller was poignant in describing the situation that is facing us online. There were several key points in his speech that require some additional discussion. One point he made was, "The growing intersection of terror and the web." He described the case of Younis Tsouli, who went by the screen name "Terrorist 007", who was an al Qaeda webmaster. Taking advantage of most of the contemporary online threats that we all face, Tsouli broke into servers to get the data bandwidth he needed to carry out his nefarious schemes, and used "phishing" (authentic appearing but counterfeit websites to steal personal information), to steal credit card and personal information. With these purloined credit card numbers and personal information, he managed to purchase over \$3 million worth of deadly supplies and equipment for terrorists. Tsouli also created a website "You bomb it" patterned after the popular "YouTube", which he hoped would become a centralized website for terrorists to exchange information. Director Mueller explained that local internet service providers could unknowingly run a server that is helping terrorists, and that we, as the innocent victims of identity theft, could end up financing terrorist activities.

Another threat facing us, according to Director Mueller, is "The rise of bots", where networks of computers are unknowingly taken over for nefarious purposes. One of the most common ways of taking over a computer is to plant a type of Trojan on the computer referred to as a "zombie", which effectively makes the infected computer a zombie under the control of persons unknown. According to recent security statements, some "bots" consist of over a million infected computers. It is well known in cyber security circles that the many variants of the Storm Worm, which is still spreading to infect countless computers, mostly through email attachments, has created millions of zombies. While many of these bots are currently being used to spread spam email, generating riches for the "bot masters" or "bot herders" who sell their purloined capacity, there are more dangerous uses of bots. It is important to note that owners of zombie infected computers are unaware that their computers are infected, and are a component of an illicit bot spreading spam and chaos to other computers. Director Mueller stated, "Once under their thumbs, these networks can wreak all kinds of havoc, from shutting down a power grid to flooding an emergency call center with millions of spam messages."

Continued on page 44

"Hackers are using sophisticated techniques to steal sensitive intelligence, scientific research, and communications data." This is what the Director is calling "the invisible man" where an unknown cyber intruder oversees everything on a network, including what people are typing, and reading any files stored on a computer or on a network. Since most cyber intruders will never leave any indication that they have viewed your files, stolen your passwords, and copied your critical and confidential data, you will never even know that you have been victimized and your data has been compromised. Once victimized in this manner, you will never know how much damage has been done, maybe until it is too late.

The federal government is actively fighting international cyber terrorists, and contemporary news accounts are rife with stories about criminal and espionage cyber attacks from China, Russia, Iran, Iraq, and other unfriendly countries. Despite governmental attempts to secure our computer infrastructure, much of the responsibility falls upon us individually. We must accept responsibility for the safety and security of our own computers. As has been appealed many times in this column before, we absolutely must have updated defenses in play on our personal computers. Antivirus, anti-spyware, and firewall software are imperative on our computers; after all, it is the personal computer that is the target of the zombie Trojan, and it is millions of personal computers like your and mine that make up these huge bots that can wreak such havoc.

For those who would be interested in seeing what a cyber attack warning might look like, an unofficial Israeli website that disseminates anti-terrorism information, the "DEBKAFfile", has recently posted such a warning about a massive upcoming cyber attack on the US (www.debka.com/headline.php?hid=4723). I am typing this prior to the date of this next alleged "cyber jihad" attack on the United States (November 11, Veterans' Day) and you will certainly be reading this column after that date. I hope that this warning, as have many other such warnings, turned out to be false. In fact, several security authorities such as McAfee, and Computerworld magazine, have argued that the DEBKAFfile warning is a hoax, and that the information presented is unreliable. Another publication, Government Computer News, also belittled the warning, but the column that said that had the subtitle, "Don't cancel your day off yet" (www.gcn.com/online/vol1_no1/45386-1.html). This cyber attack warning is but one example of what Director Mueller is warning about.

Since the antivirus and anti-spyware on our computers can be compromised or neutralized by a zombie that slips through our defenses, it is a good idea to perform a free online security scan from one of the many available. My two personal favorites are Trend Micro's Housecall (housecall.antivirus.com), and Microsoft's online OneCare at safety.live.com (click on the shield in the middle of the window). A successful scan by either or both of these services will likely indicate that your computer is clean of viruses, worms, Trojans, spyware, and zombies. Make sure your firewall is installed and updated. As I complete most of my security presentations, I close with the expression, "Practice safe HEX."



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Free PC Security Suite from eEye

By Ira Wilsker

One of my recently retired coworkers informed me that the subscription to her internet security suite was about to expire, and asked for my recommendation on what to do. She could renew her current product, purchase another competing major product suite, or try a fairly new free product. Since safe computing is paramount in my mind, I would normally be suspicious of a new security suite, especially a free one, and would research the new suite before putting it on a computer. I found positive reviews of this new free product, published by some of the major computer periodicals, so I decided to give it a try. Soon, I will confidently install it on her computer. That product is the Blink Personal Internet Security with Antivirus, from eEye Digital Security, an Orange County, California, company.

I first found out about Blink Personal Internet Security with Antivirus when one of my radio show listeners emailed me, inquiring to see what I knew about it. At that time I had not heard of it, but a little research taught me that the product and company was for real. A review of the "Clients" link on the eEye website at www.eeye.com showed that eEye products were currently installed and protecting an impressive list of over 9000 commercial clients, including several of the Fortune 500 companies (such as Verizon), over a dozen major universities (including Harvard and the University of Miami), major financial service companies (including Dow Jones, E*Trade, Merrill Lynch, Visa, and the Federal Reserve Bank of New York), several U.S. and Canadian government agencies (including the U. S. Department of Justice), healthcare agencies, major manufacturers, and technology companies (including Kodak, Adobe, Intel, and Microsoft). With a client list like this, I reasoned that eEye must be for real, and have something positive to offer.

eEye produces a variety of computer security products, one of which is its Blink Personal Edition with Antivirus. eEye is currently offering a free one year license for this comprehensive suite (for personal use only in the U.S. and Canada) with the hope that users will either upgrade to the more sophisticated Professional version, or renew the Personal edition at the completion of the initial free year of service. After the first year, the renewal fee is quite reasonable and competitive at \$24.95 for a single computer license. For those with multiple computers, eEye offers a three computer license for \$29.95, which comes out to less than \$10 per computer for a year of service, a real bargain when compared to its more pricey commercial competitors.

The Personal Edition contains an antivirus component that was recently awarded the prestigious VB100 award for successfully blocking 100% of "in the wild viruses" with no false positives. Internet security is more than just antivirus protection, and Blink Personal Edition contains a full suite of security products. Blink includes anti-spyware, a system firewall, anti-phishing (online identity theft), application firewall, host based intrusion prevention, buffer overflow protection, system registry protection, application execution protection, protection from new "zero-day" threats, and a vulnerability assessment utility. The selection of security features is more comprehensive than its major commercial competitors. Despite offering complete multi-layered protection at a great price (free), Blink Personal Edition is easy on system resources, only taking up about 60 megs of hard drive space (compared to over 300 megs for some of its competitors), and only consumes about 60 megs of RAM with all features loaded and running. This compares quite favorably to its better known competitors utilizing up to 226 megs of RAM. Using less RAM frees up system resources so other applications can run more efficiently. This free Personal Edition offers totally automated daily updates which will keep the virus signatures and other security features up to date.

Blink Personal Edition will run on Windows 2000, Windows XP (32 bit versions), Windows Tablet PC, and Windows Media Center. A version for Vista will be out later this year. Because this Personal Edition is not a resource hog, there are only minimal hardware requirements, such as a 233 MHz processor, 60 megs of hard drive space, and 128 megs of RAM, meaning that this will run well on almost all 2000 and XP series computers.

Downloading is easy, and only requires a simple online registration prior to the download. eEye only asks for an email address, and country, to download the software. eEye also offers an option to subscribe to free industry and technical newsletters, as well as eEye security alerts. Subscribing to these email lists is not an eligibility requirement for the download. According to the eEye website, over 23,000 free copies of Blink Personal Edition were downloaded since the current version was first released in April.

For those who have been using one of the other free antivirus utilities, Blink Personal Edition with Antivirus may be a good replacement since it offers a complete security suite, rather than just virus protection. For those who are currently using a commercial security suite, and are looking to renew their current suite, or who may want a change from the resource hungry utilities, Blink Personal Edition with Antivirus may be worthy of serious consideration. The price, at least for the first year, can not be beat.



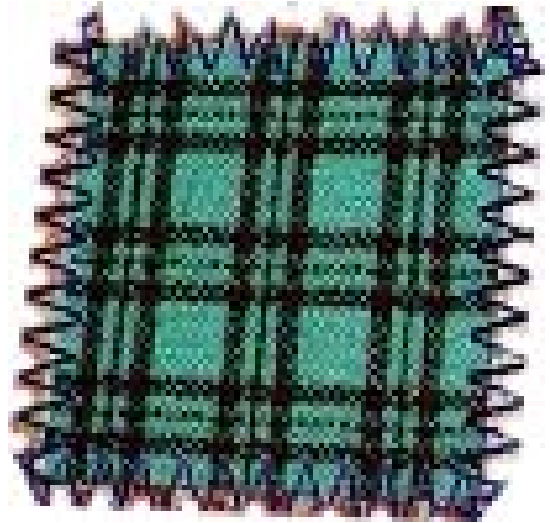
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Microsoft patches still another patch

By Bob de Violini, a member of the Channel Islands PCUG, CA, www.cipcug.org, rjddev@gmail.com



From the once is not enough department, Microsoft has, again, patched a patch. This time, it involves patch number MS07-069, which is a cumulative security update for Internet Explorer 6 installed on Windows XP Service Pack 2 only. Apparently the initial patch released on December's patch Tuesday caused computers to experience an unexpected crash or hang upon launching Internet Explorer. If you, like I, have updating set to notify but not download and install, or if you visit the Windows Update

site on your own once a month instead of using Auto Update, then by all means please go to the Windows Update site and grab the fix as soon as you can. The fix doesn't require a reboot; it just makes a minor registry entry to prevent IE6 from crashing again.

Internet Explorer and G-mail

Rolling right along, there was some debate during December with regards to a "vulnerability" that exists when visiting Google's web-based e-mail site, Gmail, with Internet Explorer. When the "bug" was pointed out to the computer industry media, both Microsoft and Google denied the root of the problem was with theirs. Apparently, an investigator has claimed that IE improperly stores files in its cache and that the scripting of Gmail allows this to be exploited, which would allow someone to steal any user names and passwords for Gmail that have been entered since the last time the IE cache was purged. The simple way around this is to use a browser besides IE when you visit Gmail or, if you must use IE for checking your mail with Gmail, first purge the cache and all cookies and then log in to the site. To purge IE's cache, inside IE go to the Tools drop down menu and select Internet Options. Now, in the middle of the Internet Options box, click the Delete Cookies button and click OK in the box that pops up. Next, click the Delete Files button and click OK in the box that pops up. Now click the OK button at the bottom of the Internet Options box, and you're all set. There has been no other news about this issue, so using another browser or purging IE's cache is the only solution for now. By the way, the biggest risk for this behavior appears to be if you're sharing computer access such as that which is available at a public library or a shopping mall where you pay for a few minutes of high-speed Internet access.

Critical Updates for QuickTime

For those of you who are fond of using Apple's QuickTime media player, there have been a couple of updates released in December to fix a few critical security vulnerabilities. If you only updated QuickTime once during that timeframe, you might want to visit Apple's site to get the latest update. The most recent version of the player (without the iTunes add-on) is 7.3.1.70. While you're at the Apple site, you might want

to download and install the Apple Software updater, which makes it very easy to keep QuickTime updated. Just click on it and watch it do its thing.

HP computer vulnerabilities

For those of you who have Hewlett Packard laptops and desktops, there is a vulnerability in HP's Software Update software. This vulnerability can allow an attacker to turn your computer into a useless collection of metal and plastic that's completely unbootable. HP rushed out a fix in around four days, and it's now available for your download. Computer security experts suggest installing it even if you don't use the HP Software Update function at all, as just having the software on your computer makes it vulnerable. One catch — you have to run the vulnerable software to get the update

to fix it. HP has had no comment about it at all, and there's no mention of it on its Web site. Please keep in mind that the HP Software Update software is completely separate from, and unrelated to, any other updating software that is installed on the computer like Windows Update or Microsoft Update.

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Windows Vista change

Shifting gears toward Vista, Microsoft has announced that, effective with Service Pack 1 for Vista due out in the first quarter of this year, those with cracked or counterfeit copies of Vista will no longer have their machines made to run in reduced functionality mode by the Windows Genuine Advantage validation tool. Instead, they'll just get nagged about once an hour to get a legal copy of Vista on their machines. Microsoft has said that this new stance is in response to customer and partner requests. Time will tell just how well this new policy goes over.

Adobe Flash patch coming

This next item pertains to a good number of folks reading this and deals with an application that runs within the vast majority of the Internet browsers in use that's called Flash. This application enables you to see animated ads and other "mini movies" within your browser. There have been a couple of very widely publicized bugs in it, one of

which has been patched. The other one is under investigation by Adobe, which has pledged a fix early this year. The way I read the security bulletin, it will probably be out by the end of January, and may already be out by the time you're reading this at home.

As of this writing, the latest version of the Adobe Flash player is 9.0.115.0. This version number will, no doubt, change as soon as the second bug is patched. The Adobe security bulletin about the second patch can be found at <http://tinyurl.com/2kktqs>. When you get there, you'll find it on the technical side of things, but there's a section titled

"Preventative Measures for End-Users" which spells things out in plain English for the rest of us.



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New Gadgets for 2008

By Sandy Berger, CompuKISS.com, www.compukiss.com, sberger@compukiss.com

Every year my husband and I attend the Consumer Electronic (CES) in Las Vegas to see the latest and greatest high tech gadgets. This year didn't disappoint. We found everything from a Leggett & Platt's \$20,000 Starry Night bed with an HDTV projector, pop-up speakers, snoring sensors, iPod dock, automatic lighting system, and breathing pattern monitor to a General Motors Chevy Tahoe prototype car that drove itself. While I don't expect this GM prototype to make it to market anytime soon, some of the technology that it is built in will evolve and is sure to find its way into our future automobiles.

We also found a few more down-to-earth gadgets and gizmos. In fact, there were several devices that you may want to check out for your own gaggle of high tech products. For instance, if you hate cleaning the gutters, the iRobot Looj has you covered. This robotic gutter cleaner cleans a 60-foot section of gutter in just 10 minutes. Yes, you must use a ladder to place it in position, but you don't have to move the ladder multiple times as you do in regular gutter cleaning. The demos looked marvelous. iRobot also have robotic vacuum cleaners and floor scrubbers.

Although we have been hearing about wireless technologies for what seems to be ions, this year some of that wireless technology became mainstream. Wireless speakers, which up to now were feeble and erratic, have finally found their voice. The Griffin Evolve is a great example. It is a compact speaker system for an iPod. It has two wireless speaker cubes that can be placed in any room in the house. It sounds great and is also easy to use. At about \$300, this is a great solution to distribute music from your iPod throughout the house.

While prices of technology gadgets continue to drop, it seems that ink for that inexpensive ink jet printer often costs more than the printer itself. Well, thanks to Kodak, this trend may be coming to an end. The new Kodak printers are said to use 50% less ink and ink cartridges are reasonably priced at \$15 for color and \$10 for black.

Polaroid, another well-known name in photography has also released a breakthrough product. Their new inkless printer is made for printing pictures from a cell phone or digital camera. Not only does the printer use Bluetooth wireless technology, but it uses special paper that is embedded with 100 billion colored dye crystals. The colors appear when the printer applies heat pulses to the paper. This ink-less technology is called Zink, for zero ink. The 2-inch-by-3-inch prints cost about 30 cents each and the printer sells for \$150, which is not bad for cutting-edge technology.

Although computers are not the focus of the CES show, there were many computer manufacturers showing their wares. Lenovo, the Chinese company who bought IBM's PC division three years ago has previously focused on their ThinkPad business laptops, but this year they introduced a line of consumer laptops called IdeaPads. These include facial recognition technology. Lenovo, Sony, and others will follow Dell's lead with the introduction of laptops in a variety of bright colors.



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Bright colors were the norm at the show. There were MP3 players, cell phone, and gadget covers in every color imaginable. There were red and blue ladybug-shaped iPod speakers and speakers that pulsed to the beat in vibrating, changing colors. There was even pink CAT-5 networking cable, whose purchase supports the National Breast Cancer Foundation.

Oh, and you can expect to be even more confused by television display technologies in the future. Sony's \$2500, 11-inch Organic light Emitting Diode (OLED) was small but clearly better than anything else on the market today..... and it was only as thick as 3 credit cards. Mitsubishi's laser television was also a dramatic improvement. Samsung and Sharp announced backlit LCD televisions. While these technologies may take awhile to go mainstream, other manufacturer's announced Internet-enabled televisions that are sure to appear quite quickly. For instance, the Sharp Aquos Net television displays small icons called widgets that showed news, weather, and traffic data from the Internet right on the television screen. Also next year, when digital television goes mainstream you will see digital TV broadcasting in a variety of devices including cell phones, cars, buses, and anything else they can possibly think of. One car at the show already had TV's in every door and drop-down television screens for every passenger.

While we may not all be interested in watching television all the time, we will find some of these new technologies making our lives just a little more pleasurable in the future.



Sony's \$2500, 11-inch Organic light Emitting Diode (OLED) was small but clearly better than anything else on the market today.



Sharp Aquos Net television displays small icons called widgets that showed news, weather, and traffic data from the Internet right on the television screen.

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Dr. Herb Goldstein is SPCUG's Software Evaluation Chairman and Review Editor for the Sarasota PC Monitor. Herb is an avid researcher on all things computer and passes on his acquired knowledge each month.
<reviewseditor@spcug.org>



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Let's Clean "Start-Up"

By Bob Elgines, Editor, Colorado River Computer Club,
AZRCC Editor, www.crc caz.com/, elginesz@rraz.net

Does your computer boot-up or run slow? Maybe there are too many programs running in the back ground. Let us do the following check first.

Hold your CTRL & ALT buttons and press the DELETE button.

Click on the PERFORMANCE tab, is your CPU Usage running more than 10% or is your Physical Memory being in total use?

Go to START then RUN, type in "msconfig" which stands for Microsoft System Configuration. In Windows VISTA you can find RUN in the ACCESSORY folder under PROGRAMS.

The System Configuration Utility windows will come up.

First go to the upper right tab labeled STARTUP, here you will see the list of items that load during startup. Of course some you want, some you don't. In the first column labeled STARTUP ITEM gives a very rough idea to what it is referenced too, but the second column labeled COMMAND, is much more useful. Too read it better, widen the column out by holding your mouse symbol over the vertical line located before the next column label.

A double arrow will appear, then hold down left mouse button and move it to the right. This information tells you where it is located and in some cases which program is using it. Uncheck those in question, you can put them back in later if you need too. Do not uncheck you Antivirus or Spyware programs.

Next go to the tab on top labeled SERVICES, this show all of the programs running now. You do not want to uncheck those labeled Microsoft under the MANUFACTURER column, so to start off, lets put a check mark in the box below labeled "Hide all Microsoft Services".

Now while you are reviewing the other programs running in the background note the forth column labeled STATUS. If it says STOPPED, then don't worry about it. We just want to stop the strange ones that are RUNNING. You can uncheck those that you are not familiar with, here again you may bring them back in later.

After un-checking all those items under tabs STARTUP & SERVICES, then click on APPLY and CLOSE.

The System Configuration Utility will now ask you to RESTART (or Boot) your computer.

After restarting a window will come up stating System Configuration Utility has been changed, be sure to put a check mark in the bottom left (labeled "Don't show this message or launch") before clicking OK.


If you improved your operation of your computer, you can put back in the items one at a time until you find the program that was slowing you down.

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Benefits of Using a Computer Sandbox

By Gene Barlow, User Group Relations,
gene@ugr.com, www.ugr.com

A computer Sandbox is newer technology that is not very well known, but, it can be quite useful in many situations. By using a Sandbox utility, you can place your computer in a protected state where you can try some rather risky things on your computer and not have your computer damaged in the trials. Once you place your computer into Sandbox mode, you can safely run anything on your computer, knowing that all changes to your hard drive will not be permanently made to your computer. While in Sandbox mode, your computer runs as if all changes to the hard drive were actually made to your system. But, at the end of using the Sandbox, you can throw away these changes, putting your computer back exactly the way it was before entering the Sandbox.

Let's take a look at some real life situations to better understand the benefits of using a Sandbox utility.

Installing New Software. Everyone knows that when you install a new software product on your computer, parts of the product are placed all over your computer's hard drive. Entries are made to the Windows Registry, special supporting files are placed in certain directories of the operating system, and other shortcut and setting files are scattered in various places on your hard drive. These are in addition to the main folder that is installed on your hard drive with the software programs. Most software will uninstall easily, but often pieces of the product are left behind on your hard drive. These leftover pieces of orphaned software can build up and slow down your computer. Some software products include hidden viruses or other bad programs as you install them. The end result is that installing new software on your computer can be a risky thing to do.

Using a Sandbox to install and test new software is a much better approach. With a Sandbox, you put your computer in Sandbox mode before you downloaded and installed the new software. Since the Sandbox lets you use the newly installed software just as if it had been permanently installed on your computer, you can run the new software to try it out and see if you like it. You can also run virus utilities to see if the installation gave you a virus you were not expecting. If you find viruses on your computer or just decide you do not like the newly installed software, you can get out of the Sandbox and throw away all traces of that software product and any hidden virus that came with it.

Letting Others Use Your Computer. Another reason to use a Sandbox is to let others use your computer. Other users may change your computer to match the way they like to use computers. For example, many of us have grandkids that come to visit and want to play on our computer. They may download games they like, change your wallpaper and default font sizes. They may pick up viruses in the process of getting your computer changed to their needs. When they leave, your computer no longer is the same as it was before they arrived. It may take you days to get it working again like you want it to. With a Sandbox, you can place the computer in Sandbox mode before they arrive and then let them play on your computer to their hearts content. When they leave, you simply exit the Sandbox and throw away all changes that they made to your computer. It is instantly back the way it was before they started to use it.

Computer Labs and Classrooms. User groups that have computer labs or classrooms have a similar situation. The classroom computers are setup carefully by the instructors before the class begins. Once the students have used the



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computer throughout the day, the computers are different and modified from what they were in the beginning of the day. This may cause problems for the students that follow them, so the instructors will often restore the computer's hard drives to put them back to normal. With a Sandbox, this long restore process is not needed. Instead, put the computers in Sandbox mode at the beginning of the day before the students arrive. Then at the end of the day, exit the Sandbox and throw away all hard drive changes made by the students. The computers are quickly returned to their normal state as you exit the Sandbox.

Browsing the Internet. Much of the Spyware that you pick up on your computer comes from simply browsing the internet. Some web sites are designed so that simply passing your cursor over a part of the screen is enough to activate a download of Spyware to your computer. Not only that, but your privacy is at risk when you browse the Internet. Windows automatically saves all of the places you browse to and all of the screens you see on the Internet. Browsing the Internet in a Sandbox is a much better approach. Place your computer in Sandbox mode before you start to browse the internet. Then browse all of the sites you want to. When you are done browsing the internet, exit out of the Sandbox and throw away all Spyware and traces of web sites you may have visited.

We offer three excellent Sandbox products that you may want to use on your computer. Let's look at each of these briefly to help you decide which one would work best for your needs.

StorageCraft ShadowSurfer. The smallest and least expensive Sandbox we offer is ShadowSurfer by StorageCraft Software. This product is the quickest product to install and the easiest product to use of all of our Sandbox products. With ShadowSurfer, all changes to your hard drive are always thrown away when you exit the Sandbox, which is what you want in most cases anyway. This excellent product runs on Win2000 and WinXP systems and is available from us at the discount price of just \$20. This is an excellent beginning Sandbox product for most home users.

Acronis True Image 11 Home Try&Decide. The next step up in ability and price is a feature that Acronis has added to their new True Image 11 Home backup utility. This feature is called Try&Decide and it is a Sandbox feature built into this award winning backup utility. Try&Decide requires that you create and use the Acronis SecureZone on your hard drive to contain the temporary changes to your hard drive. When you exit the Sandbox with this product, you can choose to keep all changes to your hard drive or throw them all away. This excellent product runs on Win2000, WinXP, and WinVista operating systems and is available from us at the discount price of just \$29 for a download or \$33 on a CD. This is a very good Sandbox feature that comes with an outstanding backup utility.

StorageCraft ShadowUser Pro. The most advanced Sandbox utility we offer is ShadowUser Pro by StorageCraft Software. This is a professional level Sandbox product that has many options and features to it. With this product, you can password protect the controls of the Sandbox, so that nobody can disable the Sandbox unless they know the password. Perhaps the biggest differences between this product and the other two Sandbox products is that you can pick and choose what files to throw away and what files to keep as you exit the Sandbox. This top of the line Sandbox product runs on Win2000 and WinXP operating systems and is available from us at the discount price of \$47. This is the product you should use if you are running a public computer workstation that needs tight controls.

A Sandbox offers you a new way to protect your computer from damage from the software you install or access on the internet. It also keeps your hard drive safe from damage caused by others using your computer. The selection of Sandbox products we offer lets you pick and choose which one is right for your needs. To order your Sandbox product, go to www.ugr.com and find the Sandbox product you are interested in. Then click on the Buy Now button on that product page to place your order using our secure web shopping cart. As you complete your order indicate the order code of UGNL0108 to qualify for these excellent discount prices. If you have questions about this new technology or about any of these products send an email to gene@ugr.com and I will try to help you.

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Connected or Discombobulated?

Ramblings by Judy Lococo, Director, Kentucky-Indiana PCUG,
www.kipcug.org, judy@thorobred.win.net

Everywhere you look today, someone is always talking about “connectivity” and how our new, improved world demands it. The more I see of this phenomenon, the less I think we are connected. The Internet and identity thieves have made us a nation of anonymity, and paranoid anonymity at that. We are electronically connected, but are losing the ability to look into people’s eyes, read their body English, listen to the voice inflections, and interact one-on-one with another human being.

It’s even impossible to keep up with all the acronyms! WiFi, DSL (I remember ADSL), URL, etc., have become entrenched in our lives so much that we no longer flinch when we hear one of them. And they keep stacking up at warp speed, so that even the nerdiest of us has to visit a website occasionally to find out what one means.

The morning newspaper used to be a shared experience at the breakfast table. Now it’s read online with only the parts that a reader prefers coming across the screen, and you don’t discuss your opinions with the rest of the family, nor listen to theirs. You no longer have to scan through the business section to find the crossword puzzle. You don’t have to pore through the sports pages to find automobile tires. IOW (another TLA), you don’t even have to talk to a soul without being considered rude.

Going to an office is not nearly as important as it once was. Now employees can work an 80-hour-week at home, without health insurance or retirement benefits. But you can work in jeans or sweats, so there’s considerable savings on wardrobe.

The chat rooms are so rampant with predators that parents are restricting their children’s surfing, and rightly so. But these chat rooms are yet another example of not connecting with a real, live, breathing person, only an image, which may or may not be accurate.

Email has replaced letter writing to the extent that I have to wonder if script handwriting will also be obsolete soon. Remember calligraphy? Have you seen any within the last three years? Will the dictionary of the future have “u r 2” as a comeback phrase? Will schoolchildren even be taught English grammar or typing?

And, of course, how could I not mention the answering machines, voice mail, and all other means of not speaking to people who are trying to contact you. If you reach a person on the first attempt, are you supposed to believe that person is not busy? Is this why nobody bothers to answer their phone any more, only return phone calls? If all one does is return phone calls, what happens when the one you’re calling also only returns phone calls?

As if all the time spent behind a monitor isn’t enough, our automobile windows are now designed to keep others from seeing you. So if there is actually a person around who is considerably higher up on the social ladder than you are, you have to roll your window down for them to see you! How gauche is that?

I have to admit, I’m just as guilty as the rest of the world of spending too much time on email and INet (look it up already...) It is a lot of fun to laugh out loud at a joke that somebody forwards, or follow a link to a You Tube video. I am not addicted, but afraid of what will I will have to face if I don’t check it daily. I guess you could say I’m not connected, I’m tethered. <BWG>

How To Answer the Question?

by Mike Kerwin, President, Central Maryland User Group,
kernary@comcast.net, <http://mycmug.org/>

OK, I'm not being mysterious but addressing an issue that most Geeks encounter often. I suspect that most of you have been asked The Question many times by friends, relatives, and acquaintances. I refer to the expectant "What do you recommend as the best _____?" (Fill in the blank for PC, notebook, PDA, digital camera, camcorder, DVR.) Folks who know me and my penchant for gadgets and gizmos frequently ask me this. Lately the most popular subject is notebook computers. Now I do get a bit of a stroke that I am asked for my opinion about things digital, and I do understand the seemingly overwhelming number of choices being marketed, but I also get frustrated when my response elicits blank stares.

My thinking is that people ask this due to despair at the multitude of choices currently available and the wide range of pricing options. And, of course, the options lead to even more confusion. A few years ago the world seemed to be simpler when the number of manufacturers of notebook PCs diminished to just a handful. Today, despite the consolidation, the remaining firms now offer several complete "lines" of notebooks along this continuum: superlight, ultralight, mobile performance, entertainment, general purpose, budget, desktop replacement... You could probably suggest even more categories. Now too we have designer notebooks in a range of case colors and

branded logos (Ferrari, LiveStrong, Hello Kitty). Then there is screen size and the directly linked weight factor; since LCD screens use glass front panels and glass is rather heavy, the larger the screen the heavier the device is to lug about.


Answer a Question with a Question

So what do I have to offer in the way of advice? I've learned to follow the experts on my reply: from the online Buying Guides back to Socrates, the recommendation is to answer with a question. (I don't think Socrates knew about decision trees, but that's what we have here.) Specifically I first ask, "Do you have a price point in mind?" followed by "Do you have a brand preference?" These two questions narrow the choices considerably. I know some individuals and organizations are strictly wedded to one brand, such as Dell, and that becomes a major factor in deciding on what is the "best" in that environment. Price is also a great divider of the pack with budget machines being advertised under \$500 and high-end performance units listed for prices around \$3K - a very wide range.

The next question along this tree is, "What do you intend to do with the computer?" The answer will be very different for a Road Warrior backed by a corporation which can deduct business expenses versus a student heading off to college, or someone who just wants to use it for email at home without being tied to a cable. For example, the weight of a notebook can be a major consideration if you travel frequently, as everything gets heavier at the end of a long flight or stressful day of sales calls. For travelers the features needed can also be important considerations as some of the lightest notebooks don't have built-in optical drives (see Dell) but use optional peripherals which can add to weight, bulk, and extra parts to keep track of recommendation is to have as few pieces as possible for simplicity's sake.)

The Fine Print

Speaking of weight, you must read the fine print of the specifications, as I learned this week looking at the new Toshiba Protégé line of notebooks. This company is making great claims for this "superlight" line. Digging a little further one soon discovers that the quoted weight is for the main clamshell case and



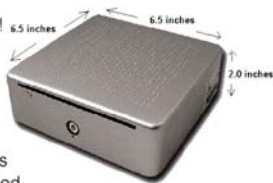
The miniPC: The smallest Windows / Linux PC ever
* small spaces * CAR COMPUTER * any room * point of sales machine *



POWER DVI / VGA S-video out (TV) LAN (internet) Firewire USB 2.0 microphone stereo audio out

BASE MODEL FEATURES:

- * Window XP computer
- * dimensions: 6.5 in X 6.5 in X 2.5 in !!!!
- * 1.4 GHZ Pentium M (Celeron)
- * 512 GB RAM
- * 40 GB hard drive
- * DVD / CD-RW combo drive
- * 10/100/1000 (GIGABIT) LAN
- * 2 x USB, 1 X firewire (IEEE 1394) ports
- * DVI video output - VGA adapter included
- * TV output, S-video & component HDTV out!
- * Sound: stereo out, mic input, internal speaker
- * Software included: Nero CD burning, Drivers, Windows XP, full Office suite (Open Office)
- * **Unlimited expansion** via USB and firewire



6.5 inches
6.5 inches
2.0 inches

UPGRADES

CPU	up to 1.7 Ghz
Hard drive	up to 160 GB
RAM	up to 1 GB
b / g wireless LAN	
Optical Drive DVD Recordable	
Install your own OS	subtract \$50

ALL this for just \$599
(Only \$549 if you install your own operating system)
Call Jason, 210-669-2156

Continued on page 56

internal parts. This is really light at under 2 lbs and is possible through the use of solid state memory in place of a traditional spinning disk HD. But, it won't do much without a battery, which adds at least 0.6 lbs additional for the limited capacity, standard battery; an optional, long-life battery weighs more. And then there is the transformer (aka brick) which weighs in at 0.5 lbs. Then one might look at whether the 68 GB of HD equivalent would be sufficient running Vista which reportedly takes nearly 10 GB just for the OS and then allocates an additional 15% of the HD for Restore points. These can take up lots of the internal HD and then one would have to consider carrying an external drive for storing data, presentations, pictures, etc which could add additional weight. And for all of this one would pay nearly \$3K.

At the other end of the price scale are the budget models which barely have enough onboard memory (or capacity) to run the old WinXP. As more Vista applications become available over the next couple of years, these machines may be left in the dust, unable to accommodate current versions of software. This could lead to early replacement before the expected lifespan of 3-5 years.

Then there are optional/necessary features you might want in a notebook. One feature is an optical drive which most, but not all, units have as a standard feature. Then there are different flavors of CD/DVD readability and writability. Virtually all of these units will read and write CDs and DVDs, but perhaps not all three formats of DVD, plus the capability for dual layer data storage and, in some cases, LightScribe technology to burn labels on the back side of special disks. Unfortunately the industry has not settled on a standard technology for a new generation of disks to store HD movies (and eventually data), so if this feature is important to you, you might plan to add the capability externally sometime in the future.

Another common feature is WiFi. This technology has advanced from A to B to G and now to N, but not all notebooks support all of the types so again you have to read the fine print.

For a notebook to be sent off to college, you might look for a built-in webcam to keep in touch and help ward off homesickness by the young adults. You'll also want to look at anti-theft features such as locking adaptors and "phone-home" software. Some of the new anti-theft features are biometric password-type locks such as fingerprint scanners and wireless proximity alarms (if the PC goes one way and the owner with the alarm gets too far away then the alarm sounds).


Another consideration is the warranty provided. Notebook PCs are very compact so popping the top to add or replace defective parts is not something to be undertaken lightly. I recommend checking to see how long any unit is under warranty and what is covered, such as what is the turnaround for repairs and where are they done (and who is responsible for getting it there).

In the end, I think the process is straightforward, though it may require several decision branches to arrive at the "Best" recommendation for a specific individual. These details always seem nagging pests when searching for instant gratification, but the old adage of "Buy in Haste, Repent at Leisure" can be avoided by taking just a little time up front to make a good choice. I hope this approach might of use to some of you.

Visit the Alamo PC Learning Center

Media Center

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Computer Crimes

Susan Ives, Alamo PC

Codex

Lev Grossman, Hardcover, Harcourt, 2004, \$24.00, 348 pages



Young banker Edward Wozny is offended when a big client requests him by name for a special project, just two weeks before he's set to depart for a new job in London. Catalogue books? Sounds menial. He's drawn into the search for a medieval book, one scholars claim has never existed. Life turns weird when a computer game he is playing seems to mimic his search for the codex. With the help of a teenaged medieval scholar he picks up at the library, he sets out to solve a mystery that has perplexed the world for 700 years.

If you liked the Da Vinci Code and The Rule of Four (neither of which had even a whiff of computers, alas) you will enjoy Codex. There is a LAN party

scene that will appeal to gamers - tell me it's not really that strange! A fast-paced book with an interesting puzzle at the core. Recommended.

Millennium Project

Joseph Massucci, Paperback, Leisure Books, 1998, 360 pages, \$5.99

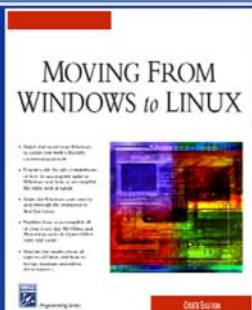


An embittered and crazy chip manufacturer has planted rogue chips in the country's satellite defense system and the computers used by financial markets. Abetted by a doomsday cult leader with a highly trained kamikaze army, he uses paranoia about the Y2K bug to create chaos in the defense and aviation industries while going after his real target - takeover of the world's financial markets. Center for Disease Control scientists team up with army special forces to stop him.

The computer details are superficial but frightening. Among the items covered are a next-generation biological computer that uses a DNA soup as its memory and the power that a dominant manufacturer can covertly accumulate by strategically placing its hardware and software in critical systems. At heart, this book is what my husband, John, calls a "shoot-em-up." After about page 12 I lost track of the hundreds of people killed and tortured in gruesome and graphic ways. It's a comic-book novel, not terribly sophisticated, but readable. If you like this sort of thing, it's not bad, but certainly not at the top of my list.

Susan Ives, past president of Alamo PC, claims that computers are a mystery to her. Remember the Alibi Bookstore at 8055 West Ave. #101, San Antonio, TX (at the corner of West Ave. and Lockhill-Selma), (210) 344-7776, tries its darnest to keep the recommended books in stock.

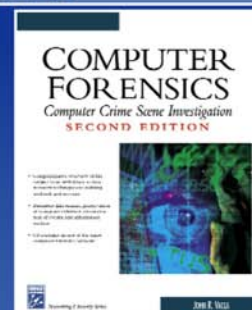
COMPUTER BOOKS THAT DELIVER



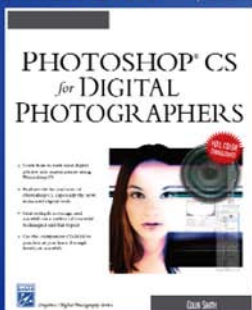
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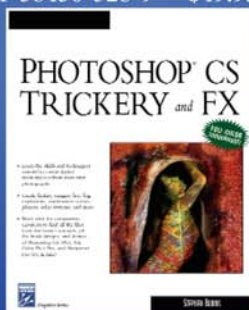
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February 2008						
Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
					1 Small Business Server 8 - 10 A.M. *PRR* Clinic Computer Diagnostic Dr. Is In 9:00 A.M. - Noon Photoshop Beginners Class 1 - 5 P.M., class 5 of 9 *PRR* C++ Study Group 2:30 - 4:30 P.M. PC Alamode Magazine & PDF 7 - 9 P.M.	2 MCSE Study Group (Adv) 8:30 A.M. - Noon *PRR* Photoshop Beginners Class 1 - 5 P.M., class 5 of 9 *PRR* C++ Study Group 2:30 - 4:30 P.M.
3	4 Genealogy 7 - 9 P.M.	5 Introduction to Photo Editing Short notice: we need an instructor. Internet and E-mail 10 A.M. - Noon, class 5 of 6 *PRR* Windows XP 1:30 - 3:30 P.M., class 5 of 6 *PRR* BOD 6:30 P.M.	6 Introduction to Windows 10 A.M. - Noon, class 5 of 6 *PRR* Windows XP 1 - 3 P.M., class 5 of 6 *PRR* Home Page Jumpsstart 5:30 - 7 P.M. (To Be Announced)	7 Student Practice Lab 9:00 A.M. - Noon High Growth Stock Investing (a/r) 6:30 - 8:30 P.M.	8 Clinic Computer Diagnostic Dr. Is In 9:00 A.M. - Noon Photoshop Beginners Class 1 - 5 P.M., class 6 of 9 *PRR*	9 MCSE Study Group (Adv) 8:30 A.M. - Noon *PRR* Photoshop Beginners Class 1 - 5 P.M., class 6 of 9 *PRR*
10	11 General Meeting @ Crossroads 7 - 9 P.M. Presenter:	12 Introduction to Photo Editing Short notice: we need an instructor. Internet and E-mail 10 A.M. - Noon, class 6 of 6 *PRR* Windows XP 1:30 - 3:30 P.M., class 6 of 6 *PRR* Alamo Coders (DotNET - Web Development Technology) 7 - 9 P.M.	13 Power Internet 10 A.M. - Noon Introduction to Windows 10 A.M. - Noon, class 6 of 6 *PRR* Windows XP 1 - 3 P.M., class 6 of 6 *PRR*	14 Student Practice Lab 9:00 A.M. - Noon 	15 Clinic Computer Diagnostic Dr. Is In 9:00 A.M. - Noon Photoshop Beginners Class 1 - 5 P.M., class 7 of 9 *PRR*	16 MCSE Study Group (Adv) 8:30 A.M. - Noon *PRR* Photoshop Beginners Class 1 - 5 P.M., class 7 of 9 *PRR* C++ Study Group 2:30 - 4:30 P.M.
17	18 	19 Introduction to Photo Editing Short notice: we need an instructor.	20 Investors Business Daily (IBD) / Vector Vest, 6 - 8 P.M.	21 Student Practice Lab 9:00 A.M. - Noon	22 Clinic Computer Diagnostic Dr. Is In 9:00 A.M. - Noon Photoshop Beginners Class 1 - 5 P.M., class 8 of 9 *PRR*	23 MCSE Study Group (Adv) 8:30 A.M. - Noon *PRR* Photoshop Beginners Class 9 A.M. - Noon, class 8 of 9 *PRR* Learning Center Desk Staff Meeting 1 - 3 P.M. Photoshop Beginners Class 1 - 5 P.M., class 9 of 9 *PRR*
24	25 CorelDRAW X3 6 - 8 P.M.	26 Photo Editing using Microsoft Digital Image 2006 Short notice: we need an instructor.	27 WordPerfect Study Group (a/r) 7 - 9 P.M.	28 Student Practice Lab 9:00 A.M. - Noon	29 Clinic Computer Diagnostic Dr. Is In 9:00 A.M. - Noon Photoshop Beginners Class 1 - 5 P.M., class 9 of 9 *PRR*	

PRR = Pre-Registration Required

Alamo PC Organization

The Learning Center

Alamo PC Organization classes and study groups

COMPUTER CLINIC

The Doctor Is In

Each Friday morning, volunteer "Computer Doctors" share their time at the Computer Learning Center to handle technical hardware and software questions and solve problems. They attempt to fix problems on site. If the problem is beyond their means, the member is referred to one of the repair shops that advertise with Alamo PC. The repair shop does charge. We do the work at the Learning Center as a member-to-member benefit, with donations requested.

What to bring with you:

- Your Alamo PC membership card
- Your computer and all connecting cables, cords, software drivers or programs related to the problem area. You do not need to bring your monitor, mouse, or keyboard unless you are having a specific problem with those items. Make sure you have the keycode for all of your software.

- If you are having problems with your scanner, printer, or something that hooks up to your computer

When: Every Friday 9 am to noon

Where: Alamo PC Organization Computer Learning Center

Prerequisites: Bring your hardware and all connecting cables, cords, software drivers or programs related to the problem area

Tuition fee: Donations for this service are requested, the funds are used to purchase testing and other equipment to use at the Dr Is In sessions.

Technical Rating: ★

STUDY GROUPS

Student Practice Lab

A specific time period for students taking Alamo PC Courses to use Computer Lab One (Classroom One) to practice their class assignments. Students may also make up missed class days, if the instructor has provided the course material to the individual. The Practice Lab is monitored and the instructors will help when possible.

The Practice Lab is for Class Work Only. Those abusing the system will be asked to leave. Seating is limited and on a first come, first serve basis. If necessary a time limit will be imposed.

Lab Instructors: Joe Gentry, Sarah Thomas

When: Thursday mornings, except Holidays, 9 am to Noon.

Where: Computer Learning Center

Pre-registration: No

Technical Rating: ★

C/C ++ Study Group

Please note we are currently a study group and no longer a Class. C/C++ Study Group Our group consists of 3 to 6 regular members who meet twice a month to discuss their plans and progress on development of software for experimental use. We do not plan to offer C or C++ courses in this study group. To join the study group, get acquainted with some of its members and consider preparing a brief presentation of your planned or current efforts.

Contact:

Bruce McAlexander
<mcalexb@satx.rr.com> 680-0231
Murry Adams
<mnadams@texas.net> 696-0047
Carl Deneke
<cdeneke@Texas.net> 496-6397

When: First and Third Saturday, 2:30 pm

Where: Learning Center.

Pre-registration: No

Technical Rating: ★★ - ★★★

Genealogy Study Group

For everyone interested in using their computer for genealogy. We will discuss currently available genealogy software, their pros and cons and meeting participants views as to best software to use for both beginners and advanced genealogists.

Contact: Jim Collier

<jcinquiry@earthlink.net> 710-5660

When: First Monday, 7-9 pm

Where: Learning Center.

Pre-registration: No

Technical Rating: ★ - ★★

HGSI Study Group

The premise of the HGS Investor SIG is, "Knowledge becomes stronger when passed on to others." We have created an environment for continuing education and open discussion between well informed members and guest speakers in matters of using Fundamental and Technical Analysis for the buying and selling of equities.

Contact: Maynard Burstein

<maynardb@juno.com> 735-3288

When: 1st Thursday, 6:30-8:30pm

Where: Contact Maynard for location

Pre-registration: Call Maynard

Technical Rating: ★ - ★★★

IBD / Vector Vest Study Group

The group determines current market direction and applies Investors Business Daily and Vector Vest methodologies to make a profit.

Contact: Kim Murphy

When: 3rd Wed., 6-8pm

Where: Learning Center

Pre-registration: No

Technical Rating: ★ - ★★★

MCSE Advanced Study Group

The MCSE Advanced SIG, affectionately known as 'The Geeks', is currently studying Microsoft Dynamics CRM (Customer Relationship Manager) version 3.0 (www.Microsoft.com/CRM). The group will prepare for the three CRM certification exams. The study group is lead by Microsoft MVPs (Most Valuable Professional) in CRM, Larry Lentz There are only 15 MVPs for CRM in the world. More information on the Microsoft MVP program can be found at www.Microsoft.com/MVP. The group has recently completed its study for the CRM 3.0 Applications exam and are now starting study for the CRM 3.0 Customization exam. The group meets every Saturday morning from 8:30 until noon. Space is limited and the subject matter is very advanced. Therefore membership is restricted. Please contact Larry Lentz before attempting to attend.

Contact: Larry Lentz, MCSE on NT & W2K, MCDBA, MCSA:Messaging
<Larry@LentzComputer.Net>

When: Every Saturday, 8:30-noon

Where: Contact Larry

Pre-registration: Yes - contact Larry

Technical Rating: ★★★★★

Technical Content Ratings

- ★ For the beginner, no experience necessary and no prerequisite.
- ★★ Assumes some basic familiarity with the subject but is not a technical course.
- ★★★ Assumes that the student is somewhat familiar with the subject and will discuss.
- ★★★★ Assumes that the student is competent in the material and will be technical.

Volunteers Wanted

Call the Learning Center to volunteer to assist ongoing classes. For more info, call 736-0700.

STUDY GROUPS (cont.)

Small Business Server Study Group

The Alamo PC Small Business Server Special Interest Group, APCO SBS SIG, held its November meeting, Friday November 3rd, at the Alamo PC Learning Center in San Antonio, Texas. Naturally we started off with our traditional Taco Talk with tacos supplied by Albert Obar. Our main attraction was Peter Gallagher, Microsoft Small Business Server Support from the Las Colinas (DFW) regional office. Peter explained many things including how to configure e-mail enabled Public Folders to save attachments to SharePoint document libraries. Apparently one has to do it a bit differently in SBS than in a non-SBS SharePoint server. He also explained how to set up a Site-to-Site VPN using ISA on SBS. Apparently that also needs a little extra TLC in SBS due to the ISA being on the Domain Controller. All in all, Peter spent about 2 hours imparting his vast knowledge on the group. Afterwards the group adjourned to Mamacitas Mexican restaurant for lunch where we continued to pelt poor Peter with questions. Peter has promised to come down again, hopefully in February. For more information, please contact group chair, Larry Lentz at Larry@LentzComputer.net, or visit the group web site at <http://www.LentzComputer.net/SBS>.

Power Internet Study Group

Current Internet users can learn more. Each month a different Internet application will be discussed, such as 64 bit computers, SATA HDD technology, e-mail, browser use, MS Outlook, and virus protection in communications. This is a good place to share interests and insights about your experiences on the World Wide Web.

Contact: John Woody
<jwoody@texas.net>
210-494-5684

When: 2nd Wednesday, 10am-noon

Where: Learning Center

Preregistration: No

Technical Rating ★★

WordPerfect Evening Study Group

We demonstrate projects and features of the latest version of WordPerfect. We also like to work on real life situations with our members who have questions.

Contact: Cynthia Thompson
210-655-1058

When: 4th Wednesday, 7-9pm

Where: Call Cynthia for directions

Pre-registration: Yes - Call Cynthia

Technical Rating ★ - ★★★

CLASSES

Alamo PC offers Free and Fee-Based classes. Classes showing a \$ next to the title indicate that either a Registration Fee or a Tuition Fee will be required.

Student Practice Lab

A specific time period for students taking Alamo PC Courses to use Computer Lab One (Classroom One) to practice their class assignments. Students may also make up missed class days, if the instructor has provided the course material to the individual. The Practice Lab is monitored and the instructors will help when possible.

The Practice Lab is for Class Work Only. Those abusing the system will be asked to leave.

Seating is limited and on a first come, first serve basis. If necessary a time limit will be imposed.

Lab Instructors: Joe Gentry, Sarah Thomas

When: Thursday mornings, except Holidays, 9 am to Noon.

Where: Computer Learning Center

Pre-registration: No

Technical Rating: ★

The next three free or low-cost classes provide instruction on the basics of using a computer, the Windows Operating System, and how to use Adobe Acrobat to obtain your PC Alamo online magazine. The successful completion of the Windows XP class (or classes) would then enable those students to take the other classes offered by Alamo PC.

Introduction To Windows - \$

The Introduction To Windows class is designed for people who do not have a computer yet or have just obtained one and don't know how to "turn it on". Students will learn about the parts of the computer, acquire keyboard and mouse skills, and some word processing. Instruction proceeds at a slower pace than most computer courses and time is allotted for "hands on" practice. Taking the next course, Windows XP, will still be necessary for students who want to be productive with their computers. Internet and Email will NOT be covered in this course.

Instructors: Andy Roca, Donna Dudley

When: Six sessions, Wed.; 10 a.m. to noon

Set 1) Jan 9, 16, 23, 30, Feb 6, 13

Set 2) Mar 5, 12, 19, 26, April 2, 9

Set 3) May 14, 21, 28, Jun 4, 11, 18

Set 4) Aug 13, 20, 27, Sept 3, 10, 17

Set 5) Oct 8, 15, 22, 29, Nov 5, 12

Fees: Registration fee is \$10.00

This class will use the Easy Windows XP book, purchase of the book will be helpful and is strongly recommended but is not required. The book may be purchased from Alamo PC for \$20

Pre-registration: YES Call Learning Center at 210-736-0080

Where: Learning Center

Technical Rating: ★

Windows XP - \$

Our Windows XP course reviews the fundamentals of using a computer, and provides instruction on using the Microsoft Windows XP operating system. In this class you will learn how to: Open, Close, Save, Delete, Copy, and Move files; work with Files and Folders; customize your Desktop Layout; and to Resize and Move program windows. You will also be introduced to several "free" programs already on your computer, including: Wordpad - for basic word processing; Paint - for basic graphics work; Computer Solitaire and other games; and a Calculator.

Prerequisites: Students should have completed the Introduction To Windows course or have the equivalent knowledge. Choice of two class days Tue. or Sat. Choose one set

Instructors: Audrey Henkin, Ed Henkin

When: 6 sessions, Tue. 1:30 to 3:30 p.m.

Set 1) Jan 8, 15, 22, 29, Feb 5, 12

Set 2) Mar 18, 25, Apr 1, 8, 15, 22

Set 3) May 13, 20, 27, Jun 3, 10, 17

Set 4) Oct 7, 14, 21, 28, Nov 4, 11

OR

Instructor: Don Robinson

When: 6 sessions, Wed. 1 to 3 p.m.

Set 1) Jan 9, 16, 23, 30, Feb 6, 13

Set 2) Mar 19, 26, Apr 2, 9, 16, 23

Set 3) July 9, 16, 23, 30, Aug 6, 13

Set 4) Oct 8, 15, 22, 29, Nov 5, 12

Fees: Registration fee is \$10.00

This class will use the Easy Windows XP book, purchase of the book will be helpful and is recommended but is not required.

Pre-registration: YES Call Learning Center at 210-736-0080

Where: Computer Learning Center

Technical Rating: ★

Introducing Vista

This course is an overview of the Vista operating system that is the replacement of Windows XP. Students will be able to see what Vista looks like but is NOT hands on. The training will be more of a visual demonstration and discussion of the major differences between the two operating systems from a user's point of view. The course includes what Vista is, the various versions available, hardware requirements, pros's and con's of converting and new functionality. The main focus will be demonstrating how to accomplish the user basics (navigating, menus, control panel, files and folders) in Vista versus Windows XP.

Instructors: Don Robinson

Choose one set

When: 2 weeks, Wed., 1 pm to 3 pm

Set 1) May 21, 28

Set 2) Sept 17, 24

Pre-registration: YES Call Learning Center at 210-736-0080

Where: Computer Learning Center

Technical Rating: ★

Adobe Acrobat - PDF Class

How to download, install, and use Adobe Acrobat Reader. How to view the PC Alamode magazine online or download it to your computer or a CD. Students who want to download the magazine to a CD in class should bring a blank CD-RW (a read / writeable or recordable CD)

Instructor: Steve Tech
stephentechnr@yahoo.com

When: first Fri. of the month, 7 pm to 9 pm

Pre-registration: YES Call Learning Center at 210-736-0080

Where: Computer Learning Center

Technical Rating: ★

APCO Retro (Antique Computer Users Group)

We're initially only going to meet on-line, through the mailing list I've established using Yahoo! Groups. Membership is limited to Alamo PC members, but anyone can join the list by sending a message to <apcoretro-subscribe@yahoogroups.com>." Or, if you're reading the electronic version of the PC Alamode where this text appears, you can join APCO Retro simply by going to <http://groups.yahoo.com/group/apcoretro/join>

Contact: Shane Hicks
<shane@absolutepowercomputing.com>

When: Anytime

Where: Cyberspace

Pre-registration: Must sign-up on <APCORETRO@yahoogroups.com>

Technical Rating: ★ - ★★★★★

CorelDRAW I Class

This basic class discusses basic tools and effects, concentrating on fills, blends, envelopes and other special effects for the next few months.

Contact: Steve Tech
<stephentechnr@yahoo.com>
210-675-2880

When: 4th Monday, 6-8pm

Where: Learning Center

Pre-registration: No

Technical Rating: ★★

Digital Camera & Photography Class

Digital Cameras have become an integral part of our computerized lifestyle. They come in all shapes and sizes; some are simple, some not. Yet many of us look at this wonderful tool and think, "Now what is that doohicky for?" Sometimes learning to use our digital cameras can be a confusing and frustrating experience and the manual may even make it worse. Then when you do figure out how to use the camera, the photo never seems to come out quite right. Learn how to use your digital camera, plus all the tips and tricks to get better pictures when you take them. This class will include field trips to interesting local spots to learn photography techniques. Topics of discussion may include understanding your camera manual, camera optics, composition, tips, choosing the right camera, lighting, how to take night shots, silhouettes, portraits, action shots, and close ups.

Instructor: need instructor

When: to be announced

Pre-registration: YES Call Learning Center at 210-736-0080

Where: Computer Learning Center

Technical Rating: ★ - ★★

Digital Photo Editing Classes \$

A series of Photo Editing Classes ranging from basic to advanced skills The Microsoft Digital Imaging 2006 software is not required for these classes but it would be helpful to have on your home computer. Students will need recordable CD's or Flash / Thumb drives to be able to save their class work.

Intro to Digital Photo Editing \$

Remedial computer work as it relates to the use of Image 2006. Any computer skills that will be essential for success in Image 2006. We will learn how to place files into the work area. How to control the work area. We will learn the use of the essential photo editing tools such as; color balance, sharpening focus, removing red eye, crop, straighten photo, etc.

Prerequisites: Students should have completed the Windows XP course or have the equivalent knowledge.

Instructor: needs instructor

When: to be announced

Fees: registration fee \$10

Where: Learning Center

Pre-registration: YES Call Learning Center at 210-736-0080

Technical Rating: ★ - ★★

Digital Photo Editing \$

Students will learn the basics of digital photo editing using Microsoft Digital Imaging 2006 and if time permits, extra tips and tricks about matting and framing plus interesting uses for your photos. The photo editing basics used in this class can be applied to almost any photo editing program.

Prerequisites: Students should have completed the Windows XP course or have the equivalent knowledge.

Instructor: needs instructor

When: to be announced

Fees: registration fee \$10

Where: Learning Center

Pre-registration: YES Call Learning Center at 210-736-0080

Technical Rating: ★ - ★★

Advanced Digital Photo Editing \$

This class is for the student who is very serious about digital editing. It involves the manipulation of photos whether they are new or old. We learn to use the tools to do everything from making greeting cards to photo refinishing.

Prerequisites: Students must have completed either the Introduction to Digital Photo Editing Class or the Digital Photo Editing Class or completed one of Joe Davis' prior Digital Photo Editing classes

Instructor: needs instructor

When: to be announced

Fees: registration fee \$10

Where: Learning Center

Pre-registration: YES Call Learning Center at 210-736-0080

Technical Rating: ★ - ★★

Technical Content Ratings

- ★ For the beginner, no experience necessary and no prerequisite.
- ★★ Assumes some basic familiarity with the subject but is not a technical course.
- ★★★ Assumes that the student is somewhat familiar with the subject and will discuss.
- ★★★★ Assumes that the student is competent in the material and will be technical.

Visit the Alamo PC Learning Center

Can you help teach?

We're looking for someone to teach one or more of the following classes:

Digital Camera; Photo Editing; Movie Maker; Microsoft Digital Image 2006

Please call (210) 736-0700

Photoshop Classes for use with Photoshop 7, CS, CS2 - \$

Photoshop CS2 Classes are open to any Alamo PC member who has Photoshop 7, CS, or CS2. Students must have one of these software programs on their home computers. All students are provided a CD with images we will use in the classes plus written lessons to go by and practice at home. Texts will be recommended for those who want to purchase their own as reference.

Prerequisites: 1) Students need to have completed the Windows XP course or have the equivalent knowledge to be able to function properly and progress in these graphics programs. 2) Students need the Software for Photoshop 7 or Photoshop CS or Photoshop CS 2 on their home computers to join these graphics instruction classes.

Beginning Photoshop CS2:

This course includes Lessons on Tools and Palettes, Adobe Bridge, Resolution, Cropping, Tonal Range, Color Cast, Restoring Images, Colorizing, Cloning Layers, Channels, Extract, Gradients, Camera Raw, Vanishing Point, PDF Presentations

When: 9 sessions, choose Fri. or Sat.
Photoshop Beginners Class Jan - Feb 2008;
Fridays Jan 4, 11, 18, 25, Feb 1, 8, 15, 22, 29;
1 pm to 5 pm

Photoshop Beginners Class Jan - Feb 2008
Saturdays Jan 5, 12, 19, 26, Feb 2, 9, 16, 1
pm to 5 pm

And two sessions on Feb 23; 9 am to 12 pm
and 1 pm to 5 pm

Tuition Fee: \$90 for new students \$50 for returning students

Intermediate Photoshop CS2:

Lessons on Typographic Designs, Paths and Shapes, Clipping Groups, Layer Sets, Adjustment Layers, Liquefy Filter, Actions Palette, Layer Styles, Adjustment Layers, Contact Sheets, Picture Package, Text Along Path, Creating Links

When: 2008 dates to be announced

Tuition Fee: \$25 for the course

Advanced Photoshop CS2

Lessons on Rollovers, Animations, Warp Tool, Image Adjustments, Creating Curled Edges, Lighting Effects Creating Patterns, Creating Pencil Sketches, Creating Posters and Post Cards

When: 2008 dates to be announced

Tuition Fee: \$25 for the course

Fancy Photoshop CS2 Class

Lessons on Custom Brushes, Stamping, Painting, Design Techniques, Creating background, Papers, Template Designs, Photomerge, Creating Kaleidoscopes, Hangovers, Frameups

When: dates to be announced

Tuition Fee: \$25 for the course

Photoshop Holiday Lessons

Holiday lessons using all of the procedures in CS2 (or possibly a Playing Cards class instead)

When: Fridays October 5, 12, 19, 26 and Thursday Oct 25; 1 p.m. to 4:30 p.m.

Tuition Fee: \$25 for the course

Photoshop Holiday Class

Holiday lessons using all of the procedures in CS2 (or possibly a Playing Cards class instead)

When: to be announced

Tuition Fee: \$25 for the course

Instructor: Beverly Bihn assisted by Jane Montgomery

Pre-registration: YES Call Learning Center at 210-736-0080

Where: Learning Center

Technical Rating: ★★-★★★

eBay - Bid with Confidence: An Introduction to Internet Auctions

The four session class will allow you to buy and sell at Internet auctions effectively and with confidence using the eBay A system.

The class will cover searching & browsing, registering, buying, selling, how to research your items to buy or sell, how to evaluate your prospective customers and sellers, basic html, digital photo hosting and much, much more! You will also actually use the system in a real-time mode and you can feel the adrenaline rush during the last few seconds of our auctions. Automobile and real estate are excluded.

Instructor: William Hudson
WilliamTheRebel@gmail.com

When: to be announced

Where: Learning Center, Room 1

Pre-registration: YES Call Learning Center at 210-736-0080

Technical Rating: ★

Microsoft Excel

This class is intended for people who want to do significant projects or develop skills for the workplace. As such it moves at fairly brisk pace and includes homework assignments. Students will become familiar with Excel basic functionality, menus, toolbars, icons and shortcut keys. Learn how to create, format, save and print an Excel spreadsheet.

Prerequisites: Students must have completed the Windows XP course or have the equivalent knowledge. It is also best if the student is familiar with another software package such as Microsoft Word.

When: 1 p.m. - 3 p.m.; Thursdays
March 6, 13, 20, 27

Where: Learning Center

Instructor: Cheng Yuan

Pre-registration: Yes, Call Learning Center at 210-736-0080

Technical Rating: ★ - ★★★

Home Page Jumpstart

This is a general introduction to developing your own Internet web page. It is not a course on HTML. Includes a 20+ page manual, training disk, and a walk through the development process.

Contact: Susan Ives

<suives@texas.net> 210-694-4582

When: ONE session. Class does not meet each month, please check the calendar or call the Learning Center to confirm meeting dates and time. 210-736-0080

Where: Learning Center

Pre-registration: No

Technical Rating: ★ - ★★

HTML and Beyond Class

Learn how to design, build and manage your own web site using HTML. Students should attend the Home Page Jumpstart Class and have familiarity with the Windows Operating System. The Six (to Eight if needed) Session class will begin a new cycle each March and September.

Contact: Mike Bianchi

<webmaster@alamopc.org>

When: Saturdays, 4-8 pm

Where: Learning Center

Prerequisite: Home Page Jumpstart Class, familiarity with Windows

Pre-registration: yes, e-mail Mike at <webmaster@alamopc.org>

Technical Rating: ★★

Technical Content Ratings

- | | |
|------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| ★ | For the beginner, no experience necessary and no prerequisite. |
| ★★ | Assumes some basic familiarity with the subject but is not a technical course. |
| ★★★ | Assumes that the student is somewhat familiar with the subject and will discuss. |
| ★★★★ | Assumes that the student is competent in the material and will be technical. |

Internet And E-Mail - \$

The Internet and E-mail course will cover basic techniques needed to effectively and enjoyably "surf the net." Students will learn how to find information on the net, download files, applications and graphics, and how to purchase items from "e-commerce" sites. Depending on student interest, the class will learn about important Internet issues like privacy, credit card security, and information reliability. Depending on time constraints, students may also cover more advanced topics like using the Internet for long distance communication, "Web Cams," and enjoying "streaming" audio and video.

Prerequisites: Students must have completed the Windows XP course or have the equivalent knowledge.

When: 6 weeks, Tuesdays, 10 a.m. to noon
Set 1) Jan 8, 15, 22, 29, Feb 5, 12
Set 2) Mar 18, 25, Apr 1, 8, 15, 22
Set 3) July 8, 15, 22, 29, Aug 5, 12
Set 4) Oct 7, 14, 21, 28, Nov 4, 11

Instructor: Don Robinson

Fees: Registration fee is \$10.00

Where: Learning Center

Pre-registration: YES call 210-736-0080

Technical Rating: ★

Alamo Coders Class

This is a class on using the DotNetNuke portal software for hosting your website and for those interested in developing Windows and Web applications using Microsoft's .NET. The class will focus on hands-on configuration and use of the DNN 3.x portal. This portal is a service available to Alamo PC members. The class will discuss the portal framework and configuration of a DNN site. We will also setup web pages, insert modules on the pages, modify and edit the look of the pages as well as the data in the pages. Modules will include Calendar, Announcements, Forums, Blogs, Contacts, Links, Surveys and HTML. We will use development modules and applications for the DNN Portal using VB.NET and C# as a basis for demonstrating .Net development. Guest speakers occasionally present new technology and development tools available for .Net Developers. Door prizes (books, software, shirts, etc.) are distributed at most meetings.

Contact: Joe Brazell 345-2207

When: 2nd Tuesday, 7 - 9 pm

Where: Learning Center

Pre-registration: no

Technical Rating: ★

Power Point class

Microsoft's PowerPoint presentation program is the defacto standard for making presentations to a large audience. This class will show students how to create a PowerPoint presentation, how to add graphics and photos, business graphs, and sound clips. We will also learn how to use special transitions and animations in presenting your slide show to an audience.

Prerequisite: Students must have completed the Windows XP course or have the equivalent knowledge.

Contact: Learning Center 736-0700

When: No class in July. Two sessions, 2nd and 3rd Wed. 7-9 pm of Odd numbered months

Instructor: Wade Forrester

Where: Learning Center

Pre-registration: Yes - Call Learning Center at 210-736-0080

Technical Rating: ★ - ★★

Movie Maker

A fun class learning to use the Movie Maker program included with Windows XP, to create slide shows with voice, music, text, and special effects. It is a very simple program, yet will do fades, wipes, special effects, sound, and moving text, etc.

Contact: need instructor

When: to be announced

Where: Learning Center

Prerequisite: Students must have completed the Windows XP course or have the equivalent knowledge.

Pre-registration: YES Call Learning Center at 210-736-0080

Technical Rating: ★ - ★★

Microsoft Word

Students will become familiar with and understand Word's basic functionality.

The course outline is as follows:

Wk 1: Opening the application, selecting a template, and saving documents

Wk 2: Formatting, Using Bullets and Numbered Lists

Wk 3: Headers, Footers, Pagination

Wk 4: Developing, Inserting, and Tables

Prerequisites: Students must have completed the Windows XP course or have the equivalent knowledge.

When: 4 sessions, 6:30 to 8:00 pm, question session afterwards; Tues. March 4, 11, 18, 25

Instructor: Belinda Ramirez

Where: Learning Center

Pre-registration: Yes, call Learning Center at 736-0080

Technical Rating ★ - ★★

Private or Semi-Private Tutorials - \$

Develop your skills at your own pace and at a time that fits your schedule. Introductory private tutorials for one, two, or three students. Choose from:

- Microsoft Word
- Microsoft Excel
- Basic Computer Skills, or
- Keyboarding/Typing

Contact: Learning Center (210) 736-0080 or 736-0700

When: Days and hours are arranged between the student(s) and teacher.

Where: Learning Center

Fees: 1 student: \$35 per hour, 10 hours for \$300. 2 or 3 students: per student—\$20 per hour, 10 hours for \$150

Pre-registration: Yes—call or visit the Learning Center

Technical Rating: ★

Student Practice Lab

A specific time period for students taking Alamo PC Courses to use Computer Lab One (Classroom One) to practice their class assignments. Students may also make up missed class days, if the instructor has provided the course material to the individual. The Practice Lab is monitored and the instructors will help when possible. The Practice Lab is for Class Work Only. Those abusing the system will be asked to leave. Seating is limited and on a first come, first serve basis. If necessary a time limit will be imposed.

Lab Instructors: Joe Gentry, Sarah Thomas

When: Thursday mornings, except Holidays, 9 am to Noon.

Where: Computer Learning Center

Pre-registration: No

Technical Content Ratings

- ★ For the beginner, no experience necessary and no prerequisite.
- ★★ Assumes some basic familiarity with the subject but is not a technical course.
- ★★★ Assumes that the student is somewhat familiar with the subject and will discuss.
- ★★★★ Assumes that the student is competent in the material and will be technical.

Help Numbers

Can you help a new member with a new computer? Are you proficient in software not listed? Can you help with a title currently showing only one volunteer? Call Linda Bianchi at 226-2460 or email her at <education@alamopc.org>.

1 Look down the list for the software program you need help with; note the number in front of the title.

2 Then look down the list to the right for the corresponding number for the person who may be able to help you.

Please observe the times given by the volunteers name to call for phone help.

Step One

1 Computers for Beginners

2 Windows 98

3 Windows XP

Microsoft Office

4 Word

5 Excel

6 PowerPoint

7 Publisher

8 WinFax Pro

Corel Office

9 WordPerfect

10 CorelDraw

11 Quattro Pro

12 Paint Shop Pro

Photoshop

13 Adobe Photoshop

Internet and E-mail

14 Internet Basics / ISP Connection

15 Web Page Development

16 Internet Explorer

17 MS Outlook Express

18 Opera

19 Mozilla

20 Dreamweaver

21 .Net

22 Flash

23 RoadRunner

Open Office

24 OpenOffice

Financial

25 Quick Books

26 Quicken

Auction Online

27 eBay

Genealogy

28 Family Origins for Windows

29 Genealogy

Communications / Management

30 Time&Chaos

31 Act

32 Goldmine

Data Base

33 Access

34 AlphaFour

35 dBase

36 Paradox

37 MySQL

Networking

38 Networking

Other

39 Hardware / Setting Up A New PC

40 Maintenance and Security

41 Home Help

Step Two

Expertise	Name	Phone	Availability	E-mail
(1, 5, 6, 3, 12, 23, 26, 38, 41)	John Bolton	658-3060	6pm-9pm M-F	
(1, 3, 14)	Joe Barth	696-5783	7pm-9pm Tu, Th, Sat	jbarth@swbell.net
(2, 3, 4, 16, 17, 23, 29, 38, 39, 40, 41)	Bruce Cramer	865-2933	9am-3pm M-F, Sat	service@pcpro4u.com
(3, 5)	Bill Eastridge	223-8743	10am-6pm M-F, Sat, Sun	
(4, 15, 17, 33)	Bill Hudson	490-6513	7pm-10 pm M-F, Sat, Sun	bhudson3@satx.rr.com
(4, 9, 14, 27)	William Hudson	824-6910	3pm-8pm M-F, Sat	rwsh@earthlink.net
(19, 24, 30, 37)	Chris Montgomery	490-2415	7pm-9pm M-F / noon-6pm Sat, Sun	
(3, 16, 17)	Ted Ressler			catechist@gmail.com
(1, 3, 14, 16, 17, 40)	Don Robinson	497-3737	9am-5pm M-F, Sat, Sun	dl7266@swbell.net
(10)	Stephen Tech, Jr	675-2880	5:30pm-9pm M - F	stephentechjr@yahoo.com
(9)	Cynthia Thompson	655-1058	7pm-9pm M-F / 10am-4pm Sat, Sun	cynthom@satx.rr.com
(4)	Christel Villarreal			christel.villarreal@gmail.com

If you are unable to find help in the list above, consider contacting the desk staff volunteers at the Alamo PC Computer Learning Center. 736-0700 or 736-0080. 10am - 4pm M-F, Sat Remember these volunteers are all levels of expertise and some may not be able to answer your questions, but may be able to find someone who can.

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Classified Ads

E-mail your ad to the Editor, PC Alamo at: editor@alamopc.org. Copy deadline is 10th of month preceeding publication. Classified ads are free to members of Alamo PC.

For Sale Windows XP Professional disk. New and unopened. Discount. Contact Carl Marmion at 494-6797

For Sale 3 Camera Bags - Universal Style 5" wide X 9" long X 6" deep, Sony DSC F828 case with shoulder strap Lowepro Micro 100 Trekker. All in good condition. Contact Bob Ramert rpramert@sbcglobal.net.

Wanted Classified ads from members of Alamo PC. It costs nothing and it's a good way to sell or buy any computer-related item.



100% gray cotton golf shirts with pocket and embroidered full-color **Alamo PC logo**
Available at the Learning Center in a wide variety of sizes.

\$20.00

Call the Learning Center at **736-0700**

Alamo PC Organization has your Number!

Your membership number entitles you to a full year of membership privileges. Established in 1983, this non-profit, all-volunteer organization is dedicated to helping members keep up with trends and technologies.

Monthly Meetings

Every month you can attend a presentation meeting, which is open to our 2,500 members. Local and national companies provide the first glimpses of new products and discounts on existing products. There are also drawings for FREE hardware and software.

Award-Winning Magazine

When you join Alamo PC, you'll receive its award-winning magazine, *PC Alamode*, each month. You'll learn of group activities and you'll enjoy the reviews of new products from your fellow members. Regular columnists will give you insight to this fast-paced, dynamic industry. As a member, you can sell your outgrown stuff in our FREE Classified ads section.

Special Interest Groups and Classes

Alamo PC offers more than 30 Study Groups and classes on specific software programs for beginners to expert. These small groups typically meet once a month in one of our two hands-on computer labs or classrooms and provide an opportunity to get answers in an informal setting. There are groups for word processing, Web design, graphics and programming and even study groups to help you get Microsoft Certified. You can attend as many SIGs as you'd like and, as you become experienced, even lead one!



Internet (www.alamopc.org)

Alamo PC is on the Internet, and more importantly, Alamo PC can help you get on the Internet too. If you're already on the Internet, attending one of Alamo PC's Internet SIGs will help you to become a savvy Internet surfer.

Alamo PC SeniorComp

Are you age 45 or older and not into computers or the Internet yet? Let us help. Contact Alamo PC today and sign up for the very next class. Classes are hands-on at a pace to match your learning style.

Expert Help

Deadlocked with a computer problem or question? Get access to personal help from expert Alamo PC members. Just call! If you need someone to diagnose hardware and software problems, try "THE DOCTOR IS IN," a free clinic where members bring in their computers and allow our experts to help diagnose and often fix many PC ailments.

APPLY FOR YOUR NUMBER -- JOIN NOW!

To join, return the application below or sign up online at www.alamopc.org. Your \$45 dues covers your entire family!e. You may use your credit card or send your personal check. If you need more information, call (210) 736-0700. Shortly after joining, you'll receive a membership card entitling you to all rights and privileges and discounts. **JOIN TODAY!**

GIFT MEMBERSHIPS NOW AVAILABLE: Call 210-736-0700 for details.



Membership Application -- Apply for your number today!

PLEASE ANSWER ALL QUESTIONS. This information will be kept in confidence - it will be used for planning purposes only

FIRST: _____ MI _____ LAST: _____

ADDRESS: _____

CITY: _____ STATE: _____ ZIP: _____

PHONE H: _____ W: _____ FAX: _____

DATE OF BIRTH: ____/____/____ OCCUPATION: _____

EMPLOYER: _____ TITLE: _____

E-MAIL: _____

Please accept my membership for: ☐ 1 year - \$45 ☐ 2 Years - \$85 ☐ 3 Years - \$125 ☐ New Member ☐ Renewal

Method of payment: ☐ Check ☐ VISA ☐ MasterCard ☐ American Express

Credit Card # _____ EXP DATE: ____/____/____ SIGNATURE: _____

Make checks payable to Alamo PC Organization and mail to: **Alamo PC, PO Box 65180, San Antonio, TX 78265-5180**

IMPORTANT ☐ I do not authorize Alamo PC Organization to release my name address and phone to selected vendors

PCA JAN05

Alamo PC Organization, Inc.

Renew Now!

Isn't it about time for you to consider all the benefits of membership with Alamo PC? Renew your membership before the year is over!

For more information call the Learning Center at
210.736.0700



Consider A Matching Donation, or a Donation To Alamo PC Organization

Increasing members knowledge and effective use of personal computers, and providing other membership services and access to the expertise of other members, does not happen without an associated monthly expense. In recent months, although member dues and ads have offset the majority of the required monthly expense, and cost-saving measures are constantly being reviewed, the total amount of monthly funds generated has been less than the monthly expense. The shortfall has had to come from reserve funds, which have been severely depleted. We would like to offer everyone the opportunity to help rebuild the reserve fund.

If you employer has a "Matching Donation" program, please consider that you can double a donation amount by participating. All donations are tax deductible and can be dropped off at the Alamo PC Learning Center in Crossroads Mall (near the underground parking entrance, accessed from Fredericksburg Road) or mailed to **Alamo PC Organization, PO Box 65180, San Antonio, TX, 78265-5180**. Checks, Money Orders, etc., should be made payable to **Alamo PC Organization** and identified as "Donation."

On-line donations can be made at <<https://training.alamopc.org/donations>>. If you do not have on-line access, credit card donations can be made by mail if you legibly provide the following information on a piece of paper: Full Name, Address, City, State, Zip, Phone Number (to verify you want your card charged), Name of Card, Card Number, Card Expiration Date, Donation Amount, and your usual Signature. Please help us keep our membership dues low, meet our monthly expenses and rebuild the reserve fund.

