Napa Valley Personal Computer Users Group

Computer News

Inside This Issue :

The Napa Valley Personal Computer Users Group has served novice and experienced computer users since 1983. Through its monthly meetings, newsletters, on-line forum, special interest groups, mentor program and community involvement, it has helped educate people of all ages. The NVPCUG provides opportunities for people to find friends who share common interests and experiences. Through its Computers-to-Schools program, members refurbish used computer equipment for donation to local schools. Since January 2003 the NVPCUG has donated 362 computers and 109 printers.

Discussion of Member Needs, Nomination of Directors, and Password Protection Tutorial Highlight October 19 NVPCUG Meeting

The Napa Valley Personal Computer Users Group will meet Wednesday, October 19, 2005, 7:00 to 9:00 p.m., at the Napa Senior Activity Center, 1500 Jefferson Street, Napa, California.

Our October general meeting will be structured differently than most of our monthly meetings to allow time to hear and discuss your needs for specific computer-related knowledge and your ideas about how the NVPCUG can improve its activities to better satisfy your needs. Also, we will be calling for nominations of directors for the coming term, which will begin in December. These special activities will be preceded by **Random Access**, an open-floor question-and-answer session.

In the **Computer Tutor** session that will follow the other activities, **Mike Moore** will discuss password protecting *Microsoft Word* and *Excel* data files. To protect personal and other private information from theft or misuse, you must password-protect or encrypt your sensitive files. Password protection can be used to restrict access to, or modification of, a file. In *Excel*, password protection can also be used to restrict access to, or modification of, specific *Excel* spreadsheets in a workbook or even the viewing of specific rows and columns on a spreadsheet.

Mike will also demonstrate how to view two parts of a document or spreadsheet simultaneously by splitting or freezing window panes **B** portions of document windows. This can be very advantageous when you need to compare, move, or copy text or graphics between parts of a long document or keep row and column labels visible as you scroll a large spreadsheet.

Mike is a Computer Studies instructor at Napa Valley College, where he teaches *Microsoft Word, Excel*, and *Access* courses. Prior to teaching, he had a varied and long career in industrial computer system design, until he retired early from Westinghouse as the president of one of its high-technology subsidiaries. Mike is also the NVPCUG-s Computer Tutor Coordinator.

During the **Random Access** period, you can ask questions about specific issues you have encountered while using computers and computer-related products and receive helpful information from other meeting attendees. Questions may be submitted in advance of our meeting by e-mailing them to Random Access Moderator **Jerry Brown** at *Questions@nvpcug.org.*

Need practical information that will enable you to make better use of your computer? Come to this meeting! Guests are always welcome.

President's Message —

Looking Ahead
By Orion E. Hill

Orion Hill

October NVPCUG Meeting Highlights

Two special activities are scheduled for our October 19 general meeting: an open discussion of member needs and how our group can best satisfy them, and nominations of NVPCUG directors for the coming year.

To ensure that the education and service programs of our group satisfy your needs, it is essential that our officers have a clear understanding of your needs and know the extent to which they are shared by other members. Don=t hesitate at this meeting to speak out about your needs and share your ideas about improving our activities.

Nominations of Directors for 2006

If you value the NVPCUG=s programs and want to help ensure that they are continued and strengthened, please give serious consideration to serving as a member of our group=s leadership team. Nominations of NVPCUG directors for the coming term, which starts in December, will be requested at our general meeting on October 19. Nominations C you may nominate yourself C can also be submitted directly to NVPCUG Secretary **Julie Jerome** by sending e-mail to *Secretary@nvpcug.org* by November 2. The only officer qualification is the ability and willingness to serve; your level of computer expertise is not important.

In conformance with the NVPCUG Bylaws adopted in 2002, the current directors of our organization will elect up to fifteen directors for one-year terms at the Board of Directors annual business meeting on November 2. Following the certification of that election at the BOD transition meeting on December 7, the new board will take office and elect our corporate officers C President, Vice President, Secretary, and Treasurer C and appoint subordinate officers.

If you are interested in serving as an officer or would like to learn more about the various positions, please let any Nominating Committee member know. The current committee, chaired by **Roy Wagner**, is composed of all of the members of our board of directors, except for me. Roy can be contacted by calling (707) 253-2721 or e-mailing *rwagner@pol.net*. The members of the committee would be glad to review with you the requirements of each position and the tools and support that would be available to help you serve successfully.

NVPCUG Donations Recognized

The **Napa Valley Unified School District Board of Education** on September 15 formally recognized and expressed gratitude for the NVPCUG=s ongoing donations of computer equipment through our Computers-to-Schools program. Since January 2003 we have donated 290 refurbished multimedia computer systems, as well as other computer equipment, to NVUSD schools. NVUSD Superintendent **John Glaser** noted the district=s increasing dependency on contributions to fill needs as government funding has become inadequate. **Bill Wheadon** and I attended the school board=s meeting to accept the board=s recognition and gratitude.

Since the launching of our Computers-to-Schools program in October 2002, we have donated 362 computers and 109 printers to Napa County public schools. We=ve also donated computer systems to several not-for-profit organizations and to disadvantaged adults and students.

EBay SIG

Nearly a dozen people have indicated their desire to participate in our new eBay SIG. Unfortunately, the initial meeting scheduled on September 28 had to be postponed at the last minute B literally B due to a brief medical emergency. The meeting has been rescheduled for October 26, from 7:00 to 8:30 p.m., at the Napa Valley Genealogical Library, which is at the intersection of Menlo Avenue and California Boulevard, in Napa. I understand that **Kay Nagel**, who gave an excellent presentation on selling and buying on eBay at our September general meeting, will be attending the coming SIG meeting.

If you are interested in participating in the eBay SIG or would like more information about it, contact SIG leader **Tom Kessler** by calling (707) 258-1884 or sending e-mail to *kesstom@yahoo.com.*

Annual Holidays Party

Mark your calendars now for our annual holidays potluck meeting on December 21. **Dick** and **Sandy Peterson** have invited us again to use the Christmas Tree House at their tree farm.

Sound Off!

Got a suggestion for improving an NVPCUG activity? Want to help with an activity? Send e-mail to *OHill@napanet.net* or call (707) 252-0637.

NVPCUG Special Interest Groups

The NVPCUG currently has two special interest groups. By attending SIG meetings, you can learn about a subject in greater detail than is feasible at NVPCUG general meetings and can share your knowledge with other people. SIG meetings are open to everyone. Meeting times and locations occasionally change. For current meeting information, see our Web site, *www.nvpcug.org*, or contact the SIG leaders.

Digital Photography SIG
Meets: Monthly, second Wednesday
7:00 to 8:30 p.m
Piner's Nursing Home,
Conference Room
1800 Pueblo Ave., Napa
Leader: **Susy Ball**
(707) 337-3998
SusyBall@aol.com

eBay SIG
Meets: Monthly, fourth Wednesday
7:00 to 8:30 p.m.
Napa Valley Genealogical Library
1701 Menlo Ave., Napa
Leader: **Tom Kessler**
(707) 258-1884
kesstom@yahoo.com

Investors SIG
Meets: Monthly, second Monday
5:30 to 7:30 p.m
Jerry Brown's home,
23 Skipping Rock Way, Napa
Leader: **Jerry Brown**
(707) 254-9607
bqandjbb@sbcglobal.net

Membership News
By Orion E. Hill

The Napa Valley Personal Computer Users Group is delighted to welcome back a former member, **William L. "Bill" Lowry**, who recently renewed his membership after a nearly two-year lapse. Bill originally joined in 1955. Although 81 years old, he still works on a computer every day. He recently became Director of Sales and Marketing for Mytronics, a custom mold engineering and manufacturing company headquartered in San Ramon, to which city he commutes from his home in American Canyon.

Napa Valley Personal Computer Users Group
Officers for 2005

Board of Directors

President	Orion E. Hill	252-0637*	President@nvpcug.org
Vice President	(Volunteer Needed)		VicePresident@nvpcug.org
Secretary	Julie Jerome	224-6620	Secretary@nvpcug.org
Treasurer	Roy Wagner	253-2721	Treasurer@nvpcug.org

Other Directors: Dianne Prior, John Simcoe, James Stirling

Appointed Officers

Computer Recycling Coordinator	Bill Wheadon	224-3901	Recycler@nvpcug.org
Computer Tutor Coordinator	Mike Moore	255-1615	Tutor@nvpcug.org
Computers-to-Schools Program Coordinator	Orion E. Hill	252-0637	CTS@nvpcug.org
Facility Arrangements Coordinator	Steve Siegrist		Facility@nvpcug.org
Greeter Coordinator	Bob Simmerman	259-6113	Greeter@nvpcug.org
Librarian	Marcia Waddell	252-2060	Librarian@nvpcug.org
Membership Director	Dianne Prior	252-1506	Membership@nvpcug.org
Mentor Program Coordinator	Hilton Des Roches	224-6170	Mentors@nvpcug.org
Newsletter Circulator	Jim Hearn	224-2540	
Newsletter Editor	James Stirling	944-1177	Editor@nvpcug.org
Product Review Coord.	Marcia Waddell	252-2060	Reviews@nvpcug.org
Programs Director	(Volunteer Needed)		Programs@nvpcug.org
Publicity Director	John Simcoe	258-8233	Publicity@nvpcug.org
Random Access Moderator	Jerry Brown	254-9607	Questions@nvpcug.org
Special Projects Director	(Volunteer Needed)		Projects@nvpcug.org
Webmaster	Ron Dack		Webmaster@nvpcug.org

*All telephone numbers are in Area Code 707.

NVPCUG Calendar

Wednesdays	9:30 a.m.-12:30 p.m.	Computers-to-Schools work parties. To volunteer contact Orion Hill, (707) 252-0637.
October 5	7:00 p.m.	Board of Directors meeting, Piner's Nursing Home, 1800 Pueblo Ave., Napa
October 10	5:30-7:30 p.m.	Investors SIG meeting, Jerry Brown's home, 23 Skipping Rock Way, Napa
October 12	7:00-8:30 p.m.	Digital Photography SIG meeting, Piner's Nursing Home, 1800 Pueblo Ave., Napa
October 19	7:00-9:00 p.m.	General Meeting, Napa Senior Activity Center, 1500 Jefferson St., Napa
October 26	7:00-8:30 p.m.	EBay SIG meeting, Napa Valley Genealogical Library, 1701 Menlo Ave., Napa

September Presentations

The two presentations scheduled at the September 21 Napa Valley Personal Computer Users Group meeting attracted a full house.

For the main presentation, **Kay Nagel** shared her extensive knowledge of buying and selling on eBay. The daughter of NVPCUG member **Linda Collison**, Kay has gained considerable experience in using eBay. For people who have been curious but wary about the Aauction@features of eBay, she had many instructive tips that she had learned by trial and error, associat-

Kay Nagel

ing with knowledgeable people, and analyzing the practices of highly successful eBay buyers and sellers.

Kay=s experience began when she moved to California, discovered that she had many unneeded objects to get rid of, and turned to eBay. After selling many small items, she decided to try selling something big: an alligator-hide purse. She listed it for $49. While she was waiting for the auction to end, her dog found the purse and chewed it up, forcing Kay to withdraw the purse from auction. The successful bidder would not accept Kay=s explanation for the withdrawal and proceeded to harass her. Kay began a search for the buying and selling history of the customer. She discovered, much to her astonishment, that the customer had an established eBay business selling similar alligator-leather purses for hundreds of dollars! That opened Kay=s eyes.

Kay described strategies for bidding that involved starting low and telling eBay to increase her bid by stated levels up to a given top price. She emphasized the tactic of knowing the exact moment when the bidding was scheduled to cease, then throwing in your highest bid, expressed in dollars and cents, just seconds before that moment. On the selling side, she told about taking the Atour@ that eBay offers to help beginners. Before listing something, she said one should first shop eBay or Craigslist for the range of prices. Then the item should be described in the most ap-

pealing way (with caveats for any deficiencies) and should be pictured with photos from every angle. For both buying and selling Kay recommended that one should look up the eBay market history of the other participant.

In a Computer Tutor presentation that preceded the main presentation, **Tom Kessler, Jr**. demonstrated convincingly that ScanSoft=s *Dragon NaturallySpeaking* speech recognition software really works. While he spoke several sentences into his headset microphone, the audience could see his words come rolling out on the screen

Thomas Kessler, Jr.

with very few errors. Contrary to what some people have said about how much time it takes to train the program to recognize the voice of a user, Tom avowed that it took only about 30 minutes of training to enable the program to recognize his voice. For this, the program listed a series of words and asked him to say them aloud, then it printed them out. Where it stumbled, he would say, ATrain that,@ repeat the word, and it would improve. The program learns early-on to recognize the inflections of a user=s voice. Tom found that its recognition accuracy is highest when he speaks at a normal conversational pace, rather word by word. He surmises this is because the program is designed to recognize phrases as well as separate words. Following each dictation session, he uses the spell checker feature to help identify and correct misrecognized words.

Tom, who is the son of NVPCUG members **Tom** and **Eleanor Kessler,** said he has used *Dragon Naturally-Speaking 7* and earlier versions for several years and finds the program indispensable for his work. As the president of Bel Aire Engineering, a Hayward, California, company that designs, fabricates, and installs custom architectural products, he uses the program for dictating letters, memos, and other documents, as well as for completing forms. He also uses it to transcribe messages recorded on his telephone answering machine and other devices and to answer e-mail. He acknowledged that the program requires a large amount of hard drive memory, but he says it is worth it. He would not be as productive without it.

The Insiders' Guide to Craigslist

by Richard O. Johnson, TUGNET, California

If you're not using *craigslist*, it's time you joined the crowd. This phenomenally successful community bulletin board serves over ten million online users in a single month, and, except for modest fees in three cities for help-wanted ads, all its services are without charge.

If you're one of the uninitiated few, you use *craigslist* by posting your needs or interests in any of various categories, like jobs, for sale, services, housing, personal, etc., or by reading and acting on posts submitted by others. The *craigslist* for this area is at *http://losangeles.craigslist.org*.

Beyond its imperfect documentation, *craigslist* support is in practical terms nonexistent (understandably so, in view of its enormous popularity and its staff of just eighteen). That's one of the reasons for writing this Guide.

Posting

Posting is straightforward. You just find the prominent "post to classifieds" link (it's at the upper-left corner of the main page), drill down to the appropriate category, and fill out the simple form.

The first page to which posters are directed will invite them to create an account. You don't really need an account, but it'll take only a minute or so to set up, and can make things a lot easier. So do get that account.

Should the need for which you posted be met right away, that's the end of it. In most cases, however, you'll want to re-post. Without re-posting, your post will stay up (in Los Angeles) for between 10 and 30 days, depending on the category, but you don't want to wait nearly that long. Posts appear in chronological order (last submitted on top), and readers will typically stop perusing after about two days' worth of posts. (You can always edit your post, but editing won't move it up as will re-posting.)

Another way to improve your response rate is to post in more than one category. But don't do that before reading about *craigslist's...*

Restrictions

Craigslist is replete with rules and regulations. Trouble is, they're not particularly easy to find, they're not all in one place, and, worst of all, some of the most crucial ones are not published at all (until you're found to be in violation, and by then you may be "blocked")!

If you want to see what rules are written down, find the *craigslist* Terms of Use, Frequently Asked Questions, and General Posting Guidelines. But bear in mind that other unstated rules may bear equally on your submissions. Here are the most important *craigslist* rules:

You may not post "essentially the same item" before deleting the old item. This applies even when posting in a different city or category. So if your post lends itself to more than one category, you need to alternate the categories. (You may possibly be able to get around this restriction by using different email addresses.)

Craigslist confuses this issue by appearing at one point to sanction posting "in multiple categories." This suggests that in some circumstances such multiple posts may be accepted. So if you want to try it, go ahead. The worst that can happen is that your second post will be refused.

You may not post the same item more than once in 48 hours. This rule is not strictly enforced. That is, if you delete and re-post your Thursday noon post at 8 am Saturday, chances are there will be no problem. But it's unwise (and really unnecessary) to post as often as daily.

Your post may not contain a link "to a commercial Web site or auction." This is an example of a rule I haven't been able to find anywhere, until I was blocked for violating it! Note that *craigslist* does not define what makes a website "commercial." My listing on the web of free summer shows, that contained a small link to my organization, was deemed to be "commercial." You'll be safe if you don't link to any website, but instead invite the reader to email you for more information (very easily done--see below). Linking to a webpage without any links on it is also safe.

Posting Tips

Craigslist makes it easy as pie for its users to respond to your posts. If you want phone calls, simply include your phone number in the writeup. If you want emails, craigslist will "anonymize" your email address, never to be seen by responders. These folks will click on a link to respond, and that response will go to craigslist, and then to you. Each anonymized email response will refer to the unique number for that particular post. So if you're running several similar posts, you can easily track your responses to see which ones are most effective.

The body of your post can be either in plain text or HTML. If you choose plain text, craigslist will automatically convert any Web addresses starting with http:// to links (but exercise care before including a Web address--see above). You can't otherwise mix plain text and HTML (don't add a few HTML tags to a plain-text submission).

You can add photos or other graphics to your post, in one of two ways:

If your post is under the heading of "for sale/wanted," you'll be invited to add a picture from your hard disk. Otherwise (providing you're submitting in HTML), you can add graphics with the <img> tag. See *craigslist's*

The Association of Personal Computer User Groups
Annual Conference
January 2-6, 2006

Stardust Hotel and Casino, Las Vegas, Nevada

Hear about the latest in computers and software from the people who make and sell them.
See their samples and get free copies of the newest and best.

Talk with the people who use them and find out how they do it.
Get new ideas from computer user groups across the country.

For information on rates and fees go to *http://apcug.net/events/conference06/index.htm*

FAQ for more details.

How Best to Post

The following assumes you're using Windows, and have postings suitable for several categories. (You can adapt these guidelines to other circumstances.) Performing these steps will reduce the re-posting process to about a minute a day, while giving you maximum exposure.

Compose your posts. If possible, create an entirely different post for each category. If sufficiently different, posts promoting the same transaction may display simultaneously without a problem.

Create your account, by using the link on the "post to classifieds" page. Create three bookmarks for your browser. One will be your account page, another will be the *craigslist* post page, and the third will be the browse page (the *craigslist* main page for your locality), for reviewing others' posts.

Submit your posts. Wait two or three days.

Open your account page. Decide which post you'll want to re-run. Click on that post.

You'll be given two choices, Edit and Delete. If you want to re-run the post in exactly the same category, choose Delete. Then go back to your account page, click on the deleted post, and you'll be able easily to re-run it. If you want to re-run the post in a different category, click on the Edit button, to bring up your "raw" post. Then using Ctrl-A and Ctrl-C, copy that raw post to the *Windows* clipboard. Go back to your account page and delete the post. Finally, open the post page that you've bookmarked [step 3 above], and post in the appropriate new category.

Wait a day, and repeat steps 6 through 9.

If you're promoting the same transaction in several different categories, it may be to your advantage to stagger the posts. To this end you'll want to keep one or more initial posts for a longer interval than the others.

Browsing Tips

Here are two tips for using *craigslist* to take advantage of others' posts. A little known source of great bargains consists of offers on *craigslist* to sell unwanted gift cards. This situation stems from the fact that many holders of gift cards either paid nothing for them, or paid well below the face value. For example, Discover Card distributes merchant gift cards at half price through its "Cashback" program.

To secure such a bargain, visit your bookmarked "Browse" page, and execute the "for sale" link. Then in the keyword search box, enter "gift card" (with the quotation marks), and pick out the offers that appeal to you. Don't hesitate to bargain with the seller for a lower price. (Aim at no more that 50 percent of face value.)

Once you've made a deal, be sure you meet the seller at the store, to verify the amount of credit remaining on the card.

Craigslist has joined forces with Google Maps at *www.housingmaps. com*, to help you better locate available housing throughout the country. You'll be able to specify your price range, and you'll see at a glance whether there's a picture or pictures of the property. Once you make your preliminary selection, you'll be taken to the original *craigslist* post.

Richard Johnson is a writer and editor, and founder/administrator of FREE FOR ALL The Skills Pool, a 29-year-old membership organization (http://theskillspool.org). He is a volunteer with TUGNET HelpContact for assistance with Internet Explorer, Outlook Express, and Gmail. He welcomes feedback, at rj@the skills pool. org.

The Editorial Committee of the Association of Personal Computer User Groups has provided this article..

Laptop Display Replacement

by Mike Borman, SW Indiana PC Users Group, Inc.

I have owned three different Toshiba laptop computers and was always impressed with how rugged they were. A couple of them have been used to collect CCD images from my telescope on cold and dewy nights without a problem. We have also used Toshiba laptops where I work to program and monitor Programmable Logic Controllers (PLCs) in industrial plants all across the tristate area without a problem. One even had water pouring down on it accidentally at one plant, and after I let it dry out a bit it was as good as new. So this past February when I decided I needed a new laptop, I once again chose a Toshiba, a Satellite A75. This one had a very nice 15.4" Trubrite TFT display.

Last month however, I discovered that my newest Toshiba laptop would not pass the drop test. I had been using it in the living room while watching TV, and had it resting on one of the arms of my recliner (which is wide enough to support the bottom of the laptop). Unfortunately, when I got up to get something out of the kitchen, the laptop slid off the arm of the recliner and fell a little over two feet to the carpeted floor. When I picked it up I noticed that the display had a crack in the upper righthand corner. I won't repeat the words I uttered!

I decided to take the computer back to Circuit City where I had bought it, to see what my options were for fixing it. They told me that accidental breakage was not covered by the City Advantage plan they had sold me in February, and it was not covered by the Toshiba warranty either. Circuit City proposed sending it off to their Service Center in Louisville to see how much it would cost to replace the display. Unfortunately, they came back with an estimate of over $1,000 to fix it. A call to Toshiba informed me that replacing the screen would cost $700 plus labor and shipping. Considering that I paid $1,400 for it new, either choice seemed a bit outrageous. I also found that it was not covered by my homeowner's insurance or personal articles policy.

I next decided to see if I could possibly replace the display myself. After searching on the Internet, I found a website called *IDParts.com* that had parts for most of the major brands of laptops. I gave them

a call and asked them how much a replacement LCD display would cost for my Toshiba laptop. They said $335. Since that was a lot better than paying Circuit City $1,000 or buying a new laptop, I went ahead and ordered one. It arrived in less than a week. Unfortunately when I opened the package I found a display more badly broken than the one I wanted to replace! More unmentionable words were uttered.

I called IDParts, and they agreed to take back the broken display and send me a new one. The second display arrived intact a couple days later.

My next task was to remove the existing LCD display. The IDParts Web site shows an example of a "typical" display replacement. It shows removing the little rubber pads that run around the perimeter of the display to reveal screws that hold the display together. When I removed the rubber pads from my display however, there were only screws under the two at the bottom of the display. With some careful probing with a screwdriver I found that the top of the display just snapped together. After getting off the bezel I found that the display LCD was attached to a metal frame with several tiny Philips-head screws. Before removing the screws, I had to detach (very carefully) a ribbon cable and a power cable. Then, doing all the steps above in reverse, I installed the new LCD display. My main worry was with reattaching the ribbon cable. It was difficult to line up the two halves of the connector and feel whether it was properly connected. The ribbon cable was just barely long enough to reach the connector on the new LCD. Fortunately I did it right and the new display works fine again!

Mike Borman is an engineer with Three I Engineering, Inc. in Evansville. He is an advisor and past president of the Evansville Astronomical Society and has won national awards for astrophotography and model rocket building. His Web site is at http:// members.sigecom.net/mborman/

The Editorial Committee of the Association of Personal Computer User Groups has provided this article.

Disaster! Geeks to the Rescue

By Roy Davis, Tech Tip No. 46—*Techtips@Geeks.com*

The news of late has been full of natural and man-made disasters, including the hurricanes on the Gulf Coast and an anniversary of the 9/11 horrors. In every disaster, it seems the highest priority is communication. To be sure, evacuation, food, water, shelter, and medical care are critical needs, but none of it can be delivered without communication between the government and the responding agencies. You might not be the hero who runs into a burning building to save a child, but as a knowledgeable and prepared geek you can still have a big impact. We'll talk about some of the issues you might face and how you could use your geek kills to improve the situation.

Hurricane Katrina Lesson

When hurricane Katrina hit New Orleans the power was lost, cellular and wired telephones went out, and government radio repeaters were silent. The mayor and the emergency operations center had only one communications link to the outside world – the Internet. That's right—the officials had only one Internet connection, and fortunately there was a geek present who rounded up some routers and cables and hooked up a makeshift Local Area Network (LAN) with a bridge to the Internet. That's how messages got to and from the people in charge for several days.

Why the Internet?

Why did the Internet survive in the face of disaster when every other major form of communication was disabled? The answer is that the Internet is not a particular medium of communications with a single point, like a telephone central switching office or trunking radio controller, that can fail and bring the whole network down. The Internet makes use of almost any communications medium available. You can be connected to the Internet via a cable, through a dialup telephone line, DSL or cable TV modem, wirelessly by WiFi, cellular, satellite, or even ham radio. The most significant point here is that your Internet address doesn't change, no matter how you are hooked up. When telephone networks go down, your phone number is useless. When a particular government radio channel is out, the workers can't find you. But if they send a message to your Internet e-mail account, you can pick it up a dozen different ways.

Hard-Wired Internet

Since most commercial and even some home Internet connections are largely run on fiber optic trunks, they are not as vulnerable to damage by wind, water, or even fire. In the hotel where the New Orleans officials set up shop, there was one functioning direct-cabled Internet connection still working. The technical person in the group scared up a Network Switch to split the single Internet connection out so the officials could jack in their Laptop Computers and start communicating via e-mail. Having a Cabling Kit on hand complete with lots of CAT 5e cable, RJ-45 connectors and the necessary wire stripping and crimping tool would allow you to quickly wire up any command post.

Telephone Dialup

In some situations or locations, you might have to resort to a telephone dialup connection. Though too slow for streaming video or high performance Web surfing, a 28 Kilobit per second (Kbps) telephone connection can handle a lot of text e-mail. If your portable computer does not have a built-in telephone connection, you could use a USB Telephone Modem to make the connection in an emergency.

WiFi

WiFi, or 802.11 wireless networking, is very good magic in an emergency. You don't need to run a cable to a laptop computer if you set up an 802.11g Wireless Router. This small box splits out an Internet DSL modem connection, be it hardwired, cable or whatever, and provides a short-range radio connection to computers within a few hundred feet. Position the router in a clear spot so the radio signals have a chance to radiate toward the computers to be served. If the router has an external antenna or two, keep the antennas approximately vertical. Computers can be moved around and new machines added to the network almost instantly. Many laptop computers come with WiFi built in, but for a computer that doesn't have it, you can use a USB WiFi Network Adapter. If it is running Windows XP, then just plugging it in should install the device and you can select the wireless network from the popup menu. This USB adapter comes with a USB cable extension so you can position the adapter away from your computer to better receive the radio signals from the router. Line-of-sight to the router is best, but at least get the adapter with its built-in antenna away from radio signal deflecting/absorbing objects like metal desks or file cabinets.

WiFi Antennas

WiFi equipment is designed for short ranges, and the signals don't penetrate walls or floors very well. You can extend the range of your wireless network by using an 802.11G Range Expander strategically positioned between the router and the computers to which you are trying to connect. Putting the range expander in a window, doorway or stairwell can spread the WiFi signals beyond a wall or floor that would normally stop them. If you have

a need in an emergency situation to go beyond the nominal range of WiFi, you can add a Range Extender Antenna to the computer, the router, or both.

Keep in mind that nothing is free, and a directional extender antenna can go a longer distance but cover only a narrow angle. First, try putting an antenna on the computer end of the link and point it at the router. The omnidirectional antenna on the router can then continue to serve other computers closer to it in any direction. If you have to extend the range by using a directional antenna on both ends of the link, then use a separate router to serve the close-by computers.

Amateur Radio *WinLink 2000*

Licensed radio amateurs (not to be confused with unlicensed Citizen's Band "CB" radio) have a long tradition of providing communications assistance during disasters. In fact, the Amateur Radio Relay League got started relaying messages copied by hand from radio operator to radio operator. The concept was very much like the Internet, where messages could pass through the network of stations by many different paths making it much more robust than commercial communications systems.

Radio amateurs (also known as "hams") have recognized the value of the Internet and have developed a method of relaying Internet packets over their radios called WinLink 2000. A radio operator outside the disaster area can act as a gateway station to connect to the rest of the Internet. Small portable stations can be brought into the disaster area to provide a link even if all other forms of Internet connection are gone. You can help out by earning an amateur radio license and joining a local emergency radio organization like the ARES or RACES. Check the ARRL Web site to see how you can extend your geek skills even further.

Power to the People

In the emergency command post or even a shelter set up in a school gym, you will have a cluster of folks helping out, and they need power for their laptops and all the geek gadgets that it takes to hook them up. Don't take power and the availability of outlets for granted. Use a Power Strip with Surge Protection to split out the end of an extension cord. You need the surge protection because there may be lightning storms and wind that can short power lines causing spikes on the line.

In the worst case, you might be running your equipment off a portable generator. For an evacuation shelter, you would want a Medium Duty Uninterruptible Power Source (UPS) while a command post should have a bigger backup with a Heavy Duty UPS. Generators have to be shut down for refueling and the UPS will keep your computer and network equipment running for several minutes while the generator is down. Also, the output of most portable generators is very "dirty" and the surge protection built into the UPS will protect your valuable equipment.

Internet Takes Over for Newspapers

It's not only government officials and rescue agencies who are resorting to the Internet in times of disaster. Newspapers in the path of hurricane Rita announced that they were limiting or suspending publication of their hardcopy newspapers, but that readers could continue to get news via their Web sites. The *Galveston County Daily News* wanted to protect their employees by keeping delivery personnel off the streets. The *Port Arthur News* cancelled publication and abandoned their offices, but updated their Web site news. Again, this is an example of the independence of the Internet from physical plant and particular locations. If you are waiting out the storm, you might want to have a PDA with *Bluetooth* to connect to the Internet via your cell phone to keep up on the news and weather reports.

Final Words

A little preparation can put you in a position to help yourself, your family, and your community in the case of a disaster. Stock up on canned food, water, and flashlight batteries, but don't forget the capabilities of the Internet at providing communications in time of need. As an experienced geek, you can get it together when the crunch comes. Speaking of getting it together, having a Transport Case handy with a list of the equipment and accessories you need can make packing quick when you can't afford to forget anything, and when there are no local stores left open for last-minute pickup.

Reprinted by permission of Geeks.com

For more information about
the NVPCUG,
visit our Web site:
http://www.nvpcug.org

The New, the Best, and the Worst

Collected by Pim Borman

SW Indiana PC Users Group, Inc.

Hard Drive Too Small?

If you think a 500 GB is still not big enough, help is on the way, in what seems to be an obvious way. If you think of a room filled with people all stretched out on the floor, you can cram in a lot more folks if you have everybody stand up, right? As it turns out, the magnetic elements on current hard drives are lying down on the job, but now several manufacturers, including Hitachi and Seagate, have figured out a way to make the lazy critters stand up on the disk and squeeze them closer together. It must be easier said than done, considering how long it took to implement this technology, but now Seagate is announcing a new 2.5" minidisk, named Momentus, that will hold 160 GB, 20 percent more than the highest-capacity 2.5" drives currently available. It sounds like magic, and the name, Momentus, suggests that Harry Potter had something to do with it. The new disks will be shipped early next year. Seagate anticipates that regular hard drive capacity will jump to 2500 GB (2.5 TB) in 3-5 years. (PC Magazine, 8/9/05)

How Much Is That Program in the Windows?

In the good old days, when you purchased the latest version of *MS-DOS* you were free to install it on as many computers as you owned, and many a copy was shared with friends and neighbors as well. That has changed, as we all know, and many expensive programs can now only be installed on a single computer, whether we like it or not.

Large commercial programs used in the business world have usually been licensed per seat, based on the number of computers the program was installed on. Some small engineering companies that obtained a single copy of expensive *AutoCAD* and used it on multiple computers were fined and lost their use of the program when they got caught.

As CPUs have been getting faster, computer productivity has gone up, to the benefit of the users. Although most providers have increased their license fees to some extent as the programs improved, fees have mostly continued to be charged per seat or per CPU.

Now the trend to faster computers is to increase the number of CPUs on a single chip instead of making single ones faster, and some software companies want to charge their fees on a per CPU basis. They are mainly concerned about the many back-room computers used as servers dishing out data over computer networks to employees. Oracle and IBM have been in the forefront of the pricing battles, but seem to be compromising on an individual basis. Microsoft has unexpectedly taken the side of the users and licenses its software at the same cost for single-core or multiple-core processors. That may have something to do with the threat of Linux and its Open Source programming model that is looking more and more attractive to many businesses as the cost of *Windows*-based software keeps increasing.

Too Much Security?

Recently I had occasion to help someone straighten out the connections between their computers and the router. The router had been set up by an expert, using all its available security features. Unfortunately, he left behind a jumble of notes about procedures and passwords that seemed to be incomplete or wrong. In the end all we could do was reset the router and start over again. That made me think about how much security we really need.

Most of us live in homes with maybe two locks on the front and back doors, possibly with an added bolt for extra security at night. That will keep most amateur burglars out, but a determined crook will find a way to get in anyhow. So be it, unless you live in a big city apartment where it is smart to live behind a steel door with multiple locks set in a reinforced frame.

The same goes for routers. To keep occasional snoopers out of your network takes only a few simple changes to be made on the router's access page. Replace the default password needed to access the set up screen with a secure one that is easy to remember (an old street address is good, as it contains letters and numbers). Also change the default user name, if your router lets you.

On the wireless access page change the SSID name to a secure one. On the same page uncheck the option to broadcast the SSID name.

Forget about all the other security options, including WEP or WPA encryption, unless someone could have good reason to spend lots of time and talent guessing your setup information and ruin you in doing so. Just because it can be done doesn't mean anyone will actually go to the trouble! Just make sure to write down the user name, password and the SSID. And if you forget anyway, it only takes a few minutes to reset the router all over again.

Windows Tips and Tricks

The June 28, 2005 edition of *PC Magazine* carried a large number of Tips and Tricks for Windows, mostly contributed by PCM's lead analyst Neal Rubenking, whose articles and advice I have been following almost as long as I have been using computers. Try to get hold of a copy to see for yourself. Here are some that caught my eye.

If an error message indicates that a system file is missing or corrupted you may be able to recover it from the *Windows* disk. You *did* get one when you bought your computer, did you? Else ask the manufacturer for one - you paid for it! Insert the *Windows* system disk and select Search from the Start menu. Use the name of the file you are looking for, but replace the last character of the extension with an underscore, e.g. Notepad.ex_ instead of Notepad.exe. Make a note of where you found it and then use some good, old-fashioned DOS command to expand that file and install it on your hard drive where it belongs. Use Start…Run and in the window that pops up type (for this example, assuming your CD ROM is labeled D:) expand D:\Setup\Notepad.ex_ C:\Windows\Notepad.exe and that should do it. In some cases the missing file is stored in a compressed CAB file. You can find out by repeating the search with the full file name. If found, open the CAB file in *Windows Explorer* and simply drag the missing file to its location on your hard drive.

Another handy tip concerns access to *Windows* in its Safe mode, such as might be required to remove a virus infection. The manual tells you to hit F8 or DEL (depending on the make of your computer) during start up, right after the initial boot sequence completes, but before *Windows* starts loading. In practice, there is only a fraction of a second during which you must do this, and it may take many repeats before you finally get it right. With a USB keyboard it is impossible to do at all, since the keyboard won't be active yet at the required moment. If you miss and the system boots up in the full-fledged *Windows* mode, press Start…Run and type msconfig followed by the Enter key. Choose the BOOT.INI tab and check the /SAFEBOOT box. Now XP will reboot in Safe mode until you repeat the procedure and uncheck the box.

Recovered Printer Cartridge

The other night I set out to print a first birthday picture of our black-and-white Cocker Spaniel, Bonnie. As the picture emerged from the printer, an older HP-812C, the top half looked OK but the bottom half was faded red. Clearly, one or two of the three colors in the color cartridge were depleted. Just because of such happenings, I always keep an extra cartridge on hand, in the refrigerator to keep it fresh. That may have been a bad idea.

I installed the spare cartridge, aligned it, and printed out the picture. The black snoot of the dog came out looking distinctly bluish. Back in the image editor I darkened the black parts of the image and printed it out again. Same result, distinctly bluish. Continuing the next evening, a test page indicated that the yellow color of the cyan-magenta-yellow cartridge was not printing. I used the printer's utilities to clean the cartridge and to prime the inks, without luck. I took the cartridge out and carefully cleaned the print head with 90 percent pure rubbing alcohol, still without success.

I was ready to give up on the cartridge and buy a new one when one more possibility occurred to me. I double-bagged the cartridge in two ZipLoc bags and immersed it for 20 minutes in a pan of hot tap water. That did the trick; Bonnie printed out just fine. From now on no more storing of color cartridges in the refrigerator!

AdSubtract, Good Bye!

For years I have used *AdSubtract* to block nuisance ads while browsing. These days ads are no longer just nuisances, as some are harmful and require stronger countermeasures. I still have *AdSubtract* on my older system, but its update button is no longer active. A Google search indicates that Intermute, *AdSubtract's* parent, has been acquired by Trend Micro. *AdSubtract* has been combined with TrendMicro's *SpySubtract Pro* to form Trend Micro *Anti-Spyware 3.0*, which is compatible only with *Windows XP or 2000*.

The Editorial Committee of the Association of Personal Computer User Groups has provided this article.

October is National Cyber Security Awareness Month

By James Katz, Editor, *Capital PCUG Monitor*

The month of October is designated as National Cyber Security Awareness Month once again this year by the National Cyber Security Alliance (NCSA), a not-for-profit public-private partnership dedicated to promoting awareness and education about computer security. Working with sponsors in the government, such as the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) and the Federal Trade Commission (FTC), as well as corporate and computer industry partners in the private sector, the NCSA began the initiative of celebrating October as Cyber Security Awareness Month last year to increase the computing public's attention to computer security issues, enhance their recognition of computer threats and vulnerabilities, and motivate them to better prepare for, prevent, and respond to computer security risks.

The goal of the NCSA initiative is to reach millions of users in homes, small businesses, schools, colleges, and universities, as well as those in corporations and government. According to NCSA President, Ken Watson, the mission of the NCSA is "to reach out to all Americans -- not just the computer experts," through a campaign of media announcements and national and regional events, such as presentations, workshops, conferences, and fairs, dealing with topics like identity theft, computer scams, safe behavior practices on the Internet, and child safety online. (For information about events in your area, check with your local college or university, look at the listings at *www.staysafeonline.info/events/index.html*, or go to the Multi-State Information Sharing Analysis Center's Web site at *www.cscic.state.ny.us/msisac/ncsa/oct05/index.htm* to find out what events your state government may have planned.)

Threats to Security

More and more people are using computers to connect to the Internet to communicate with others, conduct their personal banking, and shop and make purchases online. As computer users spend more time online, and make more use of broadband connections or wireless networks to do so, they become increasingly at risk for harmful attacks if they do not take steps to protect their computers.

And the risk is there and growing. According to the DHS, computers connected to the Internet are scanned to assess their setups and weaknesses an average 17 times a day. Estimates attributed to the FBI suggest that one in four computers will be hacked this year. Phishing scam attempts have been reported by Symantec, the security software vendor, to now exceed over 33 million each week. At the same time, 49 percent of people surveyed were not able to recognize such e-mail as a Phishing scam, as indicated by research by the University of Pennsylvania's Annenberg Public Policy Center. A study of home users conducted for NCSA last year by America Online (AOL) found that 63 percent of respondents admitted to ever having a virus on their computers. And, according to the NCSA's Ken Watson, "Industry projections note that by year end, Internet users will have been confronted by an estimated 100,000 forms of malicious code. About 91 percent of PCs today are infected with spyware programs that send information from your PC to an unauthorized third party." He further pointed out that "more than 185 million Americans own computers connected to the Internet -- cyber security should become second nature, just like brushing our teeth."

Despite growing threats to the security of information and technology systems, attitudes and practices of computer users have changed little, if at all, even as reliance on computing and information technology is increasing at all levels of use. Even though surveys have found that computer users' concerns about cyber security risks have increased over past years, users have failed to make prevention or response measures a priority.

Perhaps it is due to users perceiving the pervasiveness of cyber threats as far less common than the reality. In a survey of average computer users, the NCSA found that many people fail to grasp the level of risk: over 30 percent reported believing they were more likely to be struck by lightning, win the lottery, or be audited by the IRS than become the victim of a cyber attack or privacy breach. Yet the actual odds of suffering a cyber attack are about 70 percent, while the odds of each of the other events are well under one percent.

The Need for Cyber Security

The risk of an attack is great, and the consequences of failing to prevent the potential damage can be devastating. You may not even realize the full extent of the consequences if your system is hacked or infected with malicious software ("malware"), such as a computer virus, worm, or Trojan horse. Some of the consequences can include:

Data loss: The data you collected and the work you spent so much time producing can be destroyed. If you do get hacked or infected, you need to be able to identify what was damaged, and then restore the data from your backup systems. Computer downtime can cost money as well as time while files or hardware are fixed, and time and effort must be redirected to restore or redo the original work.

Corruption of data: If your data is not completely lost, it may be corrupted. If the data has been changed, but not destroyed or removed, this may be hard to discover. If you do, you will have to figure out which data is good and which is bad, and this can be difficult and pains-

taking. If you don't discover there is corrupted data right away, you may be working when you experience a "cascade failure," a problem that occurs when failure in one system takes down adjoining systems in a progressive series. Problems may then spread throughout your systems before the errors are discovered. It can take substantial time and effort to track down the initial problem and restore your computer's systems from backups.

Theft of data: Some kinds of data are more attractive targets than others. Of course, anything associated with money is a prime target, such as credit card numbers and banking account information. Personal data, such as social security numbers, are often sought for identity theft to commit fraud.

Misuse of data: Your work may be stolen by others at your school or business and represented as their own, or your personal photos or information could be taken and made public. If your records, trade secrets, financial data, or other sensitive information wound up in the hands of your company rival, business competitors, or even a stranger seeking to cause embarrassment, could you be at risk for losing the grant, account, promotion, job, or reputation you'd been working hard to achieve?

Noncompliance with legal responsibilities: If your computer is hacked or infected and used to send out pornography or spam e-mail, you may be held legally liable for allowing such unlawful practices. Even if you did not know of it or intend for such e-mail to be sent, you could be judged at fault for failing to prevent or stop it.

Becoming part of a larger problem: Infection of your computer or network with a malware that sends out numerous e-mails can perpetuate the problem of spam and propagate more infections. If your computer is taken over by a hacker and used to take part in an attack on a federal or corporate mainframe computer, then your computer could possibly become an instrument of cyber terrorism intended to disrupt financial or governmental operations.

As this last factor points out, cyber security is a concern not only for each of us individually, it is a concern for us collectively. As Ron Teixeira, NCSA's Executive Director, remarked, "The scope and impact of existing and emerging online threats requires an ongoing partnership between government, businesses, schools, and consumers. Working together, we can make the Internet safer for everyone." Making your personal computer secure can play a crucial part in protecting the nation's Internet infrastructure.

Cyber Security Practices

To determine whether you've made the security of your computer system or network a priority, consider the following questions:

• Do you select strong passwords and keep them private?

•Do you use a password protected screen saver?
•Do you keep your computer locked up when not in use?
•Do you make sure important and sensitive personal information is not stored on your system?
•Do you use a software or hardware firewall, or both, and have you configured it properly?
•Do you use anti-virus and anti-spyware software, and do you keep them up to date?
•Do you exercise caution when opening e-mail attachments?
•Do you know where to report spam or fraudulent e-mail?
•Are you aware of the risks in file sharing?
•Do you download and install operating system and application software security patches as they become available?
• Do you back up your important files?

According to a number of cyber security experts, the first step in keeping your computer secure is to limit access to it by unauthorized users. If you use your computer in a setting where others are around, such as in a library or office, this means physically securing the machine. Locking up the computer when not in use, and using password protected access and screen savers, keeps strangers from sitting down at your machine and exploring your files. Passwords should be strong (i.e., difficult to guess or discover), and never shared with others. As Cliff Stoll, an authority on security, suggested, "treat your password like your toothbrush -- don't let anyone use it, and get a new one every six months." You can use random password generators, such as those found at sites like *www.securityawareness.com/files/rpg.exe* or *www.toad.net/cgibin/cgiwrap/spwgroup/lc.pl.* If you suspect your password has been learned, change it immediately.

To limit access to your system by way of the Internet, be sure to use firewall software or hardware, or both. And be sure it is configured correctly to allow in and out only those communications you want. According to the NCSA survey conducted by AOL, mentioned earlier, only 37 percent of the respondents currently used some sort of firewall on their computer; 87 per cent believed they had set up their firewall correctly, yet 72 percent were found to have an improperly configured firewall.

Despite using a firewall, sometimes viruses, spyware, and other malware can still get into your computer system, often through e-mail or file sharing.

Security experts say you should make sure you have anti-virus and anti-spyware software installed, and scans are being run (at least on a weekly basis). To avoid having to rebuild your entire system after malware has taken root, it must be detected, quarantined, and deleted before damage is done. And be sure to keep the protective software current by updating it regularly, if not automatically;

protective software is useless if it doesn't know what the latest threat is to protect against. A number of different protective software applications are available, either free or at low cost; the National Capital Technology and Computer User's Group has a comprehensive table, with links to sources, comparing various anti-virus and anti-spyware programs on their Web site at *www.nctcug.org/protection.html.*

To minimize the risk of receiving malware through e-mail, it is best to not respond to any messages, click on any Web page links, or open any attachments you have any questions about. Experts recommend that you use encrypted e-mail, and not send confidential or sensitive information via e-mail. If you get questionable or apparently fraudulent e-mail, you should report it to the network administrator, your Internet Services Provider, and the appropriate authorities.

More Precautions

A number of other precautions are recommended to protect your computer from harm of spyware and to preserve your data and privacy. If you use a wireless network, be sure to secure it with the appropriate protocols. If you use a broadband connection, turn off your computer or disconnect it when not in use so that unwanted communications cannot be sent or received when its activity is not monitored.

Be careful about what is getting into your computer by other means, as well. Do not use software that has not been obtained from a known source. Do not share files from your computer, and use caution in loading files from others through removable media, such as floppy disks, CDs, zip drives, tape cartridges, and other types of storage. And be sure to keep secure any of these removable media on which you've stored your data; keep removable data storage media locked up, destroy the material when you're finished with it, and make sure your computer's hard drive is wiped clean when the time comes to dispose of it.

One important cyber security practice that is often overlooked is that of backing up your data and your systems. Consider how secure you'd feel if you couldn't rely on the information you're working with, or depend on your computer to operate properly. If any of your cyber

security measures are breached, and your computer files are deleted, corrupted, or intentionally or accidentally falsified, or if your hard drive fails, at least you can re-establish a reliable system if you have your information safely backed up. Make sure that you back up your data on an ongoing basis, that what is backed up can be restored, and that you have copies of your operating system and software applications, with all their security patch updates.

Vigilance Rewarded

NCSA's initiative to raise awareness about cyber security nationwide and empower people to improve their security knowledge and preparedness includes a number of events during the month of October and a variety of resources all year long. You can find out more, and pick up cyber security tips, at the NCSA Web site, *www.staysafeonline.info*. More information is available at other sites, such as *www.cybercitizenship.org, www.ftc.gov/bcp/conlineedcams/infosecurity,* and *www.cert.org*. An assortment of items about cyber security, as well as links to other articles, is also available at *www.microsoft.com/security/default.mspx.*

The fact is that no computer connected to a network can be assured of being 100 percent secure 100 percent of the time. No one security measure is sufficient to protect your computer from all threats at all times. Each measure requires continual care to make sure it is operating, and all necessary updates and security patches are obtained and installed on a regular and timely basis.

Cyber security may seem like a substantial burden, but the effort is an investment that can be greatly rewarded. If you are not interrupted by a security breach, you can focus on moving forward rather than spending your time trying to recover and catch up. Continually seeking the latest information about cyber security, keeping yourself educated about security issues, staying vigilant about computer vulnerabilities, and consistently exercising good protective practices online can make the difference in preventing the hardship of destroyed data, lost time, duplicated effort, and disrupted progress.

The Editorial Committee of the Association of Personal Computer User Groups has provided this article.

New Winners in the Spyware Removal Wars

A recent survey of spyware detection and removal programs by *PC World* turned up some new winners. Reporting in the November 2005 issue, their researchers named *Webroot Software Spy Sweeper 4.0* ($30 /yr.) as head of the class, removing 90 percent of the spyware components in their test. In this "Paid Standalone" cate-

gory, McAfee *AntiSpyware 2006* and *PC Tools Spyware Doctor 3.*2 trailed *Webroot.* The former champion, *Sunbelt Software CounterSpy 1.029,* came in at fourth place. *Panda Platinum Internet Security Suite* ($90) included a spyware checker almost as good as *Webroot.*

Thank You !

The Napa Valley Personal Computer Users Group is grateful for the support provided by the following companies:

Napa Valley Personal Computer Users Group

Membership Application/Renewal*

G New   G Renewal   G Information Update

Please Print

Full Name: _____ Nickname:_____

Street/PO Box: _____

City: _____ State: ____ ZIP Code: _____-_____

Phone (check preferred): G Home: (_____)_____-_____

                                              G Work: (_____)_____-_____

E-mail (check preferred): G Home: _____

                                            G Work: _____

Occupation/Profession: _____ Retired? _____

Do you want to be added to the following NVPCUG e-mail lists?

News and announcements: G Yes   G No
General discussion of computer-related topics: G Yes   G No

If you do **not** want your preferred phone number and/or e-mail address published in the *NVPCUG Directory*, which is for the exclusive use of NVPCUG members, check the appropriate box(es):

G Do not list phone number   G Do not list e-mail address

Family members whom you want to sponsor as Associate Members: (Associate Members have the same membership rights as their sponsors, except for receiving newsletters)

Full Name   E-mail Address

_____   _____

_____   _____

Annual Dues:
   $30 **Regular Member** - an individual who is not a full-time student
   $20 **Student Member** - a full-time student who is not eligible for Associate membership.
   $10 **Associate Member** - a family member of a Regular or Student member. Associate memberships run concurrently with sponsors' memberships.

   Make check payable to **Napa Valley Personal Computer Users Group.**

Mail application/renewal to: **Napa Valley Personal Computer Users Group, Attn.: Membership Director, P.O. Box 2866, Napa, CA 94558-0286.**

The NVPCUG is an accredited IRC 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization. Your dues payment may be tax-deductible as a charitable contribution.

* To request a Corporate Membership Application/Renewal form, e-mail: *Membership @nvpcug.org.*

Revised 8-19-05

For more information about the NVPCUG, visit our Web site: http://www.nvpcug.org

Tech News

By Sue Crane, Vice President & Editor, Big Bear Computer Club, California   sue.crane@charter.net

Nothing Is Ever Really FREE

Linus Torvalds, creator of the Linux OS, has begun protecting his trademark for the term Linux. He's doing so to protect users from unauthorized and confusing use of the name. Torvalds first trademarked Linux several years ago but has rarely defended its use. The licensing fees for Linux are modest. LMI is charging $200 to $5000 for each license; most sublicensees end up paying $200 to $500. Most Linux companies have enthusiastically agreed to the licensing terms.

AMD Asks Intel for a Duel

Major US newspapers in September showed an AMD processor standing in a boxing ring waiting for Intel to appear for a duel later this year so consumers can see who has the best dual-core processor. Dual-core chips have two processor cores on a single piece of silicon, boosting performance and reducing power consumption compared to two single-core processors. AMD released its first dual-core Opteron processors earlier this year. Intel said that it will release its first dual-core server chips later this year, ahead of its original schedule. But regarding the duel, Intel was not available for comment.

PC Has Water-cooled Radiator

NEC took the wraps off its Valuestar G Type C, a new desktop PC that has a radiator embedded in the water cooler unit built into the back of the chassis. The company said the added refrigeration will let consumers overwork the included Intel Celeron processor but keep the PC running at 30 decibels, which is whisper voice. PC noise is increasingly a concern as more powerful computers require stronger and often louder cooling systems.

New IE 7.0 is for Windows Only!

Sources at Microsoft have announced that *IE 7.0* will henceforth be referred to as *Windows IE 7.0*, highlighting the fact that the browser is integrated with *Windows* and isn't a stand-alone product. According to a source at Microsoft, the change signifies that *IE* will no longer be available for other platforms. Users should simply consider *IE 7.0* to be part of *Windows.*

No More Textbooks?

Students at Empire High School in Vail, AZ started class this year with no textbooks. Instead, the school issued laptop computers to each of its 340 students, becoming one of the first U.S. public schools to turn away from printed textbooks. Empire High, which opened for the first time this year, was designed specifically to have a textbook-free environment.

TPMs Make E-Commerce Safer

Trusted Platform Modules, if you've never heard of them, are chips that store cryptographic information needed to unlock hard drives, authenticate network logons and perform similar tasks. What is exciting about TPMs is their role in electronic transactions because they make sure the money and the product get to their proper destinations, via "anonymous certificates." Hacking such a certificate would not give criminals access to personal information such as credit card numbers, since the transaction is done on your side of the network, not on the server-side.

eBay Rethinks Recycling

Faster, more advanced computers, cell phones and electronics offer endless possibilities for enrichment, learning and entertainment. But as consumers and businesses keep pace with the introduction of exciting new products, we are faced with a mounting challenge: what to do with the products we're upgrading from. The Rethink Initiative brings together industry, government and environmental organizations to offer a fresh perspective and new answers to the challenge of e-waste. On their Web site you can find information, tools and solutions that make it easy – and even profitable – to find new users for idle computers and electronics, and responsibly recycle unwanted products. Go to: *http://rethink.ebay.com/* .

The Editorial Committee of the Association of Personal Computer User Groups has provided this article.

Napa Valley Personal Computer Users Group

P.O. Box 2866
Napa, CA 94558-0286

Address Service Requested