

THE C.A.T.S. Eye



PRESIDENT'S CORNER

BRING YOUR LAPTOP WITH YOU TO THE NEXT MEETING!

The Chesapeake Area Technology Society (CATS)

Happy Holidays Everyone!

I hope everyone is enjoying their holidays with family and friends. I hope you include CATS among your friends as we are a close knit club. There was a great turnout at the November meeting and I hope this continues with the upcoming meetings. We have some great meeting topics coming up and some great raffle prizes as part of those meetings. Please continue to come to the meetings and bring a friend or two!

New meeting location – Broadneck High School Media Center (Map on Page 2)

For those who didn't know, we have had to change our meeting location to the Broadneck Senior High School, in the 2nd Floor Media Center. The facility is different than what we're used to at Severn River and because of their schedule, we've had to move the main meeting from the 2nd to the 3rd Wednesday of the month. There is an elevator for handicapped use at the end of the corridor for the main (1st entrance) to the school. The custodial staff has been very accommodating to us and will be available to operate the elevator for anyone who needs it on Wednesday.

At our annual holiday meetings, we usually brought our own food and drink when it was held at the Middle School. Because of our new location at Broadneck High School. The December 18th meeting was a buffet dinner for all members in good standing at the Cafe Mezzanotte in Severna Park. It was a great meeting with 8 Raffle

prizes including a Kindle Fire 8.9" HDX, 32GB tablet, a Kindle Fire 7" HDX, 32 GB tablet, and two Kindle Paperwhite tablets. In addition there were two, 128 GB, USB 3 thumb drives, and two Toshiba 8GB FlashAir wireless SD cards. Many thanks to Sam Shepherd for handling all the arrangements for the dinner.

Upcoming Meeting Topics

At the next few meetings we will have some significant raffle prizes, so bring some cash!

January 15, 2014 – Best Buy representatives (will visit our group to demonstrate some of the latest technology they offer for sale. As the meeting gets closer, we should have more information on the specific demonstration.

February 19, 2014 – We hope to have the local Apple users group, Annapolis Apple Slice, demonstrate the Apple ecosystem to the group. This will show how the laptops, tablets, and mp3 players all work in harmony.

As you can see we have a very full agenda over the next few months. I hope to see you all at the upcoming meetings.

Dont't forget, this is the last issue of the newsletter that will be mailed out. You must be signed up for the Yahoo Groups to receive notification of when it can be downloaded from the website.

Michael



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PUPs

by

Fran Damratowski

PUPs are not dogs or any other animal, although some may consider them dogs in the context of slang. PUP is actually an acronym for **P**otentially **U**nwanted **P**rogram created by McAfee <http://www.mcafee.com/us/resources/white-papers/wp-potentially-unwanted-programs-spyware-adware.pdf>. PUPs can include spyware, adware or any other unwanted program that was downloaded with another program. The term was coined PUP because marketing firms objected to having their projects called spyware.

PUPs are frequently bundled with free programs that you download. When you read licensing agreements and privacy policies you may find a section that says that they will obtain some information about you and your computer use. This is a great way for companies to send you adware. Its worth reading the above link to McAfee it's very informative.

If you have not done so in the past read the licensing agreement and privacy policy as well as any other links in the licensing agreement the next time you plan to download a free program. Read it carefully because the information about what they collect may be obscure. They may mention subsidiaries and contractors that they cannot control. Some programs need to collect the information. For example anti-malware programs will need to collect information so that they can create anti-malware.

PUPs are sometimes called "grey ware" because they don't usually pose a security threat such as viruses, worms or Trojan Horses, but they may do so. If you would like to check for PUPs and remove them try the free version of Malwarebytes Anti-Malware <http://www.malwarebytes.org/> this program will specifically identify the installed PUPs click the ones you want to remove. You can choose to ignore some of them if you wish to do so by placing them in the ignore list.

Ccleaner <https://www.piriform.com/ccleaner> will cleanout junk and you can also clean the registry.

Here are some examples of what you may find in a license agreement or privacy policy:

"We may combine information that we have about you with information we obtain from business partners or other companies."

"Support.com automatically receives and records information on our server logs from your browser, including your IP address, Support.com cookie information, and pages you request. This is done as part of regular internet communication between a browser and a web site. We use Personal Information and other information collected in this manner to provide you with the products or services you have requested, process any payments you have agreed to for such products and services, contact you regarding specific products or services you have requested or to provide other information you have requested from us, customize advertisements or content you may see while using our products or services, and, if you have agreed to receive special promotional offers from us by email or otherwise, to contact you regarding such promotional offers."

If you would like some further information about PUPs here are some additional websites.

<http://searchsecurity.techtarget.com/definition/PUP>

<http://www.spywareremove.com/malware-programs/potentiallyunwantedprograms/>

<http://www.enigmasoftware.com/threat-database/potentially-unwanted-programs/>

<http://www.theguardian.com/technology/ask-jack/2013/oct/31/windows-pups-potentially-unwanted-programs-pc-uninstall>

Ubuntu a Form of Linux

by

Fran Damratowski

For those of you who missed the wonderful presentation on Ubuntu that Fran gave at the September meeting, she's taken the time to write this great article not just about her presentation, but about the World of Linux.

Linux is a Unix like operating system (OS) developed by Linus Torvalds. It is an open source free operating system <http://opensource.org/docs/definition.html>. This means that it can be freely distributed including the source code.

There are many versions of Linux distributions called distros. We are going to look at one of the distros – Ubuntu <http://www.ubuntu.com/>. Ubuntu means humanity to others a South African philosophy. It is easy to learn, it has a help file to help get the user started and a downloadable manual <http://ubuntu-manual.org/downloads>. Anyone can contribute to the development of Ubuntu. It is managed by the Canonical Management Team.

Long term support (LTS) versions are released every two years and are supported for 5 years. The current LTS version is Ubuntu 12.04.3 LTS, 12 for 2012, 04 for April the 4th month of the year. Hardware is supported for the first two years until the next LST version is released in April 2014, Ubuntu 14.04. Maintenance, updated to the current version, continues for the full 5 years. Just update it every week or two. Standard versions are released every 6 months for example Ubuntu 12.10 (October 2012), 13.04, and 13.10. Ubuntu 13.10 is the last release of a standard version. Each version has a name for example Ubuntu 12.04 LTS is called Precise Pangolin, a pangolin is an anteater.

Why would you want to use Ubuntu? First it's free. It's a good way to get some use out of that old computer stored away in the basement or garage after all Windows XP will not be supported after April 8, 2014. Ubuntu has minimum requirements, VGA 1024x768, 700MHz Intel Celeron

processor or better, 512 MB RAM, 5 GB hard drive space, and either a CD/DVD drive or a USB port. If your old computer only has a CD drive download the Ubuntu 12.04.2. Version 12.04.3 is larger and requires a DVD drive. Run it as a live drive from the CD or DVD first to determine if your computer can use Ubuntu. Choose "Try Ubuntu". If you want to try this on a computer that you do not want to overwrite your hard drive by mistake make a clone of your hard drive. Ubuntu is downloaded as an .iso file so it will need to be burned as an executable file.

Other reasons for using Ubuntu are the drivers are installed automatically; there is no need to search for drivers. Linux OSs are not usually a target for hackers because there are fewer users than Windows and the Apple OS. It's Multi-language. There are hundreds (maybe thousands/millions) of apps available in fact about 80 are pre-installed. Many of the apps are open source and free, others are inexpensive. . If the 80+ apps installed with Ubuntu so a search for "Ubuntu Applications". Ubuntu also includes Firefox for web browsing, Thunderbird for email, and the cloud.

One of the best things about Ubuntu is that one of the 80 preinstalled apps is LibreOffice <http://www.libreoffice.org/default>. Parts of LibreOffice are compatible with Microsoft Office, Writer (text), Calc (spreadsheet), and Impress (PowerPoint) are compatible with Microsoft Office. Base (database), Math, and Draw are not compatible with MS Office. Some adjustments may be needed for titles, images, and hyperlinks. LibreOffice can also be run on Windows. Windows and Apple programs usually will not run on

cont'd on Page 5

Alternative Landline Telephone Services

Parts 1 & 2

by

Ira Wilsker

WEBSITES:

<http://ooma.com>

<http://www.ooma.com/rates>

<http://www.magicJack.com>

<http://www.nettalk.com>

<http://www.skype.com/en/>

<http://www.vonage.com>

<http://obihai.com>

<http://www.basictalk.com>

<http://www.timewarnercable.com/en/residential-home/phone/domestic-international-calling-plans.html>

<http://gigaom.com/2012/12/26/over-half-of-american-homes-dont-have-or-use-their-landline/>

<http://www.usatoday.com/story/tech/2012/12/27/more-than-half-homes-without-landline/1793823/>

PART 1

It should come as no surprise to followers of technology that newer technologies always tend to replace older technologies; this process has been going on since the advent of mankind. Of the myriad of technologies widely used today, it should come as no surprise that the traditional hardwired landline telephones, using a basic analog technology well over a century old, are already obsolescent. According to a story in USA Today on December 27, 2012 (quoting an original 12/26/12 article from Gigaom), “More than half of U.S. homes don’t have or use landline.” The article explains how wireless phones have in many cases totally replaced the copper wired analog phones in the majority of homes. This decline in demand for traditional phone service has not been lost on the likes of AT&T and Verizon, major providers of hardwired phone services. The USA Today and Gigaom articles state, “As the FCC begins its regulatory process to change the rules associated with landline access and telcos like AT&T and Verizon try to get out of the landline business altogether, it’s clear that the phasing out of copper-based voice lines will have

repercussions that go beyond telephone calls.”

While cellular (mobile) telephones have taken away much of the market share (and profitability) of the copper based landline services, the rapid rise in the popularity of alternative phone services utilizing “Voice over Internet Protocol” (VoIP) has indicated that there is still substantial demand for a somewhat fixed telephone service for both home and business users. VoIP phone services are digital, utilize the internet to carry calls rather than the more traditional copper lines, generally offer superior voice quality, and utterly lack the domestic long distance charges still charged by the traditional phone companies. For those making international long distance phone calls, either to or from the United States, most of these VoIP services offer either free or very inexpensive international long distance. Several of the VoIP providers also offer a reasonably priced international flat rate calling plan with unlimited international calling for less than just local calling costs from a traditional phone company. Originally, most of the VoIP providers had difficulty sending and receiving traditional analog FAX messages, but that problem has been resolved, with almost all of the digital carriers now handling FAX machines as well as any other

cont'd on Page 7

connected phone devices.

Watching TV for more than a few minutes will likely expose the viewer with a host of commercials for alternative phone services. Among the most widely advertised digital phone products and services are MagicJack, Vonage, Time Warner Digital Phone (other similar cable company phone services are promoted by other carriers), Ooma, netTALK, and BasicTalk. While not heavily advertised, but widely known and used in technical circles are Skype and Obihai. Major providers of online chat services, such as Google, Microsoft, and Yahoo! offer voice chat services that are encroaching on telephone services, with the Google Voice service now being used by many users as a replacement for traditional telephone service. Social networking services, such as Facebook, may also be entering the fray.

I will admit that over the years, I have experimented with several of the devices that can be used to simply connect common home phone (corded or cordless) to the internet in order to make virtually unlimited local and long distance phone calls. Originally, my primary intent was to avoid horrendous long distance charges when my daughters started going away to college. Later, when cell phone plans offered a very limited number of minutes, with additional minutes being very expensive, I needed an alternative method to avoid crippling long distance charges when calling out-of-area family. While our current cell phone plan has a large number of (limited) daytime minutes, with unlimited evening and weekend calling, my primary interest in a VoIP system is to be able to totally replace my antiquated but traditional phone company with a much more cost effective (money saving) alternative that includes virtually unlimited local and domestic long distance calling. By noticing the increasing popularity of the VoIP systems for home use (home users may be able to retain their "old" landline phone number while generating substantial savings), and the exploding use of VoIP

based office phones (a service offered by several of the digital phone providers), it seems inevitable that the traditional landline carriers such as AT&T and Verizon may be presiding over a dying technology.

After toying around with several voice-chat services, requiring the use of a headset and boom microphone, my first foray into the more modern VoIP services was with the original version of the magicJack, which I reviewed here in the February 19, 2009 edition of the Examiner. My major complaint about the original magicJack, an issue resolved in a later version, was that it had to be connected to a computer that was turned on in order to function; when my computer was turned off, there was no magicJack service. About two years ago (Examiner, December 23, 2011), I reviewed an updated version of the then new magicJack PLUS, a much improved build that did not require an "always on" computer in order to have full phone access. Newer builds of the device, the latest named "2014 magicJack PLUS", now claim much improved voice quality. The new magicJack PLUS device retails for \$69.95, but is widely available for as low as half that price, and usually included the first year of service. Additional years can be purchased for as little as \$19.95 per year with a multiyear subscription. The PLUS version of the MagicJack is very simple to install and setup; the AC adapter is plugged into a standard power outlet, with the magicJack's USB plug inserted into the AC power source. A standard phone is connected with its phone plug to one port on the magicJack, and a standard Ethernet (network) cable is connected another port on the device. Registration is fast and simple, leading to a dial tone on the now connected telephone. To be fair, before having adequate cell phone minutes, the portability feature of the magicJack was handy as I could make and receive phone calls from wherever I had a decent broadband internet connection.

cont'd on Page 8

7

Landline Telephone Alternatives - Cont'd

As with almost all of its competitors, magicJack offers many of the same services as traditional landlines, including caller ID, voice mail, and 911 service (E911). The magicJack is arguably the best selling VoIP device because of its heavy advertising and promotions, with the magicJack website claiming over 11 million devices sold.

Prior to the release of the PLUS version of magicJack, I was seeking an alternative that did not require an "always on" computer in order to function full time; I found that device, the netTALK DUO, which I reviewed in length in the Examiner on May 4, 2012. The basic netTALK DUO was less expensive than the magicJack PLUS, priced at \$49.95 retail (commonly available for about a third less), had superior voice quality, with better customer service and tech support than magicJack. The first year of virtually unlimited local and long distance service was included in the price, with additional years of service available for \$29.95; a year of netTALK cost about the same as a month of basic landline service from the traditional phone companies. Portable, with almost all of the features of a landline (e911, voice mail, caller ID, etc.) I preferred the netTALK over the magicJack. A new model, the netTALK DUO WiFi (\$64.95), offers the option of connecting to any available WiFi service rather than connecting to a router via Ethernet cable.

Next week, in Part 2, read about some of the newer VoIP services including Ooma, BasicTalk, Obihai, Skype, Vonage, and the digital phone services offered by the cable companies.

PART 2

Last week I discussed some of the very popular, somewhat portable alternative telephone devices from magicJack and netTALK. This week I will discuss some of the more sophisticated alternative telephone services from Ooma, the cable TV companies, Obihai, Vonage, and Skype.

My latest attempt at a home based VoIP service was an Ooma Telo device. While initially more expensive than netTALK or magicJack, it seems to have better voice quality, and virtually unlimited free local and long distance calling without a monthly or annual subscription fee, making it quickly more cost competitive than a magicJack or netTALK if used for more than two years. Retailing for \$149, it is widely available new for under \$100, and several of the "bargain" websites periodically have the Ooma (refurbished) for around \$69. On Black Friday, I purchased my new Ooma Telo for the same price as others charged for a refurbished model. Installation was very fast and easy, with the online activation an intuitive process. I selected a local phone number, and was able to make and receive phone calls in just a very few minutes. The included AC adapter, Ethernet cable (included), and cord from the telephone connect to the back of the Ooma; as with other VoIP devices, a broadband connection and available router port are required. The device, which is probably the best looking of the devices I considered, is possibly one of the most full featured devices available. I tried its much acclaimed technical support (a weakness with many of its competitors), and it was fast, polite, and effective. Published reviews from trade and technical journals raved about the voice quality of the Ooma over its competitors, and while I did not scientifically test it, I can say that the voice quality was excellent. In order to be fair, the free local and long distance service is not really free, as Ooma is required to collect taxes from its users; according to the Ooma website, "Federal universal service charges, FCC regulatory fee, state and local taxes, fees & surcharges and regulatory and compliance fees are billed monthly and are subject to change." I went to the tax rate calculator on the Ooma website (www.ooma.com/rates), entered my zip code, and found that the total federal and local taxes on my unlimited phone services will be \$3.72 per month, charged monthly to my credit

cont'd on Page 9

Landline Telephone Alternatives - Cont'd

card. Reading the fine print on the websites of some of the competing VoIP services indicates that they also either are now, or may shortly start adding these same taxes and fees to their monthly or annual subscription fees. There are several Ooma devices available, including a WiFi adapter (remote devices can send and receive calls via WiFi), Bluetooth adapter (cell phones and other Bluetooth devices can connect directly to Ooma if in range), remote handsets, and other devices. There are Ooma devices explicitly for business users that can connect the businesses' phone lines to VoIP, getting the benefits of free (plus taxes) unlimited local and domestic long distance service. Ooma also offers relatively inexpensive international long distance calling, either at a very low "pennies per minute" rate or a monthly flat rate of \$17.99 for unlimited international long distance calling to 61 countries.

WalMart is heavily advertising BasicTalk digital phone service, complete with the most popular services and unlimited local and domestic long distance calling. I tried a BasicTalk and it appeared to work well, with excellent voice quality. While the VoIP device itself is among the lowest cost of any of its competitors at only \$9.99, and has had excellent reviews, BasicTalk also charges a monthly service fee of \$9.99, which, including the taxes and fees, actually would cost (in my zip code) \$12.11 per month. This is far less expensive than the traditional analog phone service, generating considerable savings over just a few years, but quickly becomes more expensive than most of its competitors.

It is almost a "given" that cable broadband providers also offer a digital (VoIP) phone service along with TV and internet services. While quality is often excellent, and feature rich, it is often among the most expensive of the competing services, even though it is common to offer a "teaser" rate for the first 12 months of service, going up to normal price the 13th month and thereafter. Some cable carriers have announced a "new lower monthly rate" of \$19.99 for service,

while several other cable companies are charging \$24.95 to \$39.95 per month, with charges for some additional services. These monthly rates do not include the added taxes and fees, which are similar to most of the other carriers. Different cable providers have different fee structures for the equipment necessary to connect the home telephone to the cable service, with some leasing (renting) the VoIP device, some including the cost of the device with the monthly subscription fee, and at least one offering a port directly on the rented cable modem for the phone jack. While still cost effective when compared to the traditional landlines, cable digital phone service is among the most expensive alternative services available.

A very interesting device that has traditionally appealed to "techie" is the Obihai series of VoIP devices. These Obihai devices are intended to utilize other VoIP services, such as the Google Voice (GV) service, providing a very low cost of service from devices that start at \$59.99 retail (often available online for about \$37) for the basic OBi100 single line model, with moderately higher prices for models that support multiple lines, FAX service, and other functions. Obihai also has models that support the multiple phone lines found in office environments. Reviews of the Obihai systems have been excellent, and when used on alternative VoIP services, such as Google Voice, are among the least expensive to operate, while offering free local and domestic long distance calling, ultra low cost international calls, and other services. While slightly more complex to setup, these Obihai systems are among the least expensive to own and operate over a period of a year or two.

Vonage is another heavily advertised VoIP product, emphasizing its international calling. In order to use the Vonage service, the user must purchase a "Vonage Box" which may retail for \$79.99 but is widely available deeply discounted. Vonage offers local and international "teaser"

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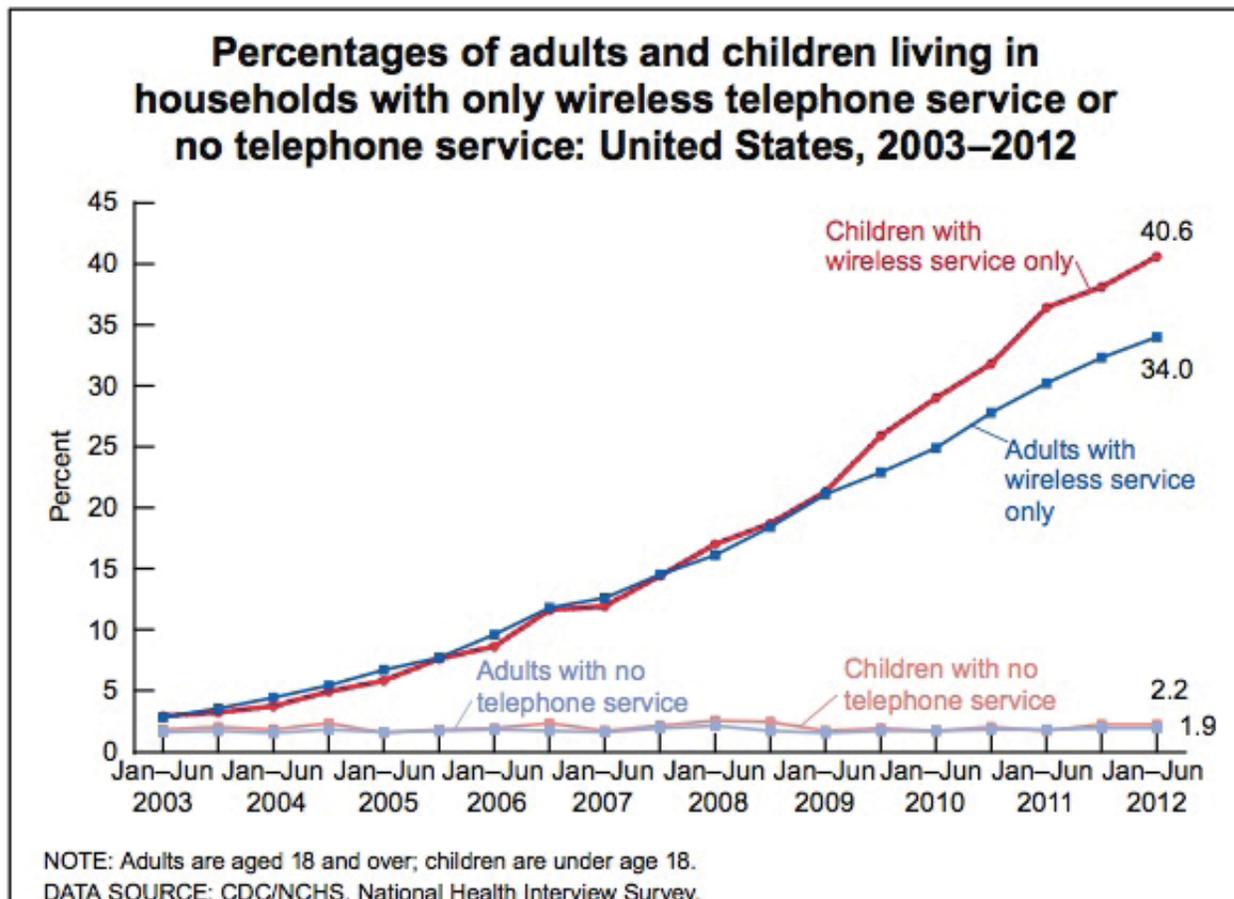
Landline Telephone Alternatives - Cont'd

rates of about \$10 per month for a limited number of months, increasing to \$24.99 per month (plus taxes) for unlimited local and domestic calling, a discounted limited plan (400 minutes per month, 5 cents per minute overage) for \$12.99, and international rates of \$26.99 for unlimited calling to the US and over 60 countries. Along with some of the cable plans, Vonage is among the most expensive of the plans over time, but its international calling plan is among the best available.

No comparison of VoIP plans would be complete without mentioning Microsoft's Skype service. Mostly free if used between computers or smart devices, and inexpensive if calling a phone number, Skype utilizes the computer (or smart device) as the "box", along with the speaker and microphone components of the computer. I have used Skype with a set of headphones and a microphone in order to talk to other Skype

users (the free calls). Calling off the Skype system, such as to other telephones, is reasonably priced, with the lowest rates being available on a subscription basis, with subscription rates being based on projected usage. Domestic (US) calling is as low as 2.3 cents per minute on a "pay as you go" basis, or \$2.99 per month for unlimited calling to the US and Canada, \$7.99 per month for most of North America (including landline calls to major cities in Mexico), to \$13.99 per month for unlimited calling to over 60 countries. There are several telephone-looking devices that serve as a dialer, speaker and microphone that work on computers with Skype, effectively making the computer a complete telephone device. Other than the cost of the computer or smart device, Skype is among the least expensive telephone alternatives.

As the technology is changing, services such as these may be the death knell for the old fashioned, traditional telephone services.



from the Secretary's Desk....

The Board of Director's Meeting was held on Wednesday, December 11, 2013. The meeting convened at 7:00 pm.

In attendance were the following:

The Mikes Young, Regimenti & De Lucia, Joyce Shue, Betsy Fravel, Kathy Walker, Sam Shepherd, Karl Richmond

Upcoming Meeting Topics

Tentative schedule of meetings topics. The meetings are subject to change or rearrangement:

- December 18 – Dinner meeting at Café Mezzanotte. CATS will pay for the dinner for all paid members in good standing and a flash drive will be given to all members. The raffle items will be a Kindle Fire HDX 8.9" and 7", two Kindle Paperwhite, two Wi-Fi SD cards and two 128 GB USB 3 thumb drives.
- January 15 – Best Buy will present the hot items that were sold during the holiday season. We will have at least 2 representatives from Best Buy at the meeting and possibility 4. Matthew Norman who did the presentation last January will be doing it again this January. There will be several raffle items based on their presentation.
- February 19 – A presentation on Apple products and raffle items will include a Mac Book Pro, iPads and an iPad mini.

SIGs

- Technology SIG – There will not be a January Technology SIG. Mike Regimenti who is the chairperson needs suggestions for topics and someone to assist him with conducting some of the meetings.
- CRSIG – The SIG is in need of hard drives that are at least 80 GB SATA and/or IDEs. They are also in need of PS2 and USB keyboards.

Finances

- The finances are stable. Kathy will be assuming the duties however she needs someone to step up and help her with this position.

New Business

- Joyce will start using Meetup.com to advertise our monthly meetings. Meetup is a network of local groups that connects people with groups of their interest.
- **Starting in January, the monthly newsletters will not be mailed. All members will be notified via the CHPCUG Yahoo groups when the newsletter is available. Make sure that you are a member of this group in order to receive your notification.**

The meeting was adjourned at 9:15 pm.

Respectfully Submitted, Joyce Shue, Secretary

The Next Regular Meeting will be at
The Broadneck Senior High School

Wednesday
January 8th, 2014

Meeting will be held in the 2nd Floor Media
Room at BSHS.

It starts at 7:00 P.M. with club business
and a short discussion period.

You're invited to a presentation
the Latest & Greatest
Technology Products
by the folks at
Best Buy

Members and their friends are welcome to
come, ask questions and become enlightened.

How to Find: Broadneck Senior High School

BSHS is close to Cape St. Claire, MD. From Annapolis and points south, take Rt. 50 East towards the Bay Bridge. Take Exit 29 B (cross over Rt. 50) at the light, turn **LEFT** on College Parkway, at next light , then **RIGHT** on Greenholly Drive. At the first light, turn **Right** on to the road that leads to the school and the Broadneck Public Library. BSHS will be ahead and slightly to your left. (Of course, if you are coming from points North, you could turn left onto College Parkway) and follow it 4.1 miles & turn **LEFT** on Greenholly. The first entrance you see, is the **Main Entrance, the left door has been open at 7 pm.** Go through the second set of doors and follow the corridor to the staircase. The Media Room is on the second floor, just off the stairs. Signs will be posted to direct you to the **MEDIA ROOM** where we will be meeting.

**The meetings are held at the BSHS in the
Media Room.**

The Chesapeake Area Technology Society



1783 Forest Drive #285
Annapolis, MD 21401

FIRST CLASS

INSIDE THIS VERY ISSUE!

President's Corner

Ububtu

Secretary Desk

Alternatives to Landlines

THIS IS THE LAST MAILED ISSUE!

.... and a little bit more!

Note: The date above your name on the mailing label is the expiration date of your membership. Contact the Membership Chairman (page 2, column 2) to update.

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