THE PRINTER

Chesapeake PC Users Group, Inc.

Happy New Year!

PRESIDENT'S CORNER

I hope that everyone had a safe and enjoyable holiday season. I'm sure many of you received technology gifts. Don't be afraid to bring them to then next meeting for show and tell.

January 9 – Wireless Connectivity

Many people will get PCs over the holidays that have wireless connectivity available. We will review what it takes to bring your broadband Internet connection to a wireless, and secure state.

As we did last time, **bring your wireless device (laptop, handheld, etc.)** so that the demonstration of wireless connectivity can be shown in real world circumstances.

Also at this meeting, I hope to shift how the meeting structure a bit which should encourage more participation from everyone.

February 13 – Roundtable discussion and Elections!

We are still working out the details for this meeting. Basically some of the BoD members (and anyone else for that matter) will host an open forum when we will discuss some of the important current technology topics.

Also February is election month. If you would like to participate more in the users group, feel free to run for a position on the Board of Directors. All positions are open for any members.

March 12 – Michael Alloy Returns!

The specific meeting topic is will be chosen soon, but Michael always does a great job at giving a presentation whatever the topic.

Michael

Free PC Security

by
Michael Young

This is he time of year that a lot of the PC utility companies release new releases of their software. Many of them are very good, but it can get pricey. In this article I will point out free or very low cost alternatives and some of the features that may be absent in the free solution.

Of note, security should be a layered approach. Your Internet ISP should have some type of anti-virus software running against your e-mail. Also, you should not open messages (and attachments) from unknown parties. You should also move away from using client based e-mail (Outlook, Thunderbird, etc.) Instead, use a web based solution. If you can keep it from your computer, there is less of a chance that problems will happen.

Free PC Security - cont'd

Anti-Virus

I have recommended *AVG Anti-Virus* for years, and will stick with it. This antiviral program offers rock-solid protection for no financial commitment. AVG Anti-Virus Free Edition provides all the necessities, including a tool for scanning your hard drive and e-mail, as well as a real-time shield to prevent infections.

By default, the application is set to search for new virus definitions daily, but you always can use the scheduling tool to change this. Should a virus create serious system problems, AVG creates a rescue disk to scan your computer in MS-DOS mode. The program doesn't tax your system when scanning or when running in the background and always proved effective in our tests.

The interface can't be described as beautiful, yet it is mostly simple to navigate. Sure, you can plunk down a lot of cash for an antiviral application with more features, but *AVG Anti-Virus Free Edition* delivers the goods for free. To download visit:

http://free.grisoft.com

Spyware Removal

This is a multi-layer approach. In the latest Microsoft updates, Malicious Software Removal Tool, is included with the monthly updates. This should be included in your monthly updates.

As an added layer of protection you should be running *SpywareBlaster*. This is one of the highest

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Free PC Security - cont'd

rated Spyware removal products for free. Despite the multiple tabs and variety of options, this utility maintains focus on its sole task: keeping ActiveX-based spyware from hijacking Internet Explorer and Mozilla. Wrapped in a no-frills yet good-looking tabbed interface, *SpywareBlaster* is easy to both navigate and operate. Additional features include the ability to disable Flash animations, create a block list of troublesome DLLs, take a snapshot of your system, and add customized ActiveX blockers for files not included in the program's database. Like most adware-removal programs, it lets you download the latest malware updates. We would have liked support for other popular browsers, such as Opera, and the program offers little help for PCs already infected with adware. Still, *SpywareBlaster* proves a helpful preventative addition to any antiadware arsenal. *SpywareBlaster* can be obtained from:

http://www.javacoolsoftware.com

Firewall

As for Firewall protection, I avoid using software based firewalls. They simply make the computer unproductive. If you use a Router on your broadband connection with a NAT address on the back end, you should be protected from 99% of hackers out there. The other 1% will be able to get through your software firewall anyway.

Miscellaneous tools

Security isn't the only concern. You should keep as much junk out of your system as well. *CCleaner* is an excellent program to clean your registry. Although it lacks a few of the bells and whistles found in other PC-cleaning applications, this free program offers more than enough features to make it a worthy download. *CCleaner's* interface is logically designed and makes it easy to wipe away your tracks from Internet Explorer and Mozilla, various Windows system areas, and some third-party applications.

CCleaner doesn't support a large number of extraneous programs as some competitors do, but it can erase traces from such popular programs as *Spybot - Search & Destroy* and *WinZip*. Also missing is a secure file shredder, but it makes up for the omission by supplying a Registry-cleaning utility, which quickly scans for invalid entries before removing them. *CCleaner* can even back up your Registry before removal, in case it accidentally removes a crucial component, and the download includes a feature for uninstalling any program on your machine.

Since this free application handles the majority of PC-cleaning chores and offers a nice extra, we have no problem recommending *CCleaner* to all users, except those who need to get rid of supersensitive data.

www.ccleaner.com

This should keep you protected from a lot of the baddies out there. As always, keep on the look out for updates and other tools.

The Chesapeake PC Users Group

The Chesapeake PC Users Group (ChPCUG) is a 501(c) 3 charitable organization that has been active in Maryland since 1984.

PC Computer users are assisted through education classes, monthly user meetings, a newsletter, an on-line forum, and the opportunity to participate in Special Interest Groups. ChPCUG collaborates with all organizations and government agencies interested in advancing computer knowledge for members of the local community.

One of the most important functions of ChPCUG is Computer Refurbishing. It began in February 1999 with the purpose of refurbishing computers for those individuals, families, schools, and nonprofit organizations unable to afford a new computer. Grants allow provision of computers at no cost to those unable to make a donation. A modest donation is requested from those able to provide it. Volunteers perform all refurbishing activities.

The activities of the ChPCUG are to promote computer literacy, challenge the digital divide, and enable recipients to have access to the vast storehouse of information available on the Internet.

As of September 2007, the Chesapeake PC Users Group has now provided over 1500 computers to those in need. Since 2004, over 350 computer systems have been provided to elementary school students at no cost.

Please direct your Combined Federal Campaign contributions to:

Central Maryland Area Code #99088
National Capital Area Code #71007

Fabulous Free Software Offer

by
Linda Gonse, Editor,
Orange County IBM PC Users' Group

Hi Everyone,

This fabulous offer was passed along from Mike Lyons, ORCOPUG president.

It's true! Full versions of SnagIt and Camtasia are FREE! Plus you can request a free registration key for each of them. No strings attached. These programs are not the current versions (see below), but with the registration key, you can use them forever -- or upgrade to the newest version at HALF of the cost!

These are not demo or evaluation copies. And we all know TechSmith offers the very best in programs and support. If you don't have these essential programs on your computer, you have a lot to gain by taking TechSmith up on this offer!

Cordially,

Linda Gonse, editor/webmaster
editor@orcopug.org

Orange County IBM PC Users' Group
http://www.orcopug.org
"Computer Users Helping Computer Users"
-- Since 1982 --

And Just When You Thought Santa Made His Last Stop

Check out all the FREE sack of goodies I found over at Lifehacker.com. Here are my favorites - a full version of Snag-It, the ultimate screen capture utility that I use to grab images for DigitalProTalk. Sure, it's a slightly older version - actually the same version I use, but hey, it still works great. And it's FREE. Here is the free Snag-It link right here. But it gets better - read the next post.

Posted by David Ziser at 6:13 PM

Training New Personnel In Record Time Without Having Them Feel Overwhelmed

We small business owners get into this situation every now and then - having to train new personnel to replace a key individual who has resigned, retired, etc. How can we make that training as efficient as possible without it becoming a real "pain?" Well folks, I'm going to make your life a whole lot simpler with another freebie courtesy of Lifehacker.com. This great "goodie grab" is called Camtasia and you can get a perfectly good version of Camtasia 3 right here and at no charge! Sure it's 2 versions behind, but I still have it on some older computers around my studio and it works great.

You ask what is Camtasia? It's the software I use to create my "Technique Tuesday" tutorials. I know what you are thinking - I don't need to make tutorials. Think again, "Grasshopper" - my studio manager of over 8 years just retired about 2 months ago. We just hired a wonderful new person, Jennifer, to fill that position. Here is the question - How do you get that new person up to speed without taking hours and even days of your own time to train them?

Well, I have been creating training tutorials like crazy. These training tutorials include several of our studio processes, Photoshop lessons, in fact anything relating to our computer production processes. We have over a dozen created so far. I've even put Camtasia on all of the staffs computers so they can create their own sharable videos that relate to their own work responsibilities. That way if someone needs to jump in to a less than familiar job, they have something to quickly review before wasting tons of time trying to figure it out on their own.

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Free Software Offer - cont'd

We are creating an entire "knowledge base" for my studio. Now any "newwhire" has the training right at their fingertips. Sure, there will still be questions to be answered, but all of our tutorials sure off loads most of the training time from myself or my experienced staff's shoulders.

Is the importance of this - training - starting to sink in? Think of businesses that are well run. What is key to their success? Product of course. But it's also a well trained staff. Just check out any new restaurant chain that opened in your area. Most of

the "new hires" go through at least 2 weeks of fairly intensive training. That's why they feel comfortable and the place runs pretty much like clockwork even on their first day. We small business owners can experience the same kinds of success by following the "big guys" example and set up in house training programs ourselves. Camtasia lets us do that fairly easily.

If you commit to producing two 10 minute tutorials a week, you will end up with your own training library in no time and a great job training resource. Make it a New Year resolution for 2008 -

Upcoming events for 2008

With the New Year, come new changes in the technology world. The changes that I will discuss are not the unexpected things that I see happening, but some of the things that I think will affect you, as a PC User, will see in the New Year.

Patches

Microsoft will be releasing two major operating system patches in the first quarter of 2008. These are Service Pack 3 for Windows XP and Service Pack 1 for Windows Vista. Both are security related and promise to make the operating systems more stable. In fact the updated in XP-SP3 will add a level of security that is similar to Vista, which brings to question; why should I ever upgrade to Vista?

Service Pack 1 for Vista will fix a few bugs, improve system performance (by about 8%), compatibility, add a few new features, and clean house with some tighter code. It still won't be as fast as XP, but any improvement can't be a bad thing.

New CPUs

Intel and AMD will continue to push new CPUs into the pipeline. AMD has the new Phenom line of Quad-core CPUs, many less then $300. The

reviews to this point have not been great for AMD, but new CPUs will be out soon.

Intel will introduce the "Penryn" processors. Already available in 7 server, and 1 desktop platforms, the laptops will be out in January. These have better performance and less power usage then the previous "Core" architecture. The price should be about the same that you are paying now, but increased performance.

I would hope that AMD would introduce better products, but they don't seem to be keeping up with Intel. This isn't a good thing for the end user. This means that Intel can keep their products artificially inflated to help the bottom line, while at the same time not innovating as quickly as possible. Let's hope AMD is able to up the ante soon.

Not so fast…

While new CPUs, faster operating systems, and other technology innovations seem to want to grab the headlines, I think what will really happen in 2008 will be the step back that we will see with technology.

2008 - cont'd

One of the best selling computers for the last quarter of 2007 has been the ASUS Eee PC. This laptop is using a Celeron 900Mhz CPU, has a 7" screen, runs a custom version of Linux, 512MB or 1GB of RAM, and 4GB of solid-state storage. All of this for $400. Basically the technology is about 8 years old. But it only weighs about 2 pounds and has a long battery life. If you only want to get on the Internet, type a few documents, and share a few photos, this could be the computer for you. I think there may be a few technology backlashes in 2008.

Tech companies always want to push the newest and most expensive widget that they have. Sometimes, this doesn't serve the purpose. Recently I have started to post some video on-line. The trick is to reduce the size to something manageable. While the video camera companies are pushing HD cameras, on-line is rather low tech. And this is where a lot of people will be using their new technology.

More offerings to local residents

Many parts of Anne Arundel County have 2 or 3 choices in the type of cable TV and broadband service that is available, Comcast, Verizon, or Millennium Digital Media. In 2008 certain areas of the county will all have Caviler as another alternative to your connectivity choices.

One of the issues that I have with Verizon is that the price isn't very competitive. And they admit that they are not going to compete on price. This is not a good thing for the consumer. We need to find alternative ways to access these services if telecommunication companies will not lower their prices, when their costs are falling.

Summary

So there are new CPUs coming, operating system patches, rebundled old technology, and the consumer is getting screwed by big companies. All in all, it doesn't look like much is going to change in 2008.

To Those Who Play Games:
Fantastic Times are Upon Us

Make no mistake about it, the entertainment model is changing!

It's easy to get disenchanted with the marvel of technology. I've been writing and tinkering with technology almost as long as I can remember, and it's a rare moment when I can stop for a second and say "Wow."

In 2007, I caught myself breathing in a few sighs of disbelief, but this industry has totally knocked my socks off on more than one occasion too.

Fantastic Times - cont'd

Sure, we saw the debut of the iPhone, dirt cheap quad-core processors, OLED televisions, terabyte hard drives, a few consoles, nearly ubiquitous high-definition media; but in my opinion the culmination of this year in technology is the video game industry.

Hollywood continues its downward spiral, television has come to a standstill as the WGA strike endures, the recording industry ran out of fans to sue -- even Broadway threw in the towel. Yet the video game industry is not only flourishing, but peaking with incredible titles and unbelievable sales.

When was the last time a movie took in $300 million dollars in the first week? Microsoft figured out the formula with Halo 3. Halo 3's incredible sales were even used as the scapegoat for a poor fall box office.

Hollywood would consider it a miracle if 2.4 million people shelled out $8 for the next blockbuster, yet Blizzard managed to sell 2.4 million $50 expansion packs in a single day in the dead of Winter earlier this year.

And how about those Nintendo Wiis? A year after its debut, nearly 2 million consoles produced per month, and yet the company still can't load enough of the consoles onto the store shelves.

Even little NVIDIA, a company once regarded as a boutique graphics manufacturer for gaming enthusiasts, managed to gross a billion dollars last quarter. There's some mobile and low-end sales mixed in there, but without a doubt NVIDIA is still a gaming company.

Is the video game industry, today, a paradigm of how entertainment should be? Maybe someday people will look back at 2007 and consider the Jason Joneses and Tim Sweeneys the new Dean Martins and Frank Sinatras of their time. EA and Nintendo certainly wouldn't disagree.

My only complaint is that I couldn't include Will Wright's pending masterpiece in the list of 2007's magnificent titles. But then again, with the weakness of all the other entertainment industries, 2008 might shine even brighter for video games.

Chesapeake PC Users Group

The Phenomenon of Facebook-
Redefining Social Networking

by
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What do Hillary Clinton, Tony the Tiger, and millions of college students have in common? They all have profiles on the contemporary social network known as Facebook.

As a college student, and avid Facebooker, I intend to share my knowledge and experiences with the site in order to uncover the reasons behind Facebook's widespread success.

As Facebook.com explains, the purpose of this "social utility" is to keep friends connected and help people network in a safe online environment.

Mark Zuckerberg, an extremely intelligent student of Harvard University, created Facebook three years ago. At the age of 19, Mark and his college friends launched the site, which began as a place to connect Harvard students.

Today, Facebook has connections to universities across the globe, with over 25 million registered users. If you have a high school or college age child, chances are they're very familiar with this popular site.

Once a fixation only among college students, Facebook is quickly expanding in the hope of connecting a diversity of users. Anyone with a valid e-mail address can register and create a free Facebook profile.

The site is successful because it is changing the ways in which the world can communicate.

Through Facebook, users create a profile where they can express their interests, activities, favorite movies, shows, books, quotes, and basic contact information. They can search for their friends and co-workers, and then click to add them as their 'Facebook friend'.

There are countless ways to participate on Facebook, such as uploading pictures, 'tagging' or identifying 'facebook friends' that appear in your pics, sending messages, writing on friends' walls, customizing your profile, writing notes to publish on Facebook, and updating your status to allow your friends to know exactly what you're up to at any given time.

With all of these opportunities to connect, it's no wonder people (especially students) are spending hours on this site, and visiting it repeatedly in order to stay updated with what's happening in the lives of their Facebook friends.

Through Facebook, I am connected with 73 different networks, and hundreds of people, from the U.S to Australia. I can see what my friends who are currently studying abroad are up to, and view pictures of their adventures.

Some of my favorite professors are now Facebook users. The site is an excellent tool for professors to get to know their students on a more

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Facebook - cont'd

personal level. It's not uncommon for students to ask academic questions through Facebook messaging instead of e-mail, or to write friendly comments on their professor's wall.

Employers are also discovering the benefits of Facebook, and can search for the profiles of potential employees. Therefore, it's smart to keep a clean profile, and to be aware of who you are associating with through the site. Many sororities, fraternities, and campus organizations monitor the profiles of their members and discourage pictures of drinking, and inappropriate behavior.

Facebook's privacy settings and methods of connectivity separate it from Myspace, and all other internet social networks. Myspace, which has similar features to Facebook, emphasizes individuality and expression through more personalized profiles. Facebook focuses on simple, safe connectivity.

Facebook corresponds more with real life than Myspace, as users typically add people they already know as their 'Facebook friends'. Myspace, users are often contacted by random locals.

In upcoming articles, I'd like to further examine the role Facebook plays in the life of the student, as well as the advantages (and maybe one or two disadvantages) of the site. Lastly, we'll uncover how Facebook is affecting the dating world, and improving the love lives of college students everywhere.

Courtney Jewett is a Senior English major at Baylor University, and is pursuing a career in Journalism.

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Saitek Optical Photo Mouse Make Your Personal Computer More Personal

by
Jan Fagerholm, Mouse Maven
Assistant Editor and VP Membership
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Obtained from APCUG with the author's permission for publication by APCUG member groups

The Bullet Points: The Saitek Photo Mouse is a desktop optical USB mouse that you can insert your own photos into. The photo area is illuminated. The mouse features 3 buttons and a scroll wheel.

What's in the Box: Mouse, User Manual with photo cutting template.

The Review: A mouse review? Hey, don't laugh – it's a perfectly good mouse that, as it happens, you can customize to make it a personalized desktop accessory. The photo part is the novelty, but first let's see the mouse.

Saitek makes a full line of PC accessories, including a wide selection of pointing devices with different talents. The Saitek Photo Mouse is a perfectly good medium-sized USB optical mouse that fits my hand well and performs better than most optical mice that I've used. It tracks well on a variety of surfaces, which not all optical mice do. The ultimate test is to place it on a mirror, and even here it tracks accurately. The only surface that it is flaky on is those artificial wood grain coatings common to student desks and conference tables, but, hey, every other optical mouse I have has the same problem. Put a piece of plain paper under the mouse and it works fine.

OK, the gimmick here is the ability to place your own photograph inside the illuminated area

Saitek Optical Photo Mouse - cont'd

where you may gaze upon it to your heart's content. This part is strictly manual labor with an assist from the paper template for fitting the photo. Being a deep dish computer geek, I find reverting to "cut and paste" using paper and scissors real, um, 20th Century, y'know? The User Manual refers to an EPS template that can be downloaded from their Web site, but I couldn't locate it. Undaunted, I scanned the paper template into Photoshop and made a mask out of it. Opening the desired photo, then pasting the template mask into the photo made it possible to resize and orient the image for best cropping in the mouse-shaped template. Beats the buttons off the User Manual's advice for the paper template that, "you may have to try [printing the image] a few times before the subject appears exactly where you want it."

The Photo Mouse is as much a designer item as a mouse, and is pleasingly crafted in modern silver and black, with a blue LED in the scroll wheel and a white LED illuminating the photo area. There are 5 teflon pads on the underside which help it move smoothly on less than perfect surfaces. The cord is 4.5 ft. long and reaches my floorbound tower machine easily. Its ovaloid shape arches my fingers sufficiently to prevent inadvertent mouse clicks, a problem with mice that are too small or too flat. In other words, its function matches its form, so you will keep it after the novelty wears off.

Just in time for the holidays, the Photo Mouse makes a good stocking stuffer for the modern techno-intense family. Its fit and functionality takes it beyond its novelty value: in the long run it's a very usable mouse. Get one for yourself, then be generous: treat the other computer-using members of your family. They may like it so much that they'll put your picture inside. . .

**The Next Regular Meeting will be at
The Severn River Middle School**

Wednesday
January 9th, 2008

**Meeting will be held in the large meeting room.
It starts at 7:00 P.M. with club business
and a short discussion period.**

Michael Young
presents
Wireless
Networking

How to Find: Severn River Middle School

SRMS is close to the Arnold, MD campus of the Anne Arundel Community College. From Annapolis and parts south, take Rte 2 (Ritchie Highway) north about 3 miles from the intersection of Rt. 50, **turn right on College Parkway**. At the first light, turn left on Peninsula Farm Road. (Of course, if you are coming from points North, you would turn left on to College Parkway) about a half-mile down the road the large SRMS school building, set back off a large two level parking lot, will be visible on your right. Park here and go to the main entrance. Signs will be posted to direct you to the **Large Group Room** where we will be meeting.

How to find: The Technology SIG, A ChPCUG Special Interest Group**

The meetings are held at the SRMS in the Library.

Chesapeake PC Users Group

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Annapolis, MD 21401

FIRST CLASS

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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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