# THE PRINTER

## Chesapeake PC Users Group, Inc.

## PRESIDENT'S CORNER

### HAPPY NEW YEAR!

### I hope 2009 is fine!

**Gifts for all members at January meeting…**

I hope everyone had a safe and enjoyable holiday season. But the giving doesn't stop! The officers of the Chesapeake PC Users Group have purchased a special gift for all members of the users group. Please attend the upcoming meetings to receive yours. This is a 2GB flash drive. I am sure that you will find it very useful for transporting files between computers.

**January 14, 2009 Meeting – Lynda.com**

Mike 'Tony' DeLucia will demonstrate and excellent on-line training site, Lynda.com. This site features training in many advanced subject matters. From their website:

*The lynda.com Online Training Library® and CD-ROM courses include such subjects as Photoshop, Flash, Dreamweaver, Illustrator, Office, digital photography, Web design, digital video, and many others. lynda.com's all-star team of trainers and teachers provides comprehensive*

*and unbiased movie-based training to an international membership of tens of thousands of subscribers. Considering the speed at which technology evolves, the Online Training Library® is a great solution for keeping your skills current. Library subscriptions begin as low as $25 a month, with no long-term commitment required.*

I am sure this will be an excellent meeting and you will get a great introduction of the training that is available at a very reasonable cost.

**February 11 Meeting – Virtual PC for the Masses**

From time to time I've mentioned virtual computing at our meetings. In February, Kathy Walker and Mike Young will demonstrate the free Microsoft product, Virtual PC. We will try to keep this as simple as possible on a topic that can get very complex. I hope that you find this helpful and useful in your day to day computing. For those unfamiliar with what Virtual PC is used for:

*Use Microsoft Virtual PC 2007 to run multiple operating systems at the same time on the same physical computer. Switch between virtual machines with the click of a button. Use virtual machines to run legacy applications, provide support, train users, and enhance quality assurance.*

## PRESIDENT'S CORNER - Cont'd

*Virtual PC lets you create separate virtual machines on your Windows desktop, each of which virtualizes the hardware of a complete physical computer. Use virtual machines to run operating systems such as MS-DOS, Windows, and OS/2. You can run multiple operating systems at once on a single physical computer and switch between them as easily as switching applications—instantly, with a mouse click. Virtual PC is perfect for any scenario in which you need to support multiple operating systems, whether you use it for tech support, legacy application support, training, or just for consolidating physical computers.*

### March 11 Meeting – Windows 7 Beta??

This meeting will all depend on how soon Microsoft releases their product. I hope that we will be able to demonstrate the next Microsoft operating system at the March meeting. More on this topic as time gets closer.

Meetings are really starting to become interesting so I hope that you can attend as many as possible. Also I hope that you participate in the meetings as well.

*Michael*

*Inclement weather - Remember to check the Anne Arundel County Public School website - www.aacps.org/ - for school closings at the first signs of the dreaded and much feared snow.*

2

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# Build a 'Green' PC on a Budget

by
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We're constantly bombarded by the subject of energy conservation—'green' this and 'green' that. I think that much of our problem is our 'disposable society'. On top of that it seems that most people tend to be 'green' only if it fits into their budget and lifestyle. It is a little difficult to rationalize spending $25,000 on a solar array for a house that will take a decade to 'pay for itself'.

But, if you happen to be looking for another computer and you're willing to spend some spare time and effort, you can rescue good parts from a premature demise and save money at the same time. How?  Read on!

**Timing Is Everything**

Around here we have 'transfer stations' to which local residents take their refuse and recyclables if they don't have curbside pickup or another service. The transfer station is somewhat of a presorting point before everything goes to a larger dump site.

What amazes me is that people seem to be willing to pay a few bucks to throw away things that could be recycled or disposed of for no cost—just a bit more effort. No matter. That works out well for me—I can shop!

I need more computer equipment like I need another hole in my head. What I always seem to lack are good motherboards to match up with the spare DVD drive here and spare hard drive there. On a recent trip to the dump I hit pay dirt! Someone had dropped off a bunch of computer equipment and I got there early enough in the day to have relatively fresh dibs!

**Weeding Out Junk**

Knowing that 'garbage' tends to be at dumps, I look for specific traits when considering a rescue of any would-be junk. Last thing I want to do is throw it away when I get home and you can't exactly test things at a transfer station. This is a good exercise in knowing your hardware as you can just take home the good stuff and leave everything else there. As luck would have it, I found a gutted case with a motherboard stripped of everything but the CPU and heat sink. Even the BIOS battery was gone!  They did leave the power supply, though.

**Back to the Bench**

So far my out-of-pocket expense is $0.00 and I'd like to keep it that way!  I take the guts home and blow them out with an air-compressor. The minimum needed to successfully power on

a motherboard are a power supply, motherboard, CPU, fan, and memory. Unfortunately I didn't have any memory on hand for this motherboard, so now it's time to do some leg work and see if I should consider spending the money when I don't even know if the board works.

The motherboard, in this case, can be identified by a silkscreen of "PTGD1-LA" between the PCI slots. This cross-references to a board used in HP Pavilion Ax00 systems. This gives me access to motherboard details so I know what the connecting pins are, memory requirements, and other details necessary to do troubleshooting. Yippee, memory for this board is on sale right now—1GB for $27!

## Good, Bad, or Ugly?

In this situation I presume the components are good until proven faulty. Having all the dust blown off, I sniff around the motherboard. That's right… using my nose, I sniff around the motherboard. The power supply, too. Fried components have a burnt smell. All smells good.

Powering on a working system with the memory removed should get yield 'memory error' beep codes from the motherboard. I power everything on and get beep codes indicating bad memory. During this time I listen for fan noise out of the power supply and the CPU fan. Nothing that sounds like skateboard wheels on pavement. Things are looking good!
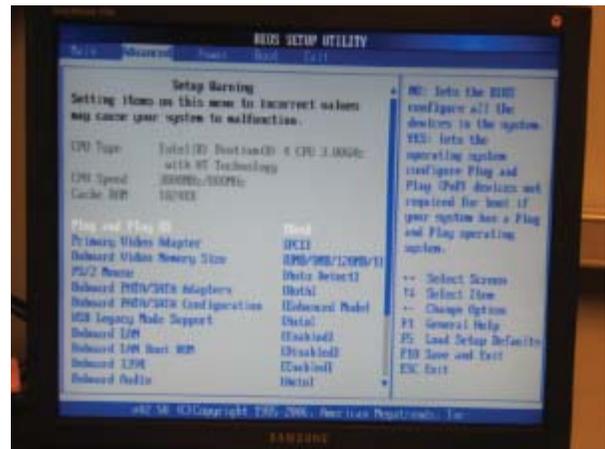
Many motherboards take CR2023 batteries for memory, including this one. I picked up a two-pack along with a 1GB stick of PC-3200 memory. So far I'm out about $30 and still don't know if this will fire up completely—but odds are in my favor. Besides, if I needed PC-3200 and PC batteries today, I'd need them in the future for another find later.

## Hot Dog!

With the memory seated and a battery added, I fired up the machine and the screen came up! Woo-Hoo! Looking really good now! And it's a P4!



I gathered up a spare SATA hard drive and DVD drive and connected them to the system. BIOS reported the devices. Turns out this is an Intel P4 3.0GHz CPU with Hyper-threading.



## Wrapping It Up

Sure this isn't a screaming-fast brand new machine, but it has much potential and is still quite useful. Someday, the parts will wind up being recycled through the transfer station for good—but not today. For now, it has a new life. This board has integrated video, audio, and four SATA ports.

# Build a 'Green' PC on a Budget - cont'd

It has IDE, USB, PCI Express, and legacy connections. It is also very quiet. This is not bad find at all! I will probably use this as the start of my network storage system.

Now if only I could get my hands on some DVD-RW drives that don't work...

# Surviving the Switch to Digital TV

*by*
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At the stroke of midnight on Feb. 17, 2009, the analog transmissions that have beamed free television over the air in the United States for over half a century will disappear for good. They will be replaced by digital signals, many of which are already broadcasting, in what will be the most significant change to television since the introduction of color.

The "digital switchover" brings with it higher image quality, better sound and a level of versatility and flexibility previously unattainable through free television.

It also brings with it a number of significant headaches, as confusion over exactly who will be affected is inspiring panic in viewers fearful of being left behind in a haze of snow and static as the rest of the country moves into the future.

Many of those who will be affected know that the deadline is fast approaching, but are unsure of how to prepare for it. Thankfully, a solution is simple, easily attainable and won't cost you a dime.

There are two major reasons for the switch from analog TV broadcasts to digital TV. First, digital signals offer superior image quality and allow for the transmission of high-definition signals over the air. This means that a properly equipped HDTV can receive local high-definition broadcasts that will look about as good as what you'd get from cable or satellite television.

Second, switching from analog to digital frees up real estate on the broadcast spectrum for other uses, as digital signals are more efficient and take up less bandwidth. Telecommunications companies like Verizon and AT&T have spent nearly $20 billion to secure the rights to the frequencies that were previously occupied by channels 52 through 69, in the hopes of using that airspace to improve their wireless communication networks.

What the digital switchover is actually doing is changing the language that TV broadcasters use to communicate with your television. Since 1941, televisions in the U.S. have utilized a set of broadcast standards laid out by the National Television System Committee. Big broadcast tow-

**5**

ers sent out information over the air using these NTSC standards and were picked up by the television antenna in your living room. Inside your TV, an NTSC tuner interpreted the information and properly displayed it on screen.

The digital switchover is introducing a new language, a new set of broadcast standards, this one designed by the Advanced Television Systems Committee. On Feb. 17, those broadcast towers are going to stop speaking NTSC permanently and start speaking ATSC. But unfortunately, your old television set doesn't know how to translate ATSC into moving pictures and sound. Just about all televisions manufactured and sold after Mar. 1, 2007 feature ATSC tuners, but if you purchased a television any earlier than that, chances are your TV won't be able to pick up over-the-air broadcasts once the switchover occurs.

The solution: A digital converter box, essentially an external ATSC tuner that sits on top of your existing television and is linked between your antenna and your TV. The ATSC signals are grabbed by the same antenna you've always used, then passed to the digital converter box that translates the ATSC signals into something your NTSC television can understand. They are easy to hook up and available at a wide variety of stores, including big box stores like Best Buy, Wal-Mart and Target, as well as online retailers.

Digital converter boxes cost between $40 and $70 on average, but since the digital switchover is being forced upon consumers, Congress has stepped up and created the "TV Converter Box Coupon Program." Under this initiative, each American household is entitled to two $40 gift cards that can only be used to purchase a digital converter box. Individuals can apply at the official Web site for the DTV switch.

You can apply for coupons until Mar. 31, 2009; they expire 90 days after they are issued.

You might want to apply for them sooner rather than later because the government has allocated a finite amount of funding.

**These funds are running out - Editor**

TV viewers who pay for cable or satellite service need not worry. The digital switchover only applies to over-the-air broadcasts, so consumers who get their television directly from Comcast or DirecTV will not be affected at all, and service will continue uninterrupted and unchanged as the DTV deadline comes and goes.

There is, however, a subtler, unrelated analog-to-digital switchover taking place among cable companies, one that could affect subscribers. It has usually been possible to view a small number of basic cable channels by plugging the coaxial cable directly into a television set, bypassing a cable box entirely.

This was a quick and easy way to bring cable TV to many rooms in a home without renting multiple cable boxes. Unfortunately, this may not be possible in the near future. Cable companies like Comcast and Time Warner are slowly phasing out their analog cable services in favor of digital. By switching over, they free up more space on their cable networks that can be allocated to new high-definition channels and interactive services like "On Demand." The downside is that when all cable channels are converted to digital, renting a cable box will be required to see any channels at all.

Another point of confusion that retailers and manufacturers have been reluctant to clear up: consumers need not purchase an HDTV to weather the digital TV switchover.

In addition to the converter boxes, new standard-definition CRT televisions are still available, and they are required by law to include the necessary ATSC tuners.

# Switch to Digital TV - cont'd

cont'd from page 6

   While an HDTV will allow viewers to take advantage of digital TV's high-definition potential, it's important to know that there is a lower-cost option available as well.

   With the emergence of free, digital, over-the-air television that includes HD transmissions, it will be interesting to see if Americans, the majority of whom now pay for their television service via cable or satellite, might see the benefit of switching back to the old rabbit ears.  While the selection of over-the-air broadcasts will never be as comprehensive as pay services, that same glut of content is often cited as an annoyance - lots of channels that subscribers will never watch.

   Of course, all this will depend on how smoothly the digital switchover goes, and whether or not people are actually able to see the improvements on their screen.  With just a few short months to go, having the right knowledge to make it through is absolutely crucial.

In Pictures: 10 Tips For Switching To Digital TV == http://tinyurl.com/5tj8wq

See Also:  Ask This Before You Buy An HDTV -- http://tinyurl.com/57jfbu

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# Cloud Computing

by
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   When did you first hear or see the term "cloud computing"?  I'm usually the last to know anything, it seems, so I've only recently started noticing this term on the Internet.  I did some research, and some say it's the greatest thing since sliced bread—but others think it isn't such a hot idea.  In very simple terms, cloud computing is this:  rather than having programs and files on your computer, you would store files online and also access applications (programs) online (think Google Docs or MS Office Live; think Flickr or Buzzword).  Your computer really wouldn't need to have much on it, and you'd have to have an Internet connection in order to run applications or access your files.  Not only individuals, but also companies would be doing this (and in fact, are doing it now).  One of the major benefits is that a company (or an individual, for that matter) has the use of combined server resources they might not otherwise be able to afford "in house."

   The ever-vigilant Richard Stallman warns against the use of cloud computing:  "Somebody is saying this is inevitable—and whenever you hear somebody saying that, it's very likely to be a set of businesses campaigning to make it true… One reason you should not use web applications to do your computing is that you lose control," he said. "It's just as bad as using a proprietary program.  Do your own computing on your own computer with your copy of a freedom-respecting program.  If you use a proprietary program or somebody else's web server, you're defenseless.  You're putty in the hands of whoever developed that software."  Food for thought.

**7**

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# Copying Information from Your Screen

by
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Dick Carricato, member of the Tri County Computer User Group in Florida wrote a good article about copying pictures from your computer screen. Sometimes there are other things you may want to copy from your screen that may not lend themselves to the PrtScr method. This is especially true of lists in drop down boxes that require a scroll bar down the right side. PrtScr will only show the portion of the list that shows. For instance, I write a (almost) monthly newsletter on the web and usually include a bunch of pictures. I like to have a hard copy of the picture thumbnails at hand to remind me of things to say. This is always a scrolling window. Often I want a hardcopy of a menu, too.

I have found FastStone Capture to be a perfect answer to my needs. You can try it free by going to http://www.faststone.org/. Then, if you like it, as I do, you can purchase a lifetime license for $19.95.

You can capture and annotate anything on the screen including windows, objects, menus, full screen, rectangular/freehand regions and scrolling windows/web pages. Editing tools include annotating, resizing, cropping, sharpening, watermarking, edge effects and many more. Of course, you can transfer the image to any editor of choice. You can either print the copy or save it in one of eight different formats. I choose JPEG. Further, you can choose the resolution of the saved image. I don't know if it actually improves the resolution or just resizes to more pixels.

Of course, it features a bunch of hot key combinations but, with my memory, this is not useful. Instead I rely on the small box of choices at the bottom right of my screen. I find it extremely useful and use it almost every day.

# Freebies!

*by*
*Dave Bilcik, a member of the STPCC (Southern Tier Personal Computing Club), New York*

**It's the Holiday Season!**  Home & hearth, good food and lots of presents, those banking and Wall Street executives should have a fine time this year (Santa Claus made a special \*\*\*bonus\*\*\* trip just for them... Ho-Ho-Ho!).  Now, what are you going to do for the Holiday?  Be creative and "Have Yourself A Freebie Little Christmas."  People may thank you.

You have technology at your fingertips so think about what is important to the special people in your life and give something meaningful to them. The best part; it doesn't have to cost much to be meaningful. CD-Rs cost less than a first-class stamp, the most expensive 8 ½ x 11 photo-paper you can get is under $1.00 per sheet while regular paper is under a penny. Put something on that paper or CD that interests the people you are interested in.

Pictures, sound, movies and even free software are all good candidates if it means something to your special person. Picasa (http://picasa.google.com/) will help you with your pictures and slide shows. Print up a nice 8x10 of that "creative" place where you hung the mistletoe for your significant other.

If you have a crafter on your list, print up a collection of cross-stitch or quilting patterns; one spot to try is http://www.alitadesigns.com/index.php another is http://www.freepatterns.com/. Grandma might be happy to get your custom x-stitch collection but don't send her your mistletoe picture by mistake. However, be ready for some "cute" overload when prospecting for freebies on the crafting sites.

If music or video is your passion then cdburnerxp (http://cdburnerxp.se/) will help you with either one. It is a full featured burner that will let you make a custom CD or DVD any time you wish. Like classical music? A site that will point you to lots of free music is http://www.classiccat.net/index.htm. Don't violate any copy-rights and fire up your CD/DVD drive. That custom-mix lute CD is right at your fingertips.

Don't forget your web-cam or digital camera with movie mode. Give a CD or DVD with a video message telling that special family member what they really mean to you. If you are lucky, they will avoid you completely at the next family reunion.

The fact that you are reading this shows you have exquisite taste and a level of computer literacy way above the average. Help those friends who are less fortunate by cleaning up their sluggish computers. Advanced WindowsCare Personal Edition (http://www.iobit.com/advancedwindowscareper.html) when installed and run on their machine, will give them back the performance that they have been missing.

The software is free, it helps a friend, costs only a little of your time, and proves your computer kung fu is much stronger than theirs. Everybody wins!

Now that you have saved so much cash on creative, meaningful gifts for your friends and family, you can now reward yourself for all your efforts. Try http://www.thinkgeek.com/ for loads of intriguing stuff. Check out the Ion USB Turntable that will help your turn your vinyl music collection into digital goodness... the turntable outputs files in either mp3 or WAV format.

If the good will, optimism and hope of the season gets to be too much, try http://despair.com/ for a big steaming cup of cynicism. It will help you to get back to work after the holidays.

My personal email address is dlbilcik@yahoo.com if you want to send me comments, questions or cash. Please put "Freebies" somewhere on the subject line so I will have some idea about its contents. Tell me about your best free software experience or your best cookie (... ever!) and I will pass it on.

# Windows 7 is Coming Soon

*by*
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If you ask 100 people their impressions of the Microsoft Vista operating system, 95 of them will tell you that Vista is no good, even if they have never seen or used it.

It is obvious that public opinion of Vista is in the mud. Microsoft made some major blunders when they introduced Vista. There were not enough drivers ready, so many printers, scanners, and other peripherals were incompatible. There was no noticeable speed increase over Windows XP. Vista requires much additional memory and more hardware, so it was often impossible to upgrade current Windows XP computers. Also, Microsoft did not woo the press as they did when they introduced Windows XP, so Vista got a lot of awful publicity. Vista is not a bad operating system, but Vista has gotten a bad name. Microsoft has lost the battle and they know it. So they are working on a new Windows operating system.

Microsoft hopes to make a clean break with previous Windows operating systems with this new version of Windows. They are especially distancing the new operating system from the "wicked" Vista operating system. This is obvious in the name they have chosen for the new OS. They are not using year names like Windows 2000. They are not using what they refer to as inspirational names, like XP or Vista. Instead, they will go back to their original numerical naming convention. There was a Windows 1, Windows 2, and Windows 3. Now there is to be a new operating system called "Windows 7".

It you have been following the versions of Windows as they have been introduced, you will find it difficult to comprehend that this next version is actually the seventh version of Windows, but Microsoft says that it is, so that is that. It's Windows 7.

More important than the name, however, is the fact that Microsoft cannot afford another misstep. They must make this operating system faster and better than Vista. Microsoft has already showed off Windows 7 at some developer's conferences and has made some announcements and promises.

Windows 7 will be built on the Vista base, so peripherals that work with Vista, which now includes most printers, scanners, and other devices, will also work with Windows 7.

Windows 7 will have a smaller storage footprint and will use less memory. This will allow it to run on the new small Netbooks that are now running Windows XP or Unix because Windows Vista cannot run on their small solid state drives.

Windows 7 will boot up and shut down faster. It will have improved battery life on laptops. It is also promised to have an easier-to-use interface and to be easier to network in a home environment.

Although Microsoft is officially targeting January 2010 for the launch of Windows 7, logic indicates that they will have Windows 7 ready for next year's holiday selling season.

This holiday season you'll find some great prices on computers running Microsoft Vista. If all goes well, when the holiday season rolls around in 2009, the stores will be filled with computers running the next version of Windows, Windows 7. Microsoft has made mistakes before, but I think they will do everything they possibly can to make Windows 7 a winner. So if you are looking to buy a new PC, this year will be a good time to buy, but, if you can wait, next year may be even better.

**10**

# Why Security Precautions are Necessary

by

Bob de Violini. Member of the Channel Islands PCUG, California

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*This is a portion on Bob's article on computer security that was edited for space. -Editor*

## Scare of the month department

Even though Halloween has already passed, we have the Scare of the Month Department chiming in with some news. There is a new phishing e-mail making the rounds disguised as a warning from the U.S. Federal Reserve. The message bears the usual dire warning of a scam and contains links for readers to follow to get more information. However, there are a few clues that give the message away as a hoax, the biggest one being poor grammar. The links in the e-mail lead unsuspecting readers to a fake site that will redirect them to a search page for porn, which will download a PDF file with malware to their computer. The malware comes in various forms, including one that attempts to make your computer a member of a botnet. A brief notice can be had here, courtesy of USCERT: http://tinyurl.com/66lzv9. The link does go to the US-CERT site; I just used TinyURL to shorten the URL's length.

## Patches Galore Department

As I mentioned above, there have been some exploits on the loose for a bit for Adobe Acrobat, and the full program and the reader have been updated as a result. The latest versions are 8.1.3 and 9.0. Adobe has also updated its Flash player, standard fare in most browser installations, to version 10.0.12.36 to patch publicly reported vulnerabilities last month as well. Not to be outdone, Mozilla has also issued a patch for its Firefox browser and Thunderbird e-mail client. These patches address several bugs that have been brought to light in the past month to month and a half. The latest iterations of Firefox are 2.0.0.18 and 3.0.0.4. The latest version of Thunderbird is 2.0.0.18. I have read reports of some problems with version 3.0.0.4 and 2.0.0.18 of Firefox, with most of the reports being about version 3.0.0.4. The solution for those having problems after upgrading to 3.0.0.4 has been to go back to 3.0.0.3. I have updated my version to 2.0.0.18 and have had no problems. Some patches take longer than others to develop and test, however. One of the patches issued by Microsoft on November's Patch Tuesday took them seven years to develop and test. The bug it patched was first reported by a security researcher in March 2001. Microsoft claims that it tried patching it when it was first reported but wound up killing off most networking applications with the patches when they underwent testing. However, they didn't give up and finally found a way to patch the vulnerability earlier this year.

While we're speaking of Microsoft, it has announced plans to abandon its One Care concept of computer protection service and develop free anti malware applications for release in 2009. The new concept is code named "Morro." As usual, folks are coming down on both sides of pro and con when it comes to this development. Microsoft hasn't given a firm release date for the new software, but has said that One Care will come to an end on June 30. Well, that's all for now. Always practice safe computing by keeping your applications and your anti-malware applications fully up to date. Make sure to run your anti-malware scanner(s) once a week, even if they don't flag anything in between scans.

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

# Wednesday
# January 14ᵗʰ, 2009

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

## *presentation on*
## Lynda.com

### by

# Mike DeLucia

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

## 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.**

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**Chesapeake PC Users Group**

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**FIRST CLASS**

## INSIDE THIS VERY ISSUE!

**President's Corner
Windows 7
Freebies
Digital TV
Green PC
 ... 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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