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MEGAPHONE

THE OFFICIAL NEWSLETTER OF THE CENTRAL MARYLAND USER GROUP

President's Message Let There Be Computer Shows

by Mike Kerwin

As some of you may know, March is the time for local computer shows and hamfests. I'm sorry to have missed the Timonium Hamboree and Computerfest this year, as I really enjoy reminiscing with the long-time devotees and looking for new gadgets which I have to hide when I bring them home to our clutter-strewn abode. I did get to FOSE (used to be Federal Office Systems Exposition but the name shrank to fit the scale of the event).

I go to these events to learn about new developments that might help my office work be more efficient, or to find answers to specific problems affecting our work. In the past this has included learning about making websites accessible to disabled individuals, something like 501b provisions. So I also go for the keynote speakers which have included Scott Adams talking about office work and Norman Schwarzkopf talking about leadership. This year I went to hear Hector Ruiz, CEO for AMD Corp. Naturally he was talking about AMD's approach to the market for microprocessors and what new products are coming down their pipeline. Well I know his company has been aggressive in pushing the leading edge in chip development, but as a speaker he was a bit of a yawn. I kept checking my watch to see when it would be time to open the Exhibit Hall, which was my main reason for traveling into DC to the new Convention Center.

Finally it was 10:00 and the exhibits opened for surfing for information and tchotchkes (give aways). I found plenty of information but very slim pickings in terms of "loot" to share with office mates, spouses (Mary got most of the chocolate), and CMUG members. This year the bags for toting home stuff were enormous but must have gone home nearly empty – no baseball caps, few T-shirts, and very few

interesting gadgets. The coolest gizmo was a ballpoint pen that unfolded like a butterfly to form a full-length pen from a half-size toy. Second cool was a smiley ball, which will be a gift for my grandson.

FOSE Report

On to the main event and new information: on this front I did find a few things to write home about. Probably the most amazing was the Color 3-D Printer (see www.ideal.com for DESIGNmate Cx). This device will take 3-D images and literally build them up layer by layer. As a sample they had built a gizmo (display model only – gosh darn) with a set of interlocking gears with no hinges or seams. This is just like a scene out of science fiction where molecular constructors build unique parts for future spacecraft and the like. I don't know precisely how it works, but the model buildings were amazing with open spaces for windows and roof structures with overhangs. My jaw must have sagged a lot at that exhibit. I chatted with the demonstrators and learned that the company also offers its services to transform a 2-D image into a 3-D image suitable for crafting a detailed model using this fine machine. These 3-D printers are still very expensive; then again, handcrafting 3-D models is not cheap.

Other things great and small: this must be the year for tiny as ultraportable computers were much in evidence. One in particular has a



Next General Meeting

Art Silverglate will present on editing your digital photos and the special effects you can do with freeware and shareware programs.

Wednesday, April 18, 7:30 pm.....Florence Bain Senior Center

Next Windows SIG Meeting

Topic: Freeware and Shareware

Tuesday, April 24, 7:00 pm.....Florence Bain Senior Center

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footprint about 1/3 smaller than a sheet of paper and only about 1.25" thick. It was a convertible tablet with a full keyboard for regular use or turn the screen around to use it as a touch-screen tablet PC. Hmm, Mary has been looking for a new tiny machine.

Also ultra-light PCs were much in evidence as solid state memory is replacing HDs and lowering power consumption as well as weight. Now if only they could get the processor chips to run cooler to avoid the roasted lap syndrome. Of course, someone else is willing to sell cooling kits but the bulk and weight cancel the weight saving of the smaller machines. How does one stay ahead of the game?

A unique item I saw was from Bitmicro with their all solid-state E-Disk product line. These are modules which are the size and transportability of standard 3.5" HDs, but they are filled with solid-state memory chips. They claim the units are faster, more rugged and reliable than HDs and dropped one to prove a point. I guess their market is DOD as the prices were in the realm of \$10k/100 gb (is that possible or did I mishear?). That is way beyond what my agency can afford so I scooted on by.

Another interesting product was ScanSoft's PDF Converter which is a software package which converts documents into fillable PDF forms from many starting formats at a price that is only 2/3'rds that of Adobe packages. Since this is a standard format then saving a little green is a good thing.

This year the exhibitors did not completely fill the hall so I made my way through in less time than I anticipated. That left time for lunch in the big city. Since the Convention Center closed its food court,

convention goers are left with only overpriced offerings from vendors on the floor or venturing into the heart of DC in a quest for lunch. I chose the latter to stretch my legs and to find better fare. I found a Corner Bakery about 4 blocks away and enjoyed an outdoor lunch in a park on K Street.

Then back to the Exhibit Hall to finish off the remaining vendors. The best treat left was a free can of soda and a can cozy from DICE, the tech employment folks. A newcomer to the exhibits was Best Buy of all places. It must be true that computers and software are becoming commodities not requiring specialized vendors. One thing for sure is that Best Buy gave away the largest shopping bag carrier that I have ever seen – nearly 3' long. If the hall had been more crowded that would have been a problem, but alas attendance seemed down this year and the exhibitors even started leaving early.

All in all it was an interesting day, but lunch may have been the best part.

So on to business: Many thanks to George Coffin for an interesting presentation about the IRS's own website and all of the goodies one can find there. Too bad that e-filing has not become universally free yet.

I'm not sure at this time what program we will have for April. Remember that we are still looking for a volunteer, or two, for Program Chair. I have too many little distractions in my own life to devote full-time to CMUG, but I still hope to see you at the meeting.

Digitally,

/s/ Mike



Upcoming Meetings and Help Needed

As was announced previously, Andrew Rein has stepped down from his job as Program Director. So CMUG is in need of someone who can coordinate presentations for our general meetings.

If you have questions about the workload or are otherwise interested, you might speak with Andrew (or one of the other officers) at the meeting.

As you can see from below, we really could use someone to arrange for some programs:

May 16: To be determined

June 20: Elections and to be determined

July 18: To be determined

Windows SIG

April 24: Freeware & Shareware

The Windows Special Interest Group (SIG) meets on the fourth Tuesday of each month. The SIG focuses on using and maintaining Windows, all platforms. We take questions, present tips and techniques, demonstrate freeware/shareware and even feature some web topics using a little trickery.

This month we'll be discussing and looking at some freeware and shareware I've collected. If you have a suggestion or a topic for a future SIG meeting, please email me at mikes_line@hotmail.com.

Remember that the meetings are at the Florence Bain Senior Center, and begin at 7 pm. See the CMUG website at www.myCMUG.org for maps and directions.

Hope to see you there.

- Mike Hayes

CMUG Finances

Statement for Calendar Year 2006

from John Weske

Below are CMUG's financial numbers for 2006. The group's position is not quite as favorable as the figures show. By year's end we had incurred about \$500 in room rental fees for the monthly general meeting that had not yet been billed. On the other hand, WinSIG room rental has been paid in advance and covers meetings through April 2007. Room rental costs for this SIG rose sharply in 2006, and attenders

helped defray the cost with voluntary contributions.

Because general expenses consistently exceed general income, the board of directors voted to raise annual membership dues to \$30 in June 2006.

No equipment was bought in 2006. Thanks to the lack of major expenses and to donations by members toward the CD of the Month, the equipment fund increased substantially during the year. The equipment fund enabled the purchase of a projector in 2006 and a laptop computer in 2002.

If you have any questions, please talk to me at the meeting, or email me at jweske@juno.com.

General Fund:

Beginning Balance:		\$ 2,741.15
General Income:		
Membership dues - renewals:	1,465.00	
Membership dues - new:	25.00	
WinSIG donations:	143.00	
Total General Income in 2006:	1,633.00	
General Expenses:		
Newsletter:		
Printing:	470.02	
Postage:	349.44	
Total Newsletter expense:	819.46	
Room rental:		
General Meeting:	300.00	
Windows SIG:	600.00	
Total Room rental:	900.00	
Other expenses:		
APCUG dues:	50.00	
PO Box rental (6 months):	40.00	
Misc expenses:	13.12	
Total Other expenses:	103.12	
Total General Expenses in 2006:	1,822.58	
Total General Fund increase/(decrease):	(189.58)	
Ending Balance:		\$ 2,551.57

Equipment Fund:

Beginning Balance:		\$ 964.78
Equipment Income:		
Donations for CDs of the Month:	510.00	
Equipment Expenses:		
Supplies (blank CDs):	30.00	
Personal property tax	28.21	
Total Equipment Expenses in 2006:	58.21	
Total Equipment Fund increase/(decrease):	451.79	
Ending Balance:		\$ 1,416.57

CMUG Totals:

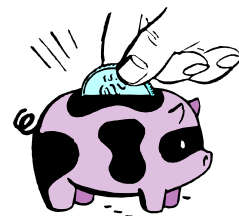
Beginning Balances, 1/1/06	
General Fund:	\$ 2,741.15
Equipment Fund:	964.78
Total Beginning Balance:	3,705.93
Change in Balances for 2006	
General Fund:	(189.58)
Equipment Fund:	451.79
Total Change in Balances:	262.21
Ending Balances, 12/31/06	
General Fund:	2,551.57
Equipment Fund:	1,416.57
Total Ending Balance:	\$ 3,968.14

Deals from the DealsGuy

by Bob Click,
Greater Orlando Computer Users Group

A Great Trade Show

We recently worked the National Association of Builders show. It was huge, with 105,000 attendees; just to build the booths took over four million pounds of freight. Six large two-story modular homes were assembled in the parking lot for display, one worth over a million dollars, and many booths in the exhibit hall had a second floor.



What really impressed me was the Kohler booth. There was a stage for their selling activities and the background for it was a waterfall about 20 feet high and the same wide, but like no other waterfall you have ever seen. Yes, the water was tumbling down in variations, but it did other things. All of a sudden the water would stop its normal waterfall display, and the individual letters for KOHLER would drop formed





with water, one at a time, then the entire name would fall, followed by other messages, all spelled out with well formed letters made with falling water. Many other patterns were also formed by the falling water. I watched it for about ten minutes and it never repeated the entire same pattern of messages during that time. It was a highlight of the show and I'm sure that display cost Kohler many bucks. I wish I had asked to see the control room.

Feedback!

Thanks for the comments that I received on the side effects of medication. Not many responded, but the comments were interesting and so far, the respondents agreed with me, but I would also be interested in other opinions. Perhaps I should start a blog about all this.

A Little Fun In The Sun

My wife and I decided to introduce our son and his wife to cruising during their stay at our beach condo, and while we did not want to take another Carnival cruise after our last experience, the spring break season gave no opportunity for deals. We finally settled on a Carnival four night cruise to Cozumel only because Carnival offered us the best price. We felt that since our son and his wife have never cruised they wouldn't know a good one from a bad one, but we ended up being pleasantly surprised at how good the Inspiration (Carnival's ship) turned out to be. The food was excellent, the shows were fantastic, and all in all, it was a great trip. As expected, it was a much younger crowd, including a lot of spring breakers, but we tried to stay clear of them the best we could, and had a good time. Shopping was fun in Cozumel. That ship did things much better than the Carnival Miracle we previously cruised on. Since the Inspiration was an older ship, there were a few things that needed improvement, but it will be going into dry-dock in September for some refurbishing and hopefully they will improve some of them. However, the shortcomings were nothing serious.

Announcements

Please be aware that I have not tried this or any of the other products mentioned here. Also, I usually edit the press release to a more reasonable length, so be sure to check the website of any product you're interested in.

Remote Desktop Monitoring

You can monitor the activity of all the PCs in your classroom remotely. Plus, you can share your screen with your students' PCs, making demos and presentations much easier. Classroom Spy Professional from EduIQ.com (www.EduIQ.com) enables remote interaction between the user on the administrator's computer and users of individual computers, over a LAN, WLAN, VPN and the Internet. Once installed and configured, the program lets you see what's taking place on the screens of remote machines and, if needed, take

full control over the mouse and keyboard of any machine. There is also an ability to show your own screen to remote users and execute some administrative operations. The program encrypts screen data as well as mouse and keyboard input.

Because the program can run as a service on Vista, the login page and User Account Control (UAC) prompt are accessible. There is a live picture of the remote computer screens. Due to some optimization, the live screen doesn't use a high bandwidth, but even when the lower network bandwidth is required, the refresh interval can be extended using one mouse click. The activities of any student can be recorded for further analysis and assessment. The teacher can use the existing computer infrastructure to deliver a presentation directly to the screens of remote users.



It's also possible to execute various administrative commands, for example, log off users, turn off, restart, hibernate, or suspend one or all remote computers at once with a single mouse click. There is also an ability to schedule recording of remote computers desktops, and record remote activities, even when there is nobody monitoring the administrator's computer. The capabilities of Classroom Spy Professional can effectively be used not only in a classroom but also in offices.

Classroom Spy Professional 2.4.2 runs under Windows 98, Me, NT4, 2000, XP, 2003 and Vista, and costs \$49.95 (US) for a three-computer license. User Group members are offered a 15% discount at www.ClassroomSpy.com using the coupon code PRUG788243. For other types of licenses, please refer to the page at www.ClassroomSpy.com/classroomspy_pro.htm. Licensed customers are entitled to free technical support by email. Additional information on the product, as well as a free 30-day evaluation copy is available from the Web site.

Direct download link:
www.ClassroomSpy.com/dwn/classroomspypro.exe (3.6 Mb)

A Bonanza of Goodies

Paul Witheridge from the Sarnia Computer Users Group in Sarnia, Ontario, sent me some items that my readers might be interested in. I'll list them, but be aware that some may already be expired by the looks of the coupon codes. I'm sorry that I didn't have room last month. I'm making them short so I can fit them all in. It's always good to have a friend with a sharp eye.

Acrobat is an expensive product and now they have their product activation which many resent. Here is a deal on another PDF product. How about a \$20 discount on Nuance PDF Converter Professional 4! Coupon code PDF\$20OFF;





www.digitalriver.com/dr/v2/ec_MAIN.Entry17c?CID=0&PN=5&SP=10007&SID=19198&PID=855990&ClickID=dwkrzzowcsmxhoybzkkkt2wmmk0mksc2txw&CUR=840&DSP=&PGRP=0&ABCODE=&CACHE_ID=0

DealsGuy note: I read a negative review of PDF Converter in the December issue of SouthEastern Michigan Computer Organization's DATA BUS: www.semco.org/newsletter/DataBus200612.pdf. The review is on page 7.

CA Deals

- ↪ 10% off any purchase at the CA store. Coupon code DecAFFOFF10; http://store.digitalriver.com/servlet/ControllerServlet?Action=DisplayHomePage&SiteID=caconsum&Locale=en_US&Env=BASE&ClickID=bdesuukdflyvqkgnueezmdyye1yelfmzne
- ↪ \$10 discount on CA Internet Security Suite 2007. Coupon code DecAFF10ISS; www.digitalriver.com/affiliate/areview/ca/lp/iss.html
- ↪ \$10 discount on CA Anti-Spam 2007. Coupon code AFFAS07; www.digitalriver.com/affiliate/areview/ca/lp/anti-spam.html
- ↪ \$20 discount on CA PC MacLAN. Coupon code AFFML07; <http://go.lockergnome.com/649>. http://shop.ca.com/file_sharing/pc_mac_network.aspx
- ↪ \$10 discount on CA Personal Firewall 2007. Coupon code AFFFW2007; www.digitalriver.com/affiliate/areview/ca/lp/firewall.html

More Deals

- ↪ \$10 discount on Allume Anonymous Surfing Platinum. Coupon code 285678; www.digitalriver.com/dr/v2/ec_MAIN.Entry17c?CID=280604&PN=5&SP=10007&SID=1839&PID=873873&ClickID=cqai77lqpkskzln7aaa4vqssawsaxpv4ei&CUR=840&DSP=&PGRP=0&ABCODE=&CACHE_ID=280604
- ↪ \$5 discount on Allume Bass Screen Saver. Coupon code 266358; www.digitalriver.com/dr/v2/ec_MAIN.Entry17c?CID=0&PN=5&SP=10007&SID=1839&PID=840116&ClickID=cqai77lqpkskzln7aaa4vqssawsaxpv4ei&CUR=840&DSP=&PGRP=0&ABCODE=&CACHE_ID=280604
- ↪ \$10 discount on Allume Morpheus Photo Animation Suite; www.digitalriver.com/dr/v2/ec_Main.Entry17c?SID=1839&SP=10023&CID=279570&PID=863664&PN=1&V1=863664&CUR=840&DSP=&PGRP=0&ABCODE=&CACHE_ID=2795700000280604
- ↪ 20% off Laughingbird Web Graphics Creator. Coupon code Holiday20%off; www.webgraphicscreator.com/

- ↪ 20% off Laughingbird Logo Creator. Coupon code Holiday20%off; www.thelogocreator.com/Corporate_logos.htm
- ↪ 10% off Roxio Easy Media Creator 9 Suite. Coupon code SAVE10C9; www.roxio.com/enu/products/creator/suite/overview.html
- ↪ \$10 discount Roxio Popcorn 2 (DVD copier). Coupon code P2SAVE10; <http://go.lockergnome.com/657>. <http://www.roxio.com/enu/products/popcorn/standard/overview.html>
- ↪ 20% off ACDsee 9. Coupon code AFFACD9; www.acdsee.com/products/acdsee/index
- ↪ 20% off ACDsee Photo Editor. Coupon code AFFPHOTO; www.acdsee.com/products/photoeditor/index
- ↪ 25% off ACDSee Pro Photo Manager. Coupon code AFFPRO25; www.acdoffers.com/en/na/acdseepro/index.htm
- ↪ \$400 discount TurboCAD Deluxe v12.2 Upgrade; www.turbocad.com/prodinfo.asp?t=1&mcid=382 (DealsGuy note: There is a problem with the stated discount, which doesn't make sense, so you should check on where the mistake is.)
- ↪ 20% off Net Nanny products. Coupon code 270355; www.netnanny.com/
- ↪ \$5 savings on Big Hammer Patio Designer; www.bighammersoftware.com/affiliates/patio.aspx
- ↪ \$5 savings on Big Hammer Deck Designer; www.bighammersoftware.com/affiliates/deck.aspx
- ↪ \$10 savings on Big Hammer Garage and Shed Designer bundle; www.bighammersoftware.com/affiliates/garage_shed_bundle.aspx
- ↪ 10% off on Rising Antivirus. Coupon code ONDISCOUNT10; <http://go.lockergnome.com/666>. www.rising-global.com/CategoryDetail.aspx?MenuId=1&CategoryId=3
- ↪ 10% off on Markzware (Tools for Printing). Coupon code PILOT10; www.markzware.com/store_usa/
- ↪ 20% off RadarSync System Checkup. Coupon code RadarSync2in1-11; <http://go.lockergnome.com/668>. www.radarsync.com/

That's It for This Month

I'll soon have some new product announcements on my website (www.dealsguy.com). Meet me here again next month if your editor permits. This column is written to make user group members aware of special offers or freebies I have found or arranged, and my comments should not be interpreted to encourage, or discourage, the purchase of any products, no matter how enthused I might sound.

- Bob (The Cheapskate) Click

bobclick.mindspring.com



The Upgrade from Hell

from Jack Fogarty

Why would I want to upgrade my Win98 system to WinXP? Two reasons: first, the TurboTax I just bought won't work with Win98 (and I need it!) and second, I'm contemplating going with DSL and I'm told that it needs XP even though Verizon lists Win98 as acceptable.

OK. Son Eric gave me a new copy of XP Professional that he acquired in a CMMUG raffle (that's how old it is), and anyway, his machine already has XP. And I believe Microsoft when it says XP will load over 98 and preserve all your files, so in it went.

Good. My machine ate it apparently OK. The screen looked good so I shut it down for the night in the controlled manner that XP requires and went to bed a happy man.

Not A Happy Man

The next day when I turned on my computer I was greeted with a blue screen containing a long message about corrupted files, whereupon the computer proceeded to shut itself off and then immediately restart. Same blue screen, same message except this time the file it promised to delete had changed name. I let this cycle continue in the vain hope that it would eventually clean out all those funny files and be OK. Silly me.

Well, now was the time for HELP. I described my problems at the CMUG meeting and got the obvious answer from Mike Hayes: buy a new box with XP installed – there should be a few of these around without Vista. But, no, my venerable machine was assembled for me by John Weske some six years ago with just the features I wanted at the time and besides, this was a challenge. Mike Kerwin may recall a drop-in some while back where he noted the five-inch floppy drive under the DVD one, used once to convert some files to three-inch for a friend.

I phoned Microsoft Support and actually got through to a human being who validated my XP disk's 25-character “serial number” and allowed as how I rated genuine assistance. I now became Case #1029967495 and was switched off to a software technician.

Between the phone connection, his accent and my ears, progress was slow. Without a running machine we couldn't connect “online” so I had to describe what was on the screen and he had to guess what to try next. We got into stable operation in “Safe Mode” via tapping F8 during startup but couldn't boot from the CD because my BIOS didn't allow that (and couldn't be updated then). We did numerous chkdsk and scandisks and monkeyed around for three hours before I had to run off to another appointment. My case is still open.

The next evening I tackled it in DOS mode

and found the text of that “blue screen” message in the BOOTEX.LOG file. I also found a DUMP.TMP file with a quarter gigabyte in it – and dumped it. I had a copy of Weske's reloader floppy and got the CD drivers. I reinstalled XP and we were alive again. I could now get online!

Since Eric's XP disk was without updates, I tried for MS Update and got a pop-up message that my registry was hopelessly corrupted but all would be well if I just went to www.registrycleanerXP.com. I thought “Dot com, eh?” but I tried it. It got halfway loaded and stuck. Another pop-up listed several other “helpful” sites, one of which I had heard of (PC Tools), so I tried their “Registry Mechanic”. It loaded and said I had 1300 errors but it would fix them if I just coughed up \$30 for a one-year subscription. Desperate, I bit, and zip-zip it claimed to have fixed everything.

On to the updates! Another pop-up again said my registry was in terrible shape but I said “Baloney” and pressed on. MS Update plugged in all the SP1 files and I reached for the SP2 disk that Mike Hayes had tossed to the crowd at one of the recent CMUG meetings. “No room, no room” shouted the disk. “I need at least 600 MB of free space to install!” What the heck?

Going to My Computer showed my ancient 10 GB C: drive with 9.5 GB filled. I killed some programs and moved others to the 8 GB slave drive I'd gotten from Dick Roberts some years back, mostly empty. At least I could now do what I needed to do. TurboTax loaded OK, and Open Office was operational. I'll juggle more later.

But the C-drive mystery bugged me. I scored up all the program content and could only account for maybe 2 GB. What was hiding in that other 7.5 GB? This time I called friend Weske who lives “just around the corner” and he came over with some DOS utilities which he regularly uses to rescue other Friends House residents. These revealed 315 hidden directories, mostly garbage! He found a dozen or so with more than a quarter gigabyte. Wiping out these gave me plenty of space for now; the rest I'll have to pick off individually later. Oh, yes, other mysteries remain but now I have room for SP2 and other goodies.

My good wife, Peggy, watched all this and asked why does nothing work around here. She's hanging on to her thirteen-year-old 40 MHz 486 (another Weske creation when he was in that business) running WordPerfect 5.1 for DOS which works just fine. “Don't you dare touch it,” she says.

My CMUG friends were right. While Win98 was running, I should have backed up programs and data on disk and then bought a new and faster box with more RAM, larger hard drive and XP already loaded. But I didn't. I hate wasting good hardware and I guess I like challenges. Anyway, the next challenge is to get DSL working with this machine. So stay tuned!



It's 10 PM

Do You Know Where Your PC Is?

by Mike Hayes

Those of us old enough will remember TV ads encouraging parents to know what their children were doing and where. Today, as a PC user that same concern applies to our PCs, and not just at 10 pm! Anytime your PC is powered on with Internet access, you need to know what's coming and going from your PC.

Just today on ZDNET I read about a new threat that exploits a vulnerability in Windows (Vista too) where a website instructs Windows to turn your cursor into an animated cursor. This used to be cute. But now some slimeball figured a way to control the code to corrupt your PC's memory. There are at least 150 websites that have been compromised so far. Now, just don't brush it off because it doesn't seem to do much. It does one thing very, very well. With your IE browser all you have to do is visit a compromised site. You don't have to click on any URLs, move the cursor or type anything. You just have to go there and the code runs on your PC.

This time it's just corrupt memory. Next time it may be your bank login ID & password, or your SSN. When the "bad guys" see a chance to make money, you can expect them to be there.

What is the recommendation to protect yourself against this cursor exploit? Once again, since this exploit is against the largest supplier of a free browser, the solution is to use a browser other than Internet Explorer, such as Firefox or Opera. That's not the first time we've seen this recommendation. Mozilla's Firefox has risen to a popular status because, as a free small startup browser, it chose to build its browser without Active-X support, a known security vulnerability that is still supported by Microsoft. Of course it didn't hurt that it also utilized "tabbed" browsing, a feature almost everyone likes. But along with that popularity came attention from the "bad guys." The number and complexity of security patches coming from the Mozilla foundation have matched or exceed that of Microsoft this last year. That's good news. The open source approach Mozilla uses gathers support from thousands of contributors world-wide. They are quick to get reported vulnerabilities patched.

Early in its life, Firefox was acclaimed as the safest browser available. All the trade magazine writers jumped on the same bandwagon recommending users switch. It didn't take long before the vulnerabilities were discovered. As more of the community used Firefox, more vulnerabilities and patches followed. Just like Microsoft's IE browser. Different browser; same story. I predicted this was going to happen. It only seemed logical. Little did I realize that it wouldn't stop with just browsers. It has spread to other applications such as Adobe's Acrobat Reader. Adobe has released a number of patches and even rushed to release an engine upgrade to V8.

So what's a user to do? You could just turn off the PC and read a book: last I checked, that was still safe. Or, you can make sensible choices and practice safe-computing. Sensible choices would include options like don't open attachments or click on URLs unless you are

Editor's Note

by Paul Van Bloem

I have a little space, so here are just a few quick notes .

Earth Day

Sumi Kinoshita emailed me about a BGE notice she got about upcoming PC Recycling events. Sunday, April 22nd is Earth Day, and a number of groups are sponsoring clean-up, recycling, and other environmental awareness programs on or around this weekend. Unfortunately, the website (www.earthday.net) is not very well organized; I had to wade through the event listings by hand to find any information. But here are three PC Recycling programs over the next few weeks.

- ☞ April 21, 10 am to 2 pm: Boy Scout Troop 750 is collecting computer electronics and peripherals at Immaculate Conception Parish in Towson. The address is 200 Ware Avenue, Towson MD 21204.
- ☞ April 28, 10 am to 2 pm: some sort of boys' club is running a recycling event at Woodmont Academy in Cooksville (that's a few miles west of the Howard County Fairgrounds). Woodmont's address is 2000 Woodmont Drive, Cooksville MD 21723.
- ☞ May 5, 10 am to 2 pm: another boys' club will be accepting computers and peripherals at St. John the Evangelist parish in Severna Park. The address is 689 Ritchie Highway, S.E., Severna Park MD 21146.

In each case, there is a \$10 fee for accepting a monitor (and they don't take TVs). All other PC equipment (printers, scanners, keyboard, mice, as well as CPUs) is accepted without charge. They will also take cell phones, fax machines, and microwave ovens.

Alpha Five Discount

I received a notice from APCUG about a big discount offered by Alpha software. They're celebrating their 25th birthday, and have just released Version 8 of their flagship database software Alpha Five.

Basically, they're offering their Desktop version (SRP \$199) for \$30, the Professional (SRP \$249) for \$40, and the Enterprise edition (SRP \$349) for \$50. The announcement is a little confusing, as it makes mention in one place about "we are making 1,000 copies available at very special pricing," but doesn't specify if that's 1000 copies of each edition, or what.

Anyway, if you think you might be interested in this deal, let me know and I'll forward the complete announcement to you.

And I should mention that APCUG isn't endorsing the software, just passing along the deal.



150% sure it is 100% safe. Just because it came from your long-time buddy doesn't mean it's safe. His PC could be infected and just passing it along to everyone in the address book. You also need to have anti-virus and keep it up to date. Not just when you think about it; daily is not too often.

You need a firewall. It too needs updating. If you are on broadband you MUST have a hardware firewall AND a software firewall. You need to keep your Windows and applications patched. And last, you need to act like every bad guy in the world is attacking your PC. You have to be vigilant 24/7 to keep the bad guys out 100% of the time. The bad guys have only to succeed once.



CMUG MEGAPHONE

George Coffin
8652 Open Meadow Way
Columbia, MD 21045

Meeting:

Wednesday, April 18, 7:30 pm

Art Silverglate will discuss freeware and shareware programs that let you edit your digital photos and perform special effects on them.



CENTRAL MARYLAND USER GROUP

Membership and Change of Address

Send renewals and address changes to:

George Coffin
CMUG Membership
8652 Open Meadow Way
Columbia, MD 21045
gcoffin3@comcast.net

Reviews

Send review software, hardware, books, and info to:

CMUG Reviews
Att: Art Silverglate
PO Box 125
Columbia, MD 21045
art.silverglate@gmail.com

Editorial Copy

Send articles, letters, ad copy, questions, and comments to:

CMUG Megaphone
Att: Paul Van Bloem
PO Box 125
Columbia, MD 21045
pjvanbloem@aol.com

Use any of these formats: ASCII (text), RTF, or Word.

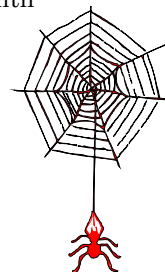
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General meetings are held the third Wednesday of every month at 7:30 pm at the Florence Bain Senior Center, near the Harpers Choice Village Center in Columbia MD. The number there is 410-313-7213.

Membership in the user group is currently \$30 (cheap!). Membership includes a monthly subscription to the CMUG Megaphone, a membership directory, full access privileges to the Website, and drawings for free and review software at meetings.



www.myCMUG.org