



MUG Monitor

Macon Users Group—Serving Southwestern North Carolina and Northeastern Georgia

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May 2009

Next Meeting:

Google Earth

by Louis Vitale,
Club President

Macon Community
Facilities Building
May 12th, 7 PM

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Computer & Internet Tips & Tricks

by Gregory West, Editor, Sarnia Computer Users' Group, Canada
from the SCUG Report, February 2009 Issue, www.scug.ca

As Editor for the Sarnia Computer Users' Group, I do a lot of online research for interesting websites and also free software. I am also fortunate to have people who send me their online gems. Here I share some of these amazing finds with you.

Remember: The programs you are about to see are FREE and legal for you to download and use. Try out programs, or simply take a sneak peek at what they can do for you; the choice is yours. So, happy clicking and email me with what you think about these programs: editor@scug.ca.

Gimme Back Those Deleted or Lost Files
File recovery program,
www.recuva.com, runs on Microsoft
Windows 98, 2000, 2003, XP and Vista.

We have all done it. You have too, come on, admit it. Yes, when you accidentally delete a file from your computer, the Recycle Bin, digital camera memory card, USB stick, or even songs from your MP3 player, this program will help you to recover those lost files. It is a good program to have on your computer for those times when you least expect it and you DELETE in error.

Attention All eBay Users
A must have eBay desktop,
desktop.ebay.com, runs on Windows
XP/Vista or MacOS X 10.4/10.5.

This desktop application puts you in total control of your eBay bargaining with an eagle-eye live gatekeeper of your bid or bidders. Never miss an eBay bargain again.

This is Web 3.0 at its best. "EBay's slick new app does more than simply recreate the auction site on the desktop—it makes the whole experience thoroughly interactive and much more engaging" (wired.com).

Catch Thieves in the Act
Live and recorded video security system using your webcam, www.yawcam.com, works on Windows 2000/XP/Vista.

This security webcam software for Windows is simple and easy to use and includes most of the usual security camera features such as: video streaming, image snapshots, motion detection, and online web forum for help.

The software program is very easy to work with and after a short time you can set your webcam to catch a thief stealing your stuff. The video or pictures are sent immediately to the Internet (where you designate for safe keeping). The program senses motion in a room. You can have the program set so that it will record a video of the thief in action, or email you a photo, or upload (FTP) the live video to a website.

Real nice to be able to hand over a full video of the thieves in your house. If

(see Tips on page 2)

Google Earth

Presented by
Louis Vitale

7 PM, May 12th

Macon Users Group Franklin, NC

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Monthly Meetings

MUG meets the second Tuesday of every month at 7 P.M. in the Macon County Community Facilities Building on Georgia Road (US 441 South).

MUG Monitor Staff

Rhonda Tomlinson, editor.....rhonda1114@verizon.net

Website

www.maconusersgroup.org

Volunteers Available

The following club members have thoughtfully volunteered to be on call for other members having problems or needing a little extra help. If you would like to add your services, please email the newsletter editor at rhonda1114@verizon.net.

Lee Alexander.....369-2342....sawdust21@verizon.net
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(Tips—continued from page 1)

you are away, say in Florida, you can easily email the police the video or photo of the live crime scene with full video and photos of the bad guys.

Windows Live Family Safety

Website download: get.live.com; website information: tinyurl.com/24k8fo.

We are all worried about young children using the Internet these days. This program puts you in control of your computer and Internet browsing experience. You are in charge of your children's online Internet surfing habits. You can also monitor Windows Live Messenger contacts and block who they talk to online. You can also block Internet websites. This is a must have for any family with a computer connected to the Internet.

NOTE: "Windows Live Family Safety is a Web service that's free to people who use Microsoft Windows XP. If you use Windows Vista—the operating system installed on many new computers—you can use the built-in family safety tools." (Microsoft.com)

Connect to your Home Computer While Away

Logmein, www.logmein.com. While away from home, wouldn't it be nice to access files and programs from your home computer? Now you can. You can easily

(see Tips on page 10)

Linux SIG

with Jim Swanson, Mentor

The Linux SIG meeting will meet at 7 p.m. on Tuesday, May 26th in the large meeting room of the Macon County Public Library. Anyone interested in exploring the Linux operating system is welcome and encouraged to attend. We are all learners, and we help each other up the learning curve.

Treasurer's Report

Phyllis Minnich

Balance forward.....	748.16
Income: interest, dues, 50/50.....	1096.91
Expense.....	(1386.91)
Balance*	
(including equipment fund).....	\$741.71
*Equipment Fund (50/50, auction).....	31.00
Investment Fund.....	1572.27

Lou's Views!

There Is An App For That

by Louis Vitale (aka 44RAILGUY)



I am too cheap to get an iPhone. My wife and I hardly use 400 minutes a month, let alone need a mobile web browser or a GPS locator to find Ingles. My mp3 player will play my YouTube videos and my favorite songs any time I want. But then someone told me that there was an iPhone app to help me determine who I was in a past life; well that changed everything.

When the iPhone was introduced in 2007, it was an instant hit and 270,000 units were sold in the first 30 hours of sale. The current model works with the newer 3G network. When it was released in July of 2008, over one million phones were sold in 3 days. I understand it will work here in Macon County, but the closest store is in Sylva.

It was a real game changer, a true convergence of a phone, computer, camera, and just about anything else you might need to carry in your pocket. True to Apple's history, it is pricey and very stylish. Also like the iPod and other Apple products, the battery is built in and any attempt to modify it or hack it will void the warranty. However, all of this is old news.

The real news, which was even a surprise to Apple, is the amount of applications which have been created for it, and Apple's financial success. There are now over 38,600 applications that have been created for the iPhone. And like all Apple products,

they can only be bought through the App Store in iTunes. As a result, Apple has retained total control of all the applications and their availability.

The iTunes App store has been open just ten months, and as of April 23, 2009 there have been one BILLION downloads. Many of the downloads are free, but most cost between \$0.99 and \$20. That is a lot of money to share between the developers and Apple. That may be one reason Apple's stock has held up so well in these troubled times.

The limit is 148, which is the number of applications that the iPhone can handle at any one time. 19 of them are native to the operating system, so you actually only have 129 installable applications possible. But that is a lot to put in your pocket. I wonder if there is an application to help you remember all the applications that you have and what they do.

There is a whole culture that has developed around the creation and marketing of these tiny programs. By far the strangest was the "I am rich" application. It was available for only one day and eight customers bought it for, this is no joke, \$999.99. It had no function except to show one graphic that displayed a diamond on a red background. Its only purpose

was to prove to those that saw it that the owner had money to burn.

One of the most interesting features of the iPhone is the "iPhone accelerometer." Since the

iPhone has an internal digital gyroscope, it knows its location in space at all times, so by moving the iPhone you can manipulate the objects on the screen. You can guide a space ship through an asteroid belt or a race car down a track, just by moving the iPhone in the right direction. What an incredible way to waste time.

One of the many sites that review and keep track of all the applications is 148Apps.com. It has your top 148 apps, the latest 148 apps, the top free 148 games, and many more lists and reviews. So many new applications are created every week, they are hiring new reviewers almost every month. There is an active blog, RSS feeds, and current price information. Of course the main source of information on all these apps is the iTunes App store itself.

I challenge you to find a possible application idea that has not already been created. But I am sure when there were just 10,000 applications, the same thing could have been said. This is creativity at its best. Just think—38,000 things that your pocket phone can do. And there is no end in sight.

That brings me back to my past lives. On April 22 "A Past Life" was added to the App Store. For \$.99 you can simply input your name, date and place of birth and this app will tell you all about your past life including, place of birth, time period, occupation, and the story of your life. Maybe you were the Duchess of Albany in the 1700s or maybe you were a poor chambermaid working in East London struggling to feed your four children, or maybe Napoleon himself. And just think, the answer is in your shirt pocket.



How To Switch Internet Browsers

by Sandy Berger, CompuKISS, www.compukiss.com

Microsoft's Internet Explorer is a software program that comes on all computers that use the Windows Operating System. Internet Explorer is called an Internet browser since it is the software that allows you to view web pages and surf the Internet. In fact, at least 80% of you reading this web page right now are using Internet Explorer. You don't, however, have to use Internet Explorer. There are several other Internet browsers available.

Due to recent critical security glitches in Internet Explorer, other browsers are looking more attractive. Also, while Internet Explorer has stagnated over the past several years, several other Internet browsers have overtaken it with useful new features and advanced functionality. Features like a tabbed interface that lets you quickly move from page to page and voice-activated menu systems have put alternative browsers like Firefox and Opera ahead of Internet Explorer.

Using an alternative browser is easy. You simply download the browser from the website of the manufacturer and install it on your computer. Firefox, Opera, and Chrome are all alternative browsers that are free downloads. Just follow the website instructions to download and install the new browser. During installation, the program will see Internet Explorer and will ask you if you want to transfer your Favorites and other information from Internet Explorer to the new program. Most alternative browsers will help you make the switch from Internet Explorer to their browser program. When you install Opera, Netscape, or Firefox, you will be given the option of importing your

Internet information. Opera can import bookmarks and favorites. Firefox allows you to import options, bookmarks, history, passwords, cookies, and other data from Internet Explorer. This works for many different browsers. For example, if you switch from Internet Explorer to Netscape and decide that you would then like to switch to Opera, you can move your information from Internet Explorer to Netscape and then to Opera by simply following the instructions given during installation.

To use a different Internet browser, you don't have to uninstall Internet Explorer. In fact, it is best to leave Internet Explorer on your hard drive. Not only is Internet Explorer difficult to uninstall, you may need to use it in the future. Internet Explorer is the only browser that you can use to access the Windows Update website. Also, since it is the most popular web browser, many websites are optimized for Internet Explorer. If you use an alternative web browser, in your surfing you may find an occasional website that does not work properly in the browser that you have chosen. If that is the case, you can simply switch to Internet Explorer to access that website and switch back to your alternative browser for your main surfing. You see, there is no problem with using several different browsers. In fact, you can actually use two or three different browsers at the same time with no interference.

When you start using your new browser, you will be asked if you want to set the new software as your default web browser. Whatever browser is set as your default browser will be the browser that will appear when you

click on a link in an email or other document. If you want to use your new browser all the time, you will want to set it as the default. If you say no to setting the new program as your default, the program will continue to ask you this question every time you start it. Look for a notice with a check box in front of it to tell the program that you don't want to see that question again. For instance, in Opera you will click to put a checkmark into the box in front of "Do not show this dialog again." In Firefox, click to remove the checkmark in the box that says "Always perform this check when starting Firefox." Then the program will not ask that question again.

If you decide that you don't want to continue to use the new browser, you can switch back to Internet Explorer at any time. Any new favorites or cookies that you have added to the new browser can be transferred back to Internet Explorer by using the export and import settings in the two browsers. You simply export the information from the program you are using and import it into the program you want to use. Click on File, and choose Import/Export to use these functions. Most browsers have Wizards that will help you through the entire process. Some programs, like Firefox, make it easy to import information, but make it more difficult to export information. If a Wizard is not available, you can use the program's Help menu for detailed instructions.

If you are used to using Internet Explorer, downloading and using a different web browser is a big step. Although most alternative browsers are similar to Internet Explorer, you will

(see **Switch** on page 10)

Juice Your Broadband Speed

by Vinny La Bash, Sarasota Personal Computer Users Group, Inc., FL, www.spcug.org

People prefer broadband internet connections because of the obvious speed advantages over dial-up and satellite links. Then why is it that broadband never seems to be fast enough? Are you getting the speed promised by your ISP? Broadband can cost \$100 a month or more, but does the provider really provide the advertised speed? Is the connection reliable, or does the modem need a reboot several times a day? Fortunately, there are ways to achieve high, reliable throughput without having to have an engineering degree. Here are some suggestions to get every bit per second possible from your modem without any technical hiccups or interruptions in service.

Start with your computer and TV equipment. A common source of line noise can be traced to improper grounding of anything that plugs into household electrical circuits. This can seriously degrade performance of cable equipment. Every electrical device, especially those in the same room as the cable modem, should be plugged into properly grounded outlets. The best connections are with polarized plugs oriented in the correct direction, and please don't use any three prong to two prong adapters. Get up-to-date gear. Electric outlet testers are cheap. Buy one and use it to test for excess voltage on your cable wiring. Any problem could indicate a serious safety hazard. Engage a licensed electrician to fix it.

Almost anything manufactured today in the consumer electronics world is light years ahead of its predecessors manufactured only two or three years ago. Cable modems are no exception, so if yours is more than three years

old, get a new one from your provider. Most providers will make a free exchange, but some will require an extension of your contract. You want to do this because the latest modems conform to the DOCSIS 2.0 standard. This offers higher upload and download capabilities and supports other advanced broadband applications, including online gaming and peer-to-peer computing.

Ask your ISP if they automatically update firmware for the modem. If they don't, have them supply the website address of your modem's manufacturer so you can download the most recent firmware. Check the website about twice a year for new updates.

Next, go to a test site such as PC Pitstop, and check your upload and download speeds to see if they match the terms of your service contract. If they don't, give your

ISP a call and have them reset the modem's settings. While you're at it, have them check the signal-to-noise ratio. Too much noise can cause interference, and your modem will then have to resend information cutting down on your throughput.

It's possible that your cable wiring may contain too many splices or simply be too long. That can be fixed by a visit from your ISP technician. Have the technician check the line quality leading to your house. If the signal is good and you're having problems, the house wiring may be the culprit. The definitive answer for cable modems is to create a split directly after the junction box and then run a new cable directly to your modem. The other side of the split will take care of your television sets which aren't nearly as sensitive to line noise.

(see Speed on page 10)



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The Deals Guy

by Bob Click, Greater Orlando Computer Users Group



Another New Toy!

I saw an ad for a HP color laser jet printer for \$199.99, but I've seen those ads before and was never happy with the price of the cartridges because new printers do not come with "full" cartridges. The sale was at Office Depot and I also shopped at a local computer shop that supports our users group and offered a Ricoh color laser jet for the same price. He printed the spec sheet and it came out on a machine that also featured duplex printing (both sides). It impressed me and it was \$379 for club members. I receive several newsletters in PDF format and can't live with reading that much on my screen. I've been printing them out by first printing the odd pages, and then reverse the page sequence to turn them over and print the even sides.

My present HP laser curls the paper a bit and even though I try to straighten them, sometimes that printer runs two pages through at once when printing the opposite side and ruins the page sequence. A duplex printer would sure simplify all that, so my choice was made. I went back to Office Depot and saw an HP printer with duplex capabilities for the same price, but after asking how the warranty worked, I returned to the other shop and purchased a Ricoh duplex printer from them.

Unpacking the machine when I got it home was a bit frustrating because trying to figure out the many protective tapes and metal stops to remove by looking at their pictorial brochure, and in which direction and sequence to do it, was confusing. I later found a PDF manual on

the installation disk. I called their tech support number and a guy picked up the phone and proceeded to help me, also offering suggestions. He was based in Atlanta, GA and spoke excellent English. What great tech support! I called again later with the same quick response. Oh yes, the store salesman didn't tell me the new machine was an all-in-one multifunction printer. I noticed that when I unpacked it.

I printed some newsletters the other evening and watched that printer run them out while I just sat there, and in *color*. The new printer is a treat, and so was the Ricoh tech support. I copied a color brochure today and that was simple, and a treat also.

Government Discount

I wouldn't ordinarily include this, but a few readers work for the government and law enforcement agencies, and perhaps some others might qualify. ElcomSoft Co. Ltd., a leading provider of various password recovery solutions, announces the availability of a special discount at www.elcomsoft.com/special.html. The new discount program enables government entities, military branches, criminal investigation and law enforcement agencies, and police and emergency services to order selected ElcomSoft password recovery products at a discount. The new 20% discount is in addition to any volume or bundle discounts already offered by ElcomSoft.

Check the URL above for products covered and information about ordering.

Protection For Your Computer

I have not tried this and there's no discount, but the lifetime membership concept sounded OK for the column. I have edited their announcement to shorten it and we found no reviews on it.

South West eCommerce announced the availability of Spyware & Adware Remover 2009, a new version of the privacy protection software ensuring optimal system performance. Spyware & Adware Remover 2009 delivers features to protect valuable data from getting corrupted or stolen, stop hackers and hinder ID theft.

Spyware can transmit secret personal information such as name, address, credit card number, social security number, driver's license number, and passwords. Spyware & Adware Remover provides users with protection from the widest range of threats, and prevents recurrence.

Spyware & Adware Remover helps find what's eating a computer's resources by detecting and eliminating malware and adware running in the background. It removes disturbances and blocks annoying pop-up ads. Spyware & Adware Remover 2009 runs under Windows 98, XP, ME, 2000 and Vista. The one-time membership fee is \$29.90. Lifetime Membership includes unlimited downloads and support. Further information on the product, and its free evaluation copy, is available from www.webdefenders.net.

That's it for this month. I'll have more new product announcements on my website (most not offering a discount). www.dealsguy.com. Bob (The Cheapskate) Click, bobclick@bellsouth.net. Editor's note: This column has been edited for space and content considerations.

Reinstalling Windows

by Vinny La Bash, a member of the
Sarasota Personal Computer Users Group, Inc., FL, www.spcug.org

No matter how diligent you are at computer housecleaning and tuning your system, at some point you will need to reinstall Windows. One of the most infuriating things about the process occurs after the installation when you realize you have forgotten something important like exporting your Favorites folder. Several weeks ago I reinstalled Vista on my laptop and almost forgot to do something elementary. So perhaps it's time to review the basics.

There are many reasons to reinstall Windows. Perhaps the registry has gotten corrupted, or it could be an accumulation of little things that are driving you nuts. Whatever is annoying you, a clean install is always the best option. Before doing anything, careful planning will keep you out of trouble.

The detailed procedures outlined here apply specifically to Vista, but the general concepts apply to any version of Windows and even other operating systems. There are three main areas to a reinstall. You need proper preparation, the install itself, and the aftermath to clean up any mess you may have inadvertently created. That means you don't schedule a reinstall the night before any deadlines.

Start by documenting any critical login identifications and passwords. If you pay bills online, access financial information, eBay, PayPal or anything else important to you., now is the time to write it all down. Some folks use a password protected spreadsheet file. Others use some kind of encrypted application to store the data. I prefer good old reliable pen and paper stored in a safe place, not taped to my monitor.

Do you have your Windows product key available? You need it to reinstall Vista. Are there any other applications you will reinstall that require product keys, like Microsoft Office? Gather them all, including any drivers you may need to reinstall hardware, like a printer or mobile smart phone.

A clean install requires that you back up your data files. This is especially important if you're planning to reformat your hard drive. Back up email contacts, calendar entries, and anything you consider important. Don't forget anything special you may have saved on your desktop. That's an easy one to overlook.

Have you installed new hardware recently? Any new devices, except physical memory, require some kind of driver software to work properly.

You can get the most up-to-date drivers by visiting the manufacturer's website and downloading them. Go to the Device Manager for a list of installed hardware, or use Belarc Advisor for a more detailed description.

Do some housecleaning. Search your drive for files that are obsolete or otherwise unnecessary. It's amazing how much digital detritus can accumulate over time. Perform a full deep virus scan so your new setup can get off to a clean start. Use Disk Cleanup if you want to reduce the number of unnecessary files on your hard disk to free up disk space and help your computer run faster. It removes temporary files, empties the Recycle Bin, and deletes a variety of system files and other items that you no longer need.

(see *Reinstall* on page 10)

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Things, Thinglets & Thingassos

by **S. Jack Lewtschuk, President, MBUG-PC**
(Monterey Bay Users Group – Personal Computer), CA, www.mbug.org

Cleaning Your Computer

During the summer you had your hands full cleaning your yard and patio. In the fall you winterized your home and prepared for the holidays. Now that all of that is over, it's time to spring clean your computer. When was the last time you opened up your "box" and looked inside? Don't tell me!

I found a very thorough guide explaining how to clean, what tools you need, why you should clean and yes, how often you should clean, courtesy of Computer Hope at www.computerhope.com/cleaning.htm#00.

Let me know what you found inside your box—I dare you! Is it still alive?

The Tiny Miracle

Have you ever received via e-mail, a URL like this:
<http://search.atomz.com/search/?sp-q=Gang&getit=Go&sp-a=00062d45-sp00000000&sp-advanced=1&sp-p=all&sp-w-control=1&sp-w=alike&sp-date-range=-1&sp-x=any&sp-c=100&sp-m=1&sp-s=0...> with only the top line underlined and in blue?

And when you clicked on it you got an "error 404," or did not get the website you expected?

That's because the URL should have included all four lines. You need to copy the whole thing (all four lines), and paste it into your browser, making sure that you do not introduce any spaces. A few websites are configured so that their URLs don't break, but not very many bother to do this.

I am guilty of sending long URLs via MBUG Listserv (see the back page to

find out how to register). This has caused some of our members to be confused by the split URL. I appreciate the fact that recently someone took the time to remind me about a great solution for this problem. Years ago I knew about this but completely forgot (you can call it my "senior moment").

One solution is Tiny URL or www.tinyurl.com. All you have to do is go to that URL and create a shortcut for future use. The instructions are simple:

- 1 Copy the giant URL.
- 2 Paste it in the slot provided by Tiny.
- 3 Click on the button provided.

And, like magic, the long four line URL becomes tiny, is automatically copied to your clipboard, and looks more like tinyurl.com/52fuz2. Surprised? Try it, you'll like it, and it's FREE! By the way, some time ago Tiny URL was reported to contain malware, however the manufacturer assures us that the problem has been rectified.

Also, another MBUG member suggests to try adding "<>" brackets to prevent URLs from falling apart.

Another program similar to Tiny URL is at www.webware.com/8301-1_109-9898698-2.html?tag=bl (or I could say: tinyurl.com/57dqyk)!

Are You The Administrator?

If you need to quickly tell if you are currently logged onto a PC as a Local Administrator of the Windows server, right click on the "Start" button. If you see "Open All Users" rather than just "Open," the account is in the Local Administrators group.

Manual! Manual!

My Kingdom for a Manual!

Have you had an instant when you had a question or a problem with one of your 21st century electronic gadgets and the dog ate the manual? Have no fear bunky, SmartComputing to the rescue! Go to www.retrevo.com/samples/index.html.

What's in Your Wallet?

Credit Cards

While two credit cards might act and look alike, levels of consumer protection that each type of credit card provides can be different. Under federal law, if someone steals your credit card you're only responsible to pay the first \$50 of unauthorized charges. However, if you notify the credit card issuer before a thief is able to make any charges, you may be free from all liability. If the credit card is not physically present when an unauthorized or fraudulent purchase is made (such as over the Internet), you're also free from liability for those charges.

MasterCard and Visa offer zero-liability protection where you don't have to pay any charges if someone uses your credit card to make an unauthorized purchase. Many credit cards offer additional benefits and supply a yearly summary of your spending.

Debit Cards

A debit card is a direct key to your bank account. The protection offered for debit card fraud is similar to credit cards but with a few exceptions. For example, your liability under federal law is limited to \$50, the same as for a credit card,

(see *Things* on page 11)

The Toughest Decision: Should My Loved One Be Placed In An Assisted Computing Facility?

For family members, it is often the most difficult and painful decision they will face: to accept that a loved one—a parent, a spouse, perhaps a sibling—is technologically impaired and should no longer be allowed to live independently, or come near a computer or electronic device without direct supervision. The time has come to place that loved one into the care of an Assisted Computing Facility. But you have questions. So many questions. We at Silicon Pines want to help.

What Exactly Is An “Assisted Computing Facility?”

Sometimes referred to as “Homes for the Technologically Infirm,” “Technical Invalid Care Centers,” or “Homes for the Technically Challenged,” Assisted Computing Facilities (ACFs) are modeled on assisted living facilities, and provide a safe, structured residential environment for those unable to handle even the most common, everyday multitasks. Most fully accredited ACFs, like Silicon Pines, are an oasis of hope and encouragement that allow residents to lead productive, technologically relevant lives without the fear and anxiety associated with actually having to understand or execute the technologies themselves.

Who Should Be In An ACF?

Sadly, technology is advancing at such a dramatic rate that many millions, of all ages, will never truly be able to understand it, putting an undue burden on those friends and family members who must explain it to them. But unless the loved one is suffering from a truly debilitating affliction, such as Reinstallzheimers, the decision to commit is entirely personal. You must ask yourself: “How frustrated am I that

my parent/sibling/spouse is unable to open an email attachment?” “How much of my time should be taken up explaining how RAM is different from hard drive memory?” “How many times can I bear to hear my dad say, ‘Hey, can I replace the motherboard with a fatherboard? Ha ha ha!’”

To make things easier, we have prepared a list of Warning Signs, which we encourage you to return to often or, if you can’t figure out how to bookmark it, print out. Also, please take a moment to read “I’m Glad I’m in Here!—A Resident’s Story.”

Must It Be Family, Or Can I Place Anyone In An ACF?

Several corporations have sought permission to have certain employees, or at times entire sales departments, committed to ACFs. At present, however, individuals can be committed only by direct family or self-internment. The reason is simple: there are not nearly enough ACFs in the world to accommodate all the technologically challenged. For example, there are currently only 860,000 beds available in ACFs, but there are 29 million AOL users.

How Much Will It Cost?

ACF rents range from free up to \$12,500 per month. The disparity is currently a point of contention in the ACF industry. Many residents are covered through government programs such as Compucaid or Compucare, but reimbursement rates are low and only cover a portion of the fees. Exacerbating the situation are the HMOs (HelpDesk Maintenance Organizations), which often deny coverage, forcing residents to pay out of pocket or turn to expen-

sive private techcare insurers such as BlueCache/BlueScreen. Offsetting the costs are technology companies themselves, many of which subsidize ACFs. Firms such as Microsoft, Dell, Qualcomm, and America Online will pay up to 100 percent of a resident’s monthly bill, but there is a catch. ISPs, for instance, require residents to sign service contracts lasting a year or more. Microsoft, meanwhile, prohibits the installation of any competitive software, while Priceline requires that residents buy shares of its stock, which seems onerous but saves residents on lavatory tissue.

How Old Must I Be To Have Someone Committed?

Until very recently, you had to be 18 or older to legally commit a family member. However, the now famous British court case Frazier vs. Frazier and Frazier has cleared the way for minors to commit their parents. In that case, 15-year-old Bradley Frazier of Leicester had his 37-year-old parents committed to an ACF in Bournemouth after a judge ruled Ian and Janet Frazier were a “danger to themselves and the community.” According to court records, Bradley told his parents about the I LoveYou virus and warned them not to click attachments, then the next day his parents received an I LoveYou email and clicked on the attachment because, they explained, “it came from someone we know.”

What Should I Look For In An ACF?

First, make sure it’s a genuine Assisted Computing Facility, and not an Assisted Living Facility. To tell the difference, observe the residents. If they look rather old and tend to openly discuss bowel movements, this is prob-

(see Decision on page 11)

(Tips —continued from page 2)

connect to your PC with a software program called logmein. This program is used by large corporations to connect to offsite PCs. The program will also allow a friend to fix your computer even though they are thousands of miles from your PC. It is easy to set up and easy to operate. Give it a test drive... You will love it.

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Directory Updates

New Members:

Jo Davis, 407 W. Main St.
Franklin NC 28734
369-5342, wmn411@smnet.net

Lana Frank, 84 Honey Maple Lane
Franklin NC 28734
349-4697, lane.frank@mchsi.com

(Reinstall —continued from page 7)

Back up the My Documents folder and any sub-folders that may exist. Back up Links if you use Internet Explorer; Bookmarks if you use Mozilla Firefox. If you're not sure you've backed up everything you need, back up the entire disk. If you've forgotten anything, your data can be recovered.

By now you should have:

- Documented all logins and passwords
- Backed up all important data including My Documents and any sub-folders
- Have all product keys and activation codes handy
- Backed up your email contact list, and calendar entries
- Backed up Favorites, Links, Bookmarks, etc.
- Collected Driver disks

(Speed—continued from page 5)

After you've done everything from a hardware and firmware standpoint, and your cable connection is as clean as possible, you're ready to fine tune the system for best performance. Vista users don't have to do much of anything to optimize the operating system since Vista does TCP stack tuning dynamically. Any internet performance adjustments can be made through the browser. Firefox users may want to try Firetune or Fasterfox. They are both free utilities and allow adjustment to cache memory, capacity and other settings such as pipelining.

If you do a lot of downloading, you can save time by installing a download manager like Flashget. This widely used utility claims the highest number of users on the internet. It uses an MHT (Multi-server Hyper-threading Transportation) technique. It's very easy to use and comes with exceptional document management features. Best of all, it's free.

After all this work, it would be a tragedy if you didn't keep in mind

Check everything at least twice to make sure you haven't overlooked anything essential and you're ready to go. Insert your Windows disk and reinstall the operating system.

After the process is complete, there is still work to do. Use Windows Update to retrieve and install the latest service packs, security updates, and any necessary patches. After bringing your operating system up-to-date, turn your attention to applications and device drivers.

If you reinstalled Vista from the manufacturer's installation or system restore disks, drivers for the original software and hardware that came with the system are likely to be either no longer relevant or out-of-date. You may need to visit several manufacturers' websites to download and install the most

that sometimes the simplest solutions are the best ones. Most cable modems and routers have reset features. Many a mysterious internet ailment has been corrected simply by resetting the equipment. Turn off the computer and the modem. Unplug the modem for a few minutes and then power everything back on. You may be pleasantly surprised.

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(Switch —continued from page 4)

need to invest some time into learning the new interface. Some features may not be obvious. For instance, the tabbed browsing in Firefox is not instantly noticeable. So be sure to read the help files and information on the product's website to get the full gist of what features are available.

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recent drivers. This is part of proper preparation, but if you neglected this step it's not a fatal mistake.

Restore any data you backed up earlier, reconfigure network settings if applicable, and tweak the system to suit your personal preferences. Create a system restore point, and do an image backup of your entire system in case you need to reinstall again.

Don't fool yourself. Reinstalling the operating system, applications, drivers and such is never as simple or as easy as it should be. If you plan carefully however, it doesn't need to be stressful.

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(Things—continued from page 8)

but only if you notify the issuer within two business days of discovering the card's loss or theft. Your liability for debit card fraud can jump up to \$500 if you don't report the loss or theft within that time.

Debit cards provide a direct pass to your bank account. You may also face cash flow problems and bounced-check fees when thieves clean out your bank accounts.

If you are the type of person who gives a passing glance to your monthly bank statement, you could be totally liable for any fraudulent debit card charges if you wait 60 days or more from the time your statement is mailed.

Visa and MasterCard zero-liability protection applies to your debit card with them but only for transactions that do not involve the use of your PIN (personal identification number).

Additional protection against fraudulent use of your credit or debit cards may be available through your homeowner's or renter's insurance. Check your policy or with your agent for more information about your coverage.

You should avoid using your debit card for any online purchase or for things which are expensive. Why? The main reason is that it is much easier to dispute a charge when you

use your credit card. If the gold-plated, limited-edition, hip-swinging Elvis wall clock arrives broken, your credit card company will remove the charge until the problem is resolved. With your debit card you are stuck dealing with the merchant directly to resolve any problems with a purchase. Don't fall for rumors about not signing your cards—all banks insist that you are much safer signing your cards immediately upon receiving them.

Just to make sure that you have all the necessary information should you become a victim of stolen or lost cards and other important documents:

- 1 Empty your wallet.
- 2 Place all your credit/debit cards and important documents on your scanner or copying machine.
- 3 Make copies of your cards, front and back.
- 4 Place the copy in a safe place: a safety deposit box, fire safe, or even your refrigerator is better than a desk drawer (in case of fire, the chances for survival of contents in your refrigerator are pretty good).
- 5 Check your wallet periodically. Thieves often steal just one credit card to make sure that you don't notice it's gone. By the time you notice, it's too late.

NOTE: When you give your card to a person to pay a bill, make sure that when you get it back it's your card and not an expired card belonging to someone else!

One last precaution: NEVER carry your Social Security card around with you.

The Third Generation Of USB

Many of you recall the old USB (Universal Serial Bus) 1.1. Its time passed when the much faster USB 2.0 was invented—it's the USB we all use now to connect our peripherals (mouses, printers, flash drives, etc.).

Last November we were given some good news:

Good news #1: by 2010 we will be able to buy USB 3.0.

Good news #2: it will be 10 times faster than USB 2.0 and it will feature improved power efficiency.

Good news #3: USB 3.0 will be backwards compatible with USB 2.0 and 1.1 devices, which means that we will have time to upgrade our peripheral devices when we are ready.

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ably "assisted living." On the other hand, if they vary in age and say things like, "I'm supposed to figure that out? I'm not Bill goddamned Gates you know!" this is probably "assisted computing." Also, at a well-run ACF, residents should lead full, independent lives, and should be allowed the use of many technology devices, including telephones, electric toothbrushes, and alarm clocks. However, only a facility's Licensed Techcare Profes-

sionals (LTPs) should perform computational or technological tasks such as installing programs or saving email attachments. And LTPs should NEVER answer residents' questions because studies have shown that answering user questions inevitably makes things worse. Instead, residents should simply have things done for them, relieving them of the pressure to "learn" or "improve."

Can A Resident Ever Get Out?
No.

***Ok, This Sounds Promising.
How Can I Learn More?***

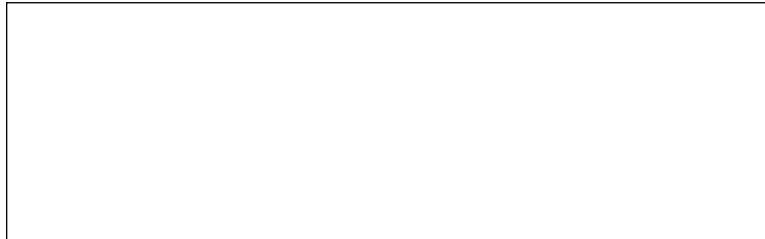
For your enlightenment, we offer extensive information on Silicon Pines and the ACF lifestyle, which can be found by clicking one of the links in the navigation bars found at both the top and bottom of this page. But whatever you decide, keep in mind that due to demand, ACFs now have long waiting lists. WebTV and AOL users alone will take years to absorb.

Macon Users Group

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April's Door Prize Winners



Joe Loewy won the April 50-50 jackpot!