The Outer Edge

Newsletter of the Channel Islands PC Users Group

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The Friendly Computer Club Helping Make Computers Friendly. On the Web at www.cipcug.org

★★★★★★★★★★★★★★★★★★★★★★★★★
Attendance at the
August general meeting
88 members
We welcome 1 new member
★★★★★★★★★★★★★★★★★★★★★★★★★

To Contact CIPCUG

Inside

COMMAND.COM

By Lois Evans de Violini, President

Our thanks to Marcy Gunn for a great presentation about the magazine Smart Computing and the other services offered by Sandhills Publishing. Particularly impressive was her description of their Tech Support Center. If you have a computer problem, try it and let us know how it works for you: http://smartcomputing.com/techsupport

Don't let the Mac people convince you that they are the only ones with easy access to voice communication from PC to PC over the Internet. Your Windows-based PC is fully capable of allowing you to use your computer to talk to a contact.

Special software like that provided by Skype has been around for a time, but now some of the popular instant messenger software is adding VOIP as a feature to their service.

**EVANS-
DE VIOLINI**

Google, Yahoo, Microsoft's MSN, AOL's AIM and ICQ all have VoIP in at least beta. Most of these, at this time, are PC to PC contact. That is two or more people are talking to one another from computer to computer over high speed lines (cable or DSL) using the computer speakers, a microphone or headset. It is much more fun to talk than to type messages back and forth. I expect this feature will be perfected and become a part of all IM software very soon.

I have not used the Google, MSN, or AOL versions, but I have used the Yahoo version. There was nothing special to buy. I downloaded the free software from Yahoo and persuaded one of my IM friends with high speed access to do the same. We have talked several times and once while the friend was in London using a laptop. With a Web cam, and the same software, we could have watched each other as we talked as was done in the Mac demo. If friends are offline or away from the computer, voicemail can be left.

With Yahoo's recent purchase of Dialpad, its IM service will be able

Root Directory

Channel Islands PC Users Group

CIPCUG mailing address:
P.O. Box 51354, Oxnard, CA 93031-1354

Executive Board
(Elected officials)

President……………Lois Evans de Violini
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Past President…………..…….David Harris
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Ex-officio members of Executive Committee
(Appointed Officials)

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CIPCUG ISP Signups………...Helen Long
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Terry Lee	1991/1993
Jerry McLoud	1993/1995
Robert Provart	1995/1997
Toby Scott	1997/1999
George Lakes	1999/2001
Andy Toth	2001/2003
David Harris	2003-2005

(With the exception of the immediate past president, past presidents are not members of the board.)

Life members

Frank Segesman*
Toby Scott
Lois Evans de Violini

*Deceased

CIPCUG is a member of APCUG,
The Association of PC Users Groups

The Outer Edge

Advertising in The Outer Edge

Steve Bass to present September program

Programs

This month's program will feature Steve Bass, author of "PC Annoyances: How to Fix the Most Annoying Things About Your Personal Computer." The meeting will be on the fourth Saturday of the month, Sept. 24, at the Camarillo Boys & Girls Club, 1500 Temple Ave. (northeast corner of Ponderosa Drive and Temple Avenue), Camarillo (see map on page 20).

The doors open at 8:30 a.m., and the Beginners SIG and Internet SIG start at 8:45 a.m.

Steve Bass (pronounced like the fish, not the bass guitar) has made a career out of hunting down PC annoyances and finding fixes for them. In fact, he's even dedicated the book to "Bill Gates, his Microsofties, and the entire Redmond Empire. For without them, this book wouldn't be possible (or even necessary)."

At presentations, Steve spends time explaining and demonstrating how to eliminate some common annoyances — such as removing the dozens of icons RealPlayer and AOL stick everywhere, as well as battling spam, pop-ups, and spyware.

For the balance of the talk, he's up for the challenge of taking annoyances from the audience and either points to the solution in the book or comes up with a fix on the spot.

Bass has written for PC World for 13 years, started and ran the Pasadena IBM Users Group for 23 years, and, in a former life, was a psychotherapist. He's a compelling presenter, is able to engage the audience, and is comfortable talking to both large and small crowds. He's also equipped to make sure everyone in the audience walks away with at least one fixed PC annoyance.

Other coming programs:

Oct. 22 (fourth Satuday): TBA.

Nov. 19 (third Saturday): Gene Barlow, who will discuss "Internet Security & How to Fix It Using Invisus." He notes in the announcement of his talk:

"The Internet is a powerful tool to communicate with others, handle your business online, research and shop. Unfortunately, the Internet was not designed to protect you from security problems. This session will help you understand the threat that hackers have on your personal computer and show you ways to beef up your security to guard against them."

He also plans to discuss "Organizing Your Access to the Internet using Optimal Desktop Pro," explaining:

"We are living in the Information Age and actually have an 'information overload' to contend with. Finding information on the Internet or even on our large gigabyte hard drives is becoming a real problem. The best way to prevent this is by organizing your 'Access Points' to the information. The perfect tool to help you is Optimal Desktop Pro. Finding the information you want on your screen can be done in three easy clicks of the mouse. Optimal Desktop Pro uses Cabinets, Drawers, and Sections. Gene will show you how to set up and tailor your desktop using Drawers and Sections by name, icon or color to make things easy to find and remember. Setting up and tailoring your desktop makes using this product simple and fun to do."

Dec. 17 (third Saturday): TBA.
2006
Jan. 28 (fourth Saturday): Bruce Fries on Audio Essentials (tentative).

Feb. 25 (fourth Saturday): TBA.
March 25 (fourth Saturday): TBA.
April 22 (fourth Saturday): TBA.
May 27 (fourth Saturday): Lee Otsubo, the Digital Photo Guy (a different presentation than the one in 2005).

June 24 (fourth Saturday): TBA.
July 22 (fourth Saturday): TBA.
Aug. 26 (fourth Saturday): TBA.
Sept. 23 (fourth Saturday): TBA.
Oct. 28 (fourth Saturday): TBA.
Nov. 18 (third Saturday): TBA.
Dec. 18 (third Saturday): TBA.

Special Interest Groups

Unless otherwise noted, Special Interest Groups (SIGs) run from 6:30 to 8:30 p.m. at Ventura County Computers, 2175 Goodyear Ave., Unit 117, Ventura; phone 805-289-3960. From the 101

Door prizes

The club door prizes for this month are:
PNY Attache' USB 2.0 flash drive 512 MB
Emprex DVD Dual 16x double layer internal DVDR/RW drive
Emprex 16x DVD-ROM internal drive
100 pack CD-R
Norton 2005 Internet Security
2 Adaptec Fireconnect 1394 PCI cards
Laptop tote
Estimated retail value: $230.

We have two types of raffle tickets: one for prizes offered by the presenter and one for club-provided prizes. The tickets for the presenter's prizes are free and limited to one per member.

The tickets for the club-provided prizes are $1 each, $5 for six tickets, $10 for 13 tickets and $20 for 26 tickets and are available to anyone.

Consignment table

A consignment table is set up at every meeting. Anyone can buy, but only members can sell. The club gets 10 percent of the sales price. A tag with the seller's name, CIPCUG membership number, item name, item description and price must be placed on each item. Sold items must be picked up at the end of the day's meeting. Any items not picked up will become the property of CIPCUG and will be subject to disposal at the club's discretion.

CIPCUG is not responsible in any way for items bought or sold at the table. Each item is sold as-is unless otherwise stated.

Meeting, SIG notices

If you would like email notices of regular meetings and SIGs, go to www.cipcug.org, where you'll find a link on the home page to sign up. The URL is http://cipcug.org/listserv.cfm.

Freeway, exit at Telephone, take Telephone south to McGrath, turn left and go one block. Turn right on Goodyear and then right again into the second driveway. Unit 117 is the back, right corner of the industrial building.

The SIGs are sponsored by CIPCUG and led by volunteer club members. There is no charge for members to at-

Mixing USB 1 and 2 cables, Wi-Fi and VOIP

Business meeting

Lois Evans de Violini presided at the CIPCUG general membership meeting. She noted that this was the first time the new sound system was used. The club officers presented their regular monthly reports, which appear elsewhere in the newsletter.

Lois has arranged for CIPCUG to use the meeting room at CompUSA, which has Internet access, for a SIG after the October meeting. Michael Shalkey will explain how to clean up a new Windows install.

Q&A session

Unless otherwise noted, questions were answered by Toby Scott, a partner in Ventura County Computers and our technical adviser. Michael Shalkey handled the demonstrations projected on the screen.

Will USB 2 cable work with USB 1?

Q: I have a question about USB. I upgraded my computer to USB 2; can I still use my USB 1 cable with it?

A: You can, but you will have USB 1 speed. USB 1 can only do USB 1. USB 2 is backwardly compatible, so it will operate at USB 1's slower speed. Incidentally, if you have a USB hub, if you plug a USB 1 device into that hub, the whole hub will operate at USB 1 speed. To get USB 2, you need to re-

move the USB 1 device.

If any of you are using the USB backup drives, if it has FireWire, use the FireWire, not USB. FireWire is a little faster than USB 2, and it requires far less processing power from the CPU than USB does.

USB printer made my printer-cable scanner stop working

Q: A friend gave me a USB printer. When I plugged it in, my scanner, which was using a printer cable, quit working. I finally plugged the scanner in with USB, and it worked fine. Is there an incompatibility between USB and printer cables?

A: There shouldn't be with your Windows Me. If you had XP, Windows XP is notorious for not liking parallel printer port scanners. You have to understand that the scanner should use a SCSI port, but they are expensive, so the manufacturers try to configure the parallel port as if it were a slow SCSI port. There may be something in this pseudo-SCSI port that conflicts with USB. The way it is being used is not as a true parallel port.

Can you extend wireless signals?

Q: Is there a way of extending the range of your wireless signals?

A: Let me explain something about wireless protocols. There are four:

802.11a, which is primarily for broadcast, not for computers, so we will ignore it; 802.11b, which is the old wireless standard. It could extend supposedly for about 200-300 feet of clear space, but through walls, etc. it is less than that. Its speed is 11 Mb per second. The later standard is 802.11g, which is good for 54 Mb/sec and covers 600-700 feet in the open, but considerably less than that inside. Then there is a new standard, that isn't a standard yet, 802.11n. It will be dual-channel 802.11g, so instead of 54 Mb/sec it will be a maximum speed of 108 Mb/sec. Because it is dual channel, each channel uses different frequencies, which will bounce off different objects in a different way. One of the frequencies will get around obstacles better than the other, and in actual tests, in an obstructed space they have been able to increase the distance the signal is good considerably. But there is no standard. Remember when 56 KB modems were first introduced? There was K-Flex from Motorola/AT&T and X2 from U.S. Robotics. This is the same kind of situation. Necessarily each manufacturer's version is proprietary. There are also hardware appliances you can use to extend the range. Access points need to be wired to the

August Executive Board meeting

By Martha Churchyard

Secretary

The CIPCUG Executive Board meeting was held on Aug. 30, 2005, at 7 p.m. at the home of George and Arline Lakes.

Present: Ken Church, Martha Churchyard, Lois Evans de Violini, David Harris, Toby Scott, Craig Ladd, George and Arline Lakes, Art Lewis, Helen Long, and John Weigle. The officers gave their usual reports, which appear in the TOE.

Lois has made arrangements for

CIPCUG to use the CompUSA meeting room for a SIG after the Sept. 24 meeting from 1 to 3 p.m. It has computer terminals, Internet access and a projector.

There was some discussion of ways to develop this relationship to build membership. Perhaps other SIGs could be held there.

People still liked the idea of running classified ads in TOE, but somebody is needed to be responsible for the details.

There were some questions about the consignment table. Lois will call people who offered to help.

After some discussion of the meeting raffle prizes, Craig Ladd and David Harris offered to help with purchase and logistics.

Helen reported that membership in the ISP has dropped to 33 as people switch to broadband.

Toby emphasized the importance of having really good SIGs. They could just be interested members who gather to exchange ideas and questions, rather than a class taught by an expert. Three areas were suggested: digital photography, audio/video recording, and investing.

More on Q&A: Turning off Active X ...

router, but if you run the wire a long way, the access point will extend from that point. They are frequently used in work situations where they want to connect multiple buildings. Put one access point in each building, and you are done. There are some newer range expanders out that don't require a wired connection. However, they only work with new routers from the same manufacturer. But they work well at repeating the signal without wires.

What is VOIP?

Q: Explain VOIP.

A: VOIP stands for Voice Over IP — Internet Protocol. What that means is using a computer or computer appliance to make telephone connections over the Internet. There are two or three different models for voice. Using Skype and its clones, you can make calls to anywhere in the world for free. The quality is pretty good now if you have broadband on both ends. If you have a phone modem on one end, it is not so good. It is a computer-to-computer conversation. Both parties use a headset or microphone and computer speakers, and the Skype software, instead of a telephone.

(From audience) Have you seen the new Yahoo Beta voice? I've used it, and it's pretty good. And you don't need earphones. It comes right out of the computer speakers.

Toby: Then there is a company selling phone service, but it just runs over IP — Vonage. They sell unlimited calls in 50 states for $24.99, and 500 minutes for $14.99. But that includes all your local calls. Of course, once you get to the Internet, everything is a local call. There isn't any difference between calling your next-door neighbor and calling Saskatchewan.

(From audience) What about the recent FCC ruling that these companies have to notify their customers that they are not able to make 911 emergency calls. There is also a problem in that if you lose connectivity to the Internet, you completely lose phone service.

Toby: The issue is, since there are no local calls, there is no local police department to call. As to the connectivity issue, most phones these days require electricity. Generally speaking, it is probably not a good idea to go purely voice over IP unless you have a cell phone.

Q: Do 911 calls on cell phones go to the Highway Patrol? How local is that?

A: They can route you. In California, they will ask you where you are calling from, and they will route you.

How do I turn off Active X?

Q: Will you discuss ActiveX, the use of it, and how to turn it off to prevent hackers getting access to your computer?

A: ActiveX is a protocol that Microsoft uses for scripting. It is important because ActiveX support was written into the Internet Explorer browser, and hackers have figured out how to use it. It is used in most of the spyware. But if you turn it off completely, you cannot receive Microsoft Windows updates, and many things on the Microsoft Web site will not work. You can fine tune it in the Internet Explorer security settings (demonstrating Tools, Internet Options, Security). It's not intuitive what some of these settings will do, and you need to experiment. But do not turn ActiveX off completely. That is worse than leaving Explorer wide open. You need to do updates to protect yourself from new Trojans, spyware, and so on.

Incidentally, if you have Microsoft Office, you need to do the online update for Office as well as Windows, particularly if you have Outlook 2003, because this is where you get the latest spam filtering. If you turn it on and keep it up to date, you can get rid of about 90 percent of your spam.

Do I have to use Internet Explorer for Windows updates?

Q: When you do updates to Win-

More on Programs and SIGS ...

tend.

The general schedule follows:

Second Wednesday: Toby Scott on HTML, CSS and Web design.

Third Thursday: Open.

Fourth Thursday: Linux

Fourth Saturday (or after the regular meeting): Michael Shalkey's SIG at CompUSA in the Shopping at the Rose center in Oxnard).

Here is the schedule for September:

Wednesday, Sept. 14: HTML/ CSS. Moderator: Toby Scott. We have another "tired" Web site that needs sprucing up. Toby will show us the proce-

dures for quickly changing the appearance of a multipage site.

Thursday Sept. 22: Moderator and topic: TBA

Saturday, Sept. 24: So, you have a new computer! Moderator: Michael Shalkey. What to throw away from your new computer! What are all those icons doing all over my desktop, and do I really need them? This SIG will be at CompUSA on Rose Avenue in Oxnard from 1 to 3 p.m. Please help cleaning up the Auditorium at the Boys & Girls Club and grab a bite to eat before coming over. We will get a head count before the meeting breaks up and

will wait until those committed to the SIG show up.

Thursday, Sept. 29: Linux. Moderator: Bill Wayson. Reading Internet News.

October

Wednesday, Oct. 12: HTML/CSS. Moderator: Toby Scott. Topic: TBA

Thursday, Oct. 20: Moderator, topic: TBA

Thursday, Oct. 27: Linux. Moderator: Bill Wayson. Topic: TBA

Check the Web site for the full October details.

More Q&A: Consumer Reports article ...

dows, do you have to do it through Internet Explorer as opposed to another browser?

A: That's right. You cannot do Windows updates with Firefox or with Opera. The reason for that is, in order to increase security, those browsers do not turn on ActiveX. What I do, and I strongly recommend that you do also, is make Windows Update the home page of Internet Explorer and only use it for the updates. I use Firefox for everything else.

Maxthon browser and Hitman Pro 2

Q: There is a browser called Maxthon, which uses the Internet Explorer engine but has tabbed browsing and should do Windows updates. Second, have you had a chance to look at that Hitman Pro 2 that we talked about last time?

A: No, not yet. As to browsers, I'm not too interested in the ones that have Internet Explorer as their engine, because they all have ActiveX in them.

Did you see the Consumers Report article on computers?

Q: Have you had a chance to read the Consumers Report article?

A: I read about two-thirds of it and ran out of time.

Q: They had an article all about the Internet and computers. It was very interesting because it wasn't written by computer people. You could tell, because they didn't mention Firefox. I have a hard time trusting someone who says that the best thing you can do is wait for Internet Explorer 7 and install it as soon as it comes out. How will that help me avoid spyware?

A: There were some other interesting things in it. They said that surveys of users showed that 20 percent of Mac users said they got a virus in the last two years. How many users think it's a virus every time their computer crashes? This is the uninformed company polling uninformed users and coming up with useless results. All of their statistics where gathered by telephone surveys. For instance, only 53 percent of Windows users reported that they had ever had spyware on their computers. Actually, for people accessing the Internet, that number is perilously close to 100 percent. I don't think there's a user out there who's been on the Internet more than three hours in the last six months who hasn't gotten spyware. It's possible, but I would be very surprised. They are asking a large group of relatively uninformed users technical questions, and not interpreting the answers to allow for that.

I can't get DSL; what do you suggest?

Q: I live in an area of Thousand Oaks where I can't get DSL. I have tried to get Verizon DSL a couple of times, and they keep telling me that it's not available in my area. The other alternative is to pay $42.95 a month with Adelphia.

Q: If you check, Adelphia has an offer of $26.95, for the first three months. I have had Adelphia for a long time. I keep

Treasurer's report
By Art Lewis

treasurer@cipcug.org

Category Description	July 2005 7-1 through 7-31, 2005
INFLOWS	
Donation	7.50
ISP Income	$ 750.00
New Members	35.00
Raffle	-35.25
Renewals	460.00
TOTAL INFLOWS	**1,217.25**
OUTFLOWS	
Coffee-Doughnuts Expense	12.50
Corporate Expenses	48.00
Equipment	279.72
ISP Expense	388.00
Miscellaneous Expense	34.06
Rent Paid	150.00
TOE	467.27
TOTAL OUTFLOWS	**1,379.55**
OVERALL TOTAL	**-162.30**

An ISP deposit of $165 was omitted from the June report and from the FY 2004/2005 report. The June 30, 2005, Bank Balance is corrected to show:

Unrestricted Funds	$4,283.57
Restricted Funds	2,000.00
Balance	6,283.57
Unrestricted Funds	4,121.27
Restricted Funds	2,000.00
Bank Balance 7-31-05	**6,121.27**
Year to Date Income	1,217.25
Year to Date Expense	-1,379.55

getting these offers in the mail, and if I call them, complaining that I pay more, they will give me the offer price.

Is DSL technology likely to change?

Q: Is there any possibility that the technology will change for DSL so that the people who live too far from switches will be able to get it?

A: It isn't that the technology is changing; but it is the rollout of switches. You have to be within 12,000 feet of the switch, measuring the length of the connecting cable. It used

Magazine offers free technical support

By John Weigle

jweigle@vcnet.com

Smart Computing and its sister magazines offer free telephone technical support for computer problems, and subscribers to any of the Sandhills Publishing magazines have access through the Internet to everything published by the company, publication coordinator Marcy Gunn said at our August meeting.

The telephone tech support is available from 7 a.m. to 8 p.m., Monday through Friday (Central Time). Callers might or might not get immediate answers to their questions, Gunn said, but if the staff can't answer the question during the call, the question goes to a second-tier staff member who will call or e-mail the answer, depending on the caller's preference.

The technical support is part of

Smart Computing's philosophy of customer service, Gunn explained. Subscribers expect to get the kind of help they're used to in the magazine, and nonsubscribers become subscribers when they get satisfactory help. "We've turned those folks into subscribers," she said.

Unlike most computer magazines — and most publications in general — Smart Computer makes its money from its readers, not its advertisers, Gunn explained. Only 15 percent of the pages of any issue are devoted to advertising, she said, adding, "We are a reader-driven magazine, not an advertising one."

She described Smart Computing as "a monthly computer magazine that is written for computer users of all experience levels" and without the jargon that is so common in many computer magazines and books.

Sandhills publishes Smart Computing, Computer Power User, PC Today, CE Lifestyles, and the Reference Series.

All articles from those publications,

More on Q&A: Cable vs. DSL, alphabetizing Start menu

to be 15,000, but that last 3,000 feet was troublesome.

They are rolling out new switches and repeaters, and they will get to you eventually. But some of the areas around here, particularly areas like Upper Ojai or along the ridge in Newbury Park, it will be a while, because there aren't enough houses to make it pay quickly.

(From audience) Verizon has been digging things up in my neighborhood and is installing new switches for Verizon Fios, which offers 5Mb a second download speed and 2Mb upload speed, for $40 a month.

A: I'll just give you my prejudice, from serving my customers: If you have the choice of cable and DSL, take the cable, even if it's a few dollars more.

Cable is about 40 times as reliable as DSL. I just have a lot of trouble with

DSL, and Verizon is the company I have the most trouble with. Their technical support is very problematic. SBC is a paragon of virtue compared to Verizon.

Alphabetizing the Start menu

Q: If you go to Start, Programs and open up the list of all the programs on the computer, how do you get that list to be in alphabetical order?

A: (Demonstrating) Open the list of programs, then right mouse-click over the list, and pick "sort by name" from the menu that appears. Do all of you know that this list is a modifiable file? (Demonstrating) Right mouse-click on Start, and go to Explore, and you are in the Start Menu folder. Click on the plus sign next to Programs to see the list of programs. You will also have to go up to the "All Users" folder to see the programs that are shared by all users. To make changes, you have to

work on both locations. When my program menu gets too big, I consolidate some of them into one folder that I have created. And programs that I use often I can put in the area at the top left of the program menu. The programs in this area are permanent. Below that there is a line, and the programs below that line are the ones most recently used. To make a listing permanent, just right click on it, and select "Pin to Start Menu" to add it permanently to that top area. Incidentally, you can reconfigure the menu to use small icons, which allows more items to be added to the list.

Mike Shalkey: You can also access the permanent Start Menu using the keyboard instead of the mouse. Hit the Start key, then the first letter of the program name.

You may need to rename some of them, so they don't all start with "Microsoft."

More on Smart Computing ...

and others that are no longer published, are available on the Web site, Gunn said. That's more than 20,000 articles and 300 issues, a guide distributed at the meeting said, with the numbers increasing every month.

The latest issues of each publication are online before they reach subscribers and newsstands, Gunn said.

It's also possible to subscribe to a PDF version of Smart Computing. Subscribers can download PDF versions of individual issues at the Web site.

When users of the Web site find articles they want to read, they can do so immediately, print a printer-friendly version, e-mail them to themselves or a friend or add them to My Personal Library on the Smart Computing Web site. So far, there's no limit on how many items from the Smart Computing site you can store in My Personal Library, but you can't store other material there (no backing up your hard drive to the Smart Computing site), and the library disappears if you let your subscription lapse.

Users of My Personal Library can do anything on the site that they can do in Windows Explorer: create folders, move files from one folder to another, delete files and so on.

Each issue of Smart Computing includes a cover story (actually several stories on a single topic; the cover story in the sample copy distributed at the meeting concerned "PC Problems: Cure the Worst Headaches"), reviews of hardware and software, PC Ops (operating systems; the title changed to Windows in the next issue), general computing, plugged in (Internet issues), PC Project, a Tech Support section, and Quick Studies (color coded in the table of contents — green for beginners, blue for intermediate and red for advanced), along with several other standing features.

Coming cover stories are what to do with CD and DVD drives in October; wireless systems in November and the annual buyers guide in December, she said.

Photo by Jerry Crocker

Speaker Marcy Gunn of Smart Computing, right, shows off the plaque she was given by Craig Ladd, CIPCUG vice president.

The Web site also includes Web-only material, including at least one article a month on Linux, Gunn said. Each issue lists the Web-only material and contains a general primer on how to use the Web site.

Web site users must register and get a user name and password by providing a valid e-mail address, Gunn said.

The Web site also offers a Tech Support Center, which includes a search engine for the entire site (one of several search engines available).

The Tech Support Center includes sections on error messages, a solutions knowledgebase, basic troubleshooting articles, security and privacy, preventive and regular maintenance, articles on how to install … just about anything, driver education (problems with drivers) and other helpful tech support tools (including a list of file extensions and their meaning, a computing dictionary and encyclopedia and a list of hardware and software manufacturers with their Web sites, e-mail addresses and phone numbers).

Material in the Tech Support Center is prepared by Smart Computing staff members and contributors, Gunn said.

The site also has a Q&A Board, where users can submit questions on any computer-related problems.

The board lets you type in information about your computer (operating system, processor, hard drive and so on) once and then saves it so it will be included as part of all questions you ask. Such information is often needed to solve computer problems.

Those who submit questions will get automatic e-mail from Smart Computing whenever an answer is posted to one of their questions.

July: Windows Mobile devices

(This article was scheduled for the August issue but was not available to substitute editor Helen Long. It's included in this issue to maintain our policy of covering all of our programs. — Editor)

By John Weigle

jweigle@vcnet.com

With a table full of Windows Mobile devices beside her, Cheryl Wester explained at our July meeting what the

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More on Windows Mobile devices ...

advantages of such devices are and why, in her opinion, everyone needs one.

She showed such things as a Portable Media Center, Smartphones, Pocket PCs, Pocket PC Phones and a variety of global positioning system (GPS) devices.

"The Pocket PC and Smart Phone Windows Mobile 5.0" was the topic of her talk. "5.0 devices have not come out yet," she said. "They're due out any day." But if you want a mobile device, don't wait for the 5.0 versions, she said. Buy the one you want now, she urged, because many manufacturers might offer free upgrades.

The long list of what mobile devices are or can do includes color organizer, Windows Media Player, gaming device, eBook reader, e-mail, multimedia capable, terminal service client, VPN, GPS, global font scaling, integrated voice command, GPS messenger, IE mobile, MS Outlook, Word Mobile, Excel Mobile, handwriting recognition, picture viewer, Bluetooth, 802.11b, landscape or portrait screens, VGA support, PowerPoint Mobile and persistent storage.

Not all models of every device do all those things, she said, but all are multi-tasking because of the Windows Mobile operating system.

Wester said she particularly likes the Portable Media Center because people using it can't do anything to mess it up.

Material on its hard drive can be changed only by hooking it up to a personal computer.

To contact Cheryl Wester:

Phone: 951-317-4220
E-mail: Cheryl-Wester@DevicesRUs.net

Recommended Web sites:

http://www.microsoft.com
http://www.mcdeb.com
http://www.brighthand.com
http://www.pocketpcfaq.com
http://pocketpcthoughts.com
http://smartphonethoughts.com

Hers has a 20 gigabyte hard drive, and with 60 complete CDs, all her pictures, a number of TV shows and a number of movie clips on it, she still has 15 gigabytes left. She can take it on an airplane with headphones and have entertainment throughout the flight because it has tremendous battery staying power and does "a lot more" than an iPod.

Smartphones allow far more than just voice calls, she said. They have instant messaging, cameras, e-mail and contact lists, all of which can be easily synced with personal computers (this is true of all the devices she showed, she said).

"I absolutely hate maps," Wester said, so she has been thrilled by GPS devices. Some pocket devices have built-in GPS, while it must be added to others. But it's well worth it, she said.

The HP Pocket PC doesn't have a phone or built-in GPS device, but it offers features of standard PCs.

There are also Pocket PC Phone Editions.

Most devices have built-in Bluetooth or Wi-Fi, she said. Dial-up modems are available, as are digital Wi-Fi cards for devices that don't have them.

The latest media centers should have Windows Media Player 10 on them, but if they don't it can be downloaded and installed, she said. It will play MP3 music, Windows Media music and is multimedia capable (streaming video, radio stations, movies and DVD to PPC).

Book readers can read downloaded books, audible books, eBooks and EZ Reader books, she said.

Connections available include active sync, pass through combo, cell phone, GPS, portable modem, Bluetooth, Wireless 822.11b and various speed connections, she said.

Internet Express Mobile allows importation of favorites, zero configurations for connections, MSN Messenger, access to the entire Web, Avant Go (a free subscription off the Net). Wester used it on a trip to New Orleans by subscribing to 10Best, which, as the name suggests, lists the bests in a number of categories.

The Windows Mobile programs do essentially everything the PC programs do, she said, so information can be transferred between the two easily.

Mobile devices can encrypt files, but, she said, "It's like any device you use. If there's information you're afraid of losing, don't put it on here." She uses a program called EWallet to store passwords and other confidential information in an encrypted file, she

Member attends Southwest User Group conference

By Dick Chaiclin

chaiclin@verizon.net

What does it take to attend the SWUG? Lots of patience. The three-hour drive to San Diego became an eight-hour trip. Ugh.

Waiting in line with 400 other hungry computer users at meal times was — shall we say — no picnic. The ac-

commodations at the Town and Country were great enough that I wanted to stay another night — or was that to avoid the traffic? The hotel has about 1,000 rooms and a convention facility that can handle several gatherings at one time.

All that aside, it was great. Lots of vendors, lots of giveaways, good work-

shops and many, many other user group people to talk to. Smart Computing, Intel, Microsoft, Corel, Pinnacle, CompUSA, the biggies, also Family History DVD, The Digital Photo Guy, The Ink Dot (Lady), Diskkeeper and more vendors. The workshop topics were quite varied: Creating a Web

Computer-related radio programs

By Jim Thornton

jasthorn@gmail.com

Several changes have occurred since we last published this listing — "The Kim Komando Show" on KTMS (Santa Barbara) has moved to 7 a.m. on Saturdays, the "Leo Laporte – The Tech Guy" on KFI (Los Angeles) has moved one hour earlier on the weekends, "Computer News with Jeff Levy" on KNX (Los Angeles) now may be heard over the Internet, and the "A Computer Show" on KVTA (Ventura) has moved to 5 p.m. on Sundays and is now two hours in length.

SATURDAY

"The Kim Komando Show" with Kim Komando, 7-10 a.m. on KTMS 990 AM (Santa Barbara).

Telephone: (888) 825-5254 (Phoenix) - toll-free.

Listen Live: http://www.wwba1040.com and click on Listen Live.

E-mail: helpmekim@komando.com

Home page: http://www.komando.com

Audio Recordings of Past Shows: No

Notes from Past Shows: No

Remarks: Kim's weekly column appears in numerous newspapers, including USA Today; she has written several books and produced a video learning tape series; provides a free (but slow) help service via e-mail; and free daily tips, daily Cool Sites, daily news, and a weekly newsletter, all sent by e-mail.

"The Computer and Technology Show" with Marc Cohen and Mark Oleesky, 9-11 a.m. on KABC 790 AM (Los Angeles)

Telephone: (800) 222-5222 (Los Angeles) — toll-free.

Listen Live: http://www.kabc.com and click on Listen Live

E-mail: computershow@kabc.com

Home page: http://www.kabc.com/ showdj.asp?DJID=3668

Audio Recordings of Past Shows: No

Notes from Past Shows: http://groups.yahoo.com and click on KABC Computer Show —access is limited to Yahoo newsgroup members

Remarks: If the caller's question is too technical, they will request the caller to e-mail the question and they will e-mail back the solution.

"Leo Laporte – The Tech Guy" with Leo Laporte, 11 a.m.-2 p.m. on KFI 640 AM (Los Angeles).

Telephone: (800) 520-1534 (Los Angeles) — toll-free.

Listen Live: http://www.kfi640.com and click on Listen Live.

E-mail: leo@kfi640.com.

Home page: http://www.leoville.com.

Audio Recordings of Past Shows: http://www.leoville.tv/radio/pmwiki.php and click on Audio Archives, in MP3 format.

Notes from Past Shows: http://www.leoville.tv/radio/pmwiki.php and click on Saturday or Sunday Show or Past Shows.

Remarks: Leo is a guest on Fridays at 8:40 a.m. on KFI 640 AM, and has written several books on computers.

"Computer News with Jeff Levy" with Jeff Levy, 12-3 p.m. on KNX 1070 AM (Los Angeles).

Telephone: (866) 569-1070 (Los Angeles) - toll-free.

Listen Live: http://www.knx1070.com and click on Listen Live.

E-mail: jefflevy@jefflevy.com.

Home page: http://www.jefflevy.com.

Audio Recordings of Past Shows: http://www.wsradio.com/, type jeff levy in the search box, and click on the unlined results, in Windows Media or Real Audio format

Notes from Past Shows: http://www.jefflevy.com/links-show-notes.asp.

Remarks: If the caller's question is too technical, Jeff will call the caller after the broadcast and provide the solution. His Web site provides nearly 400 individual lessons in the Adobe Acrobat (PDF) format on Windows 95, 98, Me, and XP and he has packaged these lessons into several books divided between XP and non-XP; provides 90-second computer-related reports on Monday through Friday at 6:22 p.m. on KNX.

"The Kim Komando Show" with Kim Komando, 4-7 p.m. on KVTA 1520 AM (Ventura).

Listen Live: http://www.kvta.com and click on Listen Live.

This program is a replay of the day's earlier live program — see 7 a.m. for details.

The program is frequently pre-empted by sport events.

SUNDAY

"Leo Laporte – The Tech Guy" with Leo Laporte, 11 a.m.-2 p.m. on KFI 640 AM (Los Angeles). See Saturday at 11 a.m. for details.

"Computer News with Jeff Levy" with Jeff Levy, 12-3 p.m. on KNX 1070 AM (Los Angeles). See Saturday at 12 p.m. for details.

"A Computer Show" with G. J. Goldwyn, 5-7 p.m. on KVTA 1520 AM (Ventura).

Telephone: (805) 289-1520 (Ventura).

Listen Live: http://www.kvta.com and click on Listen Live.

Home page: http://www.acomputerpro.com.

E-mail: show@acomputerpro.com.

Notes from Past Shows: No

Audio Recordings of Past Shows: http://www.acomputerpro.com short segments in MP3 format

Remarks: The program is frequently pre-empted by sport events.

The Cat in the Hat & Green Eggs and Spam

By Rick Smith

rants@vcmail.net

Greetings fellow TOE readers. I know at least one person reads my ramblings because you came in and told me so. In case you're wondering about my choice of a title, I have an 8-month-old bouncing baby boy at home, and my thoughts seem to revert more and more back to my childhood as I desperately search for ways to entertain and engage my young progeny. As my son grows, he acts more like me every day — very scary. My father is ecstatic that he is finally getting his revenge on me. But enough of that, time to move on to some computer talk.

SMITH

As most of you are aware, our "esteemed" editor, and I use that term loosely, was in the hospital for some emergency surgery. As he was successfully recovering, I managed to cajole him into helping out at the shop while Toby was gallavanting around a cruise ship somewhere off the coast of Alaska. John was a great sport and really got a good "feel" of what a normal day is like saving the world one computer at a time. He managed our endless stream of phone calls quite well and was able to dole out some advice about this and that to our faithful customers while handling all the walk-ins. After putting in a good day, I managed to get him to come back

> **Anyone knows the quickest way to get a response from someone is to hang a note on the door saying your utilities will be turned off for whatever reason and this is your last chance to keep the service uninterrupted.**

for a repeat, and it was the exact opposite of the other. Another quiet day at Sleepy Hollow. I just never know when I get up in the morning what's going to happen. Sometimes I think it's nice to have a routine and knowing what to expect day in and day out. But, what the hey, I love the excitement of being one of the Incredibles. Anyway, though, thank you, John Weigle, for your assistance, and it only cost me a lunch. A good deal any way you look at it.

Moving along to the point of this rant. It seems we've a new addition to the VCC family: none other than our own Michael Shalkey. He is truly the Cat in the Hat! He just comes strolling in the door and seems to take over the place, and just as you think everything is going to be a disaster he fixes it all up and leaves the place looking great until the next time he does his magic. And during the whole time he leaves his unmistakable mark of personality and humor, which makes the day go by like a Dr. Seuss book. The Cat in the Hat prefers to weave his magic in front of large audiences of adoring fans, but until they gather in sufficient quantities to warrant

a personal appearance, we have him at our disposal. You can find him on Mondays and Tuesdays making personal appearances at our shop. Don't miss the chance to get your PC fixed and be tickled, too!

It seems I've been appropriating all the talent from the club, starting with Toby and moving down the line. Who's next? Larry Hudson? He already has a key as the SIG coordinator. Humm, we'll just have to wait and see. Maybe I'll start showing up at club meetings with job applications in hand.

Now to Green Eggs and Spam! There are some nasty e-mail viruses floating around that pick up the names of e-mail servers and start sending messages to all names it can gather representing themselves as the VCMAIL or CIPCUG (or whatever) support team. Anyone knows the quickest way to get a response from someone is to hang a note on the door saying your utilities will be turned off for whatever reason and this is your last chance to keep the service uninterrupted. Boy, do we skedaddle down with money orders in hand to keep our beloved service. This same kind of thinking has led to very convincing e-mails with a variety of enticing messages. "Your account has been suspending due to someone trying unauthorized access. Please identify yourself with the correct information." "Your account will be suspended due to a huge volume of SPAMMING. Please reply with your

More on conference ...

Page, How to Obtain a Grant, Organizing Photos in Elements 3.0, Inkjet Printing, PC Security, Projectors — definitely more than one person could attend.

The vendor faire and vendor panel gave me a chance to meet the "faces" that appear at our meetings. Believe it or not, most vendors are really interested in user groups and will go out of

their way to be of service.

Talking with other users about membership varied from "we were down to five" to, yes, we really have 2,000 (well, Sun City in Phoenix has grown) — it has daily classes — and a Florida group was mentioned that had 4,000.

There should be some interesting events forthcoming for CIPCUG. Intel "show and tell" has "build it yourself."

For a fee, you get the parts in a box and an assembly DVD. "Build Fest," anyone?

Pinnacle's video presentation was great — but they were not selling this product at the conference.

I heard that the Ink Dot Lady gives a great presentation, CompUSA is getting into the user group market, and the word on Fry's is "they couldn't care less."

Tribulations of a substitute TOE editor

My apologies! The major problem with doing the newsletter last month was that I could not get the page numbers numbered correctly. In frustration, I ignored them and hand wrote the page numbers in on the paper copy for Copy Court. Now the problem I had was converting the Publisher file into PDF. I have always been able to make minor changes in the .pdf files, but all of a sudden I cannot do that any more. I believe the computer Gods have it in for me. Why me?

LONG

John managed to insert the proper page numbers in my .pub file, so if any of you have tried to read the file on the Web Page and ran across page 2, 3, 2, 3, 2, 3, etc., I have now converted the corrected .pub file into .pdf and you can now read it online and find the proper page numbers.

In Adobe, it did show the proper page numbers at the bottom of the screen but if you didn't think to look there, it certainly was confusing. Sorry for my ineptness.

At the recent SWUG Computer Club Website Contest, we only placed sixth place out of 26 club Web sites. This was a regional show held in early August in San Diego. Some of the judges' comments didn't make sense, but they did have some nice things to say about our Web site.

They enjoyed the site because it loaded quickly, had lots of great, easy to understand information, and spoke about their (our) active members, which was enjoyable.

The main complaint was that having the background information appear on all pages made for overall-boring appearance, and text was difficult to read against the image.

What surprises me is that the international show earlier in the year in Las Vegas gave us a first place among 25 countries, and the regional show gave us only a sixh place within California. I LOVE our Web site and am very proud of it, and it is a pleasure to update it.

Have you run your spyware programs lately?

X Multimedia System an open source music player

By Bill Wayson

www@vcnet.com

There are many Open Source music players to choose from when running Linux. Among them are AlsaPlayer (www.alsaplayer.org), amaroK (amarok.kde.org), JuK (developer.kde.org/~wheeler/juk.htm), and Noatun (noatun.kde.org). One of the oldest music players for Linux is XMMX, the X Multimedia System (www.xmms.org). It is still very widely used, having been voted Favorite Audio Tool by the readers of Linux Journal (www.linuxjournal.com) for the fifth year in a row in 2004. XMMX is a versatile, fun, simple, and easy-to-use basic music player modeled after WinAmp (classic.winamp.com), a player for Microsoft Windows. XMMX does a good job playing CDs and music files of many different formats and gives you lots of goodies and eye candy to play with in the form of plugins and skins.

You can download XMMX from the XMMX Web site, but chances are it is included on your Linux distribution disks. It may very well already be installed — look for it under a menu like Sound and Video or Multimedia.

WAYSON

As you work your way through learning XMMS, look through the informative README file, which should be located in an xmms directory under /usr/share/doc/, /usr/share/doc/packages/, /usr/local/share/doc/, or the XMMS Web site.

Once you find it, start XMMX. You'll be presented with a window that looks somewhat like an audio component with buttons, sliders, and a couple of display panels. In the upper left, you will see information about the player — whether it is paused, stopped, or playing, as well as the current song being played, the elapsed or remaining play time and a spectral display of the sound, which can be toggled between an analyzer or oscilloscope display, or off. To the right, you can see the title and length of the song being played as well as the artist playing. That is, you will see this if you enter the information in yourself (right mouse click | Playlist Editor) or, if playing CDs, get the information from an Internet CDDB (Compact Disc Data Base) such as freedb.org. If you configure the CD player plugin to use freedb.org, and the CD is in the database, the CD information will be downloaded automatically when the CD starts playing while your

More on Penguin's Lair ...

PC is connected to the Internet.

To the left are five letters — O, A, I, D, and V — generally arranged vertically. Left clicking each letter either toggles a setting (D alternately doubles and halves the size) or opens up a menu (O opens the Options menu). Read the README file and play around with these settings to learn more about their function.

Further down the player window you'll find volume and balance sliders, an "EQ" button that opens a graphic equalizer, and a "PL" button that opens the playlist editor. Below that is a large slider where the sliders moves slowly left to right to indicate the position in the song that is currently playing.

Moving down, you'll see standard control buttons — previous track, play, pause, stop, next track, eject, shuffle, and repeat. The eject button is a misnomer — it does not eject the CD (XMMS plays a lot more than just CDs). It brings up a file request dialog showing files on your hard disk and allowing you to choose music files that you have stored there to play.

Right clicking your mouse in different parts of the display will bring up a context sensitive menu. For example, if you do so in the upper left information panel, you'll see menu options that affect and control just that part of XMMS. The various menus allow a considerable level of control over XMMS, and the Preferences menu provides a great number of opportunities to personalize your XMMS setup.

XMMS uses this graphical interface for control, and everything it can do can be accessed and done using a mouse (other than when you have to type something in). But it also comes preconfigured with a long list of "keybindings" that allow you to control many aspects of the program using your PC's keyboard. If you are a good typist, you could seamlessly control your listening experience while writing your memoirs.

A lot of the fun of using XMMS is playing with its "skin-ability." If you are not familiar with skins, they are all-in-one look-and-feel packages. That is, a skin changes the way the display, with all its decorations, panels, buttons, and other components looks. Change the skin, and the whole display looks different. Most Linux distributions include a variety of skins for XMMS, but many more are available at the XMMS Web site. Check them out — a lot of work went into some of them, and a lot of them are definitely cool. You can even configure XMMS to use WinAmp skins and to pick out a new skin at random when playing a song.

As I mentioned above, XMMS has been around a long time — since 1997 at least. As a result, it is showing its age. XMMS is just a player and requires users to organize their music files. It is apparently difficult to add new functionality, such as new media formats like video, to XMMS. Newer media playing programs are more like media organiz-

Tips from Smart Computing magazine

Reprinted with permission from Smart Computing. Visit http:// www.smartcomputing.com/groups to learn what Smart Computing can do for you and your user group!

Web Security — Isolate Your Online Purchases: Whenever you enter information to register or purchase something at a Web site, the site often keeps quite a bit of that information on file, in case you return later. Sometimes you will have an option for the Web site to remember the credit card number. For security's sake, it's best to enter your credit card information each time. You've no doubt seen the news stories about the dozens of serious security breaches that have exposed thousands of credit cards for use by criminals. To create a "financial firewall" you may want to consider getting a credit card that you use only for online purchases.

Use Safe Mode To Remove Spyware: The most important point about spyware removal is to do it in Windows Safe Mode. This prevents almost all spyware from loading at startup and makes removal more reliable. At bootup, press F8 after the BIOS screen. Choose the second option, Safe Mode, with networking. You'll need to connect to the Internet to install and update the definitions for the spy checkers.

Stay Up-To-Date On Microsoft Fixes: If you're also interested in knowing the latest updates to Microsoft's database, the KBAlertz.com site can really help. This site will e-mail you links to any updated pages in categories that you choose. You can also determine whether you want daily or weekly updates.

It's an effortless way to keep yourself up-to-date on bugs and fixes.

More on Rick's rants ...

information." "We are updating our records and need your current info. Thank you, sincerely the VCMAIL SUPPORT TEAM." All of these can give a person pause. What's bad is one of our clients told me I should have warned them. This is a quandary. Do I send out e-mails warning clients about false e-mails? Will the real VCMAIL support team please stand up? I don't know what to do. At times like this, I must consult the oracle. TOBY! HELP! What should I do? The oracle will know. He always does.

I can't end the rant without complaining about a major computer manufacturer, and this month is no different. I love Sony cameras, TVs and stereo equipment but not their stupid computers! I got a VIAO in the shop recently that the customer said sparked when it was turned on. OK, I checked the power supply, and it gave out a steady 5 volts, but it did smell a little burned. Some components can lose a resister or capacitor or two and still keep functioning. Just like going to the hospital and having a part removed, right, John? Anyway, I could not get the board to go into CMOS setup so I was about to replace it with a new one when I noticed that all the cables are on a funky connector. The all-in-one card reader and other gadgets were MB specific, and the customer would lose all those features. So against my better judgment I called Sony and inquired about a replacement MB. They said $259 plus shipping. WHAT!?!? That can't be right. But it was. As it turns out, you can't just buy the board but must buy the 2.4GHZ CPU as well. Forget about putting in a faster one. I said my customer wouldn't pay that and went back to the drawing board. Fortunately, our hero, The Cat in the Hat successfully removed the board and was able to POST it correctly. Magic! We decided that replacing the power supply was prudent, and so a $25 PS was to be installed. But wait. The cage that it fits into will not accept a PS that fits in 99 percent of all PCs.

Once again against my better judgment I call Sony, and guess what? They will provide a replacement PS for only $117 plus shipping. I said thanks but no thanks. So we put the old one in and it worked.

All's well that ends well, but I can do without Sony's help.

More on Penguin's Lair ...

ers. They not only play your media files but also allow you to organize your collections from within the program itself. Therefore, an XMMS2 project is under way that aims to produce a completely rewritten XMMS2 program. It currently is in the development stage and is not ready for general end use. And the XMMS developers strongly assert that XMMS will not be abandoned anytime soon. See the XMMS Web site for more information, especially if you are interested in contributing to the XMMS2 effort.

Despite this, XMMS remains a stable, versatile, and fun-to-use player for your music collection, no matter (almost) what format your music files are in. Even if your Linux distribution installs another preferred music player, check out XMMS. It should coexist with the other player with no problem, and you might have some fun.

Come by the Linux SIG on Thursday, Sept. 22 at 6:30 p.m. at Ventura County Computers to learn more about Linux and Open Source Software and schmooze with other Linux users.

If there is a topic you'd like to see in the Penguin's Lair or discussed at the Linux SIG, drop me a line at www@vcnet.com.

In the meantime, happy and safe computing to you all. See you all next month.

Dust Off story not a hoax: Product can kill

At first glance, this e-mail sent to George and Arline Lakes looks like one of the many hoax messages that fill our e-mail boxes regularly, but the Snopes researchers looked into it and report that it's true. Not only is this warning true, but there are many other similar products that youths — and, no doubt, some adults — have killed themselves with. The warning is legitimate. — Editor

Dust Off

Dust Off (or a variant of the product) is available everywhere there's a computer.

First I'm going to tell you a little about me and my family. My name is Jeff. I am a Police Officer for a city which is known nationwide for its crime rate. We have a lot of gangs and drugs. At one point we were # 2 in the nation in homicides per capita. I also have a police K-9 named Thor.

He was certified in drugs and general duty. He retired at 3 years old because he was shot in the line of duty. He lives with us now and I still train with him because he likes it. I always liked the fact that there was no way to bring drugs into my house. Thor wouldn't allow it. He would tell on you. The reason I say this is so you understand that I know about drugs. I have taught in schools about drugs. My wife asks all our kids at least once a week if they used any drugs. Makes them promise they won't.

I like building computers occasionally and started building a new one in February 2005. I also was working on some of my older computers. They were full of dust so on one of my trips to the computer store I bought a 3-pack of DUST OFF. Dust Off is a can of compressed air to blow dust off a computer. A few weeks later when I went to use one of them they were all used. I talked to my kids, and my two sons both said they had used them on their computer and messing around with them. I yelled at them for wasting the 10 dollars I paid for them.

On February 28 I went back to the computer store. They didn't have the 3pack which I had bought on sale so I bought a single jumbo can of Dust Off. I went home and set it down beside my computer. On March 1st, I left for work at 10 p.m. Just before midnight, my wife went down and kissed Kyle goodnight. At 5:30 a.m. the next morning, Kathy went downstairs to wake Kyle up for school before she left for work. He was propped up in bed with his legs crossed and his head leaning over. She called to him a few times to get up. He didn't move. He would sometimes tease her like this and pretend he fell back asleep. He was never easy to get up. She went in and shook his arm. He fell over. He was pale white and had the straw from the Dust Off can coming out of his mouth. He had the new can of Dust Off in his hands.

Kyle was dead.

I am a police officer, and I had never heard of this. My wife is a nurse and she had never heard of this. We later found out from the coroner after the autopsy that only the propellant from the can of Dust Off was in his system. No other drugs. Kyle had died between midnight and 1 a.m. I found out that using Dust Off is being done mostly by kids ages 9 through 15.

They even have a name for it. It's called dusting. A takeoff from the Dust Off name. It gives them a slight high for about 10 seconds. It makes them dizzy. A boy who lives down the street from us showed Kyle how to do this about a month before. Kyle showed his best friend. Told him it was cool and it couldn't hurt you. It's just compressed air. It can't hurt you.

His best friend said no.

Kyle was wrong. It's not just compressed air. It also contains a propellant called R2. It's a refrigerant like what is used in your refrigerator. It is a heavy gas. Heavier than air. When you inhale it, it fills your lungs and keeps the good air, with oxygen, out. That's why you feel dizzy, buzzed.

It decreases the oxygen to your brain, to your heart. Kyle was right. It can't hurt you. IT KILLS YOU. The horrible part about this is there is no warning. There is no level that kills you. It's not cumulative or an overdose; it can just go randomly, terribly wrong. Roll the dice and if your number comes up you die. IT'S NOT AN OVERDOSE. It's Russian Roulette.

You don't die later. Or not feel good and say I've had too much. You usually die as you're breathing it in. If not, you die within two seconds of finishing "the hit." That's why the straw was still in Kyle's mouth when he died. Why his eyes were still open.

The experts want to call this huffing. The kids don't believe it's huffing.

As adults, we tend to lump many things together. But it doesn't fit here.

And that's why it's more accepted. There is no chemical reaction, no strong odor. It doesn't follow the huffing signals. Kyle complained a few days before he died of his tongue hurting. It probably did. The propellant causes frostbite. If I had only known.

It's easy to say hey, it's my life and I'll do what I want. But it isn't.

Others are always affected. This has forever changed

Gallbladder attack complicates last TOE

Some of you know that my routine was rudely interrupted on July 26 when I was admitted to Community Memorial Hospital in Ventura with what my doctor said could be appendicitis but which turned out to be gallstones. To shorten a long story, everything is fine (except for a scar, but I don't spend a lot of time in a bathing suit) although I started to go stir crazy because of a six-week disability leave from work.

Yeah, I know, I should enjoy that, but the no-heavy-lifting requirement limited the things I could do. Anyway, I am back at work and living as normal a life as I ever have.

WEIGLE

Special thanks to Helen Long for jumping in to publish a full 20-page TOE last month. It's not an easy task to gather the material and try to learn the quirks of a desktop publishing program when the deadline is looming. Thanks, also, to those of you who extended your best wishes. I'm sure all the kind thoughts helped speed my recovery.

You'll find a full report in this issue on the July program for those who missed the meeting.

More on Dust Off ...

our family's life. I have a hole in my heart and soul that can never be fixed. The pain is so immense I can't describe it. There's nowhere to run from it. I cry all the time and I don't ever cry. I do what I'm supposed to do but I don't really care. My kids are messed up. One won't talk about it. The other will only sleep in our room at night. And my wife, I can't even describe how bad she is taking this. I thought we were safe because of Thor. I thought we were safe because we knew about drugs and talked to our kids about them.

More on Command.com ...

to talk to traditional telephones. It remains to be seen how Yahoo will provide this feature, but it is certain that it now has the ability to do so. Downside, as you have heard before: no 911 service though this medium.

At the board meeting on Tuesday evening three areas of interest were suggested for new SIGS: digital photography, audio/video recording, and investing. If you are at all interested in any one of these three areas, please e-mail me at president@cipcug.org

Jim Thornton has accepted my invitation to become our publicity chairman again. Thank you, Jim.

Missing from both this issue and the last issue are reports on the Beginners SIG. I wrote a report on the July SIG, but, of course, Helen didn't have access to it. The August SIG was an excellent presentation by Michael Shalkey on building a computer from scratch, but words alone would not do it justice, and I didn't have the pictures Michael used to illustrate the discussion.

CORRECTIONS: OK, going back to the July issue: It's not one we'll enter in a contest.

Assuming you get the hard copy version of TOE and not the Web version, you noticed one large hole with a row of X's on Page 12 and X's instead of the date of the meeting on Page 20. I'd have sworn I fixed both those problems, but obviously did not, but I didn't notice that until I thumbed through a copy of TOE at the folding party. I was in a hurry to get the issue to Copy Court for printing, but that's not a good excuse. The issue is supposed to be complete before I take it in.

Another lesson learned: Look at the total page in the final printout, don't just flip through the bottoms of the pages to be sure they're in order.

There was one other glitch that was fine on the printed pages and Microsoft Publisher and PDF files that I delivered to Copy Court. The page folios (date and page numbers) disappeared. Copy Court had suggested bringing in a Publisher and a PDF file in an attempt to improve the picture reproduction and agreed that the lack of folios was their mistake, not mine. Unfortunately, I didn't notice that until looking through a copy after the folding party, when it was too late to fix.

Ah, well, if we don't try things, we never learn what works — and what doesn't. I'm going to keep working on the picture reproduction.

— **John Weigle**

2005 contributors to The Outer Edge

Your name can appear here, too. Share your knowledge with other members by sending an article, letter or computer tip to editor@cipcug.org.

Dick Chaiclin	Art Lewis
Ken Church	Helen Long
Martha Churchyard	Tony Pizza
Jerry Crocker	Stan Ranson
Bob Elgines (APCUG article)	Toby Scott
	Smart Computing
David Harris	Rick Smith
Larry Hudson	Bill Wayson
Richard Johnson (APCUG article)	John Weigle
	Ira Wilsker (APCUG aticle)
Kim Komando	

Membership report:
Is it time to renew?
By Ken Church

membership@cipcug.org

Welcome to the following new member:
    Matthew Toscano

Attendance at the August 2005 general meeting:
    88 Members

Total membership: 305

RENEWAL INFORMATION
The **renewal**/New Mbr dues are
$25/$35 for single membership,
$30/$50 for two or more family membership.
Please send your renewal payment to:

**CIPCUG MEMBERSHIP
P.O. BOX 51354
OXNARD, CA 93031-1354**

Or bring your payment to the September meeting at the Boys & Girls Club of Camarillo.

July 2005 renewals:

Mbr#	Last Name	First Name	Pd to Date
0915	Clayton	Phil	200507
1155	Cronkite	Bob	200507
1153	Krieger	Bob	200507
1068	Lindberg	Carol	200507
0331	Livingstone	Robert	200507
1152	Malerba	Bobbi	200507
1151	Myer	Karen	200507
0676	Pearson	Floyd	200507
1156A	Pocengal	Louise	200507
1156	Pocengal	Stanley	200507
1121T	Treadwell	William	200507
0798	Vonwicklen	Will	200507
0812	White	Norm	200507
1158	Woodruff	Ayn	200507

August 2005 renewals:

Mbr#	Last Name	First Name	Pd to Date
1159	Allen	Roy	200508
0985	Bartels	Pat	200508
0488	Bressler	Steve	200508
0598	Brown	Donald	200508
0599	Brown	Mary	200508
0028	Fiedler	Art	200508
0242	Hilley	Charles	200508
0806	Hurme	Seppo	200508
0368	Long	Helen	200508
0371	Rescoe	Jim	200508
0803	Snyder	Harlan	200508

September 2005 renewals:

Mbr#	Last Name	First Name	Pd to Date
1163	Babbitt	Virgina Lee	200509
1126	Barreto	Mary	200509
1070	Byrnes	Bob	200509
0661	Cinque	Carmela	200509
1162	Fargo	Edess	200509
0613	Green	Gunnar	200509
1161	Greene	William	200509
0249	Greenway	Frank	200509
0373	Houle	Robert	200509
0145	Lee	Bill	200509
1037	Lerner	Robert	200509
0716	Nichols	John	200509
1160	Perry	David	200509
0372	Pizza	Tony	200509
1036	Smith	Howard	200509
0938	Stroud	John	200509

See you at the September meeting and bring a friend. Until then, happy computing.

HAVE YOUR RUN YOUR SPYWARE SOFTWARE LATELY!

F1—Your Help Key

(Revised July 3, 2005)

COMMUNICATIONS/INTERNET (GENERAL)

Compuserve	DM
World Wide Web	DM

DATABASES

Access	BR

DOS   RP

EDUCATIONAL / CHILDREN   TZ

E-MAIL

Eudora	JT
Outlook	MS
Outlook Express	BR
Poco Email	MS

HARDWARE, UPGRADING   JM

GRAHICS PROGRAMS

IrfanView	MS, JT
Print Shop	BR

SPREADSHEETS

Microsoft Excel	DM
Quattro Pro	DM

UTILITY PROGRAMS

Norton Utilities	DM, JT (and Anti Virus)
PCAnywhere	DM

WORD PROCESSING

Microsoft Word	BW, DM
WordPerfect.	DM

WINDOWS

Windows 98, 95	DM, JM, MS (98)
Windows Me	JT
Windows 2000	BDV

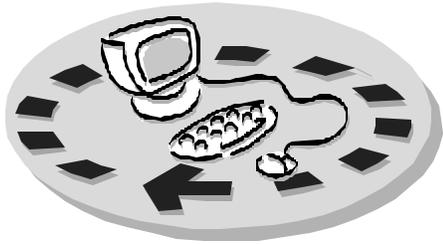| Initials	Name	(805)
BDV	Bob de Violini	rjddev@comcast.net
BR	Bill Robinson	389-2997 (b) bill@bzus.com
BW	Bart Wood	482-4993 (e)
DM	David Minkin	469-6970 (cell); 484-2974 (home); dddave@QuixNet.net or dddave@cipcug.org
JM	Jerry McLoud	(818) 889-6176 (e)
JT	Jim Thornton	987-1748 (d) jthorn@adelphia.net
MS	Michael Shalkey	483-9921 ext 142 (d) mshalkey@cipcug.org
RP	Robert Provart	498-8477 (b)
TZ	Trish Zakas	985-8519 (b)

Phone: (d) = days; (e) = evenings; (b) = both

If you would like to volunteer to help others, please send your contact information and programs you're willing to help on to <editor@cipcug.org>.

Also, if you have a favorite help site on the Web, please forward that, too, so we can make a separate section for Web-based help.

Practice safe computing:

Back up

Back up

Back up

(And then test the backup to be sure it worked)

Why join Channel Islands PC Users Group (CIPCUG)?

Every month, members of the Channel Islands PC Users Group have access to:

♦ The Outer Edge newsletter, which includes a list of members willing to help other members

♦ The general meeting, featuring a question-and-answer session and program on new software or hardware

♦ Special Interest Groups — special meetings held several times a month on a variety of topics

♦ Door prizes at the regular meeting.

Other benefits include:

♦ Special user group discounts on books and software

♦ An Internet Service Provider at a large discount (see below).

♦ A chance to make friends with people who have similar interests

♦ The ability to put your knowledge to good use by helping other members. The whole concept of user groups is members helping members.

ISP = $15 Monthly
Sign up now!

CIPCUG members are eligible to sign up for the group's Internet Service Provider (ISP) at the low price of only $15 per month plus a $15 processing fee.

To sign up, contact one of the club's techies (see below). Call one of them you may know or one in your area and they will be glad to provide you with the details necessary for signing up. Checks should be made payable to CIPCUG and forwarded to Treasurer, c/o CIPCUG,

P.O. Box 51354, Oxnard CA 93031. Don't forget to include the $15 set-up fee in your first sign-up check. You may make payments in three-month, six-month or annual increments. We also give a 12-month subscription if prepaid in advance at the 11-month price of $165. Many of our club members are electing to do this to keep Helen from nagging them for money. Renewals can also be mailed to Treasurer; just be sure to mention the dates that your check is to cover.

There is no program to install; you will use programs that are already on your computer. It's simple to talk you through the set-up, but if you're the least bit timid about setting up your computer, a club member will come to your house and make the necessary arrangements. Our agreement will also give you a 5 MB Web page allowance.

————————————————

CIPCUG INTERNET SERVICE TECH TEAM

Roland Fleig, 983-8707, mornings
    schwable@cipcug.org,
Helen Long, 642-6521
    liz@cipcug.org
David Minkin, 469-6970 (cell), 484-2974 (home)
    dddave@QuixNet.net or
    dddave@cipcug.org

————————————————————

Please clip last column and send with payment to CIPCUG-Membership, P.O. Box 51354, Oxnard, CA 93031-1354.

Please make checks payable to CIPCUG

Dues for new members

Individual member, $35.
Family membership (same address), $50.
Renewals are $25 and $30 per year respectively

CIPCUG MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION

Amount enclosed:
_____

Please Print the following information:

Name:

_____

Address:

_____

City: _____,
CA

ZIP Code:

_____

Phone no. (Home): _____

(Work): _____

E-mail address:

_____

User level: Novice _____; Intermediate

_____; Advanced _____

Can you help the club as a volunteer? If so, what would you be interested in working on?

Date _____

Member # _____

Channel Islands PC
Users Group Inc.

P.O.Box 51354
Oxnard, CA. 93031

DATED MATERIAL
Please Do Not Delay

DUES REMINDER

If the number after your name is 200509, your membership dues are payable in September 2005.

September 2005 Meeting
Of the Channel Islands PC Users Group

The map shows the easiest route to the Boys & Girls Club, but if you prefer, you can take the Carmen Drive offramp to Ponderosa Drive, which leads to Temple Avenue.

Saturday morning, Sept. 24, at the Boys & Girls Club, Ponderosa Drive and Temple Avenue, Camarillo, Calif.

Meeting Schedule:
  8:30 a.m. Doors open
  8:45-9:30 Beginners SIG, Internet SIG
 9:30-10:30 Business meeting, Q&A
10:30-11:00 Break — Please contribute requested amounts for coffee and doughnuts
11:00-12:00 Program (Steve Bass), Drawing
1 p.m.   SIG at CompUSA at Shopping at the Rose at Highway 101 and Rose Avenue in Oxnard