PPCUG

NEWS

A Publication Of The Princeton PC Users Group

Monday June 9, 2003

Batch & Script Files
How They Can Help the Average PC User
Vic Laurie - PPCUG

**A basic explanation will be given at the level of the average PC user of the purposes
and applications of file types such as BAT, REG, JS, and VBS.
The emphasis will be on how the average PC user can obtain and make use of examples of these handy files.
The role of some of these file types in e-mail viruses will be discussed also.**

At
Lawrence Library
Meetng Rooms 1 & 2
US Route 1 South & Darrah Lane, Lawrenceville, NJ

- -

*Meetings of an organization at any of the facilities of the Mercer County Library System
in No Way implies endorsement of its programs*

In this issue

Digital Photo by: Paul Kurivchack

Jim Russ from the Hunterdon County Computer Club talking about the Lindows Operating System to our group at the May general meeting.

About PPCUG

General Meetings

Second Monday of the month at the Lawrenceville Library.
Route 1 and Darrah Lane.

7:00-7:45 PM: Social Time / Tech Corner

7:45 PM: Meeting Comes to Order

8 PM: Featured Presentation

For information about upcoing meetings or joining PPCUG call 908-218-0778 to leave a message.

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For Meeting Location, Date and Time, call 609-883-5262

Board meetings are open to All.

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Annual Dues Rates

Normal dues rate is $30 per year.
    New Members Only: after February, the rate is $2.50 per month times the number of months remaining in the year.

64 Issues

By: Paul Kurivchack - PPCUG Newsletter Editor

This is my last issue as newsletter editor. Starting in July, Don Arrowsmith, the groups Secretary will take on the added responsibility as the groups new editor

I had to do a little research by looking through the piles of old newsletter I've accumulated to find out the correct number of PPCUG News I have created since I started as newsletter editor. It is a total of sixty-four issues spanning five years, starting back on March of 1998. But that is not the full story of my only involvement. I was helping the pervious editor, Kim Goldenberg for over a year before that in getting the newsletter printed and mailed out each month. While it might not seem like much trouble to do just that, it was. There was no wide spread Internet. There was limited dial up service, which Kim or I had for electronic file transfers. It was plain old "Sneaker Net". Kim put the files on a floppy disk, I drove to Princeton to meet him and pick up the disk. I then took the disk home to print it out on my 300 dpi laser printer and then off to Staples for copying. The next day was the real fun. The folding, addressing and stamping of the one hundred we mailed each month (my wife is surely not going to miss this at all), and then to the post office to be mailed. The bad news was that with this method, the newsletter was sometimes late arriving in your mail. Hence I became newsletter editor.

I am proud of the changes I made as editor such as adding digital photographs in each issue, starting in December 1997. The re-design of the mast head (front page) with the December 1998 issue and again October 1999. Moving to a two-column layout for easier reading and lastly the creation of the newsletter as an Adobe Acrobat file for easy access from our web site. When I look back, some of the advances I made to the newsletter, were truly cutting edge for a group our size and with limited resources.

It is kind of a bittersweet ending for me as the newsletter editor. While I have enjoyed the mechanics of putting together a first class looking newsletter using Adobe PageMaker, the creativity of writing software review articles or finding clip art to dress the newsletter up, I am also sad to give it up. But with the sadness come happiness, as I will be getting back the ten to twelve hours (one weekend a month) that I spent on putting the newsletter together each month. A little extra free time will be a welcomed relief to my hectic work schedule.

Let us all give Don the same support you gave me over the past five years as newsletter editor to continue the PPCUG News as a first class user group newsletter.

Startup Strategy

By: Vic Laurie - PPCUG

One of computing's big annoyances is software that wants to run some of its components at all times, whether the program is being used or not. More and more, programs are inserting things into the startup process so that every time you turn on your computer all sorts of stuff is running in the background without asking you. All these processes take up memory, CPU time, and other resources and can significantly slow up or even crash your machine. Some companies have become notorious for the junk that they stick on your computer. Some of them even go on the Internet without telling you. Intuit, AOL, and RealMedia are some names whose practices I personally find irritating. Also Windows itself will run unnecessary things if left in the default configuration. Fortunately, there are methods for taking charge of your own computer and stopping these wasteful and unnecessary processes from running automatically. Note that I am not talking about removing any program components, only preventing them from running unasked. The computer user can retain the option of running something at any time, while removing it from the startup.

Windows comes with a system tool for doing this very thing. It is the System Configuration Utility (usually called Msconfig for short). I have mentioned the Windows 98 version in previous articles and Windows XP also has a version. However, you won't find it listed in the **Start | Programs** menu. The easiest way to access it is to go to **Start | Run** and enter "msconfig" (without quotes) (figure 1). In the window that comes up there is a tab "Startup" (figure 2). Click that and you get a list of things that are loaded automatically when you turn on your computer (figure 3).
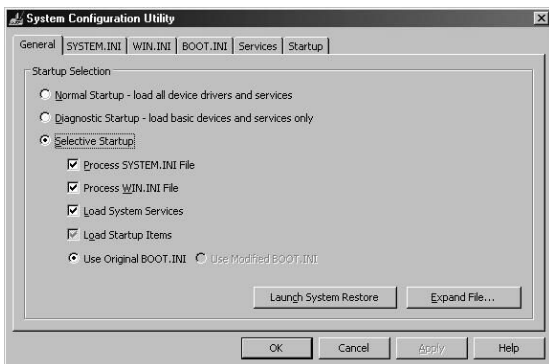

Figure 1. Run line for Msconfig
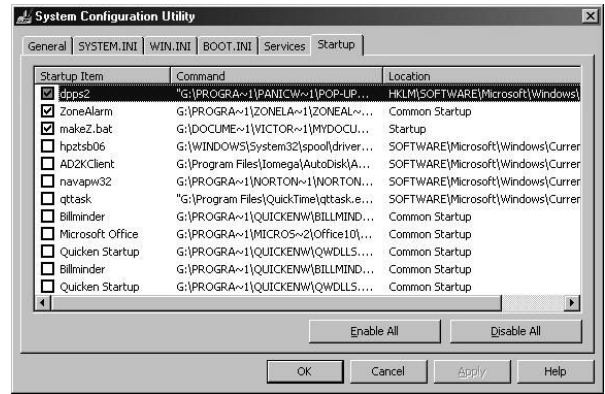

Figure 2. Msconfig in XP

Figure 3. Example of a startup list

On the left of each entry is a check box. Unchecking this box will remove the item from startup at the next boot of your computer. It does NOT remove the item from your computer. In figure 3 , you can see examples of some unnecessary functions such as Quicken "Billminder" that have had their checks removed. The user can still choose to run the process whenever desired. Also, if you find that you really do want the thing to load at startup, you can always put the check back. There is further description of how to use Msconfig at _http://netsquirrel.com/msconfig/_.

Many PC users are reluctant to make use of Msconfig, however, because they are afraid of removing something essential. As a general rule, it is my personal opinion that very few programs are essential at startup. Every system is different but power management, system tray, anti-virus program, and firewall are pretty close to all that many people need. I feel that most people will miss nothing by removing any references to Quicken, Microsoft Office, RealPlayer, or AOL. Fortunately, there are excellent references that explain the function of almost anything you are likely to see in the startup list and give recommendations on whether it is safe to remove. Some sites are:

_http://www.pacs-portal.co.uk/startup_content.htm_
http://www2.whidbey.com/djdenham/Uncheck.htm _http://www.answersthatwork.com/Tasklist_pages/tasklist.htm_

Instead of Msconfig, you can use one of the several programs that are also available for controlling startup. These offer additional features and flexibility.

Mike Lin's Startup Control Panel is freeware and is at _http://www.mlin.net/StartupCPL.shtml_.

PC Magazine's Startup Cop(_http://www.pcmag.com/article2/0,4149,2283,00.asp_) is no longer free but there are download sites that may have the old free version.

Windows XP also contains a management console that can be used to stop and start processes. Go to **Start | Run** and enter "services.msc" (without quotes). Figure 4 shows an example. A list of services is given and whether they have been started or not. In this example, "Messenger" has been turned off.

Watch out for FIZZER - Another Dangerous Computer Worm

By: Ira Wilsker

The Fizzer worm, one of hundreds of newly created computer viruses and worms may reach endemic proportions if more of us do not protect our computers from its potentially damaging payload. Fizzer was first detected by the major antivirus and cyber-threat services on May 8. As I type this, one of the major email filtering services, MessageLabs, has reclassified Fizzer to "high-level alert status", as it is currently infecting one of every 312 emails. Other services are showing that as many as 3 percent of all PCs are already infected with Fizzer. Email is not the only source of Fizzer infection, as it can also be transmitted by AOL Instant Messenger (AIM), and across networks from computer to computer. Many of the documented cases of infection came from file sharing networks, predominately the KaZaA service.

One of the reasons why Fizzer is so dangerous is that it has adopted the tactic used by many of its predecessors, such as the Klez, Bugbear, and Yaha viruses and worms, where it immediately disables any antivirus and firewall protection installed on the infected computer. It is also polymorphic, in that the code can mutate, generating different digital signatures possibly capable of sneaking by recently updated antivirus software. Fizzer is also capable of "dropping" varying code on infected computers, causing a variety of problems. Some antivirus publishers have found that some of the malicious code is itself "buggy", and capable of crashing a computer, which although damaging, was not the original intent of the code.

Once a computer is infected, the worm replicates itself by sending out copies of its mutating-self using a variety of resources likely on the computer. It can send copies of itself using its own integral "SMTP" or email engine, without the need to load whatever email software is utilized on the computer. Fizzer can harvest email addresses and other contact information from the Outlook or Outlook Express contacts list, Windows Address Book (WAB), almost any email addresses found on the computer, as well as from IRC, AOL-IM, KaZaA, and other resources. In addition to replicating itself to all of the email addresses found, it also has the capability of updating itself, changing its code and payload, whenever the computer is connected to the net.

If arriving at the targeted computer via email, it will, again similar to its predecessors, arrive with a "spoofed" or forged "From:" address, concealing the real source of the infection. Since the real sender is difficult to identify, those his computer is infecting will not likely inform the owner of the infected computer. The subject line and message are variable, as are the names and file types of the dangerous payload. The payload will likely carry any one of the common executable file extensions such as .exe, .com, .scr, and .pif. The filenames selected by Fizzer are often the names of legitimate files found on the infected computer. The message bearing the payload may also appear as a "FWD:" (forwarded message) from an acquaintance, as the worm may hijack both the "TO:" and "FROM:" addresses from the infected address book; this is yet another example of how human engineering is utilized to trick a victim into open

ing or activating the payload. Some of the subject lines reported by the antivirus companies also appear to contain religious messages. One possible hint of an infected email is that many of the messages are sent in German, or use German phrases, as well as English.

Once activated, Fizzer checks for files installed on the computer, and if vulnerable, installs multiple copies of itself to the Windows directory, using a variety of filenames. It also installs utilities to monitor and intercept the software running on the computer, and enables "keylogging", where keystrokes typed by the user can be stored, possibly enabling the theft of passwords, account numbers, email addresses, credit card numbers, and other personally sensitive information. Since Fizzer can access the net and file sharing networks, it is capable of sending this information to a large number of destinations. The antivirus publisher McAfee has detected literally hundreds of possible locations that may receive this stolen data. One method used by Fizzer to disseminate the victims' information is to connect online to an IRC or AOL-IM server, remotely join a chat, and post the information; it is not known if these chats are being monitored to capture this information, or to simply provide a means of randomly disclosing what is stolen from the victim. Fizzer can also connect itself to KaZaA and make the information available to unknown individuals by simple download.

Most of the antivirus websites have a free utility available for download, which can detect and kill most versions of Fizzer. Please do not totally depend on the antivirus software already installed on your computer to protect against Fizzer, because since it is polymorphic, and may have deactivated the antivirus software if the infection preceded the appropriate antivirus update, many users have infected computers and are unaware of it, despite the fact that they believe they are protected. I strongly recommend that one of the free online virus scans be run frequently to detect and kill anything that may have slipped by the antivirus software installed on the computer. Many of these free utilities are listed on my website at www.mycomputershow.com.

Free online scans are available at housecall.antivirus.com, www.pandasecurity.com, www.ravantivirus.com, www.bitdefender.com, and www.mcafee.com. If one of these scans finds that Fizzer is installed, it may be necessary to reinstall your antivirus software and firewall after Fizzer is killed. Again this reiterates the absolute need to have antivirus software installed, running, and updated very frequently.

This article is brought to you by the Editorial Committee of the Association of Personal Computer User Groups (APCUG), an international organization of which this group is a member.

The Ways to Reduce your Spam

By: Don Arrowsmith - PPCUG

Spam! Nobody wants it; It gets worse every week; No solution seems on the horizon.

I saw a great article about how you are likely to get on spammers' lists. Look here: http://www.cdt.org/speech/spam/030319spamreport.shtml. Their conclusion is that you are most likely to get on a list from having your email address appear on a public web page or show up in Usenet newsgroup postings.

You can disguise your address by spelling it out ("art at abc dot com") to confuse the spammers' robots. Spelling out your address is great if you frequent newsgroups. Just change your listed email address in your newsreader program.

If you try the same trick on web pages, it makes the references much less useful. By using HTML equivalents, you greatly lower the likelihood of having your address show up on a spammers' list. HTML equivalents are strings of numeric characters that represent the original characters. As an example, if your email address is "name@mymail.com", then the HTML equivalent is: "name@mymail.com". All browsers will display the correct email address and will correctly process any mailto: request. The theory is that the spammers' web robots will not decode them. Obviously they could

but at this time it appears that they aren't written to decode those strings. And of course, if everyone were to adopt this technique, the spiders would be updated to capture them.

If you have a personal web site with email addresses listed, you might be interested in a freeware program called Natata Anti-Spam Encoder. I have used this for all the web sites that I care for, including PPCUG. The program has several modes but I prefer the one called Quick Encoder. The QE window has a field with a button to paste from the clipboard anything from one email address to a complete web page worth of HTML. You then punch a button labeled Find & Encode and the revised set of HTML appears in another field. That field has an associated button that will copy the new code back to the clipboard. This revised code can be used to replace the original code with any and all email addresses written as their HTML equivalents.

If you want to see results, go to the PPCUG member listing page (http://www.ppcug-nj.org/members.html) and do a View Source. Scroll down and see all of the numerics on the page.

You can find the 620KB program and more information at http://natata.hn3.net/antispam_encoder.htm.

Tech Talk

By: Brian Jacobs - Costal Area Users Group

This month's subject is the trials and tribulations of doing simple things with a Windows computer.

My wife wanted some pictures off our web site to send to her grandfather, who doesn't own a PC. Seemed a simple enough request. Since I produce the web site on my "Purple Haze" Win NT box, I thought I would use it, without thinking about the problems this might engender. It was easy enough to bring up Dreamweaver and then copy the pictures over to Word. There I discovered that you are extremely limited as to where the pictures would be placed, leaving enough room for text explanations of each picture.

No problem, I thought, I'll just fire up MS Publisher and then place the pictures where I wanted them, leaving text boxes for position holders. Thought I might even show my wife how to use Publisher to type in the text, rather than write it out by hand after printing. Of course, when I went to browse for the pictures, I get an error message from Publisher to the effect that this part of Publisher is broke — did I want to repair it. Sure, why not. Went through my CD's to find the install disk for Office 2K, put it in and was then told that it was the wrong CD - please insert the proper disk. I think the name it is looking for is data2.msi while my CD insists the file is called Data2.msi. Did you see the difference? Took me a few tries, I'm slow, but one is

in caps and one isn't. So no repair this time. And how Publisher screamed and threatened when I tried to not repair it, with dire warning of impending program failure if I didn't repair it Now!

So far so good, but now the problems mounted. I was going to browse for the Save as location, intending to put a copy on hard drive, then another on a floppy. It was only two pages and 10 pictures so the file shouldn't be too large. Wrong! Turns out the file is way too large for a floppy, even in zipped format. No prob, I'll just burn a CD. No, that won't work. I have an Iomega CD-RW that I got on special at CompUSA a few years back after being told by both Iomega and CompUSA that it would run under NT. Of course, it didn't. Runs fine under Win2K but not NT. Which meant breaking open the box, installing my Win2K drive, changing jumpers and slaving the NT drive and then burning the CD. Instead I decided to send the file email. Yahoo chocked twice on attaching the file, so I went to my ATT account. After waiting a long time for the file to attach here, I decided that the easy way to print this file was to crawl under my wife's desk and unplug the printer, attach it to Purple Haze and print it, then put it back on her machine.

After looking at what I would have to move to get the printer cable out from behind the desk and fling cabinet, I decided to

Hunt for the Lost Font

By: Mick Topping - Springfield Missouri User Group

Did you ever lose a font? A year or so ago I made up and printed a sheet of business cards that I was happy with. Last week, I gave away my last one. (I go through about one card a month.) When I opened the business card again (in Corel Draw-7), it complained that it could not find the font Andy Bold, and asked which font to substitute.

Let me mention that I am not much of a font person. I usually couldn't care less about which font to use. I am an engineer, more interested in the meaning of the words than in how they are drawn. Arial, Courier, and Times New Roman are about all I ever use. But for my business card, I wanted something to reflect my casual insouciance, and convey the fact that I have a passion for informality, and that I am really not looking for work. Since I had put a good 10-15 minutes into the original font selection, I was somewhat concerned, and more than somewhat irritated that it was no longer available. So, I decided to hunt the critter down.

First, I looked for "Andy" in every font folder on 3 computers. (I couldn't remember which machine I had used to print the cards.) Nothing like **Andy Bold** anywhere. Then I remembered, Windows applications (for the most part) keep their fonts in the C:\Windows\Fonts folder, and most applications just reach into this folder to use a font. And applications rarely delete their fonts when they are uninstalled. So any font that was ever put on a computer is likely still there, unless major surgery has been done. This fact pointed to my laptop computer as the culprit, as I had recently done a clean-install of WindowsXP, whereas the other computers had been little changed over the year. Regular experimentation had caused numerous apps to be installed on the laptop, then when the new version of Windows was installed only those apps still needed were re-installed.

But which of those non-reinstalled applications came with the Andy Bold font? First a web-search on "lost font"—wow, I am not the only one who has lost a font. Over 300 web pages containing "lost font", none of which were very promising. Many of the links were inactive, and advertising overwhelmed others, and I was getting nowhere. Another search on "**Andy Bold**", only a few hits this time, and here was a "Bulkley Valley Christian" school web page, with a note that to appreciate the page you needed to have Andy Bold installed on your computer. And there was a link promising to let me download AndyB.ttf ! Unfortunately, it was another broken link. Most likely, someone had remembered that the fonts are copyrighted, and shouldn't be downloaded.

In frustration, I finally gave-up, and printed 2 new sheets of business cards in Balloon… or Plump or Poster Boldoni, not sure which. Of course, the new cards were not out of the printer when I had another thought—maybe someone at Microsoft had considered this problem. Sure enough they had. It is not easy to find, but once you know where to look, http://www.microsoft.com/typography/fonts/default.asp has a search engine that will allow you to find which applications came with which fonts.

A quick lookup, and there was what I needed. **Andy Bold** is distributed with Microsoft Home Publisher, part of the never used software that had come with my laptop. A quick dig through my stack of CD-ROMs, and there it was, in the MHP\Fonts folder, an icon labeled AndyB.ttf. I drag it over to my Windows\Fonts folder, and it automatically installs, and I can now print my cards like I want them. Unfortunately, I have a 2-year supply of them done with the other font. Anyone want a card? Aw come on—please take a card.

Contact Mick Topping: mtopping@mchsi.com

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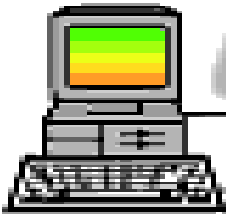
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just move over to her PC, using the backup CD of the web site. Discard the file on Purple Haze, end the Internet connection and redo everything on her PC.

I am almost positive that next month's column will be the hoops I learned to jump through as I try to network several boxes, to prevent this type of problem in the future, Of course, I could buy another printer, but that would be too easy. And her printer works perfectly well for what little printing we do. Maybe go wireless network? Nah, to much money for wireless this soon after the holidays. Think I will get a 5 port hub, a few Cat 5 cables and a few LinkSys or 3Com 10/100 cards to install. Then I can have Purple Haze (Win NT), my Dell laptop (Win2K), my wife's PC (also Win2K) on my own mini network. I'll also install my Win2K HD in Purple Haze and make sure that connection also works. And I won a copy of Win XP Pro at the CAUG holiday party, so I think I'll find a spare HD and install XP on Purple Haze and network that. Humm. That means two network cards and drivers, three OS's, a mini-hub and my laptop. Should be a breeze... Go on, just shoot me now…

Contact Brian Jacobs: brianjacobs@yahoo.com

This article is brought to you by the Editorial Committee of the Association of Personal Computer User Groups (APCUG), an international organization of which this group is a member.

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Weinberg	Robert	bweinb@att.net
Weiss III	Edward A.	eweiss@nerc.com
Willis	Robert S.	rsw9999@cs.com

(Last Update: June 1, 2003)
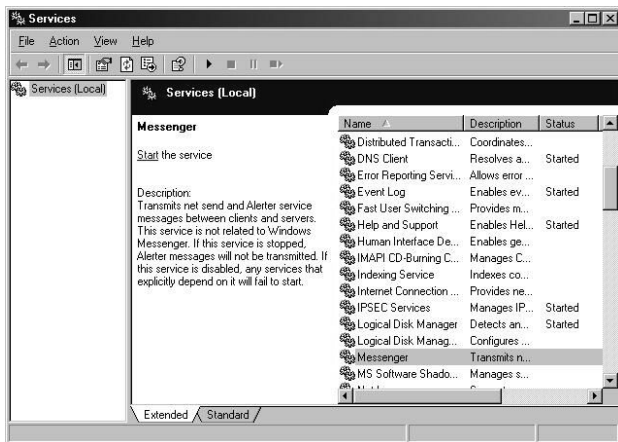Send Updates to kurivchp@optonline.net for inclusion in this listing.

Figure 4. Services console in XP

Remove all the bloat from your startup and your machine will run faster and will be less likely to crash. However, always remember to back up the Registry or make a Restore point before doing any system change.

Treasurers Report Through May 31, 2003
by Paul Kurivchack

Expense	2003 Totals	2002 Totals
Newsletter Printing	$166.65	$495.38
Newsletter Postage	$118.40	$346.80
Hospitality	$34.44	$215.79
Capital Exp	$1,314.25	$0.00
NJ Treasurer Report	$25.00	$15.00
TCF Parcel Pickup	$34.82	$18.97
Insurance	$69.00	$355.00
Post Office Box	$0.00	$32.00
Misc. Postage	$0.00	$17.95
Misc. Exp	$0.00	$3.58
Misc Printing	$0.00	$14.78
APCUG Dues	$0.00	$50.00
Group Sponsor Dues	$0.00	$110.00
	$1,762.56	**$1,675.25**

Income		
Dues	$1,735.00	$1,399.70
TCF Parcel Pickup	$516.41	$552.58
	$2,251.41	**$1,952.28**

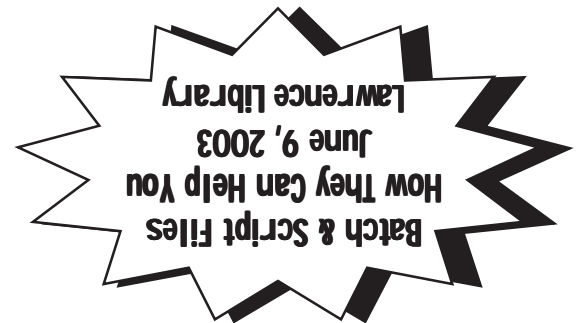| *Income vs. Expenses*	*$488.85*	*$277.03*

General Meeting Minutes
May 12, 2003
By: Don Arrowsmith

The formal meeting opened at 7:46 with Clarke Walker commenting on the TCF parcel pickup project, which netted about $500 for our group. Q&A topics included: Missing Folder Properties in Windows XP Pro.

Steve Shaw, a former PPCUG president, presented views of his patent application for a new mouse design. It combines a traditional 2-button mouse with a joystick. The published application (#20030058219) is available at http://appft1.uspto.gov/netacgi/nph-Parser?Sect1=PTO1&Sect2=HITOFF&d=PG01&p=1&u=%2Fnetahtml%2FPTO%2Fsrchnum.html&r=1&f=G&l=50&s1=%2220030058219%22.PGNR.&OS=DN/20030058219&RS=DN/20030058219. For more info contact Steve at steves@somethingbetter.com.

Jim Russ of the Hunterdon County Computer Club began the main program at 8:11 with an overview of the available Linux distributions and his experiences with them. Lindows seems to have overcome a lot of people's problems with using Linux. According to Jim, it is available for $29 (at Lindows.com the price seems to be $50 or $60). It includes a lot of application software such as OpenOffice that is file compatible with MS Office. Jim recommends that you purchase a year membership of Click and Run for about $100. This gives you access to download any of about 1800 programs of all types that have been packaged to install and run on Lindows without a struggle. Many familiar Windows programs, such as Acrobat Reader, Netscape Navigator, etc., are available. Jim started many of the programs he has already installed on his unit. Many people have trouble with getting drivers for their hardware to work with Linux but Lindows has a vast stable of drivers that cover most recent devices. Jim bought a new WinterGreen PC with Lindows included from TigerDirect.com for a nice price and is very pleased with it.

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