PPCUG*NEWS*

A PUBLICATION OF THE PRINCETON PC USERS GROUP

How to Play with Linux Without Losing My Windows
Kim Goldenberg
Monday, January 10, 2005

We'll look at using a Live CD version of Linux to see how it works and what we can do with it.

Kim has been working in computers for over 30 years and with PC for over a dozen.

Lawrence Library
Meeting Rooms 1 & 2
US Alternate 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 imply endorsement of its programs.*

In this issue:

Coming Events:

February 14, 2005—Joel May on Google.
March 2005 —Paul Kurivchack on using OnTrack's hard disk recovery utilities.
April 2005 —TBD
May 2005 —Vic Laurie on Short Reviews of his Six Favorite Programs.

Minutes of the December Meeting

After good food and conversation were shared by all for the Holiday Celebration, Clarke opened the formal meeting at 8:47 PM. The first order of business was elections. All current officers and the current four members-at-large were reelected with the exception of the Secretary. Since Don is moving out of the area (he had to miss this meeting because of the moving companies' schedule), Joe Budelis was elected as Secretary. Joe had indicated earlier that a new work commitment will prevent him from reaching Monday meetings before approximately 8 PM. Clarke said that we'll see how it works out for the time being. Clarke also said that anyone interested in becoming a member-at-large could volunteer at any time.

Paul mentioned that he is now accepting dues for next year.

Clarke mentioned the CompUSA event on December 16 from 7 to 9 AM where club members can expect 10% off accessories. A club member mentioned that he signed up to be on CompUSA's mailing list and that periodically he receives better offers than this by E-Mail that sometimes apply to in-store purchases and sometimes to on-line purchases.

During the Q&A there was a question as to whether there would be any problem with the BIOS of a 2-year old laptop running XP Professional recognizing a new 80 GB drive. The consensus was that there would be no trouble. A newly purchased DVD writer cannot be used by a laptop with only a wireless and USB1 port. This can be solved by converting the firewall port to a USB2 port. There are also USB2 PCI cards. Tom believes that SP2 enables certain USB functions and it might be a good idea to install it. It was mentioned that there is USB2, USB2 high-speed and a 3rd version of 2 that is even faster.

A visitor, Sharon, bought a PC, did a lot of browsing and appears to have been infected since the PC first lost access to the internet and then lost other functionality. It was suggested that she back up what she wants to save, reformat and do an XP clean start. If there is access to the BIOS, can boot from a CD. Otherwise there is a set of 8 floppies that install basic XP programs. Once back in operation, it was recommended that antivirus (AVG is free), firewall and ad aware programs be installed and used regularly (ZoneAlarm and Spybot are free).

The meeting ended with a raffle of 3 books - "Wireless Data for the Enterprise", "Upgrading and Repairing PCs", and "Windows 2000 Administration in a Nutshell"; 2 Borland retractable LAN cords, and several CDs (or DVDs) - BullsEye2, Picture Prep, C++ Builder, Ontrack, PC World Sensational Software, and PC World Digital Imaging Shareware.

- Submitted by Joe Budelis

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President's Letter

Let me start by wishing everyone a Happy and Healthy New Year. Let me bold **Healthy**.

As most of you know I had some health problems which cumulated in open heart bypass surgery in August. I'm doing very well and want to thank everyone for their concern and help.

Thanks also for your support of the Officers and Board members by re-electing us for another year. We welcome Joe Budelis as our Secretary. He has some big (and tall) shoes to fill as Don Arrowsmith has left us for another "window" in Pennsylvania. Thanks Don for all your work.

If you are reading this Newsletter it is a miracle, if you are reading this before the January meeting it is large miracle. If you are reading the paper edition then it is a major miracle. Because I am sitting in the Editor's Chair for this issue. And of course I ran into some computer problems as I was putting the issue together. Thanks for your patience. I'll try and do better next month. (Maybe I should forget about January all together and rename this the February issue?)

Please remember to pay your dues for this year. Especially if you want a printed edition so I know who to send the paper edition of the newsletter to.

Kim will be presenting a talk and demonstration on using Linux without messing up Microsoft Windows on your computer. Invite your non-window friends to come to the meeting.

Again I wish everyone a Happy and **Healthy** New Year!

- *Clarke Walker*

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Product Review: WiFlyer™

by Lewis A. Edge, Jr.

Several computer magazines have recently surveyed their readers and now say that the majority of them have high-speed Internet connections. I suspect that if the members of PPCUG were surveyed the majority of them would have high-speed Internet connections too.

That still leaves a significant minority of serious computer users who use dial-up Internet connections at home or while traveling and who would enjoy the convenience and mobility of WiFi. A new product was introduced this year by Always On Wireless to address this need. It is called WiFlyer, is sold directly by the manufacturer in Houston, TX http://www.wiflyer.com and costs $149.95 + S&H. As far as I know this is the only WiFi access-point/router with a built-in modem.

My wife and I were planning a working holiday trip in Florida for the Christmas/New Year break. We both needed Internet access for our laptops and knew that the hotel in which we were staying offered neither WiFi nor Ethernet connections in the room. Therefore the only Internet access we would have available to us would be a dial-up connection on a single phone line. This seemed like the perfect application for WiFlyer, so I called the company on Friday, December 17th, asked for rush delivery and received the unit via FedEx on Saturday, December 18th. Delivery service was excellent but, unfortunately, the WiFlyer we received had a defective modem that would not handshake with any of our local dial-up services.

After several phone conversations and e-mail messages that

weekend with WiFlyer's technical support person, I was told that a replacement unit was on the way and that it would arrive Tuesday, December 21st. Meanwhile I shipped the defective unit back to Houston. I was concerned about the tight schedule because our vacation flight was slated to depart early on December 22nd, but our replacement arrived as promised the morning before we were scheduled to leave. A quick test proved that the replacement WiFlyer would dial and connect to AOL and Netscape, so we were ready to go.

Now that I've had a week to use WiFlyer in a Florida hotel room, I believe that I have had enough experience with it to comment about its capabilities and shortcomings. First, let's deal with WiFlyer's shortcomings: Unless your ISP uses a standard PPP dial-up connection or it is AOL, MSN, Earthlink or iPass, WiFlyer will probably not work for you. For example, WiFlyer does not yet work with either CompuServe classic or CompuServe 2000, both of which use proprietary protocols that it does not support. It may be that a future firmware download will expand your choices. The other limitation is that WiFlyer's modem was slower for me than dialing the ISP directly from the modem in my laptop computer. The WiFlyer modem would not give me access to some Websites, nor would it work with my Hotmail account using Outlook Express. These were minor sacrifices considering that two people in our hotel room were using the same dial-up connection, but the convenience of dial-up WiFi might not outweigh the slower speed for a single user.

Now for the pluses: WiFlyer is small, about the size of the palm of an adult's hand, and is lightweight; easily fitting into a computer bag and causing no real burden for a road warrior. Not only will it give you a WiFi Internet connection from a dial-up line, it will also serve as a WiFi access point from a hotel or home Ethernet connection, though for this feature alone, there are other products that will serve as well for about 1/3 of the cost. Signal strength with its internal antenna is more than adequate for a hotel room or two-room suite.

Configuring WiFlyer with a Web browser is a breeze. Most experienced computer users will find its menus intuitive. Dialing and logging on are fast and simple. You can prevent outsiders from logging onto your WiFlyer, which is especially advisable in a hotel, by using standard 64-bit or 128-bit WEP (Wireless Encryption Protocol). Since WiFlyer uses its own protocol to dial into the ISP's listed above, the computer using WiFlyer's Internet connection does not need to have any proprietary software installed.

I have been carrying computers on the road and using them in hotel rooms for e-mail and file transfers since the early eighties when hotel phones did not have data ports and making a modem connection required a screwdriver and pigtail adapter. Even today, one of my pet peeves is that in many hotel rooms, the only phone is located on the night table next to the bed and the only worktable is all the way across the room. Before WiFlyer, I either had to string a long ex-

tension cord from the phone to the worktable or use my notebook computer on the bed. Now I have a third option of putting WiFlyer on the hotel's night table and wirelessly connecting to the Internet from anywhere in the room that is convenient.

Perhaps someday, wireless Internet access or Ethernet connections will be as common in hotels as telephones. Meanwhile, WiFlyer offers an interim solution for travelers staying in hotels, which offer neither, and for computer users at home who want the convenience and mobility of WiFi, but don't want to make the commitment for a high-speed Internet connection.

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Necessities for That New Computer
Ira Wilsker
APCUG Board of Directors

Recently, I noticed a lot of people were buying new computers for the holidays, either for themselves, or for gifts. In overhearing some conversations at a variety of local stores, it appeared that some computers were intended to replace older models, and others were for "first-time" users, both youngsters and senior citizens. If the new user, as well as the experienced user, would follow some simple steps and obtain and use some necessary hardware and software, then he will likely have several years of happy computing. If the user fails to heed safe computing guidelines, he will likely result in dissatisfaction with the new machine.

First, do not plug that new computer directly into the wall socket. It is imperative that the new computer is plugged into either a surge suppressor (the minimum protection) or a good uninterruptible power supply with automatic voltage regulation (UPS-AVR), of appropriate capacity, which would be ideal. Users need to be aware that the warranties of most new computers do not cover damage from power related problems, and plenty of users have had their new computers "fried" by power surges or spikes. The resistance to power surges and spikes is measured in joules, and generally the more joules the better. A good UPS with AVR that has adequate capacity to power the computer for several minutes generally offers far superior protection to a surge suppressor. If a surge suppressor is selected, be sure that it has a UL1449 rating at a minimum. Some users think that a common inexpensive power strip is adequate, but other than maybe having a circuit breaker, a power strip offers no protection from power problems.

Once the computer is assembled, plugged into an appropriate protective device, and turned on, other threats and needs appear. First is antivirus protection: many new computers come with a short term trial version of an antivirus program, installed with the hope that the user will pay the annual registration fee prior to expiration. I have had users tell me that they do not need antivirus software because they never go online with that computer, and that can be a dangerous misconception. Computer viruses can also be transmitted by infected floppies, CDs, and DVDs, necessitating an updated antivirus product. Several antivirus products are available at retail and by download. Before purchasing antivirus software, consider the free antivirus software available from a variety of sources, including the free antivirus software that some of the internet service providers give their subscribers. One decent free program is the EHZ Trust Suite, consisting of antivirus software, a firewall to restrict hacker access, and a popup blocker, can be downloaded at www.my-etrust.com/microsoft.

Relatively few users do not go on line, and since almost all do, Internet access will be required. Almost all new computers come pre-installed with a variety of software from several national internet service providers (ISPs). Microsoft tries to push users into using its MSN paid Internet access, and AOL, EarthLink, and others are commonly installed and featured on the desktop. The smart user desiring dial-up Internet access can probably save money and get superior service by using a local ISP for Internet access (such as Eonet, or EXP), rather than the big national carriers. If the user subscribes to a local ISP, then the directories containing the software for the national carriers can be safely deleted from the hard drive. If the user will be using the Internet extensively, then high speed "broadband" Internet access would be desirable. Choices of broadband providers include cable, DSL, and satellite broadband. They are generally price competitive with each other, but some offer better service then the others, and this varies locally. One warning: be sure that you understand any contracts that may be required, as some broadband providers have a hefty cancellation fee for terminating an account prematurely.

A printer will be necessary to print documents, photos, and other items. Almost all modern printers will do a decent job for household use, but be aware of what new inkjet or laser cartridges can cost. The user can save a lot of money by recycling and recharging his used inkjet and laser toner cartridges (such as from Laser Recon), or by purchasing refilled or generic cartridges. Be aware that inexpensive but good quality generic cartridges are generally available for some brands (Epson, Canon), but difficult to find for others (Lexmark, HP). A good deal and a high rebate on one brand of printer may turn out to be a false economy when the cost of replacement cartridges is factored in to the overall cost.

The user replacing his old computer with a new one may want to move files and programs to the new computer. Data files can be copied to CD, or moved via a direct network connection, but program files can generally not be simply copied from one computer to another. It would be best to reinstall desired programs from the original discs, but if they are not available, a utility sometimes included with new computers, or a utility such as "Aloha Bob" can move program files properly.

Enjoy that new computer, but be sure to practice "safe hex".

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Link of the Month

Have you discovered a useful link. Then share it with the members of the P PC UG.

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Hard Drive HouseKeeping Is Vital
Dennis Schulman
Tampa Bay Computer Society

For those of you who surf the net on a regular basis - and that includes those who use dialup access as well as cable or DSL - it is absolutely crucial that you take your hard drive housekeeping more seriously than you ever thought necessary. Many users think that by having a suite of utilities, such as Norton or McAfee, that you are protected. You might be, but I seriously doubt it for so many reasons I won't go into it now except for three:

You use auto update and auto scan. This requires that your computer be online at the time to run the auto update. In the case of cable or DSL, that is possible, but the computer has to be on at the time also. In the case of dialup, the computer won't go online unless your password is saved and used automatically. That, of course, defeats keeping friends and annoying children from messing up the computer without your knowledge. So, you might want to run your antivirus update manually, just to make certain it worked and there were no errors.

The second reason is based on the fact that if you did not clean house before scanning, you risk the possibility of the antivirus finding a virus it could not delete or quarantine and you did not know it. You also risk the possibility of not knowing if the auto update was not run successfully for one of many reasons (and time and space won't permit that discussion at this time) and consequently your subsequent full system auto scan may not be able to recognize the latest nasties you have managed to acquire.

There is a third, more obtuse, reason. If you don't really know if your system is truly clean and clear of all the bad stuff, how will you know what to do when you get a message that says something to the effect: "It has been determined that your computer has been sending messages infected with the _____ trojan horse virus to what appears to be the email listing of your address book. If you do not take appropriate action immediately, your email service will be discontinued. If your anti virus program has failed to protect you, please download the following trojan horse removal tool and run it immediately."

So, here is a housekeeping procedure I use - which is man-ual - because then I am more certain that I know the status of my files than most of the "suite" programs. And it doesn't use much - if any - of my system resources except when I use it. Just in case you think you have all the utilities you need, let me comment that I am not an expert on your system, but I spend more time now than ever before on systems that have too many over-burdensome utilities that are truly unnecessary and in some cases more dangerous than what they claimed to be designed to do. What I am proposing is basically using 3 little free utilities that only work when invoked, along with utilities that already come with your computer.

Run Disk Cleanup (under System Tools under Accessories on the Programs menu) and process all options (don't worry about compressed files, but do them at a later time when you have nothing else to do, since it could take quite a while if you haven't done it the first time.)

Clear your browser cache (In Internet Explorer go to Tools, Internet Options. Delete cookies and delete all offline files.) In Netscape Communicator go to Edit, Preferences, Advanced, Clear Memory Cache and Clear Disk Cache)

Open Windows Explorer (right-click on My Computer, select Explore), Select the folders/View option and select show all files except system files (You can leave it this way.) Find any folders called tmp, temp, or cookies. Unless you have a good working knowledge of what cookies you need or do not need, you probably don't need the contents of any of the temp, cookies, or temporary internet folders except the index.dat file (you might want to save the contents of the History folder)

Empty the Recycle Bin

Update and run the latest core version of Adaware SE Personal Edition (currently version 1.05). Once the scan is complete, click on an object found, right-click a lined item and select all, click next and remove all.

Update and run the latest version of Spybot (currently version 1.3.) Before running the scan, run immunize. Then run Look for Problems. Once problems are found, select them all and click on Fix Problems.

Note: Some spyware may be associated with programs you want to use, so read the help section for a further understanding of the features and options on both of these programs. These spyware objects detector utilities can be downloaded from download.com or majorgeeks.com.

There is a third utility, called a hijack remover. There are many available, but I like CWShredder.exe (current version 2.00) (use www.google.com to find the program) Just make certain you are not online and that your browser is not open when you run it. You may be surprised and pleased if it finds something and fixes it (generally really bad stuff).

Now you should be able to update and run your antivirus software more successfully than ever before. The only catch is that it takes time. Once you figure out about how much time each step takes, you can determine whether you can walk away and come back later when it is done.

I recommend running HouseKeeping at the end of every day you go online - if you can manage it. (cough! cough!) Otherwise, run it every 3 days for certain.

Now, if you know your computer is clean and pure, then this is the only condition to justify running the defragmentation utility (once a week or twice a month). Defrag does not "fix" anything. It enhances the performance of a healthy environment. If you attempt to defrag a "sick" system, you could make it worse to the extent that the computer will fail to boot or run. If you have Windows 2000 or Windows XP, you can run defrag directly. If you have Windows Me, 98, or 95, run it in Safe Mode. I prefer running Defrag in Safe Mode as I have a UPS and the computer can complete the defrag, even if the lights go out in the house.

Now that you have successfully learned the housekeeping routine and understand its importance without the need for complex and sometimes dangerous free software utilities that can cause conflicts, you can set up the program scheduler to run your housekeeping routine for you and just check up on it from time to time to see that it is accomplishing your wishes.

Feel free to email me for further details and other fine, free utilities available for keeping your hard drive and system performing at its best.

Dennis Schulman, known as the PC Miracle Man, has been a practicing field consultant in Largo, Florida for over 22 years. He has been a member of the Tampa Bay Computer Society for over 15 years and was the editor of its sometimes 40-page newsletter for 5 years. He can be contacted at dschulman@myrapidsys.com.

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