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# PPCUG NEWS

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**Monday, January 12, 2004**

**Window XP Extras**

**Clarke Walker**

**Technology Consultant**

With each release of Windows, Microsoft has added additional programs to the package. For example you can identify the release of Windows in which games are included. Remember when the only game was Solitaire? This talk will review some of the “extras” in Windows XP. We will learn how to burn a slide show of your favorite pictures, create a movie using Movie Maker and compile audio CDs. I will also demonstrate how to set up a wireless network. If you have a laptop with a wireless network card, bring it and get connected to the Princeton PC network. This will also enable you to transfer the demos and the free Window XP extras if you do not already have them.

At:

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.*

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**If you haven't renewed your PPCUG membership for 2004, this will be the last newsletter**

**you'll receive!** Read your monthly newsletter online and pay only \$20 dues. All members will get an email when the new issue is available at the PPCUG web site. If you prefer to receive a printed, mailed copy of the newsletter, indicate that on your renewal form and pay \$30 in dues. Forms are available at the PPCUG web site.

## Coming Events:

February 9, 2004 - Turbo Tax Time - Joel May

March 8, 2004 - TBA

## About PPCUG

### General Meetings

Second Monday of the month at the Lawrenceville Library, Alternate Route 1 and Darrah Lane.  
 7:00 PM: Social Time / Tech Corner  
 7:30 PM: Meeting comes to Order  
 7:45 PM: Featured presentation

For information about upcoming meetings or joining PPCUG, see our web site:

<http://www.ppcug-nj.org>

### Board Meetings

Board meetings are open to all members. Notice of an upcoming meeting will be posted on the web site.

### Board Members

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### Annual Dues

Dues are \$30 per calendar year with a mailed newsletter or \$20 per year with online access to the newsletter. New members pay \$2.50 or \$1.75 per month times the number of months remaining in the current year.



## December Meeting Minutes

About 26 members enjoyed our holiday party. The food was great - Thank you Bill Hawryluk! The short business meeting included elections for 2004. The nominating committee's slate was unanimously elected (see sidebar for names). Q&A touched on use of the PPCUG Yahoo! Group email and a hard drive problem. Before the meeting ended, a raffle was held for prizes donated by Microsoft: Digital Image, Works Suite, Zoo Tycoon, 2 T-Shirts, ball, CD opener, 2 different books on Office 2003, and a full copy of Office 2003 Professional. Every attendee was also given a pen, courtesy of Microsoft.



## Are You Being Served? Vic Laurie, PPCUG

Many functions of the Windows XP operating system and other software are classified under the general rubric of "services". These include such core services as Windows Management Instrumentation as well as some unnecessary functions such as Windows Messenger (discussed previously in <http://pages.zdnet.com/hampsi/Articles/messenger.htm>). By default, quite a few services that most PC users don't need are set to run automatically in the background. To see the services that are on your computer go to **Start/Run** and enter "services.msc". (As is characteristic of Windows, this is only one of several ways.) This will open what is called the "services console," which will appear in a window like Figure 1. To show the complete console you may need to open the "View" menu and click on "Detail". The services console is where unneeded services can be stopped from running, thus freeing up resources. Also services that are intended for networked computers or specialized administrative functions may make your system less secure and can be disabled.

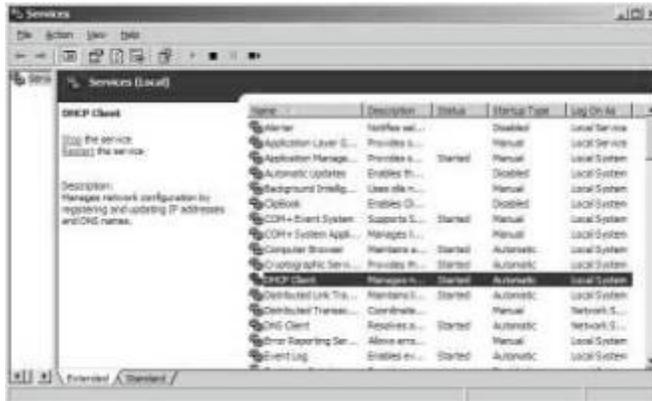


Figure 1. Services console

When a service is highlighted, a description of the service is given on the left side. In Figure 1, the service called "DHCP Client" has been selected. The column headed "Description" also contains the explanation of all the services but has to be expanded to see the whole description.

Put your mouse on the divider bar between the column heading "Description" and the column heading "Status". A crosshair will replace the mouse pointer and dragging to the right will expand the column width. Many people may find the list of services to be pretty cryptic so some further explanation of the meaning of the entries may be needed.

Comprehensive references can be found at <http://www.blackviper.com/WinXP/servicecfg.htm> and at [http://www.theeldergeek.com/services\\_guide.htm](http://www.theeldergeek.com/services_guide.htm). Both of these sites make recommendations about which services to turn off. A less overwhelming list is at <http://www.pcworld.com/howto/article/0,aid,111121,00.asp>. Among the services that most people can dispense with are the Messenger service (previously discussed), Remote Registry, Internet Connection Sharing, and Smart Card Service. See the references for more information.

The column in Figure 1 labeled, "Startup Type", indicates one of three possible conditions for a service. "Automatic" means that the service starts automatically at boot up (or user log on for multi-user setups). "Manual" indicates that the service can be turned on as needed while "Disabled" means the service is not available unless it is re-

enabled in the Services console. An entry “Started” in the “Status” column indicates whether a service is currently running.

To disable a service or to change from Automatic to Manual, right-click on the entry for the service and choose “Properties” from the context menu. (“Properties” can also be accessed via the “Action” menu.) A window like Figure 2 will open.

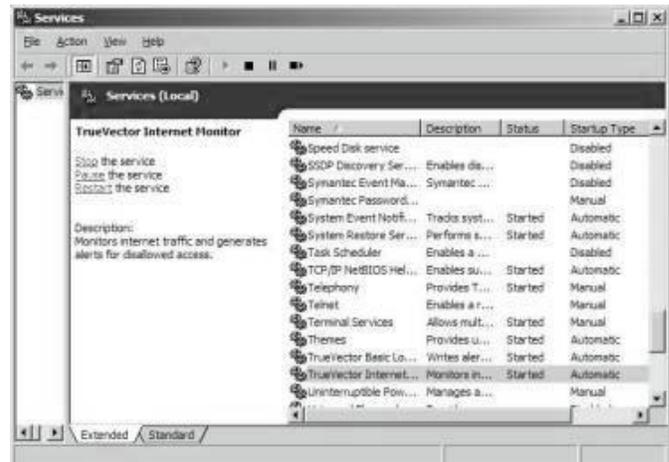


**Figure 2. Properties sheet for a service**

In the entry “Startup type”, you can scroll to choose which of the three states is desired. In addition to configuring the startup type, you can also temporarily stop a service by clicking the “Stop” button that is below the “Startup Type” entry in the area “Service status”. This action only lasts until the next boot up or log on. Permanent configuration has to be done in “Startup type”. “Stop” is a useful function for checking to see what happens when a service is prevented from running without having to go through booting. A temporarily stopped service can also be restarted in this area by using the “Start” button. The “Stop” and “Restart” functions are also available when a service is highlighted in the main window (left side in Figure 1) or from the right-click context menu for a given service.

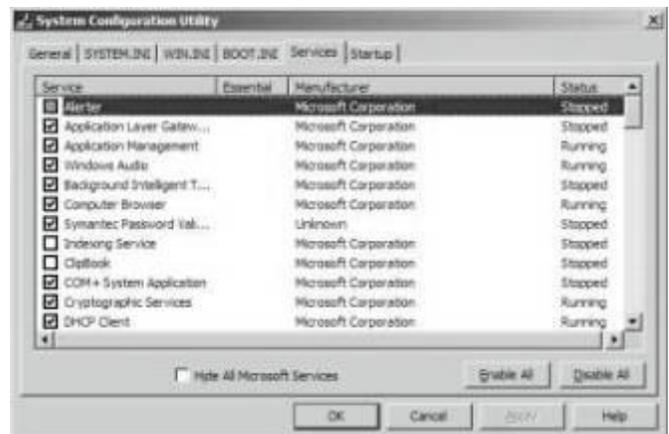
Not only Windows functions but also services from other software will be listed in the services console and can accordingly be stopped and restarted. For example, Figure 3 includes entries from Symantec and a highlighted entry (TrueVector) from ZoneAlarm. Note that for the ZoneAlarm case there is a “Pause” function in addition to “Stop” and

“Restart”. The name “Pause” is a little unclear but means that the service is stopped for user accounts that do not have administrative or service privileges.



**Figure 3. Illustrating other software**

Our old friend, the System Configuration Utility (msconfig), also can be used to control services (Fig. 4). However, it does not list all services and the services console is a preferable place to control which services will run. Also the services console contains more information about a service, making it easier to understand what the service does.



**Figure 4. Services in "msconfig"**

As always has to be said, make no system changes unless you know how to undo them and get back to where you started. Also there are interdependencies among the services and disabling one may disable others. See the references given above for details.



## Accessories for a New Digital Camera

Ira Wilsker

Last month I wrote about the features to look for in a new digital camera. That column was most timely as many in the national media are predicting that digital camera sales will soar this holiday season. It is also common that many of us "accessorize" our gifts to others to enhance the enjoyment of the recipient. Appropriate accessories would include cases, memory, photo editing software, photo printers and paper, rechargeable batteries, and other useful items.

Cases for digital cameras are usually available from the camera makers as well as a broad assortment of third parties. The primary function of a case is to provide protection for the sensitive instrument. Other functions include a means of conveniently carrying the camera, and a place to store accessories. In shopping for a case, look for proper fit and good protection from harm, as this is the function of a case. This protection may be in the form of padding, water resistance, and a variety of other factors. Do not practice the fine art of "buying cheap" and trusting a several-hundred dollar camera to a five dollar case, unless that case can provide adequate protection and convenience, which will not be likely.

Additional camera memory may be one of the most valuable adjuncts to a new (or already owned) camera. Almost all new cameras come with integral memory which can only store a very limited number of images before it must be downloaded to a computer, or the images in memory must be deleted to make room for more. While some cameras, such as several of the Sony models, use a floppy disk or mini-CD-R disc to store images directly to a universal media, almost all other digital cameras use some type of non-volatile memory card or stick to store images. These cards or sticks are inserted directly into the camera, and provide additional storage for images. In shopping for camera memory be absolutely sure that the proper type is selected for the camera, as there is often little interchangeability between the types. Common types of memory are "CF" compact flash, smart memory, multimedia cards (MMC), "SD" secure digital cards (sometimes interchangeable with MMC), tiny "xD" cards, memory sticks, and several other formats. Normally, "more is better" applies to memory capacity, but price must also be balanced with capacity. If photos are taken at full resolution (not normally a best practice), a 2 megapixel camera uses about 900k for a single JPEG format image, so a 32meg memory card will hold about 35 images, while a 128meg card will hold about 142 images. Other resolutions and amounts of memory will be somewhat proportional. A 4 megapixel camera uses about 2 megs of memory for each image at maximum resolution. Another factor which varies among different models of memory is the speed (faster is better) and power consumption (less is better). Along with a new memory card, an external reader, typically with a USB connector, is a great convenience which enables photos to be transferred without the

camera.

Almost all digital cameras come with a "lite" or limited functionality photo editing software. The included software may be adequate for normal snapshots, but often we want to do more to enhance or improve our photos. Near the top of the price range of popular photo editing software is the Adobe PhotoShop at around \$600, and its lesser brothers from Adobe including PhotoShop Elements (about \$90). One of the other powerful photo editing and enhancement utilities is JASC's PaintShop Pro 8, available locally for around \$60. I especially like PaintShop's "One Step Photo Fix" that can automatically perfect almost any reasonable digital image. For the bargain hunters who want a powerful editing and enhancement utility, without paying big bucks is the very popular Irfan Viewer, which is available for free download from [www.irfanview.com](http://www.irfanview.com). Personally, I use both Irfan and Paint Shop Pro about equally. Other editing software is available from other publishers.

Most color printers on the market today can print plausible color images using stock inks and decent quality paper. Some printers offer enhanced photo printing capability for a moderate price, while there are also dedicated photo printers on the market. Good photo grade paper is a necessity to produce quality prints. Some printers on the market print directly to Polaroid film, giving real photos from a digital camera. Many users prefer both the quality and economy of having their local photo finisher print digital prints, a service which most now provide, often at prices less than "do it yourself".

My digital camera eats batteries. Using AA alkaline batteries would be a major expense, if it were not for the now common NiMh or Lithium rechargeable batteries. Many cameras utilize the common AA size, and as an added advantage, the better NiMh rechargeable batteries typically offer many times the photos of disposable alkalines, at a far lower cost per picture. Spare batteries, especially if fully charged, can be a godsend.

Other popular accessories for digital cameras may appeal more to the advanced user than the amateur. These include tripods, accessory lenses, external flash devices, and other items. Just be sure that the accessories are compatible with the user's camera.

Ira Wilsker is the Advisor for Region 8, APCUG Representative & Bylaws Chair for the Golden Triangle PC Club, a columnist for The Examiner in Beaumont, Texas, and has two radio shows. He also graciously shares his articles with the APCUG editors.

There is no restriction against any non-profit group using this article as long as it is kept in context with proper credit given the author. The Editorial Committee of the Association of Personal Computer User Groups (APCUG), an international organization of which this group is a member, brings this article to you.



## **Online Information for the Elderly & the Disabled Steve Rosenthal, Secretary, Space Coast PC Users Group, Cocoa, Florida**

On Tuesday, July 22, 2003, Kim Komando ([www.komando.com](http://www.komando.com)) had a link to a site that is of major interest to EVERYONE approaching retirement, Social Security, and/or who is permanently disabled for any reason. The site is sponsored by the National Council on the Aging, and hosted by AOL's GovernmentGuide.com. It is called <http://benefitscheckup.org> (do not add 'www'), and is a comprehensive guide and list of any and all programs that are available to the "older generation," i.e. adults who are ready for Social Security or on permanent disability. This is a "must see" site for anyone with questions of importance about their benefits at or near 65.

The opening page has several choices: 1) How to Use the Site, 2) Tips, 3) Sponsors, 4) Support for N.C.O.A. (National Council On Aging). The first place to go on the site would be the "Benefits CheckUp" button, which will take the reader to several pages that ask important and pertinent questions about the individual, spouse and any dependents living in the household. There is a second button that takes the reader to a page for prescription drug information and savings.

I would suggest starting with the Check Up button, and going through the questionnaire, filling out ALL the questions as accurately as possible. The reader will need information on: A) State & Zip Code, B) Dates of birth for individual and spouse, C) Type of residence, D) Length of time living there, E) Veteran status, F) Employment History as it refers to governmental employment, G) Prescription Medication List (very important), H) Current income and their sources, I) Current Expenses.

Get this information together BEFORE entering the site, as it will speed the process of "filling in the blanks." The reader has only 20 minutes to answer all the questions, before the site 'times out,' meaning the reader will have to start all over from the beginning.

Once the reader has started the questionnaire (Click the 'Click Here' button), there are about 35 or so questions, on approximately 10 different pages, some of which will require detailed information on medications, household income, work status, marital status, and the like.

A detailed questionnaire on current medications will probably take the longest, so it is advisable that a current list of medications be written out and by the computer when answering this part of the questionnaire. Not all drugs are listed; some are listed as generic meds.

After filling in all the information, the site will then take a

minute or so to assess the input, and select a list of sites and contact addresses/phone numbers for applications for various programs that would be valuable to the individual, assist limited income individuals who need help with their bills and even suggest further research for available programs for the retired and limited income families.

The federal government offers tax breaks and some private companies offer reduced price medicines for individuals and families on fixed incomes, which help retirees and the disabled cope with month-to-month living expenses and 'survival.' As far as I can tell, none of the information is stored -- it is erased after the 20-minute time period has elapsed. It doesn't appear to be 'collected,' and if it is, it would only be for statistical purposes, since the site does not ask for a name, address, phone number, Social Security Number, or any other personal identifying information directly traceable back to the individual. Answering the questions honestly simply retrieves information for the reader. In total, there are about 40 questions, and the most comprehensive is the one about prescription meds.

With ALL of your personal information at hand, it should take about 10 to 15 minutes to complete the survey, and another minute or two for the site to retrieve the pertinent information for your specific situation. The results will vary according to each individual's input and can list a few or several sources for further printing out the final results, as names, addresses, phone numbers and web sites can be extensive and comprehensive, depending on the individual's answers to the questionnaire. Examples of the results may include:

- 1) Golden Access Passport, 2) Food Stamp Program, 3) Medicare Counseling through the SHINE organization, 4) Real Property Tax & Other Exemptions, 5) Homestead Property Tax Deferral (for FLA residences in particular), 6) Earned Income Tax Credit, and other qualifying programs, depending on income status.

These are by no means the total list; you will get a list that applies directly to YOUR specific needs and income level. Anyone with a computer can access this information, and if you don't have a computer at home, your local library (or even a neighbor, friend or family relative) can access the site, fill in the required information, retrieve the results, and print out the information for you to follow up via letter or phone call.

The Internet is chock full of, and a FANTASTIC source of information if you know where and how to look for it. This particular information might take an individual months to collect separately, but on the Internet, it took only 20- 30 minutes to gather, print, and store in a file that can be referred to over and over again.

I was able to download the PDF file with ALL the information in text form, which I can then read at my leisure or constantly go back to as a reference source. Anyone who is in-

terested in available benefits should access this site, and do the questionnaire for themselves. Again, the name of the site is [http:// benefitscheckup.org](http://benefitscheckup.org) and is available 24/7.

Take advantage of what the Internet has to offer; you'd be surprised at the wealth of information available. If you need further information, my Email address is [stever43@bellsouth.net](mailto:stever43@bellsouth.net). Feel free to contact me, and I will do my best to help you find the information you are seeking. Good luck with your search, and use the Internet to its full-est capacity, you'll be pleasantly surprised at what it has to offer.

There is no restriction against any non-profit group using this article as long as it is kept in context with proper credit given the author. The Editorial Committee of the Association of Personal Computer User Groups (APCUG), an international organization of which this group is a member, brings this article to you.

### **Comcast HSI Speed Increase**

During December, Comcast increased the speed caps for their High Speed Internet service to 3Mbps down (was 1.5Mbps) and 256Kbps up at no extra cost. Customers must power cycle their modems to let the new limits take effect. Note that this doesn't guarantee that your Internet activity

will be twice as fast or, in fact, any faster only that the maximum rate is now limited to 3Mbps.

### **Zone Labs has a New Owner**

Zone Labs, maker of Zone Alarm personal firewall, has been purchased by Check Point Software. More info is available at: <http://www.informationweek.com/story/showArticle.jhtml?articleID=16900068>.

### **Do You Like to Attend Live Theater?**

If you enjoy attending local, live theater, you should sign up for Discover Jersey Arts at <http://www.jerseyarts.com/>. You can get a monthly newsletter with new shows highlighted. They also have a discount card good for 10% or more off at most NJ theaters. Occasional special offers are even better deals.

Also, go to njArtsTix at <http://www.njartstix.org/> for same day, discount (often 50%) tickets. You can also receive a Hot Ticket Alerts newsletter. Tickets can be purchased online for 10% over the discounted cost and will be available at the venue's box office for you.

More information about NJ theaters is available at: <http://www.njtheatrealliance.com/>

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