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DEALS COLUMN
from the DealsGuy
Greater Orlando Computer UG
by Bob "The Cheap skate" Click

They Said It Couldn't Be Done

Have you ever wondered what goes on behind the scenes when a company sheds one of its holdings? When the separation between Daimler's and Chrysler's financial systems needed to happen, many said that would not be achieved for years, but one guy decided the experts were wrong and accomplished wonders. Read this fascinating story at: <<http://www.informationweek.com/news/showArticle.jhtml?articleID=211200970>>.

Here's an article about what some schools are doing to gather data that would help improve the students chances for getting the most out of school. It's lengthy, but is at: <http://www.informationweek.com/news/business_intelligence/showArticle.jhtml?articleID=211600206&pigno=1&queryText=&isPrev=>>. Some 'letters to the editor' printed later were also interesting from folks that said that teachers also should share the responsibility for a good education for students.

Just a reminder about the special offer for Diskeeper that is still good <<http://www.diskeeper.com/purchase/purchase.aspx>> Also, I have not tried any of the products below except TeamViewer.

Reminder

I have been using TaxAct to do my income tax for a few years now and I'm happy with it, although I do use the pay version because it brings data forward from last year to edit and the free version doesn't; you must type in all the data again. The free version also does

one free E'file for you, and if there's a refund, you'll get it back in ten days. Visit <<http://www.taxact.com>>.

DVD Converter At No Cost

DVDVideoSoft Ltd. has updated their Free Video to Flash Converter:

With Free Video to Flash Converter it is very easy to enrich a corporate web site or a personal blog with a good looking video. The program offers over 80 different themes for the flash player. Free Video to Flash Converter converts video files, one by one, or several files at once, to flash (SWF and FLV). Do the whole movie or just a portion in order to make a required video.

The updated Free Video to Flash Converter has a completely new player that meets all up-to-date standards and has all necessary features. Among them are:

- full screen mode
- volume control
- autoload enable/disable feature
- autoplay enable/disable feature
- loop playback
- big play button on the video
- play list
- subtitles support
- hot keys support.

Free Video to Flash Converter's design is somewhat restrictive, but the colors of all player elements are customizable. Now everyone can find the matching one for the particular site. The application runs under both XP and Vista; very convenient for the majority of users.

Free Video to Flash Converter is available at <<http://www.dvdvideosoft.com/free-dvd-video-software.htm>> for immediate free download. The program contains no spyware or adware and no activation or registration is required.

Now For A New Task Manager

AnVir Software has released AnVir Task Manager Pro 5.4, a complete application that lets you control everything that's going on while using your computer. AnVir Task Manager manages startup programs and active processes and removes spyware while offering a great variety of Windows enhancements. No need to install dozens of system utilities. You need only one program instead; AnVir Task Manager.

This Task Manager replacement analyzes everything that's currently active on your system and displays it on a tabbed interface. It displays programs that are scheduled to run upon Windows start, as well as all active processes, and services. It shows full information about each process including command line, its DLLs in use, inbound and outbound traffic, disk load, tray icon, performance graph, and Internet connections.

AnVir Task Manager monitors the system's workload, dropping icons in the system tray that indicate CPU usage (including a breakdown by application), hard drive temperature, free space, disk activity (again with per-application info), laptop battery, memory, and network inbound and outbound traffic. You always know exactly what's loading your PC's processing power.

AnVir Task Manager automatically provides a security risk rating for each active process, service and startup program. The security risk rating indicates the likelihood of a program being potential spyware, malware or a Trojan. The rating is based on behavior, code analysis, and integrated database with information about 70,000+ startup programs, Internet Explorer toolbars and services. When any program tries to add itself to startup, AnVir Task Manager

shows a notification and enables you to cancel each new startup program you consider useless or harmful. Right click on any suspicious process or file and check it on <<http://virustotal.com>> with 30 antivirus products.

AnVir Task Manager makes using XP or Vista much handier. With it you can minimize selected application windows to the system tray to save taskbar space. You can make windows semi-transparent, or pin them "always on top" by just right-clicking on the title of any running application. Also, you get the list of recently used folders in Open/Save dialogs. On Windows XP it shows the drive's free space with a colored horizontal bar in Windows "My Computer."

AnVir Task Manager offers a very useful Tweaker that gives you direct access to many Windows settings, enabling you to make your operating system behave the way you want. Tweaker also includes many settings that cannot be accessed in Windows at all without directly editing the registry. AnVir Task Manager dramatically accelerates your PC or Windows boot process. The Startup tab shows all programs that run on Windows start. It includes name, file path, company, and description. You can disable or delete programs that you don't need and your PC will run much faster.

With its "Delayed Startup" feature, you can set up any startup program to load one or more minutes later after Windows startup. This allows you to begin using the computer without waiting for Windows to load all startup applications. Also, you can run startup programs as minimized to system tray, or as floating icons.

AnVir Task Manager runs on Windows XP/Vista/2003/2008 and is available in Pro version for \$59.95, standard version for \$39.95 and a free version, which still has a lot of functions. Users Group members get 15% discount from the retail price using the coupon code "user group." You won't see that on their Web site. 20-days evaluation trial is available free from <<http://www.anvir.com>>.

Take Control Remotely

Having someone talk you through fixing a problem on your computer doesn't always accomplish the task very well, besides taking a lot of time. Perhaps a better solution would be for the other person to take control of your machine and physically do the job before your very eyes, which sometimes happens when you call a company's tech support. This could also be a better system for a helper to teach you how to use your software to accomplish a special task. <<http://www.Teamviewer.com>> might be the answer for this, and the product is free.

Hewie Poplock <<http://www.hewie.net>> of Central Florida Computer Society told me he tried this and it works well. Both parties need the product on their computer, but only one actually needs it installed for a session. The other can simply run it without actually installing it. Check their Web site for more information. In fact, he set up a session with my machine, although on the first try, I accidentally had control of his machine, so we had to start over, but the connection was easy. According to their Web site, we could have exchanged control, but we didn't realize that. He checked some settings on my machine and then I asked him to actually transfer a file from my floppy drive to

his machine. While I could watch him moving the curser around to check my settings, I was surprised that I couldn't see it when he did the file transfer and he didn't know a way to make it show for me, but he also transferred a jpeg of a document to my machine. If your file is too large for an e-mail, this method would do the file transfer quickly and easily.

Hewie also suggested another remote control product, but has not fully tried it out. It's called CrossLoop and Don Singleton has an article about it in his APCUG Reports, just released. Visit <<http://reports.apcug.org/2009q1.htm>> to get that publication.

That's it for this month. I'll have some more new product announcements on my Web site that didn't offer discounts. Meet me here again next month if your editor permits. This column is written to make user group members aware of special offers or freebies I have found or arranged, and my comments should not be interpreted to encourage, or discourage, the purchase of any products, no matter how enthused I might sound. Bob (The Cheap skate) Click <[bobclick at bellsouth dot net](mailto:bobclick@bellsouth.net)>. Visit my Web site at <<http://www.dealsguy.com>>

Protection From the New Crop of Trojans

Ira Wilsker has advised us, via Bob Clyne, that Microsoft trojan protection is not really adequate. See report from US CERT (Computer Emergency Response Team) on how to address the issue:

<<http://www.us-cert.gov/cas/techalerts/TA09-020A.html>>.



**Latest in Backup
from NTI
By Ira Wilsker**

As has been said several times before in this column, the three most important words in personal computing are “backup, backup, backup!” Murphy’s first law of computing is, “A properly backed up hard drive will never fail; but the first time there is not a current backup, the hard drive will fail at the most inopportune time.” Backing up the hard drive is one of the most important tasks a computer user should frequently accomplish, but is also one of the least performed tasks. Sadly, all too often, users discover the need to backup only after the hard drive crashes, and critical files are forever lost. I have personally heard in the first hand from young mothers who lost their digital baby pictures, young couples who lost all of their wedding photos, and business people who have lost all of their business records. This is a needless tragedy, as backing up critical files is fast, easy, and considering the value of what may be lost, relatively inexpensive.

In the last three years, I have been subject to three mandatory hurricane evacuations (Rita, Gustav, and Ike), and took damaging hits from Rita and Ike. In this region, people living near the Gulf coast suffered catastrophic losses from the storms. Homes, furnishings, and computers can be replaced, but critical personal data may be lost forever. It is explicitly for this reason then when I hurriedly packed for each evacuation, the first item in my suitcase was my external hard drive with my current data backup.

There are two utilities that I regularly use to backup my computers, and based on my experiences, I have found them easy to use and reliable. Running almost continuously on my computer is the recently released version of NTI’s Shadow, Version 4 (<<http://www.ntius.com/shadow.asp>>, \$40 full version, \$20 upgrade from previous version). I like Shadow, and have used the previous versions for several years. What is especially nice about Shadow is that it saves the backed up files in native format, which make them readable from any other computer, and exceptionally easy to restore if the original hard drive is damaged, or data files become corrupted or inadvertently deleted. Shadow runs quietly in the background, automatically backing up files as they are written or saved, ensuring that the backup and the original hard drive are always synchronized with the data duplicated on the backup device.

My personal choice for backup media is a USB 2.0 external hard drive. I am currently running two drives, which I alternate, such that I always have a redundant copy just in case both an external drive and the internal drive fail. One drive is always connected to the computer maintaining a complete backup of my data files. Periodically, I switch drives, and put the other drive on the computer, safely storing the first drive. While probably unnecessary to alternate external drives, I feel that it gives me that tiny extra bit of security in the case of a data catastrophe. I am also using large capacity flash drives to redundantly store especially critical and sensitive data files, such as tax information, family financial data, and other data of extraordinary value. Shadow can track which data has

been stored on individual USB drives, making data management very easy.

Shadow is explicitly designed to backup data files in native format, and not backup the entire hard drive. If a hard drive is lost, it is often better to do a clean install of program files from their original media, and then restore the data files from the Shadow backup. I securely store my original installation media separately from my computer such that I can reinstall any programs at will, if necessary. Shadow does not require a lot of system resources, and will run on any Windows PC with a CPU (chip) 900MHz or faster and 256MB RAM. It will run on Windows 2000, XP or Vista. There is also a version of Shadow for Mac, which will run on a Macintosh computer with PowerPC or Intel processor and 128 MB of RAM, and Mac OS 10.4, or 10.5.

Being a firm believer in redundancy, I also periodically do a full backup of my hard drive using the newly released NTI Backup Now Version 5 Advanced Edition (<http://www.ntius.com/backup_now.asp>, \$70 full version, \$20 upgrade from previous version). If, or more likely when, my hard drive fails, using Backup Now 5, I can restore the entire contents of my hard drive to a new hard drive, and quickly be back in full operation. Backup Now 5 makes it easy to create and maintain current backups of the hard drive, and easy to restore in the event of a catastrophic drive failure. One type of backup, preferred by many, is referred to as an “image” backup, which creates a bit-by-bit image of the hard drive, enabling the user to create an exact copy of the original hard drive, and restore or “migrate” it to a new hard drive. Drives can be backed up to almost any media, including CD-R/RW, DVD-

R/-RW/-RAM, DVD+R/+RW, internal hard drives, external hard drives, network hard drives, FTP servers, MO, Zip, Jaz, USB flash drives, and almost any other type of storage device. The software supports data compression and disk spanning, making it easy to backup the hard drive to multiple CD or DVD discs. Data can be encrypted for security purposes, and be password protected if desired. Backup Now 5 will create bootable media that can be used to boot a computer with a clean, newly installed hard drive, and that can also manage the restore process.

Backup Now 5 will run on most current PCs, and has minimal system requirements, such as 90 MHz or faster chip speed, 256 MB of RAM, and 35 MB of available free disk space for software installation. It will run on all versions and editions of Windows 2000, 2003 Server, XP and Vista.

With software products such as Shadow 4 and Backup Now 5 Advanced, and the declining prices of large external hard drives and other media, there is no valid excuse not to have a current backup. To quote an old military phrase, “It is better to have it and not need it, then to need it and not have it.” If you do not have a current backup, make one now; do not wait until later, as it may then be too late.

WEBSITES

<http://www.ntius.com/backup_now.asp>.

<<http://www.ntius.com/shadow.asp>>.

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Things That You Can Do With That Flash Drive

By Ira Wilsker

With the demise of the floppy disk, and the approaching demise of the CD disc for data purposes, the USB flash drive has become the de facto method of saving and transporting files between computers. These small USB drives are known by a variety of monikers, such as flash drive, pen drive, pin drive, and thumb drive. Since their introduction a few years ago, their capacity has increased, and their prices have plunged. They are readily available in the big box stores, discount stores, club stores, and online. The most recent ones I purchased for the holidays were 8 gig size (almost the equivalent of the data stored on 2 standard DVD discs, about a dozen CD discs, or about 5700 floppy disks), and cost under \$15 each. In the after-Christmas sales, some 8 gig flash drives were advertised for \$9 each (after rebate). This amount of non-volatile storage for the price was inconceivable just a few years ago. I thought I was getting a bargain a few years ago when I bought my first flash drive, a 64mb Lexar, for \$49, and now a drive with about 64 times that capacity is about one-fourth the price! I have co-workers and students who wear their flash drives on cords around their necks, where they are referred to as “geek beads.”

Most of us use the drive simply for portable storage, the ability to carry files around with us, but in reality these flash drives can do much more than to simply be used for storage. Most of the USB flash drives on the market today comply with the USB 2.0 standard for high speed transfer, while there still are

a few inexpensive, low capacity drives that are of the slower USB 1.1 speed standard, or only about 3% of the speed of the USB 2.0 drives. From a practical viewpoint, the user will not notice any significant difference in speed if small files are saved and read, but will notice a difference if large files are used.

There are some other standards for USB flash drives that many users may find beneficial, if their flash drives have the capabilities. Users of Microsoft Vista (Home Basic, Home Premium, Business, and Ultimate versions) may find it advantageous to purchase flash drives that are labeled as “ReadyBoost.” According to Microsoft, “Windows Vista introduces Windows ReadyBoost, a new concept in adding memory to a system. You can use non-volatile flash memory, such as that on a universal serial bus (USB) flash drive, to improve performance without having to add additional memory “under the hood.” If the drive is compatible with the ReadyBoost standard, some of the flash memory in the drive can effectively and temporarily be added to the RAM (memory) installed in the computer, with an improvement on performance. If the Vista user with a compatible flash drive right clicks on the flash drive letter displayed under “My Computer” or Windows Explorer, and then left clicks on Properties – ReadyBoost, Vista will recommend how much of the available memory on the drive can be effectively and safely utilized by Vista. Other data stored on the ReadyBoost drive is protected from damage, and will not be harmed if the drive is used as a ReadyBoost drive. Because of the higher performance requirements, ReadyBoost compatible flash drives are slightly more expensive than standard drives,

but are often the least expensive way to add memory to a Vista computer.

Another useful feature often found on a USB flash drive is known as “U3.” Drives that are U3 compatible are labeled as such. A U3 powered flash drive allows the user to carry special versions of hundreds of programs on the flash drive that can be run directly from the flash drive without being installed on the computer. This is an effective way to carry the actual software the user is familiar with, and run it on other computers. When unplugged from the computer, U3 leaves no data or other information left on the computer that was used. Some of the popular programs that come in U3 formats are the Firefox browser, Skype telephone, McAfee Antivirus (about \$15), RoboForm Password Manager, OpenOffice (the comprehensive suite of office software including a Microsoft compatible word processor, spreadsheet, presentation program, database, and more, free), Thunderbird e-mail client, and dozens of games. Most U3 drives come pre installed with password protection and a “U3 Launchpad” which is a menu driven directory of the software on the U3 drive.

For those of us who have standard non-U3 drives, there is now an alternative that provides for the same functionality. This alternative to U3 that will run on almost all contemporary flash drives is called “PortableApps,” and can be found online at <http://portableapps.com>. According to the PortableApp website, “A portable app is a computer program that you can carry around with you on a portable device and use on any Windows computer. When your USB flash drive, portable hard drive, iPod or other portable device is plugged in,

you have access to your software and personal data just as you would on your own PC. And when you unplug the device, none of your personal data is left behind.” Dozens of portable apps are available, including the Firefox browser, OpenOffice office suite, antivirus software, games, password managers, and many other pieces of software. The PortableApp Suite is totally free, and does not contain any spyware or adware. In addition to the bundled suite, there are many other programs available, almost all free, which will run as portable apps. The PortableApp website keeps a running tally of new software that is available, including new releases and versions, as well as beta (pre-release) software. A simple click will install the selected software on the flash drive.

Now that many of us are routinely carrying flash drives, it is nice to know that they may be capable of doing much more for us than just transport data.

WEBSITES:

<http://portableapps.com>.

http://u3.sandisk.com/download/Download_no.asp.

<http://www.microsoft.com/windows/windows-vista/features/readyboost.aspx>.

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**IRS Again Offers FREE
Online Filing for Most
Taxpayers
By Ira Wilsker**

It is that time of year again. Now is the time of the annual W-2 and 1099 forms. Once again, the IRS, through its Free File Alliance partners, is offering most of us the ability to prepare and electronically file our federal income taxes for free. This year, for most of the free tax preparers, almost anyone with an adjusted gross income of less than \$56,000 can prepare his taxes online and electronically file them for free. At present, 20 tax preparation companies are participating in the Free File Alliance. According to the IRS, 70% of all taxpayers, or about 98 million wage earners, can prepare their taxes online and e-file, all for free. Since its inception in 2003, over 24 million tax returns were prepared and filed through the Free File Alliance, of which 4.8 million were filed last year.

For the first time, almost all taxpayers, regardless of income, can use the common IRS forms online and file their returns electronically, for free, just as if they were filling in the traditional paper forms. The IRS states it this way, on the [IRS.gov](https://www.irs.gov) website, "Regardless of income level, taxpayers who are comfortable with filling out paper tax forms and who don't need extra assistance can use the IRS's new Free File Fillable Forms. These new online versions of paper tax forms that can be e-filed are available for the first time by visiting the IRS.gov Free File site."

Not just can taxpayers use the IRS online e-file system for free, but if a refund is coming, it may be received in as little as 10 days. The IRS does

not charge a fee for the online tax preparation or for e-filing. Online filing is safe according to the IRS. "E-filed tax return information is protected through encryption. Also, taxpayers receive an acknowledgement within 48 hours that the IRS has accepted their return." The IRS goes on to say, "This year, the IRS and its partners are offering a new option, Free File Fillable Forms, which opens up Free File to virtually everyone, even those whose incomes exceed \$56,000."

For those with an adjusted gross income of less than \$56,000, selecting one of the 20 free online tax preparers would be a wise choice. There is a button on the IRS website, "Help me Find A Company," to help the taxpayer select a free online company based on eligibility criteria. Different Free Filing Alliance members have different eligibility requirements for free preparation services, ranging from state of residence, age, income range, eligibility for an earned income tax credit, to military status. I went online to try one of the companies, and it was an easy process to complete an online tax return. The site used an interview method where a series of planned questions were asked online, and typed responses filled in the blanks. I was asked questions about marital status, and different forms of income. I was also asked if I lived in an area that had been a federally declared disaster area in 2008, to determine if I was eligible for special benefits. Adjacent to most questions was a "learn more" link, which opened a popup window which explained the item. There was a request online for my bank routing information such that my refund could be direct deposited. Upon completion of the

questions, and filling in the necessary fields on the website, my return was checked for accuracy. With a few more mouse clicks, my return would have been e-filed directly with the IRS, and my refund would be direct deposited in my account in as little as 10 days. It was noted that I would receive an e-mail confirmation from the preparer within 48 hours acknowledging the filing of my tax return.

Security was provided to the Internet connect via online encryption; while not perfect, it does provide a reasonable amount of security and safety. This was confirmed both by the “https” in the web address, and the closed padlock in the corner of my browser, which indicated a secured connection. In terms of privacy, all of the participating companies must comply with IRS privacy guidelines as a matter of contract. While there are the 20 providers of free federal tax computation and e-filing, most of these companies offer additional services for a fee. The most common additional paid service is the preparation of state taxes, and when offered, this is a voluntary option and not a requirement for the free federal service. A few of the providers also offer the preparation of state income forms for free, but most charge a fee for state returns.

The tax preparation companies participating in the Free File Alliance range from well known providers, such as H&R Block, to well known software companies, such as TurboTax. The well respected provider of free tax software, TaxAct offers the free online service through the IRS website to those with an adjusted gross income below \$56,000, but charges only a \$7.95 fee to those not eligible for the free computation and e-filing. TaxAct also offers a “free

for everyone” service and e-filing from its website at <<http://www.taxact.com>>, with nominally priced “Deluxe” (federal only, \$9.95, state \$7 extra) and “Ultimate” (state included, \$16.95) tax preparation services online. TaxAct also offers inexpensive preparation and e-filing of state income taxes. There are several lesser known companies linked on the IRS site, but all have been tested for accuracy and are acceptable to the IRS. A few of the services also have websites and tax forms in Spanish and most explicitly include the new Form 982 (Mortgage Forgiveness Debt Relief).

We all have a choice in regards to preparing our federal (and state) tax returns. We can use a CPA firm, a commercial tax preparation company, commercial or free computer software, or pencil and paper IRS forms. We can mail paper forms to the IRS, or we can e-file through a variety of methods. For many of us, using one of the free filing services may be a proper way to perform this onerous annual task, that most of us dread doing, but still do it effectively and for free. If you feel comfortable doing your taxes online, this IRS Free File Alliance may be a worthwhile alternative, and you can not beat the price.

WEBSITE:

<<http://www.irs.gov>>.

<<http://www.taxact.com>>.

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SPAMfighter—Free Spam Filtering Software

By Ira Wilsker

According to a recent report published by Symantec's MessageLabs, 81.2% of all e-mail in 2008 has been some form of spam, or unwanted commercial e-mail, down slightly from the rate in 2007. Almost all of the spam is coming from "botnets," or hundreds of thousands of computers which are unknowingly infected by "zombies," which have hijacked the bandwidth of those computers for the purposes of propagating spam, malware, and other malicious software. Many Internet service providers (ISPs) offer spam filtering at the mail server level, but many do not. Locally, one major broadband provider offers excellent spam filtering for its integral e-mail service, but the other major broadband provider does not. This other major broadband provider does offer a third party security suite which incorporates spam filtering, but for a variety of reasons it is not widely implemented. Many of us have multiple e-mail accounts with other e-mail services, and they vary greatly in their ability (or inability) to filter the enormous quantity of spam mail we routinely receive. Some contemporary Internet security suites offer spam filtering as a feature, while many others do not, leaving countless users exposed to the scourge of spam e-mails.

For those lacking an ISP with spam filtering, or those without a security suite spam filter, spam mail can be an overwhelming problem. Fortunately for us, there are several independent spam filters that we can incorporate

on our computers, and some of those are free. One I recently experimented with was SPAMfighter (free version), available for download from <<http://www.spamfighter.com>>. SPAMfighter will run on almost all 32-bit versions of Windows, including Windows 98, ME, 2000, XP, and Vista. This software integrates with most contemporary Microsoft e-mail platforms, including Outlook Express (version 5.5 or later), as well as the full versions of Outlook (versions 2000, 2002, XP, 2003, and 2007). It also works with Microsoft's Windows Mail.

SPAMfighter was originally developed in Denmark, and has over 5.7 million registered users all over the globe, including about 600,000 in the US. SPAMfighter has offices in the US, Denmark, Germany, Ukraine, and India, and is available in 18 languages. The company is a Microsoft Gold Certified Partner, and the SPAMfighter software has been well reviewed by major computer publications. In May, 2008, PC World magazine awarded SPAMfighter one of its top awards, and stated that it was, "The only recommended spam filter." Computerworld rated it as one of the top 100 programs available. The software service TUCOWS has awarded SPAMfighter its highest "Five Cows" rating, and ZDNet gave it its highest "5 Star" rating. Other publications have given its spam filtering technology numerous awards.

The basic version of SPAMfighter, referred to as the "Standard Version" is completely free for home and school users, but incorporates an "I'm protected by SPAMfighter" message as a footer to your outgoing e-mails, and displays a short text advertisement in your e-mail client. The SPAMfighter Pro

version is available for \$29.00, and can be used in commercial environments. The Pro version also adds increased functionality, and does not append the "I'm protected by SPAMfighter" message as a footer to your outgoing e-mails, and does not display the text ad in the e-mail client. The Pro version is available as a 30 day free trial, and will regress to the free Standard version if not registered (paid) within the trial period.

Using a very intuitive and simple interface, and a short toolbar in Outlook, SPAMfighter protects against one of the worst scourges in the spam kingdom, which is the identity theft tool known as "Phishing," as well as other types of identity theft and e-mail frauds. It can automatically filter e-mails based on the originating language, and can recognize spam sent as pictures, and not as text. The software is automatically updated very frequently, and manages both blacklists (prohibited mail sources), and whitelists (allowed e-mail sources). If a spam e-mail slips through the defenses, a single mouse click enables "revenge mode" which will report the e-mail as suspected spam, and automatically notify the other 5.7 million users. A feature called "Automatic real mail protection" assures that legitimate business related e-mails are not filtered. Unlike many competitors, SPAMfighter does not trigger or filter on simple phrases or words, and does not censor legitimate content. The users' privacy is protected, as the publisher does not see any of the users' e-mails. SPAMfighter can be used on multiple e-mail accounts on a computer.

The company that publishes SPAMfighter also publishes a variety of other products, including an Exchange

spam filter, a server spam filter, hosted spam filtering, and antivirus utility, and a spyware remover. All of these commercial products are available as a free 30 day trial from <http://www.spamfighter.com/Other_Products.asp>.

For those computer users who do not have spam filtering services or software, SPAMfighter would be a very worthwhile utility.

WEBSITE:

<<http://www.spamfighter.com>>.

<http://www.spamfighter.com/product_info.asp>.

Ira Wilsker is an APCUG director; Columnist, The Examiner, Beaumont TX; Program Director of Management Development at the Lamar Institute of Technology, Beaumont TX; and a radio and TV show host. Contact him at <iwilsker@apcug.net>.



Useful Windows XP Utilities By Warner Mach

I have discovered that Windows XP is chock full of various utilities to solve various kinds of problems. Some of the utilities that I have had occasion to use in recent months:

(1) Windows Task Manager

You bring up the Windows Task Manager by holding down ctrl-alt-delete. Some of the useful features are:

- (a) Go to the applications tab. This shows the running tasks and is useful for ending a task that refuses to go away.
- (b) Go to process tab. This shows all the miscellaneous tasks in the system and shows the CPU time that each is using. This can frequently be useful when you are not sure what exactly the

[Continued on Page 21](#)

SEMCO Volunteer Party



(Above) Franz Breidenich and Bette Gay with Beth Fordyce, who hosted the function. (Below) Mike Bader, Franz Breidenich, Bob Clyne, Richard Jackson, Tom Callow, Bette Gay, Carol Sanzi.



SEMCO Volunteer Party



(Above) Mike Bader, Steve Yuhasz, Franz Breidenich, Bob Clyne; as Steve works on fixing the clock. (Below) Steve Yuhasz continues work on the recalcitrant clock.



Meeting Pictures



(Above) Ballot box in foreground. Tom Callow in background. (Below) Scott Simpson of Main Street Auctions talks about EBay.



Meeting Pictures



(Above): Members get refreshments. (Below): Ray McLaughlin, President of MDLUG, discusses Linux.





BOARD MEETING
1/11/2009
Carol Sanzi

BOARD MEMBERS PRESENT

President Mike Bader, Treasurer Bette Gay, Secretary Carol Sanzi, SIG-IBM Chairman Tom Callow, Publications Committee Chairman Warner Mach, and Members-at-Large Bob Clyne and Chuck Moery. Also attending were members Gary DeNise and Ray McLaughlin. Arriving late was Vice President Richard Jackson. The meeting was called to order at 12:09 p.m.

OLD BUSINESS

Treasurer, Bette Gay, reported that the amount in the treasury equaled \$9,593.50 with \$4,887.78 in the bank account and \$4,705.72 invested in three Certificates of Deposit. The membership stands at 79. It is time for Chester Blechinger to renew his membership.

A discussion took place pondering the number of members bringing their computers for the Linux installfest next month. It was suggested that we contact other groups and invite their members with Linux interest to bring their computers for the install.

NEW BUSINESS

Mike Bader reported that there are now 60 members in the SEMCOUG. Activity continues to increase.

Since Easter is on the second Sunday in April, Tom Callow moved to cancel the SEMCO meeting that would be held that day. Bob Clyne seconded the motion and it was carried.

Edgetech is offering to sponsor SEMCO, possibly giving incentives in return for an ad on SEMCO's web page. Mike Bader will research this offer more thoroughly before any action is taken.

Mike Bader is researching the possibility of distributing DATA BUS copies or SEMCO flyers at Penguicon. A quarter-page ad in the Penguicon program would cost \$25. This would be another way to publicize SEMCO.

Gary DeNise requested help with refreshment and door duties. After a lively discussion of possible solutions, it was suggested to lock the door at 1:45, unlock it at 3:15, and lock it again at 3:45. This would allow the door guard to participate in the presentations. With a rotating list of guard volunteers, the duties would be shared. A wireless doorbell temporarily installed at the door would allow latecomers a way to ring so that the door could be opened. Warner Mach moved to purchase a wireless doorbell. Tom Callow seconded the motion and it was carried. Bob Clyne moved to amend the motion to limit the purchase to \$50. Warner Mach seconded the amended motion and it was carried. Tom Callow offered to research and make the purchase.

Tom Callow moved to adjourn. Warner Mach seconded the motion and it was carried. The meeting adjourned at 1:12 p.m.



2009 Election Results
Carol Sanzi

Office—Name—Vote Count
 President—Mike Bader—19
 Vice President—Richard Jackson—19
 Secretary—Carol Sanzi—19
 Treasurer—Bette Gay—19
 Board of Directors Members-at-Large:
 Bob Clyne-19
 Chuck Moery-18

SPECIAL INTEREST GROUPS (SIGS)



SIG-IBM
Tom Callow

February 8: 1:45 p.m. Raymond McLaughlin, president of MDLUG (Metro Detroit Linux User Group) will present our first Linux Installfest. Bring your computer, new or old, or just come to observe. There will be several Linux people there to assist. Also there will be carts and people to help load computers. We will start at 1:30 p.m. and plan to be out of the building by 5:30 p.m.



SIG-IBM INTERMEDIATE

February 8: 3:45 p.m. Linux Installfest continued (See SIG-IBM).



**JANUARY
REFRESHMENT
DONORS**
Coordinator: Gary DeNise
Donors:
Gary DeNise
Warner Mach
Carol Sanzi

NOVICE-IBM GROUP Rotating Volunteer Hosts

February 8: 3:45 p.m.:Help Q & A: Discussion directed by the audience. No question is too simple! Note: The Novice-IBM Group is 'by request.' If you have special questions for this group then speak to one of the officers to schedule the session.



SIG-ADVANCED Franz Breidenich

February 23 (4th Mon.): 6:45 p.m.: At the Oak Park Library. The library is located at 14200 Oak Park Blvd., Oak Park, MI. Phone: (248) 691-7480. Topic: Wide ranging discussion of computers and computing.

March 2009 DATABUS DEADLINE (7th day after 2nd Sunday in month)
SEMCO Input and Members' Ads—Deadline: Sun., Feb. 15, 11:59 p.m.
Members' personal ads are free. To mail, use Editor [address on Page 2](#); e-mail address: [<machw@att.net>](mailto:machw@att.net). PLEASE send to arrive sooner than deadline.
Business Ads - Deadline: Second Friday monthly. Contact Editor ([address Page 2](#)).

Warner Machmachw@att.net

(to post monthly computer group info)

**CALENDAR-OF-EVENTS
OTHER GROUPS****COMP (Computer Operators of Marysville & Port Huron)**

March 4, 7 p.m., (1st Wednesday); St. Clair County RESA, 499 Range Rd., Marysville, Admin. Building. Jane Wheatly 810-982-1187 or Pam Raisanen <compinfo@hughes.net>. <<http://www.bwcomp.org>>. Topic: TBA.

DCOM Computer Club

Feb. 13, 6:30–8:30 p.m., (2nd Friday) Henry Ford C.C., Patterson Tech Bldg, Ford Rd/Evergreen, Rm T143, Parking Lot C. Info: Doug Piazza 313-582-2602. Topic: TBA.

Focus Hope IT Users Group

Feb. 7, 9:30-11:30 a.m. (1st Saturday), 1400 Oakman, Detroit, MI. 48238. Web <<http://www.fhitug.org>>. Info: <info@fhitug.org>. Topic: TBA."

HUG (Holly User Group)

Feb. 14, 8, 9:00 a.m., (2nd Sat.); Groveland Twp. Fire Hall, 3085 Grange Hall Rd. & Dixie Hwy., Ortonville. Topic: TBA.

MacGroup- Detroit

Feb. 15, 3:00 p.m., Birmingham Temple, 28611 West 12 Mile Rd., Farmington Hills. Info: Terry White, <terry@macgroup.org> or 248-569-4933. <<http://www.macgroup.org>>. Topic: "Data Base Apps, including Bento." SIGS: 2:00 p.m.

MacTechnics. (MAC User Group)

Feb. 21, 11:00 a.m., (3rd Saturday); (SIGs at 9:30); See web site for meeting location. <<http://www.mactechnics.org>>. JoAnn Olson at 248-478-4300. Topic: "MacTechnics Demo Fair."

MDLUG (Metro Detroit Linux User Group)

Feb. 14, 12:30–2:30 p.m., (2nd Saturday); MDLUG meetings will be at The Gaudior Academy located at 27100 Avondale Avenue in Inkster. Web: <<http://www.mdlug.org>>. Info: Raymond McLaughlin <president@mdlug.org>. Topic: TBA.

MUG (Michigan User Group)

Feb. 10, 6:00 p.m., (2nd Tuesday); MUG meetings are at The Farmington Community Library–Main Branch, 32737 W. 12 Mile Rd., Farmington Hills, MI. 48334. <<http://www.mug.org>>. Topic: TBA.

Michigan Apple Computer User Group

Feb. 12, 7:30 p.m., (2nd Thur.); Westview Office Park, 26100 American Dr., Suite 100, Southfield MI. 48034. Avi Drissman 248-232-7865. Web: <<http://www.themichiganapple.com>>. Topic: TBA.

Oak Park Computer Club

Every Fri., 10:15 a.m. at Oak Park Recreation Bldg, Oak Park Blvd. west of Coolidge.

Royal Oak Computer Club

Every Wed., 12:30 to 2:30 PM at Mahany/Meininger Senior Community Center, 3500 Marais Ave., Royal Oak, 48073. Near Crooks & 13 Mile. Guest speakers & regular monthly speakers. <<http://www.geocities.com/royaloakcomputerclub>>.

SHCC (Sterling Heights Computer Club)

March 3, 7:30 p.m. (1st Tues); Macomb Community College South Campus, Bldg. K, 14500 E. 12 Mile Rd. Don VanSyckel <Don@VanSyckel.net>, 586-731-9232; Web: <<http://www.SterlingHeightsComputerClub.org>>. Topic: "Backup: Issues and Techniques."

Continued from Page 13

system is doing. (c) Go to performance tab. This shows the use of resources. Especially useful is the dynamic graph of CPU usage.

(2) Event Viewer

The Event Viewer has a log of recent events, including events at power up and power down. This was of value to me when I was attempting to learn about certain messages that were appearing at power down time. Under the 'application' and 'system' tabs the logs are listed. To get more detailed information on a particular problem, double-click on the 'type' portion of a particular entry. This will give some keyword search hints that can be typed into Google. Bring up the Event Viewer by going to start=>run and typing 'Eventvwr.msc' into the box => OK.

(3) System Configuration Utility

The tab that was useful to me was the 'startup' tab. These are tasks that automatically come up at startup. By

unchecking groups of entries (and saying 'apply' and then rebooting) I was able to zero in on one particular entry that was causing a problem. You bring up the System Configuration Utility by going to start=>run and typing 'msconfig' into the box => OK.

(4) Check Disk

The check disk utility is available in the 'command prompt' box. Type 'chkdsk.' This utility shows space usage and also checks for proper control block linkages

Useful Resources

There is a useful list of utilities, with examples and explanations at: <<http://tinyurl.com/9um8or>>.

There is also information about the Microsoft '906569' update at: <<http://support.microsoft.com/kb/906569>>.

This update "... adds the tools tab to the System Configuration Utilities in Windows XP Service pack 2." But even if you don't want to do this, there is a list of useful utilities with an explanation of their function.

COMPUTER RESOURCE PEOPLE

This is a list of members willing to be resources for other members to call when they have hardware or software questions.

Are you willing to help members learn?

Which software programs are you familiar enough with?

It is not necessary to be an expert, but just have some familiarity with the program and be willing to help someone starting to learn it. Please give this some thought and volunteer at the next group meeting.

Almost Anything: Vander-Schrier

AutoCAD: Comptois

Genealogy: Cook

IBM PC Hardware Issues: Clyne, Yuhasz

Operating Systems: Callow, Clyne, Yuhasz

MAC Hardware and OS Issues: Yuhasz

Security: Bader

MS Office for Windows: Callow

MS Word: Clyne

Networking: Callow

Novell Netware: Yuhasz

Quicken: Clyne

Geocaching: Cook

Bader, Mike—586-573-7330, 9am–8pm..... mdbader@flash.net

Callow, Tom—248-642-5770, 9am–5pm tcallow@monaghanpc.com

Clyne, Bob—810-387-3101, 9am–10pm clyne@mich.com

Comptois, Jerry—248-651-2504, anytime

Cook, Stephen—313-272-7594, eves..... scook48227@ameritech.net

Vander-Schrier, Jack—586-739-7720, 12–8pm jvanders@myself.com

Yuhasz, Steve..... Help@yuhasz.org



**SOUTHEASTERN MICHIGAN
COMPUTER ORGANIZATION, INC.**

SEMCO CALENDAR

**ArvinMeritor Building
2135 West Maple Road
Troy, Michigan**

February 8—SUNDAY (Meet 2nd Sunday)

**SEMCO Board Meeting at 12:00 noon. For Officers and SIG Chairpersons.
Other members are invited to attend.**

SEMCO General Meeting at 1:30 p.m.

Special Interest Groups (SIGs)

SIG-IBM 1:45 p.m. **Program: Linux Installfest:** Raymond McLaughlin, president of MDLUG (Metro Detroit Linux User Group) will present our first Linux Installfest. Bring your computer, new or old, or just come to observe. There will be several Linux people there to assist. Also, there will be carts and people to help load computers. We will start at 1:30 p.m. and plan to be out of the building by 5:30 p.m.

SOCIAL PERIOD 3:15 p.m. Refreshments! (Reminder: We must continue to maintain a neat environment.)

NOVICE-IBM GROUP 3:45 p.m. **Program:** Help From An Expert With Discussion Directed By The Audience.

SIG-IBM Intermediate 3:45 p.m. **Program: Linux Installfest:** Linux Installfest continued (See SIG-IBM).

SIG-ADVANCED, February 23, 2009 (4th MONDAY), 6:45 p.m., Oak Park Public Library, 14200 Oak Park Blvd., Oak Park, MI. Phone: (248) 691-7480. Directions: Oak Park Blvd. is 9 1/2 mile Road; library is west of Coolidge. Info: Franz Breidenich 248-398-359. TOPIC: Wide-Ranging Discussion Of Computers & Computing.

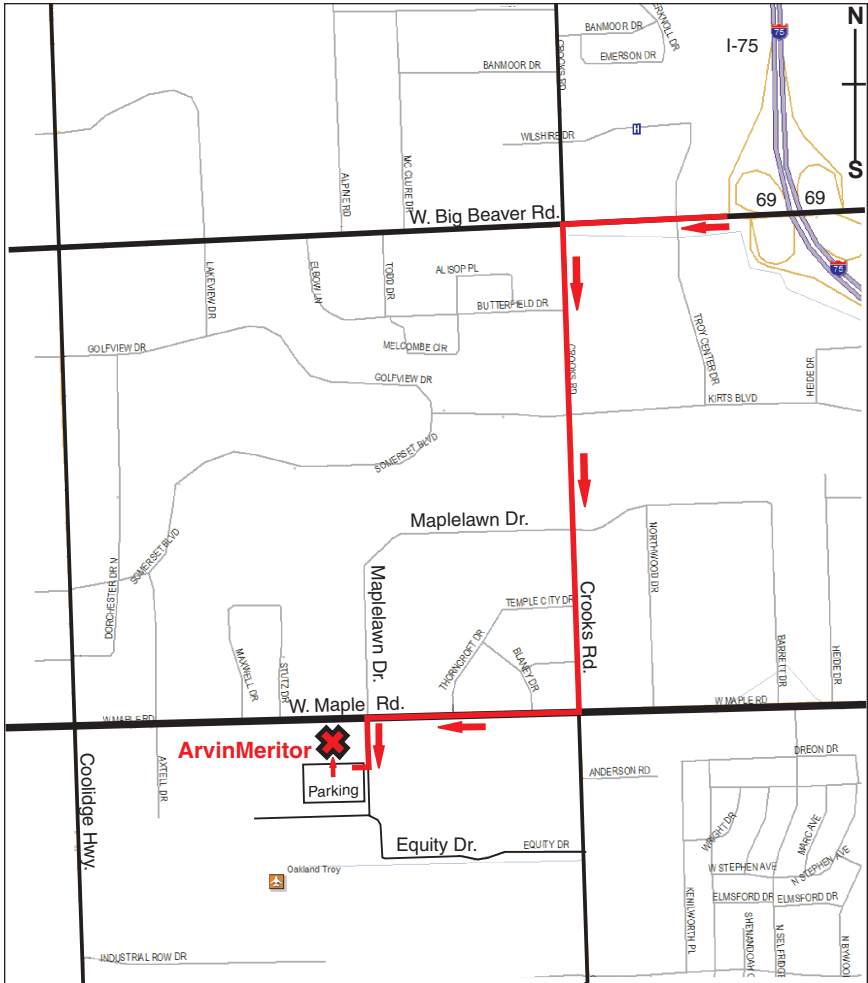
March 8—SEMCO Sunday

<http://www.semco.org>

PUBLIC INVITED

(Please copy this and the next page to post on your bulletin board)

**SEMCO Meetings at [ArvinMeritor](#)
2135 West Maple Road, Troy, MI 48064**



DIRECTIONS

From I-75, take Exit 69 to westbound Big Beaver Rd. (16 Mile). Turn left (South) on Crooks Rd. Turn right (West) on Maple Rd. (15 Mile). Turn left (South) on Mapelawn Dr. Turn right into the parking lot at the rear of the ArvinMeritor building. The building is shaped like an X. Enter the building thru the South entrance at the center of the rear of the building. Follow the SEMCO signs.

SEMCO thanks the [ArvinMeritor](#) Corporation for their hospitality in providing their facility for our meetings.



**SouthEastern Michigan
Computer Organization, Inc.
P.O. Box 707
Bloomfield Hills, MI 48303-0707**

SEMCO (future meetings)

February 8

March 8

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