

# Diablo Blue

April, 2002

The Monthly Newsletter of the Diablo Valley PC User's Group



## **April 4, 2002 Meeting Announcement** **Microsoft and the Digital Photography Experience** **DVPC Board of Directors Election**

At the April DVPC meeting we're going to have a presentation by Eric Johnston of Microsoft's [Mindshare](#) on The Digital Photography Experience. Microsoft has a great lineup of products that can help with your digital photos. You'll see how enhancements in Windows XP make it simple to scan or acquire photos from a digital camera. Eric will show us Microsoft Picture It! 2002, which makes it easy for anyone to improve photos and include them in great projects to share with friends and family. You'll see how you can use MSN Photos to take advantage of the Internet as a way to share your pictures. Finally, Eric will tell us about a way to easily share digital photos with people who don't have a computer. Come see all the amazing things you can do with digital photography.

DVPC meetings are held in the lobby conference room in Building B at the Bank of America Technology Center office complex in Concord, located near the northeast corner of Clayton Road at Galindo (see the Map to Monthly Meetings on page 15). Please use the entrance that's on the east side near the southeast corner of the building. Doors open at 6:00 p.m. and the meeting starts at 7:00 p.m.

The New Users SIG holds its meetings at 6:30 p.m. prior to the regular DVPC monthly meeting on the first Thursday of each month at Bank of America building B. We discuss whatever is confusing or puzzling new PC users. If you are a new user of PCs who would like to meet with other new users – and some experienced users who can answer your questions as well – then join us at the New Users SIG meetings at 6:30 p.m. prior to each DVPC monthly meeting.

We'll also have the Networking Table from 6:30 to 7:00; if you have something to sell or trade, need technical help, or just want to exchange views, visit the Networking Table. We will have one of our pre-meeting games, with a great prize for the winner! Also, as

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### **President's Corner**

by [Alan Mildwurm](#), DVPC

#### **VOLUNTEERS NEEDED – APPLY WITHIN!**

Every April we hold our Board of Directors election and every March I write the same article asking (begging?) for more members to step up and volunteer to be on the Board. While your Board does an excellent job of handling the club, think how much better we could do with your input. Have you noticed that club attendance is down? Probably it's because we are not doing enough to advertise ourselves. WE NEED A PUBLICITY CZAR and helpers to GET THE WORD OUT. Perhaps there are speakers or programs you'd like to see. Computers and computing are becoming more appliance like and certainly with the Net, it is often easy to get the info you need to solve the immediate problem. Does this mean the computer club is a dinosaur? I don't know. I enjoy the meetings and have met several people and made several friends as a direct result of my membership. I'd hate to

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## President's Corner...

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*(Continued from page 1)*

see the club go the way of an old 5.25 inch diskette.

### **APRIL MEANS MICROSOFT!**

In April we welcome Eric Johnson from Microsoft to show us some new HARDWARE and a presentation dealing with digital pictures. See the meeting announcement on page 1 for more info on this presentation.

### **DISPLAY DEVICE**

Our trusty INFOCUS projector is getting a bit long in the tooth. We are thinking about a special membership assessment to buy a new projector. I hope those of you in the back row will pitch in!

### **MAY IS MINE**

In May, I will show you a program for screen capture, SNAGIT, which I think is terrific. I will also show you a cool new pen scanner! See you at the April meeting!

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## Meeting Announcement...

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*(Continued from page 1)*

usual, we'll have library disks and those great DVPC mugs (version 2) for sale, SIG news, and some of our usual great door prizes.

We're also going to have the annual election for our Board of Directors. Here's a list of the DVPC members who are running for the Board this year. As Alan says in his President's Corner column on page 1, we need volunteers who will run for the 2002-2003 Board. That means YOU! So, when Alan asks for members who are willing to run for the Board, don't sit on your hands – volunteer!

Alan Mildwurm	President/Programs, Incumbent
Nicholas Chase	SIG Coordinator, Incumbent
Will Crites	Publicity
Charlie Crothers	At Large, Incumbent
Peggy Johnson	Membership Secretary, Incumbent
Tom Krauss	Secretary, Incumbent
Jessica Mildwurm	Treasurer, Incumbent
Ron Ogg	Newsletter Editor/Webmaster, Incumbent
Craig Peterson	Librarian, Incumbent
Stan Umlauf	Web Site, Incumbent

The election will be held prior to the speaker from Microsoft at the April meeting. Volunteer! Vote! See you all at the April meeting.

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## New-New by [George Griffin](#), DVPC

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Yes! Creative Labs, purveyor of the Sound Blaster line, has come out with something new... no, New-New. It's called *Extingy*, and it is an external sound card that uses a USB interface to handle the sound.

This sound system has to overcome the USB version 1.1 narrow-band deficiency. This was accomplished by some clever electronic juggling: only part of the sound load is processed by the external card – the rest of the job winds up being processed by the computer's CPU. By all reports I read, it does a pretty good job of this. In the future they may come up with a

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## New-New...

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*(Continued from page 2)*

Firewire, or USB 2, version – that would certainly overcome the narrow-band restrictions.

One suggested use for Extigy is for people who want to upgrade their laptop's sound performance. The price is a bit steep at \$149 list, but the street price may be a bit lower. Unless you have a large "foolish fund", it might be financially prudent to wait till a USB 2 version comes out. Just in case you are tempted, the Extigy was seen at our local CompUSA.

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## Tips for Internet Shopaholics

by [Steve Bass](#), Pasadena IBM Users Group

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Last month I described my experience spending over \$150 to save about \$4 on vitamins I bought on the Internet. This column takes care of the other side of the story: Tips on tackling the problems of Internet buying.

### ***Fighting the Free Syndrome***

How much do you make an hour? If you're clocking more than, say, \$5 an hour, don't waste your time hunting for discounts that come and go. The worst ones to try finding are free shipping or \$10 off with your first order. A better strategy? If you bump into an offer from [Half.com](#), say, and you're in the market for a bunch of used books, it's a slam-dunk. Otherwise, don't bother tracking them down.

### ***Factor in Shipping***

Paying attention to shipping costs may seem obvious, but there are variables to consider. You might think you'll save on shipping by choosing a site that charges a flat fee for shipping no matter how many items you purchase. That's likely true unless the site's products are inflated to cover the shipping costs. With some items – vitamins, for instance – that's not such a big deal as most sites charge a flat \$4.95 for standard shipping. (One exception, though, is [AdvanceRX](#); they charge a flat fee of \$3 for the entire order, and the product pricing is lower than other drug sites.)

### ***Listen to Users***

The wealth of opinions on the Net is overwhelming and you need to tap into it before making any major purchase. There are two spots I listen in on, are useful in its own way. First try the newsgroups and do it using the [Google.com](#) search engine. When I was interested in a camcorder, I typed "Panasonic Camcorder" into the Google search field and clicked on Groups. Goggle will provide a list of groups that contain the two words. It's a little daunting from here because you'll face at least 10 groups. Choose the one that's closest to your search. For instance, "Humanities" (Fine art, literature, philosophy) and "Misc" (Employment, health) won't fit while "Comp" (Hardware, software, consumer info) sure will.

You'll then see a dozen or more sub-groups belonging to Comp, each with a green bar showing the likely hits in the groups. Type "Panasonic Camcorder" into the field again and choose "Search only in comp."

The dilemma, as you'll soon find out, is there's a lot to sort through in order to find the recommendations and discussion you're looking to read.

The other spot I really like is [Epinions.com](#). It's filled with people like us providing their observations and experiences with products. Don't be put off by thinking these are just willy-nilly opinions. Granted, some are, but most people are careful and thorough in their reports,

*(Continued on page 8)*

**Moving? Changing Your E-mail Address?**

***Tell us so you will continue receiving Diablo Blue!***

**E-mail your name and new information to [changes@dvpc.org](mailto:changes@dvpc.org)**

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## **SIG NEWS** Compiled by [Nick Chase](#), SIG Coordinator, DVPC, 680-4211

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**Be sure to see the DVPC Calendar on [page 16](#) for the date and time of each SIG meeting, and any changes in meeting location or schedule.**

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### **Advanced Developers SIG** [Ron Ogg](#), SIG Leader – 415-281-0431

The Advanced Developers SIG is a learning co-op. Every month we choose a topic and let people know where they can learn about it. We then get together and go over the information. We hope that if everyone learns a little on their own, and when we get together everyone can learn a lot. If you are an advanced developer you are invited to join the ADSIG. Beginners will want to get some serious development experience before joining the SIG. See the ADSIG page on the DVPC web site at [www.dvpc.org/clarion.html](http://www.dvpc.org/clarion.html) for meeting location, dates, and time.

### **Advanced Users SIG** [Jeff and Sharon Noyer](#), SIG Co-Leaders – 778-4348

The Advanced Users SIG meets on the third Thursday of each month at 7:30 p.m. at 4208 Amargosa Drive in Antioch. Directions: Go east on Highway 4 through Antioch to the Hillcrest Avenue exit. At the light at the end of the exit ramp, go right onto Hillcrest Avenue, and then stay towards your left. At the 3rd light, Hillcrest Avenue turns to the left. Go left and stay on Hillcrest. (Landmark: "The Crossings" Shopping Center is at intersection). At the 4th light, go left onto Wildhorse Drive. (Landmark: 7-Eleven on corner at intersection). At the 2nd left turn, go left onto Meadow Lake Drive. At the 4th right turn, go right onto Amargosa Drive. 4208 Amargosa Drive is the 3rd house on your right, blue and white one-story. The Advanced Users SIG is for anyone interested in discussing advanced topics such as hardware and software issues, cutting-edge technologies, networking, Windows NT Server and Workstation, troubleshooting, etc. Please join us to participate in this very informative and educational forum. We hope to see you at the meeting!

### **Genealogy eSIG** [Peggy Johnson](#), SIG Leader – 676-7522

The DVPC Genealogy SIG is a group of computer genealogists who share helpful websites, databases and source information found on the internet. It's an opportunity for members seeking help to put forth a question or problem to the SIG and receive suggestions and advice. When you locate a useful website, database or visit a research facility, please email the group of the details so we also can take advantage of this information. If you wish to be included in this Genealogy SIG, please email Peggy Johnson, [pegszone@aol.com](mailto:pegszone@aol.com).

### **Education and Entertainment SIG** [Alan Mildwurm](#), SIG Leader – 510-770-5770

The Education & Entertainment SIG usually meets on the fourth Wednesday of each month at Montevideo School in San Ramon at 7:30 p.m. Check the DVPC web site ([www.dvpc.org](http://www.dvpc.org)) for information about each month's meeting. The E&E SIG is oriented to exploring the best in education and entertainment software for the PC. Come back in the fall when everyone is invited to attend our meetings, and bring your kids along - they'll have a great time, too! Directions for our next meetings: Take 680 to Bollinger Canyon Road, go west to San Ramon Valley Blvd., go south to Montevideo Rd. and turn left. Proceed east on Montevideo about 3 blocks to Broadmoor and turn left. The school is 1 block on the right. We meet in Room 22.

### **Internet SIG** [Craig Peterson](#), SIG Leader – 671-7025

The Internet SIG meets at 7:00 p.m. on the third Wednesday of each month at Computer Renaissance, 959 Contra Costa Blvd. in Pleasant Hill. We cover everything about the Internet, from browsing and email to creating your own web site and the tools for doing so. For more information, contact Craig Peterson by email at [compmail@pacbell.net](mailto:compmail@pacbell.net) or phone at 671-7025.

April is a month where spring is finally starting to show that it is here, Earth Day is observed, Daylight Savings Time messes up our clocks and schedules, and taxes need to be sent out in the mail. This month we will be looking at how time and seasonal changes are observed worldwide via the net.

### **.NET SIG** [Ted Armstrong](#), SIG Leader – 939-5874

The new **.NET SIG** will have its kickoff meeting on Thursday, April at 7:30 p.m. in the [\(Continued on page 5\)](#)

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## SIG NEWS...

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*(Continued from page 4)*

Community Room at Concord Police Department headquarters, 1350 Galindo Street, in Concord.

The SIG dedicated to the new Microsoft .NET development tool, the newest Microsoft standard for developing cross-platform stand-alone and web-site applications. .NET tools include Microsoft Visual Basic® .NET, Microsoft Visual C++® .NET, and Microsoft Visual C#™. .NET developers can take advantage of a common toolbox, debugger, and task window, greatly reducing the developer learning curve and ensuring that developers can always choose the language most appropriate for their task and expertise. .NET gives developers the tools for integrating solutions across operating systems and languages. The .NET SIG will provide an opportunity for .NET developers at all levels who live or work in the East Bay to network with fellow developers. The SIG will provide speakers on different .NET topics. If you or anyone you know could benefit from this SIG, please come to our kickoff meeting on April 25.

Contact Ted Armstrong at [tedarm@yahoo.com](mailto:tedarm@yahoo.com) for more information.

**New Users SIG** [Bill Earl](#), SIG Leader – 939-5874

The New Users SIG holds its meetings at 6:30 p.m. prior to the regular DVPC monthly meeting on the first Thursday of each month at Bank of America building B. We discuss whatever is confusing or puzzling new PC users. If you are a new user of PCs who would like to meet with other new users – and some experienced users who can answer your questions as well – then join us at the New Users SIG meetings at 6:30 p.m. prior to each DVPC monthly meeting.

**PC 101 SIG** [Craig Peterson](#), SIG Leader – 671-7025

PC 101 (a class on how to use the computer) will be holding its next class on the Saturday following the general meeting, April 6, at 1:00 p. m. at the **Concord Library** (2900 Salvio) this month **only**. PC101 usually meets in the community room of the Concord Police station, 1350 Galindo Street, but that facility is not available this month. The classes will start at 1:00 pm and end at 3:00. Join us for some hands on, one on one, help at the nuts and bolts of using computers. Those in the class enjoy the extra time we can now devote to each problem, as well as the time to answer questions in class.

**Photo SIG** [Chuck Graham](#), SIG Leader – 680-1333

The Photo SIG usually meets on the third Tuesday of the month at 7:00 pm at Graham Family Photo, 5100-35 Clayton Road, Concord. Vineyard Center at Ayers Road next to KMart. Call for directions at 925 680-1333 or check out our map at [www.grahamphoto.com](http://www.grahamphoto.com). Please bring anyone that is interested the Photo SIG. Please continue to let me know what your interest are. Also be sure to see our page on the DVPC web site at [www.dvpc.org/photo.html](http://www.dvpc.org/photo.html). Because of the holidays, there will be no Photo SID meetings in November or December.

**Windows SIG** [Ron Ogg](#) (415-281-0431) and [Walt Parsons](#) (934-0775), SIG Co-Leaders

The Windows SIG usually meets at the Community Room at the Concord Police Department Building on the first Monday of each month at 7:30 p.m. We discuss the latest version of Windows, demonstrate interesting shareware and freeware, and have random access sessions where we all try to answer SIG members' questions. Everyone who uses, is interested in, or is curious about Windows on their PC is invited to attend.

Directions: The Concord Police Department is at 1350 Galindo Street in Concord. From the 242 Freeway take Clayton Road east to Galindo and turn right; the Police Department building is 3 blocks south on your left. From Highway 24 take Monument Blvd. east and continue on Monument Blvd. to where it changes to Galindo; the Police Department building will be on your right a short distance past the signal at Cowell Road.

Give a DVPC Membership  
Gift Certificate!

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## DVPC Board Meeting Minutes by Tom Krauss, DVPC Secretary

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Well, last month I started out the Board Minutes saying "Two months in a row now I have managed to show up at the right time and on the right day for the Board meeting."

Big mistake.

That put a jinx on me, and I missed the March Board meeting.

Of course, I had a good excuse this time. I took a four day weekend, with Monday and Tuesday off. So when I rolled out of bed Wednesday morning and headed for the office, I was pretty clueless as to which day of the week it was. Extended weekends always take me another four or five days to get back on schedule. I have a good sense of direction. I can drive around in a new area on a cloudy day and pretty much tell within 10-15 degrees which way is north. I can roam the corridors of a strange building and know I'm facing east or south. But change my week from five-plus-two to four-plus-three or some other combination and I'm lost in time for a few days.

I was checking my email at home Wednesday night when it hit me. A quick check of the time [\(Continued on page 7\)](#)

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## Switch to the Diablo Blue Web Edition

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*"I am a real computer person and as such recognize the ultimate reality of the '**Paperless Society**'. In keeping with this spirit and in an effort to help DVPC reduce overhead costs, I say "Nay" to a written newsletter. Give it to me electronically, I want to get my copy of DVPC's Diablo Blue off the Web. (I can always print it out on blue paper and don't even have to admit that I did!)"* Turn in this form at the monthly meeting or email to: [nopaper@dvpc.org](mailto:nopaper@dvpc.org)

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

City: \_\_\_\_\_

State: \_\_\_\_\_ Zip: \_\_\_\_\_ Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

Email address for meeting notification: \_\_\_\_\_

Also notify me about these SIGs:

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\_\_\_\_\_

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## DVPC Board Meeting Minutes...

*(Continued from page 6)*

and I realized the pizza was already gone. By the time I could drive down to San Ramon, even the dessert would be gone. Just not worth the attempt. Oh, and I would miss the important business part of the meeting, too. That usually occurs in the five minutes between pizza and dessert.

I sent off an email to Ron and Alan with my apologies and asking if I had missed anything exceptional, and was told by Alan that "We're always exceptional". In other words, no, I hadn't...

Well, I didn't have to be there to know the following was discussed:

### **New Business:**

*Elections:* Elections are in April and the competition is raging for positions on the Board. One interesting rumor, so far unsubstantiated, is that Al Gore is considering tossing his hat into the fray and running for Board President. Apparently his staff has recommended that he slowly ease himself back into politics, aiming low and for a position that won't require him to shave the beard he has been trying to grow for over a year. While it would be quite a coup to have as president of our group the person who invented the internet, the smart money is on Alan for yet another term.

*Technical:* Nick mentioned that the Sony S50's lens appears to be of fairly high quality, with rather low chromatic aberration (about a pixel of color at the edges of objects in the corners of the frame). It does have moderate geometric distortion though, showing 0.9% barrel distortion at wide angle, changing to 0.5% pincushion in telephoto mode.

*Membership:* Peggy said seven members renewed their membership at the meeting and one guest joined. She asked for ideas to improve the attraction and retention of new members.

*Technical #2:* Nick stated that the term dBm is often abused to signify a signal level of 0.775 Volts, but unless the load impedance is exactly 600 ohms, this is incorrect. Because exact load impedances are less of an issue in modern audio systems, the new term dBu (u meaning unloaded) was introduced to signify a voltage level of 0.775 Volts, regardless of the load impedance. In other words, while the dBm is a measure of power, the dBu is a measure only of voltage. The term dBv (lower case v) also means the same thing as dBu, though the term dBu

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## Email Meeting Notification Available by Ron Ogg, DVPC

We're providing an Email Notification service for the DVPC monthly meeting, and for SIGs as well, for all current, paid-up members. If you're interested in receiving an email message announcing each monthly meeting, and for the SIGs you attend, fill out this form and mail to the address on page 16 of this copy of *Diablo Blue*. Note that there's no separate notification for the New Users' SIG since it's held on the same night as the monthly meeting.

*Send me Email notification of each monthly DVPC meeting and these SIGs:*

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Email Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Advanced Users SIG	<input type="checkbox"/>	.NET SIG	<input type="checkbox"/>
Advanced Developers SIG	<input type="checkbox"/>	New Users' SIG	<input type="checkbox"/>
Education and Entertainment SIG	<input type="checkbox"/>	PC 101 SIG	<input type="checkbox"/>
Genealogy eSIG	<input type="checkbox"/>	Photo SIG	<input type="checkbox"/>
Internet SIG	<input type="checkbox"/>	Windows SIG	<input type="checkbox"/>

## DVPC Board Meeting Minutes...

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is more commonly used.

*Newsletter:* Ron announced he needed all articles in by noon Saturday March 23.

And so on, and so on, and so on... You get the idea.

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## Tips for Internet Shopaholics...

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*(Continued from page 3)*

few seem to have an ulterior motive, and those that do are easy to spot.

Try [Epionions](#) by typing, "Choosing an Air Conditioner" into the search field. Scroll down to "Member Advice" and you'll get a sense of what Epionions offers. Better, search for an item you're very familiar with and see what others have to say.

### ***Make those Comparisons***

You're crazy if you shop on the Internet without using a price comparison site. There are many available, and here's a sampling:

- [Mysimon.com](#)
- [Dealtime.com](#)
- [Pricingcentral.com](#)
- [Bizrate.com](#)
- [Smartshop.com](#)
- [BuyBuddy.com](#)

If you're wondering which sites I use regularly, take a gander at some of my favorites:

- [Pricescan.com](#): A neat site with an assortment of ways to search for products and spots to purchase the item. The site does an exemplary job at digging up pricing for a myriad of products including for books, computers, office equipment, home and garden, and other categories.
- [DestinationRX.com](#): Does a remarkable job at neatly displaying a grid with product, vendor, price, estimated shipping, and total cost. Great: Sorting by column—cost or price—is easy, and getting details about the vendor is a click away. Not so hot: "Total Cost field" doesn't take into account price per unit, so comparing a bottle of 100 60milligram vitamins with the same bottle of 100mg vitamins isn't accurate.
- [Canada.rx](#): A member of another user group told me about [Canada.rx](#). She said, "I thought you might be interested in this solution for prescription drugs. A friend is diabetic and has who knows what else. His doctor faxes his prescriptions and he receives a package a few days later with no hassle from the post office. (His only real difficulty lay in convincing his doctor to send the fax and that only had to be done once.) His credit card is charged approximately one-third the price he'd pay locally. I asked him for the URL and this is his re-

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**Bring a Friend to a DVPC Meeting**  
**Help Them Grow their PC Knowledge**  
**Help Grow DVPC Membership**

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## Tips for Internet Shopaholics...

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*(Continued from page 8)*

sponse:

'It's CanadaRx. No www, no .com, nothing but CanadaRx. They keep changing the entry screens, making it sometimes difficult to find the screen one wants. But it's all there. All that's needed in patience. Persistence helps some too.'

I checked and the prices really are substantial lower than most discount pharmacies.

- [Pricewatch.com](http://Pricewatch.com): This site has been around the longest and provides a fast, convenient way to find the best prices on computing hardware.
- [Addall.com](http://Addall.com): Think [Amazon.com](http://Amazon.com) has the best prices in town? Nope. [Half.com](http://Half.com), [BooksAMillion.com](http://BooksAMillion.com), and others often beat Amazon. The savings are enough that it makes using Addall.com a must every time you shop for books.
- [PCworld.pricegrabber.com](http://PCworld.pricegrabber.com): I'm a little biased here, so pardon my conflict-of-interest for a minute, and try PCWorld's Product Finder. Primarily hardware, software, and electronics, it gives you a way to find products, and check and compare their prices. Three things I like better here than the other sites: I can easily track a product, watching for price changes, just by supplying my e-mail address. Next, if the product's been reviewed by PC World, one click gets me to the article. Finally, the site gives me access to the full spec sheet of the product, something I find invaluable.
- Cnet's [shopper.cnet.com](http://shopper.cnet.com): Does a decent job with hardware and software but only so-so for consumer electronics. It's sometimes difficult separating ads from product reviews.

*Steve Bass is a Contributing Editor with PC World and runs the Pasadena IBM Users Group. He's also a founding member of APCUG Write to him at [Steve\\_bass@pcworld.com](mailto:Steve_bass@pcworld.com). Check PCW's current edition at [www.pcworld.com/resource/toc/index.asp](http://www.pcworld.com/resource/toc/index.asp) and sign up for the Steve Bass online newsletter at [www.pcworld.com/bass\\_letter](http://www.pcworld.com/bass_letter).*

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## The \$152 Internet Bargain by Steve Bass, Pasadena IBM Users Group

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I don't have a good head for numbers, so double-check these figures for me, okay? I went online, pressed a few buttons, and two minutes later, bought a bottle of multivitamins for \$10 and some Folic Acid for \$3. Shipping was \$3 so the entire bill was \$16, right?

Nope. It cost me closer to \$152 and two hours of futzing.

Raise your hand if you think shopping on the Internet can save you money. No doubt it can, provided you use it efficiently.

In the next few minutes, I'll show you the mistakes I've made (hey, I'm not as bright as I look, okay?), how you can avoid them, and maybe stave off a few gray hairs in the process.

### **Bargain Hunting**

The trap I always seem to fall into is spending a few minutes trying to find the best deal on the Internet. (Computing minutes, as you may have noticed, are not related to real minutes, but that's another story.) I started by opening my Internet Explorer Favorites and trying to remember which folder I tucked the "vitamins and drugs" into.

Oddest thing, I muttered, is how these darn Favorites have a way of getting disorganized. I mean, what was I thinking when I combined DVD Rentals and DVD Player Research into the same folder. That's confusing, even to me, and it might be best if I separated them into two

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**Get Involved! Learn!**  
**Join a SIG today!**

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## The \$152 Internet Bargain...

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folders. I wouldn't take five minutes to fix. You think?

Of course, an interesting thing happened while cleaning and dusting my Favorites. I noticed the "Free Stuff" folder, the one with coupons, discounts, and giveaways. Right, I think, I'd better stop by there first and see if [Drugstore.com](http://Drugstore.com) or [MotherNature.com](http://MotherNature.com) is offering free shipping. My first stop is to [couponsforyou.com](http://couponsforyou.com). Nothing for me there because it's a dot.gone. So were four other coupon sites. I hit the jackpot with [www.dealofday.com](http://www.dealofday.com) because drugstore.com offered free shipping and a free diaper travel bag with any \$20 order. Cool, I could use the diapers for buffing the car and I'd find something to do with the bag. And free shipping will put \$4.95 in my pocket.

### ***So What's the Deal?***

The deal wasn't difficult to handle. Do all your shopping, stick the code into the special box on checkout, and shipping was deducted from the total. I did all my shopping, clicked done, and drugstore.com gleefully greeted me. "Yo! Steve-o! Welcome back buddy. Good to see you! But listen, the free shipping, and diaper deal? New customers only. Sorry, pal." Busted.

I couldn't just let that go. It was a challenge to my hacker mentality and less-than-adequate hacking skills. Creating a new user name and account couldn't be much work, and drugstore.com wouldn't be the wiser. I really wanted that diaper bag.

### ***Busted Again***

"Hey, Frank, when did you move in with Bass?" Around ten this morning, I fumed. It was a good question and one that I felt drugstore.com had no right to ask. As a consenting adult, what I did with my alias is my business.

I was busted again and chose not to play around with drugstore.com's cookies. So I headed back to [AdvanceRX's](http://AdvanceRX.com) site, added three bottles of Folic Acid to AdvanceRx's shopping cart. But it hit me that Drugstore.com was selling it in bottles of 200 tablets, a better deal. I think. But hell, even if I paid for shipping and went without the diaper bag, that'd save me roughly \$2. Better check.

So I open a fourth browser window, navigate to the site, and find I was right the first time. AdvanceRX is the best deal. You know, Bass, I think, kicking myself. You oughta stick this stuff on a spreadsheet so next time you can refer back to it. Easy enough to do, so I do a few rows and columns, stick in sites, vitamins, prices, shipping, and whether I've ordered there before. It was worth the 35 minute investment, really, even though I decided to forego any fancy fonts or formatting.

### ***Stay Calm, Okay?***

By now I'm feeling a little antsy so I head back to AdvanceRX to place the order and get on with my life. At this point, you're probably one step ahead of me. I faced a really dumb prob-

*(Continued on page 11)*

# Special Raffle Promotion

Bring a guest to a *DVPC* meeting, you get 10 Raffle tickets!  
If your guest joins at the meeting, you get 10 Raffle tickets –  
*and* your new member guest *also* gets 10 Raffle tickets!!

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## The \$152 Internet Bargain...

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*(Continued from page 10)*

lem: After all my futzing elsewhere, AdvanceRX timed out. The shopping cart was empty, my patience was fading, and I was in dire need of a psychotropic drug. Try clicking IE's Back button, I thought and Windows applauded my decision with a General Protection Fault. With all the B vitamins I'd depleted, I didn't think it made sense to bother rebooting.

I asked my wife if she'd like to make a quick trip to Costco. She did, we found the vitamins (about \$2 more than online, not including the stress formula I felt a need to buy); we also bought \$100 of stuff we really didn't need and went out for lunch.

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## Toss Out That Shoebox by [Steve Bass](#), Pasadena IBM Users Group

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It's the middle of March and I'm more than a month early on my taxes, a rare occurrence by anyone's standards, especially mine. Now don't get me wrong, it's got nothing to do with me. Heaven forbid I make a deadline. The credit belongs to my tax guy (yeah, that's how I refer to him. He's a guy, does my taxes, and has been a tax guy for years).

As tax guys go, he's even-tempered and patient. But every year he loses his professional cool at the site of me and my shoebox coming into his office. Last year he said, "Go buy a computer tax program, Bass" handing me back my shoebox. "Anything will do," he said, "just make sure it doesn't include a shoe box."

It turns out that once I started using a tax program, I actually enjoyed getting things organized. The process is simple: I just went through and answered the program's questions. Some programs, such as TurboTax, allowed me to fill in a screen that is a pretty accurate rendition of an IRS tax form (real enough to cause some anxiety).

Other programs are less realistic — you answer questions on screen and move from field to field. And if you're using an accounting program, there's a good chance you can export data to a variety of tax programs. For example, Intuit's TaxCut accepts data from Quicken. By the way, most tax programs will print out IRS approved forms on a laser printer and some even include software for electronic filing.

### ***Give Me Some Help***

Every program I tried offered extensive help so even inexperienced users can get some on-line reassurance. At any point you can stop the process and get advice. TurboTax's chatty, comfortable tone reminded me of my tax guy (it obviously didn't see the shoe box on my desk). All tax programs let me play "what-if" scenarios to my heart's content. I was able to see the effect of, say, buying a new car, or adding a new deduction to the family. And TurboTax compares your deductions to the national standard to make sure you're not out of line, saving you a potential audit.

Of course, there's a downside to doing my taxes on my own. Every so often I'd get a message suggesting a talk with my, uh, tax guy. I ran into one snag when I tried to figure out if I was able to deduct a unique retirement fund from my state taxes. And here's where I get a little squirrely with tax programs because the answer was not forthcoming. My solution? Find a tax preparer who's willing to answer your questions and double-check your computer generated return.

Here are some recommendations if you decide to use tax preparation software:

If you have a simple return, don't hesitate to do-it-yourself. Your return will be more accurate, you might have fun, and you'll likely save some money.

*(Continued on page 12)*

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**Get a Friend to Join DVPC!**

## Toss Out That Shoebox...

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*(Continued from page 11)*

If you have a complicated return, and someone does your taxes, try a tax program and compare the results. Do that for a year or two and if you don't see much of a difference, consider working exclusively with the software.

To get the best price on tax preparation software, compare the prices of local discount stores to mail order companies. Many mail order firms bundle the federal and state versions for a lower price.

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## Windows Tips by [Ron Ogg](#), DVPC

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Here is a collection of miscellaneous tips and random jottings for Windows users, whether 98, 98se, ME, XP Home, or XP Pro.

### ***Where the Heck Did My Volume Control Go??***

Has the volume control icon in your system tray disappeared? I've found that some multimedia programs, for their own perverse reasons that aren't announced in the manual or readme file for the program, remove the volume control icon. Here's how to get it back:

Go to Start — Settings — Control Panel, and double-click on Multimedia. At the bottom left of the Multimedia Properties dialog box put a check in the "Show volume control on the taskbar" box. Click OK, and close Control Panel. Your volume control has been resuscitated.

### ***But the Volume Still Isn't Loud Enough!!***

OK, go to Start — Programs — Accessories — Entertainment and click on Volume Control. You'll see the Play Control (it's named Volume Control in XP), a much more capable volume control. In fact, you'll see a gaggle of volume controls. The one at the left marked "Play Control" (again, "Volume Control" in XP) controls the overall volume. The others are for each media type: CD Audio, Wave, and more, each control letting you make individual adjustments. And if you have a media type that's not listed, you can add it by selecting them from the Options menu. Each media also has a balance control, and the Advanced button lets you adjust the overall bass and treble.

If you want the Play/Volume Control to be available every time you run Windows, add it to your Startup Group. You can do so by doing the following: Right-click on the Start menu, select Explore (Explore All Users for XP) from the Pop-up menu, click on Programs on the pop-up menu, double-click on each Accessories and Entertainment, right-click on Volume Control and select Copy from the pop-up menu, back under Programs in the left pane click on Startup, and in the right pane right-click and select Paste from the pop-up menu. Close Explorer, and from now on when you start Windows the Volume Control application will be loaded automatically.

### ***A New Way to Use Your Wheel Mouse***

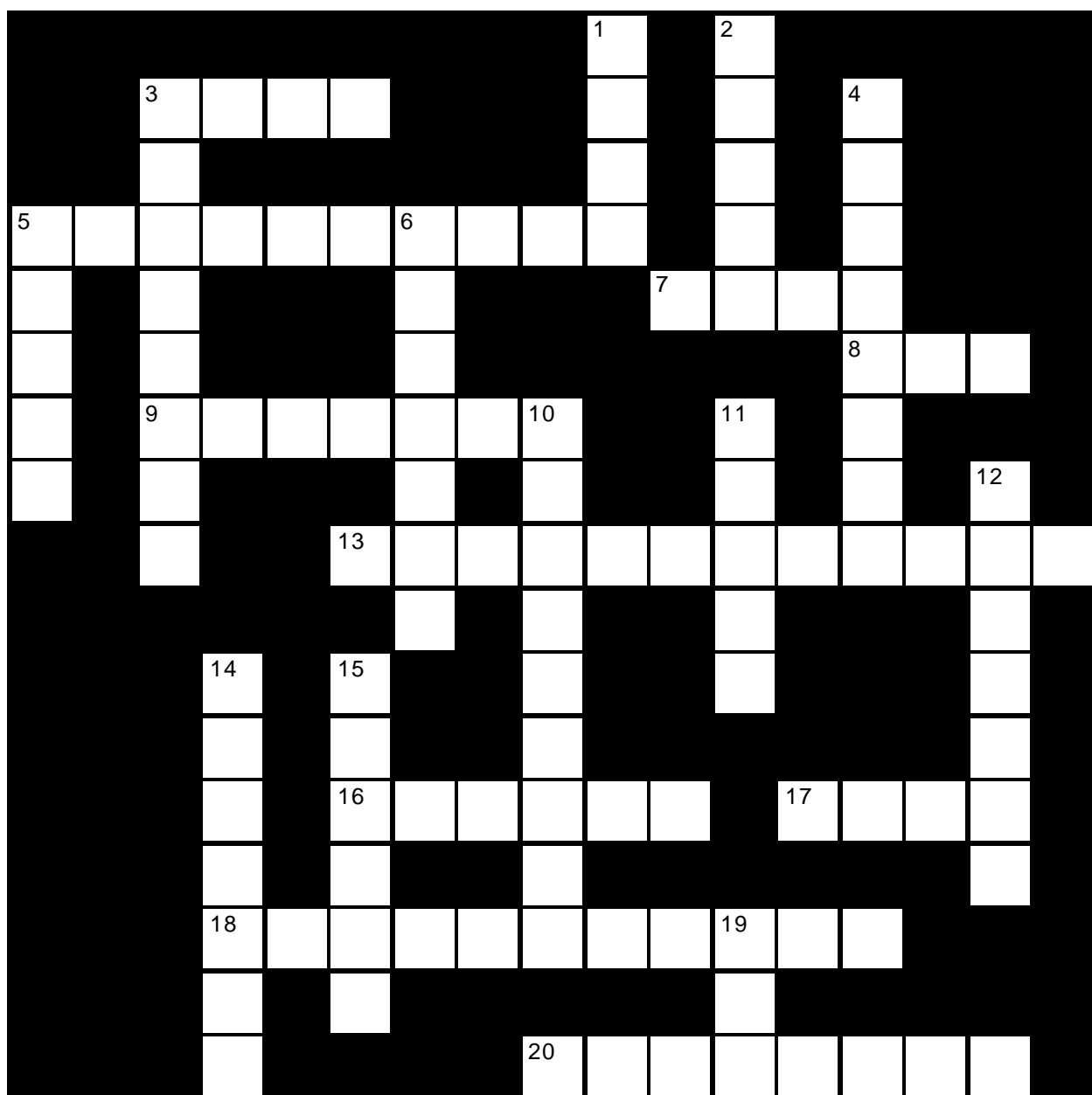
If you have a wheel mouse you probably use the wheel to scroll in documents and Internet Explorer. But you can also use it when you want to select from a drop-down menu and there are more choices than room to show them. When you want to select from such a drop-down menu, use the wheel on your mouse to scroll through the menu choices; it's a lot faster than using the elevator bar at the right edge of the menu. I've found that this works in almost all applications, whether they are from Microsoft or not.

### ***Why is My Computer so Slow?***

Windows XP (Home and Professional) users can see a graphical representation of their system's performance by pressing Ctrl-Alt-Del which will open the Task Manager. Click on the Performance tab. You will see how your CPU and Paging File are being used.

For other Windows users, go to Start — Programs — Accessories — System Tools and select System Monitor. You can add whatever you would like to monitor; just click the Add icon or click on Edit — Add Item.

**Computer Crossword  
"April Showers"**



**Across**

- 3. Frozen version of water that falls from the sky
- 5. Where you do not want your house to be located
- 7. Large "fishin' hole"
- 8. Word not to be used outside of beaver studies
- 9. Subterranean water level
- 13. Best way to lower water bills
- 16. Measure of snow-to-water conversion
- 17. A larger version of #3 Across
- 18. Natural loss of water
- 20. Manufactured transportation route for liquids

**Down**

- 1. Warm version of #3 Across
- 2. An area where fresh water streams meet salt water bodies
- 3. California's water storage from November to April
- 4. Water transport system
- 5. More water than the local delivery system can handle
- 6. Type of toilet the water companies would like you to use
- 10. Same as #3 Down, but from April to November
- 11. Natural version of #4 Down
- 12. Drinkable water
- 14. Brief bursts of #1 Down
- 15. Smaller version of #11 Down
- 19. The original hard water

**About the April Crossword Puzzle** by *Craig Peterson, DVPC Librarian*

Most of us have heard the old saying "April Showers bring May Flowers" (which, of course, led to the old joke, "What do May Flowers bring? ...Pilgrims!). This saying is a bit confusing to the kids in this area due to our being in a Mediterranean climate which brings winter rains and golden hills. Computer rainfall projections and high-tech water delivery/conservation systems help see to it that we limit the number of droughts we have to live through, but there is still no escaping that by this time each year we have gotten most of the rain that will be coming our way. So, get a cool glass of water (with ice and lemon of course) and try to solve this month's puzzle.

PS... due to requests by several members, the answers to the current month's puzzle are provided on line by going to [www.dvpc.org/solution.html](http://www.dvpc.org/solution.html).

## Diablo Blue Article and Ad Information

Diablo Blue needs articles from the members of DVPC. See your name in print! Achieve fame and fortune! (Well, maybe just some limited fame in Contra Costa County...) We are particularly interested in product and book reviews and articles about your PC experiences.

Commercial advertising is available in Diablo Blue. Prices are \$75 for a full page, \$40 for a half page, and \$25 for a quarter page for one insertion — or get three consecutive insertions for the price of two. For more information, call editor Ronald Ogg, at 283-7900, Ext. 201 (days). Members of DVPC can submit personal classified ads that will be printed in Diablo Blue for three insertions at no charge. The rules are simple: up to 9 lines (as we typeset it), material must be suitable for publication (the editor is the sole judge of suitability), the member must be in good standing (current dues paid), and ad space is available on a first-come first-served space available basis only. If you want fewer than three insertions note that on your ad copy. If members want their business card reproduced, the rate is \$10 for one insertion, or \$25 for three insertions. The card must be horizontal and must be scanable.

Send your articles or member ad copy as email attachments to the [Newsletter Editor](#), See the deadline information in the Calendar on page 15 of each issue of Diablo Blue.

## DVPC on the Internet

DVPC has a web site on the Internet - thanks to our Web Team: Ron Ogg and Stan Umlauf. You can surf your way to our own domain and home page by starting your favorite Web browser and typing the following URL; be sure to save it in your browser's hotlist so you don't have to type it each time: <http://www.dvpc.org>

## DVPC Officers and Directors

Alan Mildwurm, President/Programs 510-770-5770 (work)  
Ted Armstrong, Publicity 939-4096 (home)  
Nicholas Chase, SIG Coordinator 680-4211 (home)  
Charlie Crothers, At Large 829-2237 (home)  
Peggy Johnson, Membership Secretary 676-7522 (home)  
Tom Krauss, Secretary 689-9960 (home)  
Jessica Mildwurm, Treasurer 829-5858 (home)  
Ron Ogg, Newsletter Editor 415-281-0431 (work)  
Craig Peterson, Librarian 671-7025 (home)  
Stan Umlauf, Web Site 458-5560 (home)

The Board of Directors usually meets the week following the general meeting. Check the DVPC Calendar on page 16 of each issue of *Diablo Blue*, or the DVPC home page on the Internet ([www.dvpc.org](http://www.dvpc.org)) for the meeting date, time, and location. You can reach any of the officers and directors by talking to them at the DVPC monthly meeting, by email to [bod@value.net](mailto:bod@value.net), or leaving a message on the DVPC voicemail System.

## DVPC Voice Mail System

DVPC has a computer-based voice mail system. The phone number for the DVPC VMS is 925-556-1449. Hear up-to-date information about monthly and SIG meetings, information about DVPC for potential new members, and a message center for Board of Directors members and SIG Leaders.

*Diablo Blue* is the monthly newsletter of the Diablo Valley PC Users' Group.

Editor: Ronald Ogg, Mailing: Peggy Johnson

Please submit articles and columns to the Newsletter editor by email at [rogg@value.net](mailto:rogg@value.net)

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DVPC is a member of [APCUG](#), the Association of PC Users Groups

DVPC is a certified member of [UGN](#), the User Group Network



Support **DVPC** — Get a friend to join!

### MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION

Enclose a check for \$30.00 for one year's dues with printed edition of *Diablo Blue*, or \$25.00 for one year's dues with access to the Internet edition of *Diablo Blue* (\$20.00 for students who must enclose a copy of current Student ID), made payable to **DVPC** and mail to:  
**DVPC User's Group, PO Box 3244, San Ramon, CA 94583**

Renewal\_\_\_\_\_ New Member\_\_\_\_\_ Referred by current member? Name\_\_\_\_\_

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Company/School: \_\_\_\_\_ Email address: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

City/State/Zip: \_\_\_\_\_

Home Phone: \_\_\_\_\_ Work Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

Email Address: \_\_\_\_\_

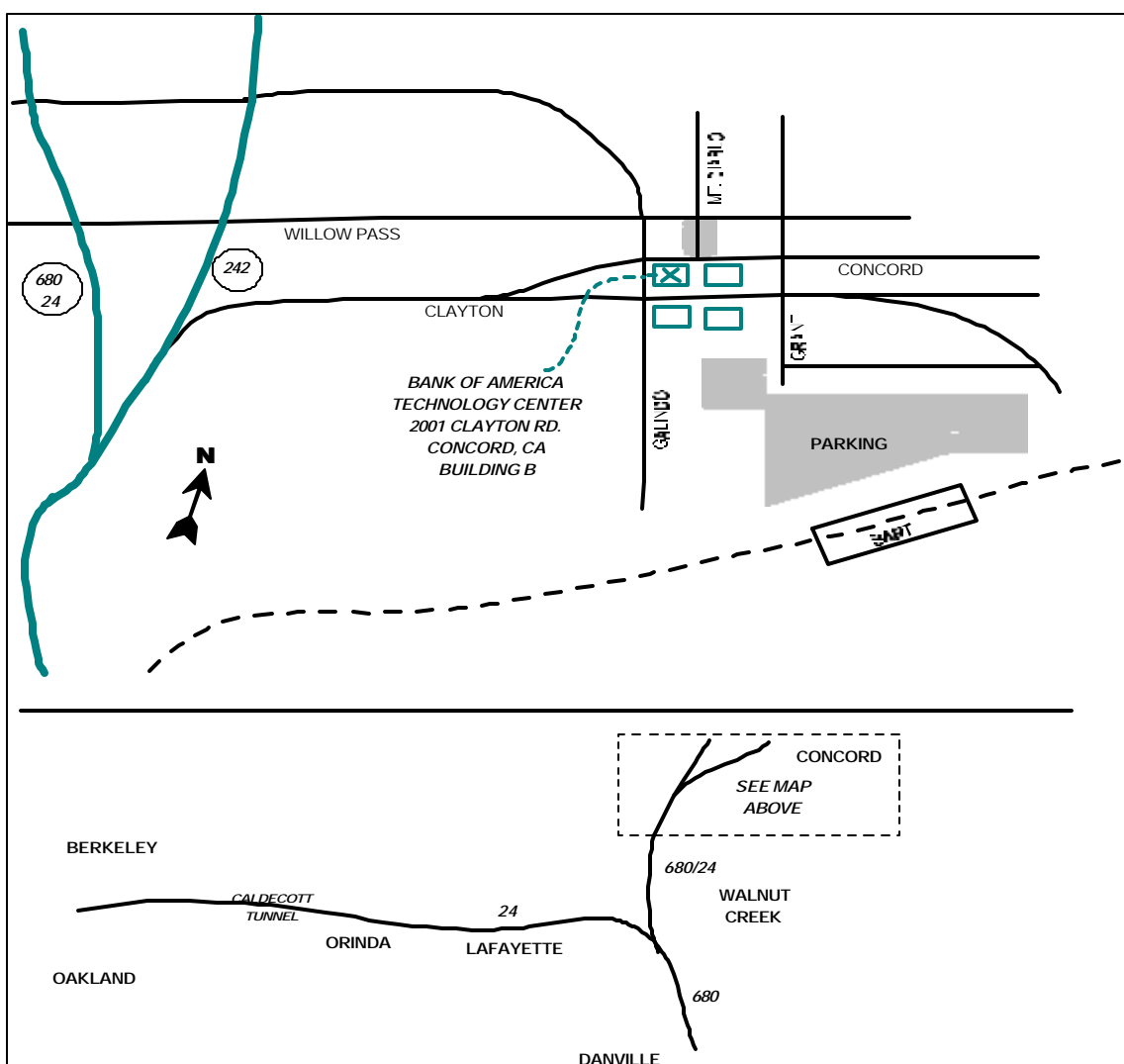
On occasion DVPC publishes a list of members **for distribution to DVPC members only**. Please check how you would like to be listed: **No listing**\_\_\_\_\_ **List Name and Home**\_\_\_\_\_ **Work**\_\_\_\_\_ **phone number(s)**

I'm also interested in these SIGs: \_\_\_\_\_

#### Directions to Bank of America Building B in Concord

Take the Clayton Road exit off of the 242 Freeway, and go east on Clayton Road. After about 1½ miles you'll come to Galindo, and you'll see the Bank of America complex of four high-rise buildings. Enter the door on the east side near the southeast corner of the building. Building B is the first building on your left, at the northeast corner of Clayton and Galindo.  
**Parking:** Turn right on Grant Street (the first block past Galindo), then right into the BART parking lot at the back of the BofA complex. Or turn left on Galindo then right onto Concord Avenue to find street parking.

**Be sure to observe parking regulations! Concord parking officers are very efficient!**



# DVPC April 2002 Calendar

MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT
1 Windows SIG 7:30 p.m.	2	3	4 DVPC Monthly Meeting 7:00 p.m. New User's SIG 6:30 p.m.	5	6 PC 101 SIG 1:00 p.m. <i>New meeting location this month only</i>
8	9	10 <i>DVPC Board Meeting Alan Mildwurm's house 7:00 p.m.</i>	11	12	13
15 Genealogy eSIG See SIG News on page 4	16 Photo SIG 7:00 p.m.	17 Internet SIG 7:00 p.m.	18 Advanced Users SIG 7:30 p.m. Advanced Developers SIG 7:00 p.m.	19	20
22	23	24 Education & Entertainment SIG 7:30 p.m.	25 .NET SIG 7:30 p.m. <i>New SIG Kickoff meeting</i>	26	27 <i>Diablo Blue deadline: Email articles and ads to the Editor: rogg@value.net</i>
29	30				<i>See SIG News starting on page 4 for more information about SIG meeting dates, times, topics, and locations</i>

**FIRST CLASS MAIL**

**TO:**

Diablo Valley PC User's Group  
PO Box 3244  
San Ramon, CA 94583