



## August 5, 2004 DVPC Meeting Announcement All About Genealogy and PhotoShop Classroom

The August DVPC meeting will feature two presentations, one on Genealogy by Peggy Johnson, SIG leader for DVPC's Genealogy eSIG, and a PhotoShop Classroom presentation by Craig Peterson that will show many of the amazing features of this leading photo editing program.

Genealogy is rapidly becoming one of America's favorite pastimes. With the use of computers, the internet and user-friendly genealogy programs, genealogy research has become much easier, less expensive, and allows researchers access to a world of information online in the form of censuses, vital statistic databases, newspaper transcriptions, archives, libraries and to other researchers via email. Peggy will share her favorite genealogy program, websites, research techniques, and how search engines are helpful in your research. So come to the August meeting and share in this challenging hobby.

Craig will show a demonstration of Software Cinema's Photoshop Classroom training DVDs. You'll see highlights from the 7 hour Fundamental Techniques and the 8+ hour Advanced Techniques volumes.

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 on page 4). Please use the entrance that's on the south side 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. 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. 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. Also, as 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.

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### President's Message

by Alan Mildwurm, DVPC

Hot August nights! This is a favorite time of the year. Unfortunately, I am destined to miss our August meeting and it should be a great one. We have two of DVPC's own members presenting in August.

Peggy Johnson will discuss online genealogy. You will learn how to research if you are related to someone interesting or maybe even rich! Of course you might also find a herd of black sheep chewing at the roots of your family tree. Oh well. I have been doing some research on my own heritage and I still can't disprove that my parents arrived at Roswell in an unfortunate landing accident.

Craig Peterson will do a presentation of Software Cinema's Photoshop training software ([www.software-cinema.com](http://www.software-cinema.com)). These training "classes" are really very well done and the presentation should be fun. You may just want to run out and buy your own copy of PhotoShop after seeing this presentation!

In September Gene Barlow will be here to show us several interesting utilities. October will bring an Intel presentation on the Centrino microprocessor.

(Continued on page 11)

## DVPC August 2004 Calendar

DVPC Calendar						
August 2004						
Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
See SIG News starting on page 5 of Diablo Blue for more information about SIG meeting dates, times, topics, and locations	No Windows SIG this month -- we'll be back on October 4!			DVPC Monthly Meeting 7:00 pm New Users SIG 6:30 pm		
8	9	10	11	12	13	14
			DVPC Board Meeting 7:00 pm			PC101 and PC201, Computer Renaissance, 4 pm to 6 pm
15	16	17	18	19	20	21
	Genealogy eSIG (See SIG News on page 5 of Diablo Blue)		Internet SIG 6:00 pm	Advanced Users SIG 7:30 pm Clarion SIG 7:00 pm	Diablo Blue Deadline. Email articles and ads to the Editor: rogg@value.net	
22	23	24	25	26	27	28
29	30	31				

### Email Notification

We provide an email notification service for the current month's *Diablo Blue* password, the DVPC monthly meeting, and information about SIG meetings as well. You have to be a current, paid-up member to receive this service. To read the current month's issue of *Diablo Blue* on-line you need to receive these monthly email messages, so print this page, fill out the form, and mail it to DVPC, PO Box 3244, San Ramon, CA 94583, or bring it to the sign-in desk at the monthly meeting. Or, if you prefer, you can send an email message to [nopaper@dvpc.org](mailto:nopaper@dvpc.org) with your name and email address and your favorite SIGs.

Send me email notification of each monthly *Diablo Blue* password, the DVPC meeting, and the following SIGs:

Name \_\_\_\_\_

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

Advanced Users SIG	<input type="checkbox"/>	New Users SIG	<input type="checkbox"/>
Clarion SIG	<input type="checkbox"/>	PC 101/PC 201 Classes	<input type="checkbox"/>
Genealogy eSIG	<input type="checkbox"/>	Windows SIG	<input type="checkbox"/>
Internet SIG	<input type="checkbox"/>		<input type="checkbox"/>

### ***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 stories about your PC experiences. Send your articles or member ad copy as email attachments to the Newsletter Editor (*see email address below*).

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 415-281-0431 (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 format 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 scannable. Send your ad copy as email attachments to the Newsletter Editor (*see email address below*). See the deadline information in the Calendar on page 16 of each issue of *Diablo Blue*.

### ***DVPC Officers and Directors***

Alan Mildwurm, President/Programs 510-770-5770 (work), [awm@mildwurm.com](mailto:awm@mildwurm.com)

Nicholas Chase, SIG Coordinator 680-4211 (home), [nachase@yahoo.com](mailto:nachase@yahoo.com)

Will Crites, Publicity 938-1291 (home), [bugkiller@aol.com](mailto:bugkiller@aol.com)

Charlie Crothers, At Large 829-2237 (home), [ccrothers@attbi.com](mailto:ccrothers@attbi.com)

Dick Curry, At Large 376-5541 (home), [racorinda@pacbell.net](mailto:racorinda@pacbell.net)

Peggy Johnson, Membership Secretary 676-7522 (home), [pegszone@aol.com](mailto:pegszone@aol.com)

Tom Krauss, Secretary 689-9960 (home), [tkrauss@astound.net](mailto:tkrauss@astound.net)

Jessica Mildwurm, Treasurer 829-5858 (home), [jess@mildwurm.com](mailto:jess@mildwurm.com)

Ron Ogg, Newsletter Editor and Web Site 415-281-0431 (work), [rogg@value.net](mailto:rogg@value.net)

Craig Peterson, Librarian 671-7025 (home), [compmail@pacbell.net](mailto:compmail@pacbell.net)

Stan Umlauf, Web Site 458-5560 (home), [stanu@honeybee.com](mailto:stanu@honeybee.com)

### ***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: [www.dvpc.org](http://www.dvpc.org).

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 calendar page, 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 by leaving a message on the DVPC voice mail 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 Web-based newsletter of the Diablo Valley PC Users' Group.

Editor: Ronald Ogg, Membership: 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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The Diablo Valley PC Users Group is a non-profit corporation.

DVPC is a member of APCUG, the Association of PC Users Groups, [www.apcug.org](http://www.apcug.org)

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

**MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION**

Print this page, fill out this form, and enclose it with your check for \$30.00 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, 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: \_\_\_\_\_

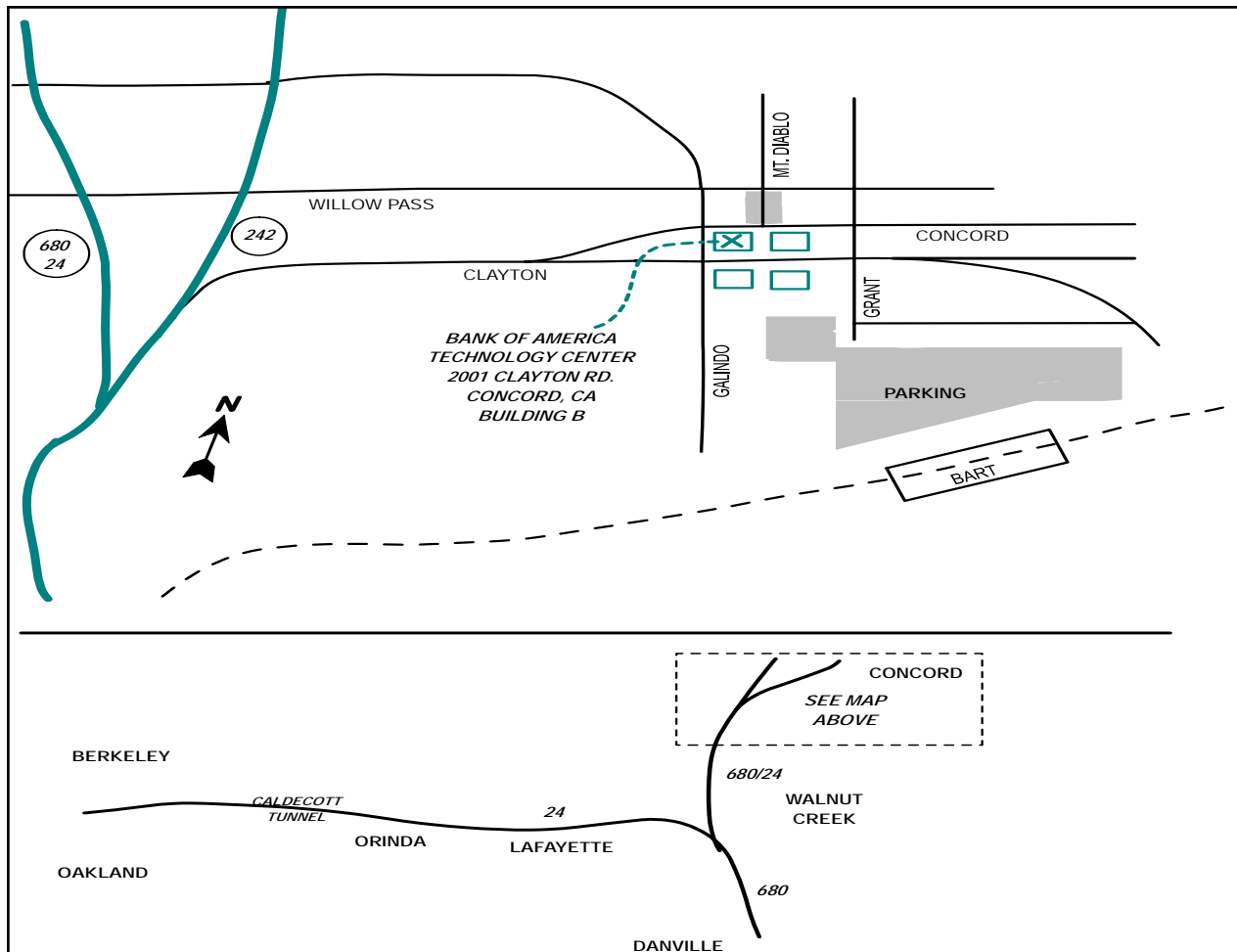
On occasion DVPC publishes a list of members for distribution to DVPC members only. Please check how you would like to be listed: No listing \_\_\_\_\_ List Name and Home \_\_\_\_\_ Work \_\_\_\_\_ phone number(s) \_\_\_\_\_

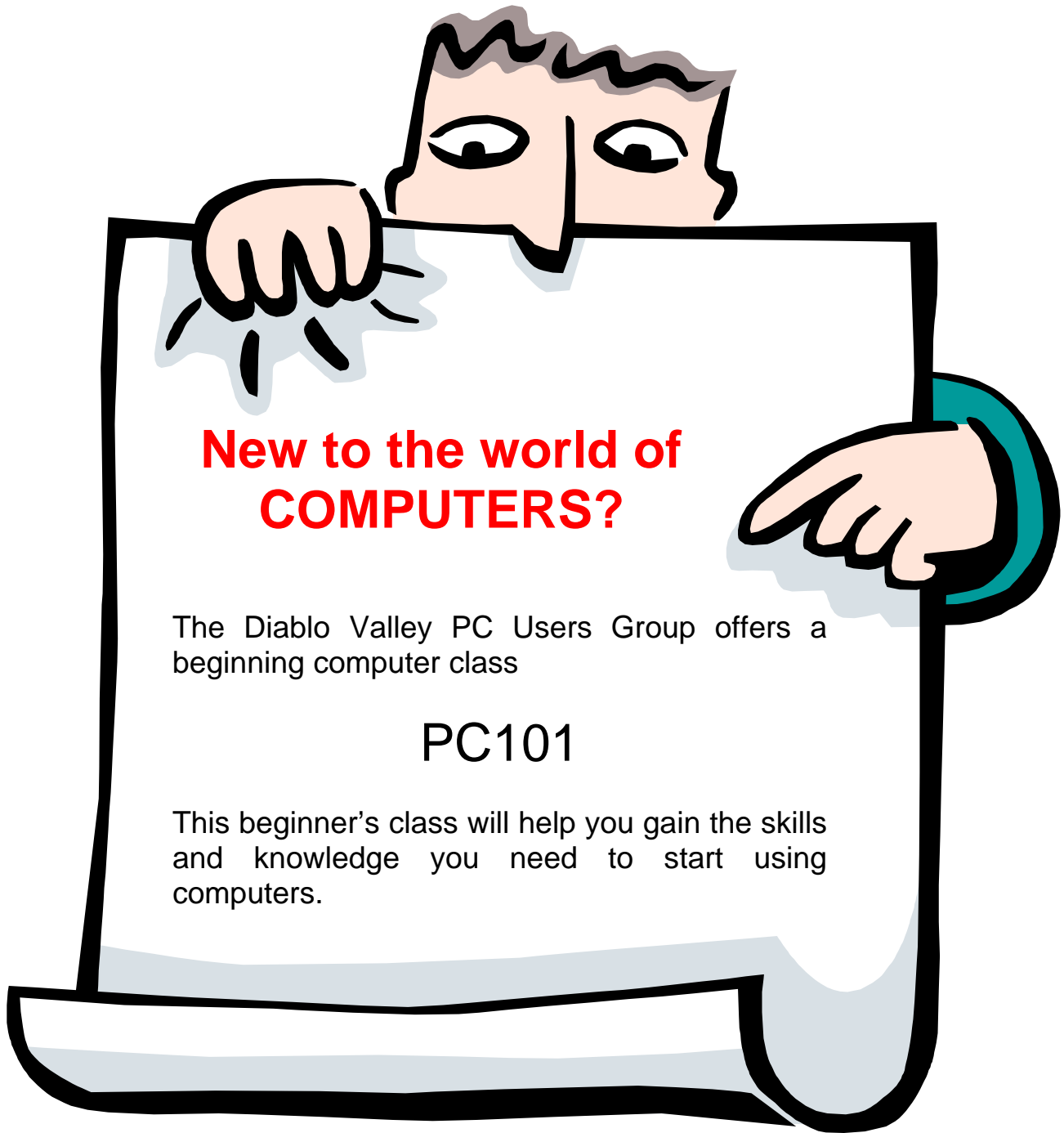
I'm also interested in these SIGs: \_\_\_\_\_

**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. Parking: Turn left on Galindo then right onto Concord Avenue to find street parking. Or turn right on Grant Street (the first block past Galindo), then right into the BART parking lot at the back of the BofA complex. Building B is the building at the northeast corner of Clayton and Galindo. Enter the door on the south side of the building.

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



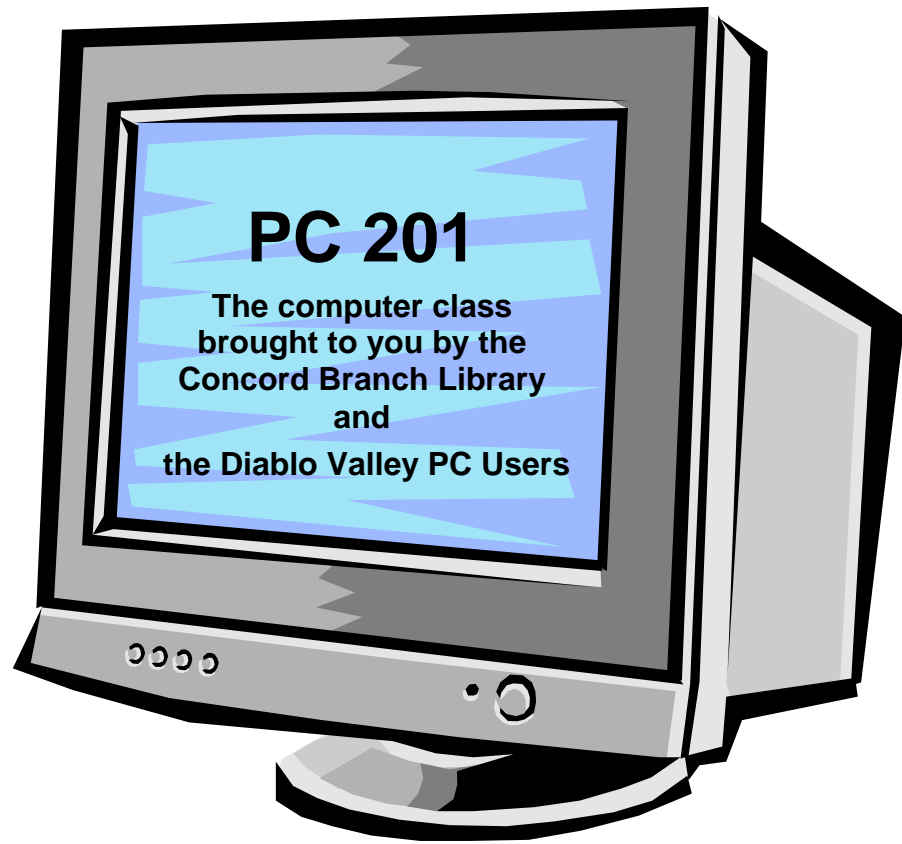


***The next PC 101 class may be held in August.*** Details of the date and time of the first class were not finalized as the newsletter was being prepared, so watch the web site at [www.dvpc.org](http://www.dvpc.org), or call (925-671-7025) or e-mail Craig Peterson (compmail@pacbell.net) for further information.

There's a new day (the second Saturday of each month), a new time (4 p.m. to 6 p.m.), and a new location (Computer Renaissance, which is located at 1936 Linda Drive off Contra Costa Blvd. in Pleasant Hill).

This free class is brought to you by the Diablo Valley PC Users Group as a service to the community, and is open to anyone who is interested in learning about computers.

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## SOFTWARE

***There are no PC201 classes scheduled.*** As soon as arrangements can be made to resume classes we'll schedule the next PC201 class. Look for an update on the DVPC web site at [www.dvpc.org](http://www.dvpc.org).

The PC201 class is usually held from 12:00 noon to 2:00 p.m. in the Concord Branch Library's Community room, 2900 Salvio Street, Concord, CA.

This free class is brought to you by the Concord Branch Library and the Diablo Valley PC Users Group. Space is limited, so sign up at the information desk at the Concord Branch Library.

**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. The Advanced Users SIG is for anyone interested in discussing advanced topics such as hardware and software issues, cutting-edge technologies, networking, servers, troubleshooting, etc. Please join us to participate in this very informative and educational forum. We hope to see you at the meeting!

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.

**Clarion SIG** SIG Leader Bill Morris ([wcm@soft-trak.com](mailto:wcm@soft-trak.com))

See the Clarion SIG page on the web at [www.desine.com/svcug/sv\\_meet.htm](http://www.desine.com/svcug/sv_meet.htm) for meeting location, dates, and time, or send an email to Bill Morris ([bill@soft-trak.com](mailto:bill@soft-trak.com)) asking to be put on his email announcement list for the Clarion SIG.

**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 the Genealogy eSIG, please email Peggy Johnson, [pegszone@aol.com](mailto:pegszone@aol.com).

**Internet SIG** Craig Peterson, SIG Leader – 671-7025

The Internet SIG meets at Computer Renaissance in their new store location 1936 Linda Drive, Pleasant Hill. We meet the third Wednesday of each month at 7:00 p.m. See the meeting details in each issue of *Diablo Blue* (you can find the article by checking the Table of Contents on [page 1](#)).

Hope to see all of you there. For more information, please call Craig Peterson at (925) 671-7025 or e-mail him at [comp-mail@pacbell.net](mailto:comp-mail@pacbell.net).

**New Users SIG** Craig Peterson, SIG Leader – 671-7025

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.

**PC101 and PC201 Classes** Craig Peterson, SIG Leader – 671-7025

PC101 usually is held from 10 am to 2 pm, and PC201 is usually held from noon to 2 pm, at the Concord Library, 2900 Salvio Street, on the third Saturday of each month. Look for information on these classes on the *DVPC* web site.

**PC101** is a beginning class on computers. Offered in conjunction with the Concord Branch Library, it helps introduce computers to and empower the person not comfortable with the technology. Class space is limited, so sign up at the information desk at the Concord Library, 2900 Salvio Street, Concord, CA 94519-2597 from 10 am to 2 pm in the community room of the Concord Branch library. For class meeting dates, times, and topics, [see page 5](#) in this issue of *Diablo Blue*.

**PC201** is a series of lectures that will be given by experts in different areas of computers and technology. This month we are back from vacation and will have a class on everyone's favorite computer topic, "Everything you ever wanted to know about Software". The class will take place on January 17th from noon to 2 pm in the community room of the Concord Branch library. For class meeting dates, times, and topics, [see page 6](#) in this issue of *Diablo Blue*.

**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 680 Freeway take Monument Blvd. east and continue to where it changes to Galindo; the Police Department building will be on your right a short distance past the signal at Cowell Road.

*There will be no Windows SIG meeting in August because of SIG Leader business travel, and in September because the first Monday is Labor Day! Windows SIG meetings will resume on October 4.*

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## **Comdex is History** by Steve Bass, PC World Magazine

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*Comdex was inflated, owners were arrogant, and since 1998, it was clear the show was destined to fall into the bit bucket.*

In a downward spiral for the last five years, Comdex is finally kaput. The show owners declared it dead when they cancelled the November, 2004 event. Many of you have been attending Comdex since close to forever, and most of you knew the show was destined to fall into the bit bucket.

Good riddance. In the last few years, the show's become an empty shell of its previous life. So much so that room prices on the Strip were as low as \$50 a night during Comdex week in 2003.

The problem was I couldn't *not* attend. Even though I didn't enjoy myself and couldn't find lots of really nifty products to write about, I still drove in from Pasadena and stayed for two nights. Call it nostalgia. Or maybe I was just hoping there would be one more chance that Comdex would get back on its feet.

But nope, it's really over.

### *Dig Into the Files*

I dug around and found some of Comdex the missives I sent in the last few years.

#### *December, 1998*

*"It's bad. In 1998, the Lotus exhibit consisted of a bus in the parking lot with a box of Winchell's donuts on the table..."*

Comdex is toast. It's fading rapidly and while it'll always be with us, it's never going to be "bigger than ever."

I polled lots of people and all agreed. The attendance was dismally low. Softbank's claim of 250K attendees was a lie. It was based on registrations--not attendees--something made lots easier because the normal \$100 "Exhibits Only" fee was waived when you registered on Softbank's Internet site.

My best sources are the cabbies, and all emphatically said 60- to 90K tops. And it was easy to see. I never had to wait more than five minutes for a cab. Ever. Even at 5:00pm. Parties weren't well attended. In fact, for the first time ever, there was actually walking-around room at the exclusive Spencer party.

lomega was back promoting their Clik gizmo. But wait, weren't they doing that last year? And Castlewood was pushing their 2.2GB ultra SCSI removable storage disk that wouldn't ship until next summer.

The quality of the show was also disappointing. The Sands was filled mostly with OEM stuff--lots of system boards, drives, memory checking devices, and other boring equipment. Joe Bohannon nailed the entire Sands Convention Center in five hours, something that ordinarily takes a day and a half.

I couldn't even find anything very inspirational.

For instance, Creative Labs had a second generation Live sound card. Wow. Sure, there were some booths with interesting things--wireless networking was cool, as was HP's Jornada, their oddly named sub-notebook--and I found a few products to write about. But overall, I could've done just as well surfing the web.

Why has Comdex slowed down? Simple: Games went to E3, anything about the Web went to Internet World, and e-commerce apps also needed their own specialized trade shows.

Worse, it appears Softbank's jacked up the price on everything. That's happened before, but my hunch is vendors aren't going to take it much longer. (That happened to the Food Show when Pepsi and Coke pulled out, literally destroying the event. And Deere, the largest exhibitor of the Machinery Show, left the show high and dry when told they'd be charged double--the new policy put them into both agriculture and machinery.)

At Comdex, the newly remodeled Las Vegas Convention center was missing Intel, IBM, and other big vendors. The Lotus exhibit consisted of a bus in the parking lot with a box of Winchell's donuts on the table. One of the Lotus reps said this is their last Comdex.

On the exhibit floor, the Japanese companies were slugging it out, with Sony and Samsung making lots of noise, each trying to impress the other. Phillips created a small, loud city, and Microsoft was in their corner with more vendors than spectators.

Me? At \$329 a day for the hotel room and the five days lost...I dunno. It may also be my last Comdex.

#### *October, 2000*

Comdex is struggling. That's because most other trade shows specialize while Comdex tried to cater to everyone. Funny, in the past Comdex charged an outrageous \$100 for admission just to the exhibit floor. This year they're offering a free exhibits pass. (Too bad the hotels haven't caught on to this trick...) This is my last Comdex, for sure.

#### *December, 2001*

The Comdex mood this year was all business, with somber overtones. Journalists clustered around in small groups, talking about layoffs, and concerned with the dozens of freelancers gone missing. Lots of PR people didn't make it to Comdex; many of those who did were kvetching about having to share sleeping rooms with colleagues.

*(Continued on page 9)*

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## **Comdex is History...**

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*(Continued from page 8)*

I don't know that I'll be back next year. While the exhibit floor didn't have the sizzling array of products I saw at previous Comdexes, like last year, the place to be was the evening press events: Showstoppers, Digital/mobile Focus, and Silicon Northwest.

*December, 2003*

Sleeping rooms are under \$60. The show floor at the Convention center has lots of curtains and barriers to make it look as if there are lots of vendors. The aisles are narrow so it feels crowded. There are practically no big vendors, except for Microsoft, and even their exhibit is small.

I've said it every year, but this time I really mean it. This is *definitely* the last Comdex I'm going to attend. (And I'll see some of you at the Consumer Electronics Show in January, 2005!)

*Steve Bass is a Contributing Editor with PC World, a 23 year veteran of PIBMUG, and a founding member of APCUG. He's also the author of PC Annoyances: How to Fix the Most Annoying Things about Your Personal Computer, O'Reilly Press. It's available on Amazon for \$7.98 at <http://snurl.com/annoyances>.*

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## **TechTV – Gone But Not Forgotten** by Michael Rosenthal, Claremont Senior Computer Club

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*The fabulous TechTV show is gone and integrated into G4TechTV, a gaming channel*

It seems unlikely that they needed the money, but that's the only reason I can think of for Paul Allen's Vulcan Ventures to sell TechTV to Comcast. Comcast has merged TechTV with their poorly regarded all-games-all-the-time G4TV. Then they demolished TechTV's web sites and rich archives. Their motive is not clearly stated, but it's clear that they were after the TechTV cable/satellite slot and part of its demographic.

The coveted demographic is not the computer literati and enthusiasts, but the gamers. Hence, Leo is gone and Screen Savers hangs on by a thread. Screen Savers has a small gaming bias with their weekly LAN party and occasional conversation about game boxes, etc. They are closing the San Francisco facility in mid-July, 2004, and taking a handful of the on camera and technical talent with them to Los Angeles.

### *Gaming Rules*

It seems that the suits at Comcast want to tap into the 12 billion dollar per year electronic game industry and are otherwise computer ignorant. They are throwing away a segment of the TechTV audience, perhaps most of it, probably ignoring the purchasing power of the senior segment that has the discretionary funds to appeal to the tech advertisers.

I haven't seen Vulcan Ventures' balance sheet, but the story that could be extracted by careful listening is that TechTV was heavily subsidized and only became self-supporting in the last year or two. Their audience had become international. They had live call-ins from Australia, and parts of Asia, Canada and Europe.

*(Continued on page 10)*

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## **Internet SIG Meeting** by Craig Peterson, DVPC

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The Internet SIG will be meeting at Computer Renaissance in the new store location 1936 Linda Drive, Pleasant Hill. We will meet the third Wednesday of August (8/18/04) at 7:00 p.m. For further information phone Craig Peterson at 925-671-7025 or e-mail him at [compmail@pacbell.net](mailto:compmail@pacbell.net).

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## **Membership Alert** by Walt Parsons, DVPC

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Senator Liz Figueroa has a bill in this year's legislature which will be a big help to us if it is passed and signed.

Bill SB 1154 deals with rebates.

At the moment some of the bill's features are:

- If a rebate is offered directly by the retailer it must be redeemable at the time of purchase.
- The rebate offer must allow at least 60 days from the date of purchase for the consumer to submit the rebate form. The check must be in the mail within 30 days of receiving the rebate form.

*(Continued on page 12)*

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

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

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I was hurt and offended when several of my peers, my so-called friends, my fellow Board members, asked me upon my arrival if I had already written the minutes. They implied, nay, they outright stated, that they thought I often make up things in my minutes. They showed absolutely no respect or appreciation for the hours I spend crafting these minutes.

First there is the strain of taking scrupulously accurate notes. Perhaps the most difficult part of this phase is staying awake while the other Board members blather on about arcane, inconsequential technical nits (e.g., see last month's minutes, final paragraph, "QAM"). Then I must hurry home and begin transcribing the information while it is fresh in my mind and I can review my notes and my memory for hidden nuances. The final result must not only be accurate, but also entertaining. It must convey not only the literal facts of the conversations but also the emotions and the political maneuverings that are a constant undercurrent of the meeting.

For my fellow Board members to insult me with their snide comments about the minutes can only mean one thing: they have read them.

Alan began the business portion of the meeting with the announcement that we have about \$1,100 in the treasury. This prompted a brief discussion about projectors (you guessed it: Ron and Charlie were both there). We appear to have had incredible timing when we bought our current projector: the same model, which we bought for about \$1,200 (including sales tax and shipping charges), has not been advertised below \$1,600 (plus tax and shipping) since. This rare display of savvy consumerism on our part still gives us a warm feeling of satisfaction. Ron and Charlie, and indeed the entire Board, are still so proud of ourselves that although it has been about seven months since we bought this projector, as of yet no one is pushing to upgrade.

We talked about speakers for the next meeting. Intel was planned, but they called and begged a deferral. Alan may be out of town, as may Ron. So the pressure was applied to Peggy to discuss genealogy, and she reluctantly assented. Peggy is a very dedicated researcher, and really knows how to uncover a family tree, so this should be a fascinating meeting. Craig will also present a Photoshop training video. This "class on a disk" will show many of the neat features of Photoshop.

We wrapped up the meeting with a discussion of how to combat junk mail: the snail mail kind. Well, to be more accurate, that was one of several concurrent conversations that wrapped up the meeting. I picked up some interesting tips to try from Alan including stuffing the materials sent to you by one solicitor into the postage-paid return envelopes of another. (Counsel strongly advises making sure that the materials you stuff and return to not include your name, address, or other personal information.) Craig contributed another factoid which was news to me: the last four digits of a nine digit zip code in most cases are unique to one house! In other words, if your zip code is 55512-1212, within zip code 55512 you are the only one with the Plus-4 digits 1212. For more fascinating information like this, go to [www.usps.gov](http://www.usps.gov). Or even the US Post Office Fan Page at [www.zpub.com/aaa/uspofan.html](http://www.zpub.com/aaa/uspofan.html).

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## **TechTV – Gone But Not Forgotten...**

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*(Continued from page 9)*

### *And What about Leo?*

Sadly, there is no comparable TV outlet for computer enthusiasts. Leo LePorte says on his KFI radio show in Los Angeles (Sat and Sun, from 12 through 3, since Jan 2004 at [www.kfi640.com/main.html](http://www.kfi640.com/main.html)) that he will be flying to Toronto monthly for taping of Call For Help shows being produced by CBC. They are hoping to sell into the US market, but where? He says that he has been considering relocating his family to Toronto, but they are reluctant to leave the Bay Area.

Much of Leo's fan club has migrated with him to the KFI broadcasts by logging on to the real time audio stream. His callers are from all over North America.

As of June 27, LaPorte says that Comcast is considering adding the Call for Help feed to their G4TechTV programming. Go figure.

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**Curmudgeon's Corner** by Walt Parsons, DVPC's Official Curmudgeon – Accept No Substitute!

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*The Tale of a Much Delayed Rebate from Fry's for an O'Reilly Book*

Here's another example of the games the rebate people play.

On 23 March I purchased an O'Reilly book at Fry's Electronics that had a rebate involved.

Time Log:

3/23/04 Time elapsed – 0 Paperwork mailed for a \$15.00 rebate.

5/5/04 Time elapsed – 6 weeks Rebate request logged into the TCA Fulfillment System

6/19/04 Time elapsed – 11 weeks Phone TCA to inquire about over due rebate. Informed that the rebate is sent out 6- 8 weeks AFTER it is logged into the TCA system. My rebate to be mailed 6/30/04. This will be some 13 weeks *after* the date I mailed the rebate request.

7/19/04 Time elapsed – 17 weeks Check finally received

Complaints were sent to Fry's starting on 6/10/04:

6/10/04 – E-mail sent to customer service – The Fry's web page says that somebody will reply with 24 hours. No reply

E-mails were sent three more times. Never a reply

Early July – While shopping at the store I saw a form to tell Randy Fry, the owner, what you think about Fry's Electronics. The full story about the long overdue rebate was described and the form and letter was mailed. No reply

Fry's web page: They make it very hard to contact somebody. Never is a phone number given for customer service. The only way to contact them is via an e-mail address that never replies.

It is my experience is that their attitude is: "Don't bother us with customer service or problems, just come and spend your money."

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**President's Message...**

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*(Continued from page 1)*

As many of you know Comdex is on "hold" for November, and I wonder if we are witness to the end of an era. I am sure one can place a bet in Vegas as to whether Comdex will return in 2005!

Also, on a personal note, my friend Alan Chitlick is leaving Microsoft. Alan has been a good friend to DVPC by inviting us to host some of the Microsoft Extreme programs. I wish him well in his next endeavor.

Have a great meeting in August, and I look forward to seeing you in September.

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**Spammers CAN-SPAM** by Ron Ogg, DVPC

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MessageLabs, an anti-spam and anti-virus filtering service, reported that in June they scanned 917,613,868 email messages world-wide for spam, of which 791,776,652, or 86.3%, were stopped as spam. One year ago only 38.5% of email messages were stopped as spam by MessageLabs. This is despite the much-heralded but obviously ineffective CAN-SPAM legislation sponsored by U.S. Senators Conrad Burns (R-Mont.) and Ron Wyden (D-Ore.). When the CAN-SPAM bill was introduced, approximately 50% of all email messages were spam. (You can read the entire article on MessageLabs' web site at [www.messagelabs.com/intelligence/reports/monthlies/june04/default.asp](http://www.messagelabs.com/intelligence/reports/monthlies/june04/default.asp).)

The rhetoric from the supporters of this legislation claimed that the CAN-SPAM bill would halt spam email messages.

"The problems of spam have been accumulating over the years to a point where everyone has seen the effects of this frustrating junk mail," said Burns. "The CAN-SPAM bill will finally offer consumers the ability to put an end to the bothersome email they see each day in their in-boxes."

I don't know about you, but I haven't seen the end of spam email messages, or even a decrease in the amount of spam I'm receiving. On the contrary, the amount of email messages I receive that are spam has been growing at an increasing rate since the introduction of the CAN-SPAM legislation.

So, what can we do about spam email messages?

*(Continued on page 12)*

Give a DVPC Membership Gift Certificate!

## **Spammers CAN-SPAM...**

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(Continued from page 11)

First, get a good anti-spam program. You can purchase Qurb by clicking on the link on the DVPC home page, [www.dvpc.org](http://www.dvpc.org). Qurb uses a white list; that means any email that doesn't have the sender's email address or domain in your Qurb white list will be sent to the quarantine folder, where you can tell Qurb it should be accepted in the future or you can send it to the Qurb folder where you can delete it at your leisure. See the Qurb review on page 20 of the April, 2004 issue of *Diablo Blue*:

[www.dvpc.org/blue/2004apr/dvpc2004apr.pdf](http://www.dvpc.org/blue/2004apr/dvpc2004apr.pdf)

Second, write a complaint about the ineffectiveness of the CAN-SPAM law to your Representative and Senator. Tell them that CAN-SPAM isn't working. Tell them that the CAN-SPAM law could be improved by removing the restriction that prevents individual states from passing laws that are more comprehensive, like the California anti-spam law that was invalidated by CAN-SPAM.

Third, **NEVER** open an attachment or link that comes in a spam email message. Doing so may (and probably will!) cause spyware to be installed on your computer.

Fourth, and probably most important, **NEVER** respond to an offer in a spam email message! These messages are sent out by the millions, and the spammers don't need a high percentage of responses to their offers to make money. Don't make them successful by buying their goods or services!

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## **Are Cheap Software Offers Too Good To Be True?** by Ron Ogg, DVPC

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Since we're on the topic of spam, have you noticed that many of the spam messages you receive are for brand-name software at unbelievably low prices?

How about the full version of Photoshop CS for \$50 instead of \$568.99 from Buy.com — it lists for \$649.00.

How about the full version of Macromedia Studio MX 2004 for \$80 instead of \$942.95 at CompUSA — it lists for \$999.00.

How about the full version of Norton AntiVirus 2004 Professional for \$9.99 instead of \$64.81 at eCost.com — it lists for \$69.95.

How about the upgrade version of Windows XP Professional for \$40 instead of \$197 at newegg.com — it lists for \$199.00.

As yourself this:

1. Does this cheap software come in the software publisher's packaging? Is there a registration card included? Can you register the software on the publisher's web site? The answers are No, No, and No.
2. Will your computer be infected by viruses if you install this cheap software? Will your computer be infested with spyware if you install this cheap software? Will this cheap software have bugs? The answers are Probably, Probably, and Probably.
3. Where did these cheap copies come from? The answer is either they are pirated or they are OEM versions being illegitimately sold on the black market.
4. Are you willing to risk your computer by buying pirated or illegitimate software? Your answer should be No.

Stay away from software that's being offered for prices that are so cheap they are unbelievable. The old saying says "There ain't no free lunch", and that's still very true. If something is too good to be true, it isn't true.

When you're thinking about buying software and are looking for a good deal, and you see a deal that looks unbelievable, it's a good idea to follow the advise of the Robot on the old Lost in Space TV show: "Danger! Danger! Wil Robinson!"

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## **Membership Alert...**

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(Continued from page 9)

- The rebate offer must disclose a phone number to check the status of the rebate The rebate form must be supplied with the product, or at the time and place of purchase.
- The rebate form cannot require personal information beyond name, address and home phone.
- Additionally, copies of the receipt would be permitted (instead of only the original), and the consumer would only have to write down the model number on the rebate form if the receipt doesn't include the name of the product.

The bill sure sounds good to me but what affect will it have on companies from out of California? Or on vendors from out of state?

The bill has been passed by the State Senate and is not being considered on the floor of the Assembly. A e-mail or letter to your Assembly person sure wouldn't hurt.

To follow the progress on this bill go to [www.leginfo.ca.gov](http://www.leginfo.ca.gov).

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## **Computer Crossword** by Craig Peterson, DVPC

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The Computer Crossword is on summer vacation this month. Check the September issue of *Diablo Blue* for the next Computer Crossword!

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## **Will Your Critical Information Live After You Die?** by Walt Parsons, DVPC

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There was an interesting article recently in the Contra Costa Times about people and their passwords.

There was a man who did historical research for a history society and all of his work was on the society's computer and was password protected. Regrettably the gentleman was killed in a car accident and the society discovered that nobody knew the password to unlock his years of research. The society was so desperate to get at the man's research that they hired a hacker to discover the password and unlock the valuable information. Fortunately the hired hacker was able to discover that the man had used his last name spelled backwards and all was well.

Think how often this problem could crop up. Even if you are just in a hospital for a while, how can trusted people get access to key information that is stored on your computer or in key web sites? Things like insurance, bank accounts, bills to be paid, investments, pensions, etc.

So lets look at you, the reader. Most likely you have many different passwords for the various web sites you go to and including your bank by computer web site. Now if you have followed Ron Ogg's good advice you have used a different password for each web site and you have used a randomly generated password of at least 8 characters consisting of upper and lower case letters, numbers, and punctuation. Also you have resisted the urge to not have a data base on your computer containing all of these passwords and you have not printed out a list of them and hidden them under your keyboard for convenience or have a yellow sticky note hanging from your monitor. So what happens if you suddenly die? Surely somebody, probably your estate's executor, will need to get access to your financial, insurance, and investment information.

Here were some of the suggestions ranging from minor security for items you don't really care if somebody sees them to drastic measures for information you really want to keep secure such as your credit card information and information needed to steal your identity.

1. Minor security — keep a list of web site passwords in a data base but name it something misleading like "DVPC E-mail list". Or print a list to be kept inserted in a rarely opened book such as "Ancient Greek History" or "Sex life of a sand flea".
2. Major Security — keep your passwords in an encrypted data base, but don't forget to make sure that somebody has the code to un-encrypt this file.

Some password programs such as *Roboform* ([www.roboform.com](http://www.roboform.com)) actually encrypt its list of passwords. (I carry this one step further by using a USB flash memory to store the Roboform data and when I leave home for a vacation I take the flash memory with me. This also allows me to use my laptop to access my password protected information.)

So what do I do? Well, I compromise a bit. Most of my passwords are in Roboform, but I do keep a printout in my safe deposit box. The list in the safe deposit box also has the master password needed to access Roboform.

What do you do? If you have an interesting way to handle this problem, either drop me a note for a future article or write an article yourself.

Start your article with "my main password is ??????" <grin>

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## **Online and In Person** by Billy Mabray, Oklahoma City PC Users Group

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In the early days of the Internet, a common fear was that people would spend too much time online, creating a world of isolated loners. Computer users would stop spending time in the real world, preferring to type instead of talk. While this may be true for some people, many others are finding the Web has enhanced their social life, not hurt it. The proliferation of e-mail, instant messaging, and chat rooms are evidence that people are connecting more now than ever before.

What about real life social interaction? People still like to meet in person, and there are many Web-based services to help people do just that. These services are blurring the lines between virtual and real communities. People are finding friends online and getting together in real life. Others are using the Internet to keep in touch with their real-life acquaintances. Internet users are finding they can connect with other people better than they ever have before.

A common example of virtual communities creating real-life friendships is PC user groups. People typically learn about their local group through that group's Web site. Much of the group's communication is done online. For these groups, though, the real point of using the Internet is to facilitate real-world get-togethers. Meetings, presentations, and study groups bring people together who

## **Online and In Person...**

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*(Continued from page 13)*

have similar interests, but would otherwise have not found each other. Web sites and mailing lists allow for efficient communication, while group activities create opportunities for learning new things and meeting new people.

Meetup.com offers a similar service, but for a broader range of topics. Meetup.com arranges monthly get-togethers in cities around the world on a vast array of topics. For example, the third Tuesday of every month is International Poker Meetup Day. If you are interested in meeting poker players in your area, visit the Web site, type in your zip code, and join the poker meetup nearest you. Members vote on where to meet each month, and they RSVP through the Web site. If enough people RSVP, the get-together will take place. Meetup.com offers many features for communicating with other members, planning agendas, and more. There are literally thousands of topics, with new ones being added all the time, so you are bound to find something you are interested in.

For those who are interested in communicating and spending time with friends they already have, there are online services to help with that too. Yahoo Groups, for example, lets you set up your own personal portal. A Yahoo Group includes a mailing list, photo gallery, polls, online chat, and more. You can set up a group for your family and invite all your relatives to join. Then the whole family can upload photos, plan the next reunion, or talk about what's been going on in their lives. Similarly, sites like Classmates.com or Reunion.com allow old classmates and military personnel to reconnect with each other. These services are a great way for people who don't get to see each other very often to stay in touch.

Along the same lines is a wave of new services known as social networking applications. There has been an explosion of these sites in the past year: Friendster, LinkedIn, Orkut. The idea here is to map relationships - someone invites you to join, and you in turn invite all your other friends to join. The Web site shows you people who are directly connected to you (friends), as well as those who are connected to you through other people (friends of friends). You can then use the service to keep in touch with your friends, and to meet new people through friends you already have.

So, are these virtual or real communities? The line is blurring, and the distinction between the two will most likely disappear in a few years. Technology continues to improve the way we interact. Rather than turning us into loners, the Internet is helping us to make new friends, and to keep in touch with old ones.

*Billy Mabray and his wife, Angela, own Smart Goat, a local software development and Web design business. They are members of the OKCPCUG. Comments or questions on the article are welcome and can be addressed to: [billy@smartgoat.com](mailto:billy@smartgoat.com).*

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## **Computer Power Protection** by Ira Wilsker

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Now that summer is upon us, and our air conditioners seem to cycle on and off endlessly, we may have noticed our computer screens flicker or shrink ever-so-slightly for a moment when the AC compressor powers on. With our intermittent yet common summer thunderstorms, we may have noticed our lights flicker, occasionally accompanied by a power outage of varying lengths. While these and similar effects may be an emotional strain upon us personally, they may also be an indication that we may need to protect our computers from unseen electrical damage.

The most basic form of electrical protection for our computers, which should be considered as mandatory for all computers, including notebook computers used away from the home or office, is a surge suppressor. Power surges, also referred to as spikes, are short term increases in voltage, often occurring when major electrical equipment, such as air conditioners or freezers are turned off. These surges and spikes can damage sensitive electronic devices such as computers, TVs, microwave ovens, and other devices. Surge suppressors to minimize the risk of damage are readily available in a variety of forms and prices, ranging from an inexpensive suppressor in the form of a power strip, to large box shaped devices that provide surge protection with line conditioning and a battery backup function. A recent review of the selection available locally at the office supply, electronics, and discount stores indicated a vast array of power strip type surge suppressors, ranging in price from about \$3 to almost \$100. One caveat is appropriate here; many users have a standard power strip connecting their computers to the wall plug. While almost all power strips offer some form of overload protection, typically with a circuit breaker, standard power strips offer no other protection for power related problems, and need to be replaced with a decent quality power strip that has a surge suppression function with a UL 1449 rating.

The ability of a surge suppressor to dissipate the surge or spike is measured in "joules", with a higher joules rating indicating a greater ability to absorb and dissipate the excess voltage from the surge. Almost all surge suppressors have a limited life expect-

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

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## **Computer Power Protection...**

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*(Continued from page 14)*

tancy, and may wear out. Many of the better ones have an LED or other device indicating the proper functioning of the surge protection. It is a good practice to frequently inspect your surge suppressor, and to immediately replace it if there is even a hint or suspicion of malfunction. Power surges are one of the major killers of computers and other electronic devices. In my house, each of my major electronic devices, including TVs, microwaves, stereos, cordless phones, and of course computers, is connected to a functional surge suppressor. I also carry a good quality surge suppressor - power strip in my notebook computer case which is always used whenever my notebook is plugged in.

While the primary function of a surge suppressor is to protect plugged-in electrical devices from surge related damage, many of the suppressors on the market also provide additional functionality. Common in most better suppressors is an electronic noise filter, which reduces the electrical noise, often referred to as "RFI" or "EMI" interference, carried through the power lines. This electronic noise may be thought of as a type of static, and commonly comes from a variety of transmitters, welding devices, printers, lightning, or other sources. This type of line noise can cause errors in computer programs and data files, and possibly also damage some hardware components. In purchasing a surge suppressor, I recommend that one be purchased that includes electronic noise filtering.

I have repaired countless computers where the modem was "fried", or destroyed by a power surge. It is widely known in professional circles that power surges and spikes can also come through a phone line, as well as a coax cable, network cable, or other form of data connection. Many surge suppressors also include one or more protected lines explicitly for a phone or fax cable, TV or satellite cable, or other types of network cable. For those of us that still use dialup connections to the internet, or use fax machines, a surge suppressor that has a phone jack should also be a necessity. The phone plug from the wall connects to the jack in the suppressor, and another cable is used to connect the suppressor to the modem or fax machine. Generally, there is no significant degradation of signal while connected to a fax machine, but some 56K modems may suffer a slight degradation of signal or speed. This slight performance is a small price to pay for the added protection provided by the suppressor. All of my phone lines and cable TV coax is connected to the same surge suppressor that protects the device they are connected to.

As an added benefit, many models of surge suppressors also carry some form of insurance coverage to repair or replace devices connected to them from covered perils, often including lightning. The amount of coverage provided is often high, but is sometimes used as a marketing gimmick. As with all types of guarantees and insurance, be sure to read the fine print, and follow explicitly the directions for filing a claim.

Better safe than sorry.

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## **How and When to Enable Windows XP's Firewall** by Linda Gonce, Orange County IBM Users' Group

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Most users are aware of a need for an antivirus program and a firewall in order to be protected from regular, daily Internet threats.

What some may not know is that Windows XP has a built-in firewall. While it lacks the bells and whistles of a full version firewall, such as Norton or Zone Alarm, it is still useful.

You can enable it by going to Control Panel and clicking on the Network Connection icon. In the Connections window, right click on the name of your connection and click on Properties in the drop-down menu. Click on the Advanced tab. Check the box next to "Protect my computer and network by limiting or preventing access to this computer from the Internet." Then, click OK.

Follow these steps each time you wish to enable the firewall for other Internet connections on your computer.

But, before enabling XP's firewall, you should be aware of these points:

- It must not be used through software or hardware routers.
- It only works on incoming Internet traffic, not outgoing traffic from spy-ware, Trojan viruses, or hacker tools.
- On local area networks (LANs) with other computers, it will block File and Printer Sharing.
- It can be turned on or off for each of your dial-ups, LAN, or high-speed Internet connections.

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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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## **Viruses, Worms, & Other Security Issues** by Sue Crane, Big Bear Computer Club

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It wasn't a good month for Internet Explorer. A computer virus designed to steal valuable information like passwords spread through a new technique that converted popular Web sites into virus transmitters. Hackers made subtle changes to the Web site so visitors get a piece of code that's designed to retrieve software that records a person's keystrokes. Such data, which can include credit card numbers, bank accounts and passwords, are collected for remote delivery to hackers, experts say. Security experts worried about its method of delivery. The virus takes advantage of three separate flaws in Microsoft products and can be difficult to detect. Software updates to fix two of the flaws were released in April, but the third flaw is newly discovered and has no patch available yet. Computer owners can search their computers for the files "Kk32.dll" or "Surf.dat" to see if they are infected. They should obtain the latest security updates for Microsoft products and their anti-virus and firewall programs. For the flaw that lacks a patch, users should turn up security settings on Internet Explorer browsers to the highest levels. Users could also turn off the "JavaScript" feature on their browsers, though doing so could cripple functions on some sites. Removal tools are available from major anti-virus vendors. Security researchers suggest that using Microsoft alternatives is one way to surf the Web worry-free.

Computer viruses overall are on the rise. According to Sophos ([www.sophos.com/pressoffice/pressrel/uk/20040601topten.html](http://www.sophos.com/pressoffice/pressrel/uk/20040601topten.html)), "The number of new viruses released on the Internet in May hit a 2-1/2-year high." Bill Gates claims Microsoft is responding to viruses and other online threats faster. "We will guarantee that the average time to fix will continue to come down," "The thing we have to do is not only get these patches done very quickly ... we also have to convince people to turn on auto-update."

Cisco Systems issued a patch for a security flaw in one of its Linksys routers that could give hackers access to consumers' home networks. Linksys WRT54G 802.11g wireless router & other new Linksys routers, using firmware versions 2.02.7 and 2.02.2. Cisco posted a beta version of the new firmware ([www.linksys.com/download/firmware.asp?fwid=201](http://www.linksys.com/download/firmware.asp?fwid=201)) on the Linksys Web site. Customers using the new Beta version should not experience problems even with the firewall turned off.

Microsoft is set to phase out support for both NT 4.0 Workstation and Server in the coming months. Microsoft officials have denied that the company is using product-support cut-off dates as a tool to force Windows users to upgrade. Windows 98 support was discontinued this month, too, but there are several sites on the Internet where 98 users can go for assistance. If you're not upgrading to Windows XP and you need help, do an Internet search for "Windows 98 + support".

Microsoft revealed a new long-term support policy along with upcoming technologies to boost security and reduce spam. The company will now guarantee a minimum of 10 years of support for all business and developer products, giving all customers the option of installing (IMF) Intelligent Message Filtering, a spam-blocking add-on. They also promised future improvements in spam blocking through E-mail Caller ID, a system Microsoft is working on to verify the sender of a message, thus enabling people to block junk messages.

Windows XP, SP2 will de-emphasize backward compatibility with legacy systems and code for the sake of security. Microsoft admits that as many as one application in 10 will experience problems due to the upgrade. However, Security experts advise Windows XP users install the update immediately and Windows expert Paul Thurrott suggests, "If you ignore or put off this release, you'll only be hurting yourself." Microsoft won't be offering this service patch to those who have pirated copies of Windows XP. SP2 will check for bad Product IDs looking for pirated copies and will not install.

Yahoo's new Anti-Spy toolbar gives adware the benefit of the doubt. Users who want to use the toolbar to identify adware have to remember to check a special box each time they scan. Meanwhile, Yahoo pays Claria Corp. (formerly Gator) a percentage of ad revenue when users click on paid listings. Claria and WhenU.com Inc., are accused of tricking users into accepting adware downloads and pop-up ads.

After Google introduced G-mail with 1Gb of free storage, competitor Yahoo quickly increased its 25Mb of free storage to 100 Mb free. The following day Yahoo's email business was so good, most users couldn't log on - or in many cases even get yahoo.com to load! In addition to Yahoo's increased traffic, a reported DNS attack halted traffic on Microsoft, Google, Yahoo and Apple, among others. Akamai Technologies Inc., which provides services improving the reliability of large Web sites, claims the problems were caused by a "sophisticated" large-scale DDOS attack. After other sites were restored, Yahoo users were still reporting glitches including site inaccessibility, slow page loads and inoperable buttons on the site. And now G-mail users are reporting they can't get messages through to users of Microsoft's Hotmail. Yahoo's web sites and services stumbled for the second time in less than a week when users were unable to log onto Yahoo's instant messaging program. Yahoo described the problem as an "isolated hardware-related issue". Some users also received confusing notices that their accounts had been suspended for exceeding storage limits when that was not the case. Microsoft will increase Hotmail's free e-mail storage limits from 2 megabytes to 250MB and its paid e-mail service, which costs \$19.95 a year, from 10MB to 2 gigabytes, to counter rivals Google and Yahoo, who increased their online storage last month. Hotmail changes will begin in early July.

Phishing has become a major concern for banks and credit-card issuers, which end up footing the bill when a criminal runs up unauthorized charges on a stolen credit card. Visa USA, the FTC, the Better Business Bureau and the other coalition members said they plan to work together to teach consumers how to avoid phishing scams and to report suspicious e-mail to authorities. The advice to consumers is simple: Don't click on the link. "If you do, you may be the catch of the day," said Howard Beales, director of

*(Continued on page 17)*



# Tired of Spam?

Go to [www.dvpc.org](http://www.dvpc.org) to download QURB!

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## **Viruses, Worms, & Other Security Issues...**

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the FTC's Bureau of Consumer Protection. Beales encouraged Americans to forward any suspicious e-mail messages to the FTC at [uce@ftc.gov](mailto:uce@ftc.gov). Such information is valuable, he said, because it helps investigators track scam artists, many of whom change their Web site locations and e-mail addresses frequently in an effort to frustrate law enforcement officials. Consumers can also send suspicious mail relating to their visa cards to [phishing@visa.com](mailto:phishing@visa.com). Beales stressed that legitimate companies rarely if ever send e-mail asking customers for sensitive data. Customers who have any question about such a request should go directly to the company's Web site by typing the company's Internet address into a browser window, rather than by clicking on a link in a suspicious e-mail. A number of private-sector firms have joined to create the Trusted Electronic Communications Forum that will work to design technical solutions to the phishing problem. The Anti-Phishing Working Group's Web site ([www.antiphishing.org/](http://www.antiphishing.org/)) posts alerts about the latest phishing attacks and advice about how to avoid Phishing scams and what to do if you've given-out your personal information.

Yahoo, Microsoft, EarthLink, America Online, British Telecom, Comcast and other members of The Anti-Spam Technical Alliance (ASTA) announced a proposal of best practices for filtering and sending e-mail, authenticating e-mail senders by IP address or with digital content signatures to help prevent e-mail fraud. They called on ISPs to "police their networks more aggressively and cut off machines suspected of being launching pads for spam." When such machines are found, Internet providers are urged to block their Internet access until their owners come forward, at which point they will be given help to remove spyware, adware and malware. Group representatives believed the zombie problem is going largely unchecked because some ISPs are not taking such action. The Alliance is proposing that ISPs who are quarantining zombies might reject all mail from networks that are not doing so. ASTA, recommends that all PC users install virus protection and security systems and suggested that ISPs implement rate limits on outbound e-mail traffic, control automated registration of accounts and close all open relays. The IETF, which develops the technical standards that run the Internet, will publish initial recommendations on e-mail authentication in August. The FTC, meanwhile, plans to address the issue this fall. 'Filtering technologies are not enough' says Bill Gates. Microsoft is adding tools that would combat the forgery of e-mail sender addresses and allow senders to 'qualify' their messages so they can guarantee delivery. ...In addition, Mr. Gates said Microsoft is developing technologies to detect and block 'dictionary attacks,' where spammers send e-mail to a random assortment of names and then harvest the real addresses by collecting those that generate bounce-back messages." A Utah judge has granted an injunction to adware maker WhenU.com to temporarily halt the state's new anti-spyware law from going into effect on the grounds that the law is unconstitutional.

Security analysts have been warning of a cell phone virus. A group of underground virus writers has showed off what is believed to be the world's first worm that can spread on advanced mobile phones. The worm, named Cabir, was sent to security software firms Kapersky Lab of Russia and U.S.-based Symantec by a member of 29a, a group of virus writers from the Czech Republic and Slovakia who pride themselves in creating "proof of concept malicious viruses," the "Cabir" virus takes an approach that hampers its spread--it asks for permission to infect your phone.

Symantec, makers of Norton Antivirus, says the next big worm is likely to exploit flaws in instant messaging clients – and it will spread faster than any other worm on record. Eric Chien, chief of research at Symantec Security Response. "An instant-messaging threat could spread to a half a million machines in 30 or 35 seconds." All it takes is 30 seconds; IM users should be running antivirus software. Most engines have plug-ins for IM clients. Chien recommends using something other than the free clients, something that uses encryption and goes through a more rigorous testing process.

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## **Tech News** by Sue Crane, Big Bear Computer Club

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Get your DDR SDRAM now! With back-to-school demand for more PCs due to pick up during the month of July, computer memory prices are expected to rise again. After an unexpected spike in April, prices have fallen about 24% to around \$4.80 for 256 megabytes of DDR SDRAM from a peak of \$6.30.

Hewlett-Packard Co. will replace memory modules in up to 900,000 HP notebooks with an "industry-wide" design flaw that can cause system lockups. The problem is tied to the interaction of DRAM and Intel chipsets. HP's replacement program will send the customer a kit containing a screwdriver and instructions for replacing the faulty modules. The customer can then ship the DRAM to HP and receive a new module free. HP appears to be the only computer manufacturer taking action. A representative from Dell Computer Corp. said the company is "looking into it."

Computer trade show Comdex, once the biggest event on the tech calendar, has been canceled this year, making room for the growing interest in shows emphasizing consumer electronics and specialist IT gear.

Personal computer makers have been eager to revolutionize the way people watch movies, listen to music and record their favorite TV shows. Last month Intel launched new core logic and motherboards, along with a new socket format for the Pentium IV, targeting the high-performance desktop PC market. The new technology gives PCs more powerful sound and graphics, a speedier link for peripherals and memory, and an ability to run a wireless data network, turning the PCs into home entertainment devices. The inclusion of Wi-Fi access point technology allows new PCs with the chipset to become wireless gateways for other mobile devices.

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## **Tech News...**

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Intel was unable to ramp up the Wi-Fi technology in time for the launch, but Intel spokesman Dan Snyder said Intel will announce the technology now and provide availability later throughout the year.

Sun Microsystems has designed 3-D interface software to compete with the PC desktop and file folders. Sun's "Project Looking Glass", is a 3D interface allowing documents or images to be turned sideways and spun around so that notations can be made on the back. Sun is initially planning to use the technology on desktop machines running Linux or Sun's Solaris operating system. Sun president and COO Jonathan Schwartz says Project Looking Glass reflects a swing in software development back toward desktop machines instead of running programs on centralized servers.

Meanwhile the digital home has become a reality! At the Samsung Tower Palace in Seoul, \$1 million-plus apartments are outfitted with Internet-enabled ovens, security cameras and wall-mounted flat-panel displays. The company has tests under way in Canada, Australia and Europe, and it recently struck deals with two U.S.-based home builders to conduct digital home trials in the U.S. Wiring homes in the U.S. will cost from \$2,000 to \$10,000.

The Virtual Doctor Will See You Now. Some health care providers are offering e-mail medical advice and "e-visits". So how do you get doctors who don't want to use e-mail because they are too busy, worried about privacy, and not being paid for it to buy into the program? Pay them, of course! In August, Blue Cross & Blue Shield of Massachusetts will start paying primary care physicians for 'Web visits' with their patients. Blue Cross will be expanding a pilot program that pays doctors to respond to patient e-mails. Watch for the program in your area...

From truckers in the U.S. and Canada to Yak farmers in the mountains of Nepal, more people are jumping in with wireless technology. Yak farmers are taking advantage of a wi-fi network set up in a remote region to keep in touch with their families where there are no phones or other communication. And at networked farms of the future, farmers sit in their pickups with a laptop, drive robot tractors and even feed the hogs remotely. Two Georgia farmers are already using the technology: One uses wireless video to monitor vegetable packing; another uses a wireless network equipped with GPS to monitor irrigation systems. Robotic tractor technology has also proven useful in insect control. The Texas Department of Transportation (TxDOT) hopes to reduce fatigue-related accidents by enticing drivers with free Wi-Fi hotspots so they'll stop more often and check their e-mail. Meanwhile, the whole city of Chaska, Minnesota will soon be blanketed by a Wi-Fi hot-spot and city officials plan to offer wireless Internet access as a municipal service for about \$16/month for home users, creating a "connected community." The manager of arena operations for the Charlotte Bobcats is including Wi-Fi wireless in the design of a new \$265 million arena. He says, "Some people will think this is the geeky thing, the nerdy thing. But they were probably saying that 10 years ago when other people were going to Web sites and using e-mail." Other sports teams are following suit; Giants CIO Bill Schlough says: "It's like walking into Starbucks -- except our Wi-Fi is free!"

Game developer Respond sign has created a first-of-its-kind game geared toward helping the player lose weight through exercise and diet. The game, titled "Yourself! Fitness", is designed for the Xbox and features a virtual personal trainer who guides the player through a customized set of exercises and diets; players advance to the next level when certain fitness goals are met. Next year the Xbox Live version will allow players to use a wireless headset to chat with each other during their workouts

"The Effect of File Sharing on Record Sales," released by Harvard Business School professor Felix Oberholzer-Gee and his co-author Koleman Strumpf, of the University of North Carolina caused a ruckus in the music industry. The team concluded Internet music piracy not only doesn't hurt legitimate CD sales, it may even boost sales. The researchers contend that most downloading is done over peer-to-peer networks by teens and college kids, groups that are "money-poor but time-rich," and wouldn't have bought the songs they downloaded, anyway. The team also claims illegal downloading may actually help the industry with an older crowd who download a song or two and then, if they like what they hear, go out and buy the music.

"Toxic dust" found on computer processors and monitors contains chemicals called PBDEs which have been linked to reproductive and neurological disorders. "The levels in the dust are enough to raise a red flag, but not enough to create a crisis," said Dr. Gina Solomon, senior scientist at the Natural Resources Defense Council and assistant professor of medicine at University of California,

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# **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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## Tech News...

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*(Continued from page 18)*

San Francisco. "I have an old computer monitor in front of me now, and I'm not about to throw it away. But when I get a new one, it darn well will be free of these chemicals." Dell, along with Apple Computer Inc. and others, stopped using PBDEs in 2002.

The U.S. Supreme Court ruled that a federal law designed to restrict Internet pornography violated Americans' rights to freedom of speech and upheld an injunction excluding prosecutors from filing criminal cases under the Child Online Protection Act, or COPA, until a full trial takes place. COPA restricts the use of sexually explicit material deemed "harmful to minors" on commercial Web sites. But the law isn't dead: COPA now goes back to a Philadelphia appeals court for a full trial.

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## **No Joke: Free Money from Microsoft** by Steve Bass, PC World; Author, PC Annoyances (Ed: Article Updated)

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You've probably received the e-mail telling you about Bill Gates and his \$240 rebate (or was that \$520?) if you send an e-mail to everyone you know. That's a hoax and it's been floating around for years.

### *Here's an Offer That's Real*

Raise your hand if you want \$100 bucks from Microsoft while keeping the money out of the hands of lawyers. Yeah, I know, of course you do. Well, if you live in California (and some other states), all you need do is fill out a form and file a claim.

**Update:** The deadline for submitting a claim has been extended. The court has not set an exact date, however, the earliest possible date that claim forms would be due is October 5, 2004. Please check back for additional updates and get the details at:

[www.microsoftcalsettlement.com/](http://www.microsoftcalsettlement.com/)

(Bass disclaimer: Concerned because you're not sure if you should tell the truth on the form? Check with your local mental health facility, a school guidance counselor, or a neighborhood church or synagogue leader. Distressed because you can't find the serial number for your pirated version of Windows 95? Look it up on a Warez site. And if you live in Canada and can't cash in like the folks in California, complain to your Canadian Microsoft representative, easily found on the Internet (Alternatively, you can move and enjoy our smog and traffic.) Most important: Don't write to Bass with your concerns. While he certainly cares, he doesn't have the time to answer your questions.)

### *Let's Hear from the Lawyers*

The lawyers, who always seem to make out better than the plaintiffs in class action suits, are kvetching. From a recent article in the Los Angeles Times: "The 35 law firms that spent as much as five years fighting the case have asked the court to award them \$270 million in fees and expenses. They say they took a big financial risk by agreeing to go up against one of the world's most powerful companies."

I guess that's not enough. The Times continues: "Altogether, the lawyers say their hourly rates add up to \$51 million, and they have asked San Francisco Superior Court Judge Paul Alvarado to multiply that amount by 5.05 to account for the risk that they could have lost the case and received nothing. That would result in reimbursement at rates as high as \$3,019 an hour — or as much as \$36,658 for one lawyer's 12-hour day."

### *MS's Money — for a Fee*

Be careful when you ask for the MS money. There are numerous sites that'll help you fill out the form with easy-to-use wizards. As you're clicking away, gleefully smiling and wondering how you'll spend the \$100, you'll eventually get to the last page where you're told about the fee and asked how you'd like to pay. ([www.mymsclaim.com/home.html](http://www.mymsclaim.com/home.html)) My advice? Use the MS site, download the form, and do it yourself. It's easy.

*Steve Bass is a Contributing Editor with PC World, a 23 year veteran of PIBMUG, and a founding member of APCUG.*

*He's also the author of PC Annoyances: How to Fix the Most Annoying Things about Your Personal Computer, O'Reilly Press.*

*It's available on Amazon for \$7.98 at <http://snurl.com/annoyances>.*

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## **No Windows SIG Meetings In August or September**

**Because of SIG Leader travel and the Labor Day holiday, Windows SIG meetings will resume in October. See you then!**

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