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Cyber Chat

"A computer user group newsletter"

Volume 9 Issue 2

DeFuniak Springs, FL 32435

February 2007

NO VOLUNTEERS—NO COMPUTER CLUB

By Bob (The Cheapskate) Click,
Greater Orlando Computer Users Group



It was with sadness that I read the final issue of Blue Chip News, newsletter of the Saginaw Valley Computer Organization <<http://www.svca.org>>. Describing the end must have been tough for their long time editor Lynn

Kauer to write since he has long been one of the faithful for the benefit of the members. I thought I even detected a tearstain on that page. The final bell rang when four long time volunteers moved away and nobody would step forward to replace any of them, and the same problem for some other long time volunteers who wanted to relax for a while. With too few members willing to help with the work, it became necessary to determine the group's future, and only 13 members bothered to show up for the final meeting. I feel that the no-shows were actually the real losers. Two SIGs will continue to run independently. I hope the members who couldn't find the time realize the error of their ways and revive the group. I had occasion to visit that group several years ago and it was a fun night. My meeting badge still hands in my office; my name written on a 5 1/4" floppy.

This is not the first user group to shut down recently for the same reason, and the abundance of free-riders assures that it won't be the last. Some groups are still

doing well even though they also have some long time workers who cannot get replaced. I have long heard the refrain about the Internet replacing user groups because it has every thing a computer user needs to know, but I don't buy that statement. Nobody from the Internet is going to stand in front of you trying to explain something so you can better understand it, and answer your questions in the process. Nor will anybody from the Internet stop by and help fix your problem computer for free. Yes, there are some people who could read the answers on a Web page and know exactly what to do, but I am not one of them and many other people are not that capable either without friends to help. Most important though, the friendship and camaraderie of a user group is irreplaceable.

I know my opinion will be mostly ignored because freeloader members are what they are, but that type of member should think about all the answers and information they get at a meeting or presentation, and consider giving back instead of just taking. Try it, you might enjoy it, and there are lots of ways to give back.

Fitness Philosophy

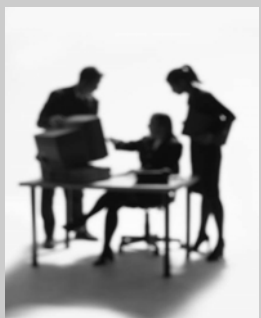
My grandmother started walking five miles a day when she was 60. She's 97 now and we still don't know where she is today!

If you are going to try cross-country skiing, start with a small country.

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General Meeting
February 17
Okaloosa-Walton
College
Chautauqua Center
Room 201
(computer lab—bldg 2)
DeFuniak Springs, Fl.



Special
Interest Groups

Genealogy
Next meeting Feb 6, 2007
OWC Chautauqua Center
Gay Russ—SIG Leader

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The principle of equal access/equal opportunity for everyone is practiced.

The primary purpose is to assist our members and others to become more proficient in the use of a computer for their personal enjoyment. We serve through promotion of computer literacy and education by being actively involved in the community.

The Chautauqua Cyber Club, Inc. is a not-for-profit organization under section 501(c)3 for educational purposes, and incorporated under the laws of the State of Florida.

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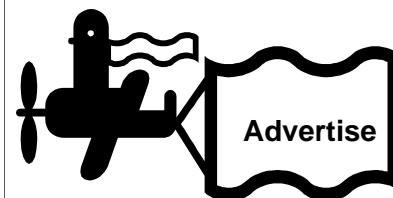
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Publishing information: Articles submitted for publication should be in Microsoft Word or regular ASCII text and unformatted. Photos with article are encouraged.

Presenters/Writers: Members are encouraged to volunteer and present a program on software or hardware. Vendors will provide presentations-in-a-box, and publishers will provide books for review. Whatever is presented becomes the property of the presenter. Make your interest known and share. You will be surprised at what all is available to demonstrate.

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Boot n' Reboot

by J. B. Hillard—President



Sort of a pet peeve of mine—how cable TV operates! Recently Bright-house Cable here in De-Funiak petitioned the City of DeFuniak for a 15 year franchise. This has to be made in the Sun-shine so the public can

offer comments. Last month the public got off a shot at the City Council meeting.

Quietly included in the agreement (submitted by BrightHouse) they want to require 30 houses a mile before service will be provided. Currently the number is 15. One councilman generated a lively discussion when he asked by the Weather Channel was removed for the low end service and he would like to see it returned. This is the one issue with the company that has brought more negative comment about the company than anything else. Local folks love and want the Weather Channel and those using the lower tier are the most disenfranchised. Of course there were the usual public comments about being required to pay for dozens of channels that are not wanted nor watched.

Many of our members use the BrightHouse RoadRunner service. The service is excellent although overpriced when you compare it to Cox and Mediacom in south Walton. We love it, appreciate it, and promote going high-speed at every opportunity.

However, some of our members have complained they are just outside the current service area by only a few hundred feet and can not get the service. If the 30 house per mile is allowed to stand they may never be included.

The issue should be on the City Council agenda for their Feb. 13th meeting. Be there if you want to offer any comments.

Happy computing, J. B.

Recycle old ink cartridges:

Turn in your used ink cartridges and help the club earn money as we help protect the environment

Our Community

Community Service Program "People Helping People"



Activity has slowed to a trickle. The Council on Aging has requested computer support. They have a new volunteer operation going and need three computers. We were able to meet their need and provided

free computers.

We continue to receive individual donations. We use what's useable. Several older laptops have been received and they are being evaluated.

If you want to learn a little more about how to maintain your computer stop by Room 210 at the Chautauqua Center on Monday and Tuesday mornings. Sam is usually there working on computers.



Northwest Florida Association of Computer User Groups

www.nwfacug.org



Congratulations to the founding members of NWFACUG who have brought to life a new regional use group organization. The founders are Chautauqua Cyber Club, PRIME Time Computer Club, Emerald Coast Computer Society and the South Walton Computer Club.

NWFACUG is closely association with Okaloosa-Walton College who will co-sponsor the 2nd Computer Expo in October. A PCUG is providing free web hosting service and Diane Merkel, member of the CCC, has graciously agree to be the webmaster. The website is a work in progress.



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Signing Up with MySpace

I recently mentioned signing up with MySpace.com/DonEdrington so I could learn what happens there and why the site is so popular. First, let me tell you about my previous experience with social networking.

In the late '90s I joined a *Writers' Board* on AOL, where authors of short stories and poems could post their creative efforts, and comment on the postings of others, who in return might comment on theirs. Although the board was never intended as a *get acquainted* service, many of the writers did get acquainted, and some of the relationships evolved into real-life romances.

Well, in those days all the corresponding was done with the written word — no pictures, no drawings, and certainly no videos. MySpace, on the other hand, encourages people to get acquainted using all of these things. You start by filling out a questionnaire that creates an online profile, which includes any mug shot you may choose to upload. You are then given a "space" where you can post more photos and/or writings, such as a personal blog.

Other users see these things and can then post comments on your photos and/or add something to your blog. Each such response is accompanied by a thumbnail of the responder's photo, which gives you a miniature view of the person's appearance.

The real frosting on the cake, however, is the access to all kinds of layout templates, which let users create some amazingly colorful and eye-dazzling pages. Some use animated graphics and/or a conveyor-belt slide show of their photos. Many pages look like they were created by special-effects designers at DreamWorks or Pixar Studios.

All of the above is completely free and there seems to be no limit to how many things can be put into a user's space. It's free, of course, because of an endless stream of ads that goes along the top of each page. Be aware that spending any time on MySpace nets a goodly collection of *adware cookies*. These can be subsequently removed by clicking on **Start>Control Panel>Internet Options>Delete Cookies**.

I assume everyone knows the site was designed with young people in mind, but a few *mature* users have signed up as well. However, the clickable list of years in which one graduated from high school only goes back to 1950.

Another feature is a Search field, into which you can type a person's real name or his or her user name. (Mine is **donedrington**.) This can be used to look for a specific person's space, or you can type in, say, Beverly and see the pages of all users with that name. Another option is "Keep my space private," which allows only user-invited persons to see it.

If you choose to just browse all the public pages, you may see some pretty wild stuff, including a few pictures posted by Playboy-wannabees. However, any image can be marked as *inappropriate*, in which case it might be removed — but I doubt this happens very often.

Who's Teaching Whom?

Historically, adults have taught children who grew up to teach still other children. Contemporary computer knowledge, however, often moves in the opposite direction. When Grandpa buys a PC he might ask a grandson to teach him how to use it. The teen will probably accommodate, if he's not too busy ogling pics of scantily-clad and provocatively-posed females on MySpace or watching strippers on DailyMotion.

It's not my intent to be an alarmist about the exploding social networking phenomenon, but rather to suggest that anyone wanting to know what's going on — and what's coming off — should consider checking out some of the groups. Most allow visitors to look around, but one needs to sign up to get the inside scoop.

If you feel uncomfortable joining an online group that caters to teens and twenty-somethings, you can pretend to be a hip young hottie when you post your personal profile — which is one of the chief dangers of using these sites; people are not always who they claim to be. You've undoubtedly heard some of the horror stories.

Rather than banning youngsters from these sites, I'd recommend checking them out and talking to your kid about being the one who sets a good example for others. Having controls on a home PC won't keep kids from these sites when their friends have free access.

(See My Space—page 6)

TIP LINE

Q:

I know this is a little silly, but can you give me some tips on cleaning a mousepad? Mine is awful looking, but I don't want to ruin it in the process. Please help!

A:

That's not a silly question at all! We all clean our mice, right? So, why not give the mousepad a little touch up too? Also, it's imperative to have a mousepad underneath your mouse when you're using it, so why wouldn't you take good care of it? So, after you clean your mouse, go ahead and make the mousepad your next project. Here are some tips you can use to do just that.

Just like a mouse, the mousepad can easily collect dirt, dead skin and oil. After all of that sits in place for awhile, it can start to make your mousepad look a little grimy and gross. Listed below are the steps you need to follow to keep your mousepad looking spic and span!

1.) Most of the mousepads out there today have a spongy, foamy material in them. Then on top of that, they are usually covered in a thin fabric or a plastic top. Investigate as to which material yours is made out of before you go any further. That will determine which way you can clean the mousepad.

2.) Now, if the material is a fabric, you can use a slightly moist washcloth and a little bit of shampoo. (Make sure you're using a cloth that you don't mind getting dirty). This works out well, because chances are, you already have shampoo on hand and it's a gentle cleaner that works perfectly on different fabrics.

3.) On the other hand, if your mousepad has a plastic top, spray a bit of your household cleaner on it. Make sure it's a mild kind and you only need to use a small amount. Use a piece of cloth or a sponge to then clean the pad. Even dish soap or some shampoo would work for this type of mousepad too.

4.) Once you choose which method you'd like to use, go ahead and clean the mousepad as best you can. When you're done, make sure all of the cleaners are rinsed off.

5.) When the whole thing is rinsed, use a towel to dry the mousepad. Just pat the towel gently until the surface feels dry.

6.) Now, even though it may feel dry, there's probably still some water soaked in, so let it sit overnight or as long as you need to. Make sure it is completely dry (even all the way into the foam) before you start using

it again. Also, if your desk is wooden, you'll want the mousepad to be 100 percent dry, because the water could ruin the surface of your desk as well.

The only other thing you want to be careful of when you're cleaning your mousepad is the color of it. If you think the water might ruin the colors, test it out first. Just moisten a corner of the mousepad to see what it does. It's better to ruin just a corner, rather than the whole thing. Also, if your mousepad is coming apart at the seams or if it is stained pretty badly, you may just want to go out and purchase a new one. They're relatively inexpensive and it's better to have a good place for your mouse to sit than to keep an old mousepad hanging around.

Can you please explain to us what mail merge is?

A:

That is an excellent question and you're actually not the only one who has asked me that in a matter of a couple weeks. To be honest with you all, I didn't know much about it either, so I figured it would be a good idea to check into it, for all of our sakes! So, I did just that and the below tip is everything I found out.

Nowadays, everyone goes the e-mail route, don't they? Whenever you want to send something to a friend or a relative, you compose a quick e-mail and shoot it off to its designated recipient. It's fast and easy and you don't have to worry much about anything else. As soon as you send the e-mail, you can always be about 99.9 percent sure that it will arrive to the right person successfully.

I could probably go on for hours about the benefits of e-mail and while that's all good and well, what about regular mail? Why don't we hardly ever use that anymore? Well, it's slower and there's always the possible chance that it will get lost in the shuffle. Although that's true, I bet there are some of you out there who still prefer to use the good ol' regular mail. Am I right? Well, if you are one of them, I have something very cool for you today and it has nothing to do with e-mail. Instead, welcome to the world of mail merge!

Mail merge is a feature that is supported by several word processing programs that you can use to create form letters. These letters can then be sent using the regular mail (or snail mail, as you might know it) method. One of the main word processors that has the mail merge option is MS Word. Now, I know this isn't an MS Office tip, but you're going to get a little lesson on Word today, in regards to the mail merge. Hope you don't mind!

(See Tip Line—page 6)

(My Space-from page 4)

In any case, if you decide to sign up disguised as a teen, be sure to use the worst imaginable spelling and grammar, like udderwise aint nobdy gonna beleive u. To its credit, MySpace does have a Safety Tips page, which offers some sensible advice.

I don't take a position on what consenting adults do in private, but I do worry about lonely people — of any age — who can be duped into dangerous situations by a smooth-talking conniver who is out to steal their identity, or worse. On the other hand, social networking can be a great way for a shy, introverted person to make new friends — if he or she uses common sense and keeps informed about the potential dangers. I have met some wonderful and amazing people online, whom I never would have met otherwise.

True Story about a VERY Embarrassing IM...

I was once giving a presentation for about 75 people at my hometown computer club, and was about to demonstrate how to initiate an IM. I'd logged on and saw the names of some friends on my *Buddy List*. I was about to double-click one and send her a greeting.

Well, imagine my surprise when *Margie* beat me to it. "Hi, Don," she'd typed, "how are you doing?"

This is great, I thought. Now I can demonstrate what it looks like when you're suddenly IMed by a buddy, as well as how you type a reply and send it.

"Great, Marge," I replied. "How are you this evening?"

"Well," she replied, "kind of bored. My husband's out of town and I was wondering if you'd be interested in stopping by for a glass of wine."

Well, you can imagine the raised eyebrows on my viewers — all of whom knew I was married — as I gasped and tried to think of a good answer.

The rest of this story can be seen here... Next month.

Reprinted with permission of Don Edrinton

(Tip Line from—page 5)

First, to do a mail merge, you must first set up a selection of data and place it in its own file. This data is usually like an address book that you have made for yourself on your computer. It should contain all of the names and addresses of your friends, relatives, etc. Chances are, you already have an address book on your computer, but if you don't, go ahead and create one. Once you have that set up (in its own separate file), you can then write a common letter that you would like to send to different people. Place this in its own separate file as well. You can save both of these files in the same folder (My Documents, for example), but

make sure you give them both a different file name, so they're each their own thing.

Now, when you're writing your letter, you need to insert certain blank areas, since the letter isn't going to the same person several times. For example, your letter may look something like this:

Dear NAME

STREET

CITY, STATE ZIP

Of course then, what you want to say will be in there as well, but this is just for an example. By leaving those areas blank, the mail merge can then go to work. The word processor you're using will automatically fill those areas in by the information you have in your address book. Your letter file will take the information from your other file and fill in the empty spaces. That's what a mail merge is all about. It's meant to save you a lot of time!

Now, you do need to keep in mind that different word processors will act differently when you're using the mail merge feature. Some will support a lot more than others, so you just have to keep an eye out for that. One of the most popular processors to use for this is MS Word though and I'm guessing most of you have that on your computer already, so it would be a good one to start out with.

If you want to do a mail merge with Word, open up a new document to begin. Make sure you have your two files all set and ready to go. Once you do, go to **Tools, Mail Merge**. You can then choose **Document Type** to pick which type of data you have. You can choose from **Form Letter** (which is what we went over in this tip), Mailing Labels, Envelopes or Catalog. You're able to do a mail merge with all of those options.

Once you choose yours, click **OK**. The next screen will ask you if you want to merge your address book or if you want to merge data from another file. Choose the one you want and click on its icon. (In this tip, we went over using the address book). Just follow the directions from there and the rest should take care of itself. There are other options you can choose to narrow your recipients down a little as well, like **Select Names** and **Filter and Sort**. Just go back to the **Tools** menu and click on **Mail Merge** to do that.

The mail merge feature is just something a little different to help you save some time and energy when you want to mail out some letters. You can't complain about that, now can you?!

~ Erin

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