



# SoftTalk

The Official Newsletter of the Roanoke Valley Personal Computer Club

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Serving the Roanoke Valley

October 2007



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## Help your newsletter

You are invited to share favorite websites, reviews of software or just general computer experiences. Send your article or notes to [editor@rvpcc.org](mailto:editor@rvpcc.org).

## NEXT MEETING—OCTOBER 13

**Time: 9:15 a.m.**

**Place: Arnold Burton Tech Center-Room 105**

The club will tour VDOT's Location and Design office in Salem as part of the October meeting. We will see how VDOT uses computers to develop and print highway plans.

We will meet at Arnold Burton for the business portion of our meeting and then leave to go to VDOT around 9:40 AM for the tour. The office is located on Harrison Ave, behind the Home Shopping Network building and Oakey Field.

**Directions** from meeting site: Go left on Roanoke Blvd to Rte 419. Take a right onto 419 and go to East Main Street, Salem. Turn left on E Main and go about 1 mile. Turn right on Brand Avenue and go about 0.2 mi to Harrison Ave. Turn left onto Harrison and go about 0.1 mile to 731 Harrison.



**CHRISTMAS PARTY—DEC. 1ST @ 3 PM**  
**THE HOME PLACE \$17 PER PERSON**

December 2007						
Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
						1 RVPCC PARTY
2	3	4	5	6	7	8
9	10	11 Hanukkah Begins	12	13	14	15
16	17	18 Hanukkah Ends	19	20	21	22
23	24 Christmas Eve	25	26	27	28	29
30	31 New Year's Eve	Christmas	Kwanzaa Begins			

## November Program:

John Leary will be bringing a selection of his Mac equipment.

He will share with us some of its features and advantages.

Make plans to attend the Christmas party. Checks payable to RVPCC will save you a place.

# Secretary's Report

Saturday, September 8, 2007

The September meeting of the RVPCC was opened by Earl Abbott, President. He welcomed all members.

### OFFICERS REPORTS:

**Secretary** - Margaret Ann Hoag stated that the minutes of the last meeting were published in the newsletter.

**Treasurer** - Helen Trenor gave the treasurer's report. She gave the treasury balance and said that the club was solvent.

**Public Relations** - John Yeatts reported that he is trying to get a tour of the VDOT facilities. Bill Scott is working on a program on quad core and multicore computers.

**Newsletter** - Sandy Johnson stated that the September Newsletter is available online.

### SHOW & TELL:

John Yeatts showed his old Texas Instrument computer from the 1980's.

**DOOR PRIZE:** Kay Viskup - \$10.00.

### PROGRAM:

Bill Scott showed his new special MP-3 Player. You can put pictures on it, video clips and music. It has an FM stereo radio and is Windows Media Player and MP-3 compatible. Then he showed us how to RIP music from a CD.

### A QUESTION & ANSWER PERIOD FOLLOWED.

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned.

Respectfully submitted,  
Margaret Ann Hoag  
Secretary

Following the meeting, a short Executive Board Meeting was held.

## PREZ NOTES

I want to thank each of our officers for the fine jobs they have done this year. The office of Vice President has been vacant for too long. Folks, we need someone to run for Vice President. I assume that every present office holder will agree to serve for another year. I believe that each of our officers have done a good job this year.

We have good programs planned for October and November. The programs will be described elsewhere in the newsletter.

I hope to see each one of you at our meetings.

Earl Abbott

## Comodo Firewall

One of our club members has reported that he encountered a problem with the free version of ZoneAlarm when networking two home computers -- the free version would not allow communication between computers. He could have used the purchased version of ZoneAlarm, but instead he switched to the free Comodo firewall and was able to complete the network with no problem.

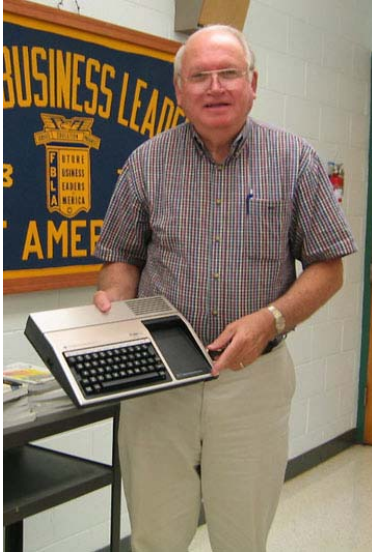
He has found that Comodo looks and feel very similar to ZoneAlarm.

Details about the free firewall and other free Comodo products can be found at [www.comodo.com](http://www.comodo.com).



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John Yeatts showing off his TRS-80 computer. Remember that this computer also required a tape recorder and a TV set to work.

## Sunspot Warning

The Wall Street Journal recently ran an article about predictions for intense sunspot activity beginning next March and peaking in 2012. This could mean increased power outages and communication difficulties ahead.

The article also discussed the potential for damage to satellites ranging from missed communications to complete failure. The most surprising item in the article was the fact that there are currently over 860 satellites in orbit.

The link for the full article is <http://online.wsj.com/public/article/SB119091398309341475.html>. Or, go to [www.wsj.com](http://www.wsj.com) and search for "sunspots." You are looking for an article titled "Digital Age Means We Must Care More About Space Weather," published on September 28, 2007.

**Meeting space provided  
by Roanoke County  
Schools**

## Office 2007 file extensions

Walter Mossberg discussed the new Office 2007 file extensions in his article in the September 6 Wall Street Journal.

Office 2007 saves all its documents with an "x" added at the end of the extension -- .docx and .xlsx instead of the .doc and .xls we are used to seeing.

Older versions of Office don't recognize these new extensions. Microsoft has issued a conversion patch for these older versions. If hyperlinks work for you in this newsletter, go to [Microsoft Office Compatibility Pack](#)

. Hyperlinks don't work? Go to "[Microsoft.com/downloads](http://Microsoft.com/downloads)" and find "Microsoft Office Compatibility Pack for Word, Excel, and PowerPoint 2007 File Formats."

If you can't persuade all your correspondents to install this patch, you can change your Office 2007 to use the traditional extensions without the "x." You might lose some of Word 2007's new features, so it becomes a trade-off of features versus incompatibility.

For all the details on how to change the default extensions, read the full Mossberg article. Again, if hyperlinks work for you in this newsletter, click on [Managing the New Microsoft Office File Formats](#). If not, go to [online.wsj.com](http://online.wsj.com), search for "Mossberg" and scroll down the search results to 09/06/07.



This is Bill Scott's latest 'toy'. Not only will it play MP3 files, it also stores all of his photographs, many videos, plus it is an FM radio. Well, they say, 'Good things come in little packages!'

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## Hidden info in digital pictures

Kim Komando's News Of The Day newsletter for 9/24/2007 had an interesting article about secret data in digital photos. She said that when you post a picture on the web, the hidden information might go with it.

The information is called metadata or EXIF data. It is hidden in the picture file's header. Different makes of cameras encode different information, such as: date and time the picture was taken, model and serial number of the camera used, and the camera settings. Some cameras also included GPS location data.

Many cameras also store a thumbnail (tiny, low-resolution copy of your picture). If you edit the picture, the thumbnail is often unchanged, so something you edited out may still be in the thumbnail. Might be embarrassing.

The GPS location could be dangerous. If you post a picture of a child on the net, the GPS information could tell a pedophile the location of the child.

Most photo-editing programs can remove the EXIF data – read your program's HELP file for the details. In PhotoShop it is "File Info" in the File drop-down menu. Or, download Microsoft's [Photo Info](#). Go to [www.microsoft.com](http://www.microsoft.com) and enter a search for "photo info." The program will allow you to edit or remove the hidden information.

To read the entire Komando article, go to <http://komando.com:80/tips/index.aspx?id=3757>



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## Word's Symbols and the €

In preparing a document, there is often a need for a symbol (such as the ♪ or ♂) that is not on your keyboard. In Word, you can select a symbol from a table and insert it in your document. Access the table by clicking on "Insert" and then clicking on "Symbol" in the drop-down menu. You will find hundreds of symbols that can be inserted into your document. The table has useful symbols like ¢, ¶, ©, °, ☺, and ¿. It also has some not-so-useful symbols like Ø, Ψ, ⚡, ⚡, ☰, and ☱.

The symbol table may seem a bit slow to appear when first using it in a document, but it will appear more quickly after that first use.

Word versions 2003 and later include the Euro symbol €, but earlier versions do not. To include the € when using these earlier versions, place the cursor where you want the € and hold down the ALT key while typing 0128 on the keypad on the right end of the keyboard.

The 0128 is the "ASCII code" for the Euro Symbol. ASCII codes can be used to insert many symbols, but insertion using the symbol table is so convenient that there is little reason to remember all those code numbers.

### We Meet the 2nd Saturday of the Month Next Meeting September 8, 2007

**Place:** Arnold R. Burton Technology  
Center  
Room 105  
1760 Roanoke Boulevard  
Salem, Va. 24153  
**Time:** 9:15 a.m. - noon

