



SoftTalk

The Official Newsletter of the Roanoke Valley Personal Computer Club

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Serving the Roanoke Valley

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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.

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Next Meeting

June 13, 2009

9:15 a.m.

Topics:

Energy Thieves in your House

Or

Energy Saving Tips

by

Earl Abbott

and

Bill Scott

Malicious Software Removal

The Conflicker virus may yet cause us problems. It is just one of the many pieces of malicious software on the 'Net. Some of them may be able to avoid detection by anti-virus programs. Microsoft has a "Malicious Software Removal Tool" that will scan your computer and detect and remove 160 or so of these malicious viruses. The tool is not a substitute for an anti-virus program, but rather a way to remove a virus that has sneaked into your computer.

The tool can be found at <http://www.microsoft.com/downloads/details.aspx?FamilyId=AD724AE0-E72D-4F54-9AB3-75B8EB148356&displaylang=en>. Or, go to www.microsoft.com and search for "malicious" without the quotes. You are looking for the response "Microsoft Malicious Software Removal Tool (KB890830)." Download and run the quick scan. Run the full scan if the quick scan detects something. Don't save the program since it changes monthly and you should download the latest version each time you run it.

Microsoft says that if you get updates for Windows automatically, the latest version of the tool runs quietly in the background each month. If the tool finds something, it will pop up a window describing the find and listing instructions.

The tool works with XP, Vista, and a few others. It does not work with 98, ME, and NT 4.0.

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Secretary's Report

May 9, 2009

The President, Earl Abbott, called the meeting to order at 9:16 a.m.

The visitors at this meeting were Chris Gimbert, Steve Loritsch, and Bobby Lewis.

Reports:

Vice President: Nothing new to report.

Secretary: The minutes from the April meeting are in the May SoftTalk. Kay will be back for the June meeting.

Treasurer: The treasurer was not present. Earl said that the club is solvent.

Public Relations: June meeting will cover how to save \$ on energy

Door Prizes: John Leary, disks; Andy McLaughlin, disks; Steve Loritsch, flash light; and Lewis Wilson, candy.

Program: 'What do the dogs do when you're not home?' by Andy McLaughlin

Andy brought in an AirLink 101 wireless camera with a 640x480 video resolution. He demonstrated how to set it up. This camera is for indoor use only since it will not work well with high-contrast situations such as looking outside into bright sunlight. He also showed how the camera images could be retrieved from a remote location. The system can be set up so that only the camera and router are turned on; the computer can be turned off.

The meeting was adjourned at 11:07 a.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Sandy Johnson, acting secretary

RVPCC

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PREZ' NOTES

May 29, 2008

I hope everyone is well, happy, and not as late as I am. I am reading my emails that have accumulated during my trip to Alaska. This is being written at the last minute (normal for me).

I have two things to report on my Alaska trip.

1. I saw a black bear (close enough). Our float plane was coming in for a landing. We were about 200 feet up when I saw a big, black thing, well over 1000 pounds. It was walking down a logging trail like it owned the road.

2. If you pack a suit coat in your luggage, be sure to wrap any hand or body lotion in a separate, plastic bag. The baggage compartments are not pressurized, and strange things can happen to containers while the airplane is up in the air. The good news is that my lesson was learned on the return trip, and not on the out-going trip. Glad to be back in Roanoke. Hope to see you at the RVPCC Meeting.

Earl Abbott



Now doesn't this look like a great way to relax!!!

XP SUPPORT BY MICROSOFT

Microsoft will continue to provide XP security updates until 2014. However, Microsoft will no longer provide non-security updates and fixes for XP. This should not be a significant problem since relatively few bugs remain in XP after nearly 8 years of use (knock on wood).

Browsing the 'Net in Private

Let's suppose you are using the Internet to find a surprise gift for your Significant Other (SO). However, as you use the web, your browser stores information about the websites you visit and information that you're frequently asked to provide (for example, your name and address). If your SO uses the same computer and the same browser, the history of your browsing can be seen easily – it is hard to not see it. There goes the surprise!

You also need to worry about that history if you are using a public or kiosk computer and do not want any of your personal information to be left behind.

The bad news is that browsers record information such as:

- Temporary Internet files
- Cookies
- A history of the websites you've visited
- Information that you've entered into website or the Address bar (this includes things such as your name, address, and the website addresses that you've visited before)
- Saved web passwords
- Temporary information stored by browser add-ons.

The good news is that browsers allow you to remove that private data or not record it at all. Two popular browsers are Firefox and Internet Explorer. Both provide tools to keep your internet activities private.

Mozilla Firefox: With Firefox open, click “Tools” and “Clear private data.” In the next screen, check off those items you wish to remove. Sites visited and temporary files should be enough. Finally, click “Clear now.” No evidence of your gift shopping will remain. You can also set Firefox to clear private data on exiting the browser. You can set Clear on exit to be automatic or you can have it ask permission before clearing.

Microsoft Internet Explorer: With IE open, click “Tools” and “Delete browsing history.” In the next screen, check off those items you wish to remove. Sites visited and temporary files should be enough. Check off those items and then click “Delete history.”

The latest version of Internet Explorer, IE8, has a

new feature that allows private browsing – no data is recorded at all, so no clearing will be needed. Click “Tools” and select “InPrivate Browsing

Deleting all browsing history does not delete your list of favorites or subscribed feeds. It only deletes temporary files, browsing history, cookies, saved form information, and saved passwords.

Ready for Windows 7?

Thinking of a new PC? Some sources say that a PC purchased with Vista Home Premium or better will get a free upgrade to Win7. Get it in writing!

Are you thinking of upgrading your PC to Win7? Depending on who is talking, Win7 will be available any time from Thanksgiving to Christmas.

The requirements for upgrading a PC to Win7 are similar to the requirements for Vista. But you should check your computer to make sure everything is OK. Download, install, and run the “Windows 7 Upgrade Advisor” from www.microsoft.com/downloads.

The Upgrade Advisor will scan your computer and tell you if your hardware will support Win7. It will also let you know if it finds problems with your software or drivers and make upgrading suggestions.

RVPCC Meetings

When: 2nd Saturday of every month

Where: Arnold R. Burton
Tech Center
Room 105
1760 Roanoke Blvd.
Salem, VA 24153

What time: 9:15 am until noon

More info: RVPCC.org

System Repair Points

If your computer begins to act strangely, or if a newly installed program causes major problems, you can quickly and easily return your computer's operating system and application files to a state before the problem occurred. That is, you can if you are running Windows XP or Vista – Sorry you 98ers, you don't have this feature.

To quote Microsoft's instructions: *"You can use System Restore to undo harmful changes to your computer and restore its setting and performance. System Restore returns your computer to an earlier time (called a Restore Point) without causing you to lose recent work, such as saved documents, e-mail, or history and favorites lists. Any changes the System Restore makes to your computer are completely reversible."*

Your computer automatically creates Restore Points (Called system checkpoints), but you can also use System Restore to create your own Restore Points. This is useful if you are about to make a major change to your system, such as installing a new program or changing your registry."

If the Restore Points function is turned on, your computer automatically records Restore Points roughly every 24 operating hours, when an application is installed, when some drivers are installed, and when Windows Update is run. XP and Vista come with Restore Points turned on, but if you have turned them off, you won't have any Restore Points to use.

Two things to know: The Restore Point will probably not get rid of a virus since most malware doesn't use the files that are reinstalled from a Restore Point. Also, any

new applications installed since the Restore Point was recorded will be lost.

To turn on Restore Points in XP, click Start, right-click My Computer, choose Properties, and select the System Restore tab. Make sure the Turn Off System Restore box is unchecked. In Vista, click Start, open the Control Panel, select System and Maintenance, choose System, and click the System Protection link in the Tasks pane. Then choose a storage location under Available Disks and click OK.

If your computer is running well now, record a Restore Point now. In XP, click Start, All programs, Accessories, System Tools, and System Restore. Then choose Create A Restore Point and click Next. Add a name so you'll remember why you recorded the Point, such as "RunningGood." It would be a good idea to manually record a Restore Point before you begin to install a large new application or begin a major disk cleanup or defragmentation.

Vista automatically records a Restore Point at system startup and at midnight (you can change the time if you prefer). To record a Restore Point manually in Vista, Click Start, select Control Panel, choose System and Maintenance, click System, and select System Protection from the left pane. Click Create and enter a name for the Restore Point, then click OK.

If you need to use a Restore Point, get to the screen as described above except click Restore rather than Create. You will be shown a calendar and a list of recorded Points. Choose a Point and run it.

A Restore Point isn't a fix-it-all solution, but it's a lot faster and easier than reinstalling Windows.

Pictures from May meeting



Andy McLaughlin setting up remote camera



The 'all-seeing' eye

Health Information From Merck

MerckSource is a website dedicated to providing credible health information that is unbiased by product advertising. Features include:

- Comprehensive health information.
- Condition guides to enable you to learn more about your health condition.
- Suggested questions to help you prepare for your next doctor appointment.
- Complimentary subscription to the *Harvard Health E-Newsletter* and *The Source Report newsletter* for registered users.
- Health centers for men, women, seniors, and children.
- Interactive health tools, trackers, and risk assessments.

Merck says that this site is “A world of health information at your fingertips.” The link to MerckSource is: www.MerckSource.com/health. Registration is optional and free.

The Quick Launch Toolbar

Are you using the Windows Quick Launch Toolbar? This handy toolbar sits on the taskbar at the bottom of your windows desktop, on the left end, next to the Start Menu. The Quick Launch Toolbar is not covered by an application and is always in view. This is a handy place to put icons for applications you use often, such as e-mail or the Task Manager.

The Quick Launch Toolbar comes with a very handy icon that takes you directly to the desktop. In effect, it minimizes everything on the screen at one click. This is useful if you have several applications open and need to open another. It avoids having to minimize open applications one at a time.

To install the Quick Launch Toolbar, right click anywhere on the blue Taskbar – find an open area that does not cause a symbol or message to pop up. From the pop-up menu that appears, click “Toolbars.” In the next menu, click “Quick Launch.” It is easily removed by following the same procedure and click “Quick Launch” again to uncheck it.

You can copy icons such as e-mail and browser into the Quick Launch Toolbar. Right click and drag an icon into the new toolbar and click “Copy Here.”

Flat-Screen TVs Injure Children

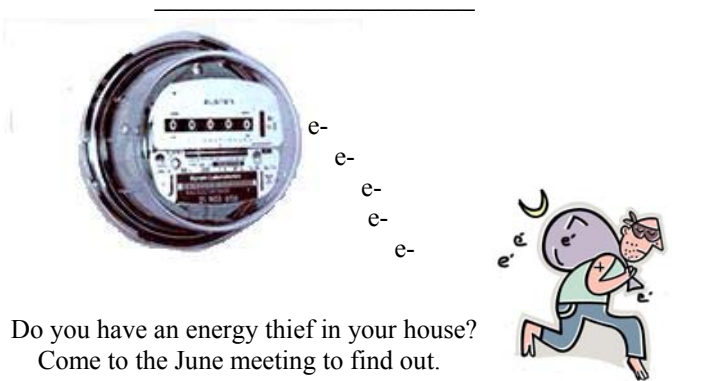
An article on flat-screen TVs appeared at MSNBC.com on May 12, 2009, and was included in a recent Kim Komando newsletter.

The increased size of flat-screen TVs has resulted in an increase in the numbers of children being injured and killed by falling TVs. In 2007, nearly 17,000 children were taken to emergency rooms after heavy or unstable furniture fell over on them. Three-quarters of the victims of falling furniture were younger than 6 years old. Children that age don't recognize the danger of climbing on furniture.

New owners eager to start watching their TVs frequently ignore instructions for securing their units. Large flat-screen TVs weigh 100 pounds or more, have a small base, and are top-heavy. That means that parents must secure them properly to the TV stand or to the wall. Suggestions for accident prevention steps were:

- Place television sets low to the ground and near the backs of their stands.
- Strap televisions and other large furniture to the wall with safety straps or L-brackets.
- Buy furniture with wide legs or with solid bases.
- Install drawer stops on chests of drawers and place heavy items close to the floor on shelves.
- Eliminate kids' impulse to climb by remembering not to place items like toys or the remote control on top of furniture or the television.
- Always keep tabs on where your kids are and what they're doing.

All parents and grandparents of young children should read the full MSNBC article at <http://www.msnbc.msn.com/id/30686493/>. Click the link or copy and paste it into your browser.



Do you have an energy thief in your house?
Come to the June meeting to find out.