

Your computer is keeping secrets from you!

Your computer records almost everything you do on it. That’s the warning Modesto computer forensics expert Kirk Stockham will bring to Modesto PC User Group members on Thursday, Jan. 27.

“Secret data areas of your computer can be telling on you,” he says. “If you erase the data, it can still be found.” Everywhere you have been on the Internet is recorded on your hard drive. But he promises to tell his audience how to unlock their computers’ secrets.

Stockham, a retired Modesto Police Department computer forensics investigator, has handled literally hundreds of cases, both as a police officer and as the only licensed computer forensics PI in the area, extracting court case evidence from computers.

He will talk about some real cases, especially in the private sector, where finding hidden data has made life-changing differences to those who hired him.

Stockham, whose website can be found at www.hitechpi.net , will offer a multi-media big screen presentation up to now given only to special private groups. The “secret” information on computers can be used either by criminals or by those seeking to resolve computer problems, he notes.

The MPCUG will meet at Destiny Christian Center on Carver Road just south of Roseburg Avenue at 6:30 p.m. for it Random Access Special Interest Group question-answer session on computer problems. After a refreshment break at 7:15 p.m., Stockham will offer his presentation at 7:30 p.m.

**For the meeting location see
the
inside back page for
directions**
**Next Meeting
Thursday, Jan. 27,
7:30 p.m.
Random Access SIG
6:30 p.m.**

Inside This Issue

- President’s Comments2
- Membership Report.....2
- Treasurer’s Report2
- Claude’s Bytes3
- Phishing in shallow water4
- Screen Capture Tools5
- The Digital Home 6
- Hard drive Housekeeping 7
- SIG dates and leaders12

Next board meeting

Come have dinner with the board at 7 p.m. Wednesday, February 2, at Ridgeway’s Restaurant, Modesto.

Be sure and check our web site at least once a week: www.mpcug.net



President's Corner Mike Kumler

What a nice time we had at the December Meeting. The Q & A seemed to be especially lively and the snacks and visiting following were great fun.

My New Year Resolution—to get my home network working—has taken a set back. I spotted a “deal” in the newspaper ads . A certain computer store was selling an HP all-in-one for \$39.99 after rebate. Since my Cannon scanner had recently bit the dust, my current color printer was a 3-year-old, very slow HP 610C and I really do miss having the copy feature a lot, I decided this was the perfect opportunity. I now have the copier, scanner and printer, and the shelf-space savings is wonderful. Only one problem ...while the software for scanning and copying installed, I cannot get the printer to install! More later....

We are still seeking suggestions for programs. What is it you would like to hear about? Our own “vendor liaison” (Bud) is going to make a new run at some of the major vendors, so hopefully we will have something from them in the near future. Speaking of Bud, I have decided to name him our “gadget” man. Ask him about thumbprint recognition.

Membership Chairman Hank Mudge

Renewals - Thank you for your continued support

Allan Romander 6/05
 Kirk Stockham 8/05
 Dorothy Libby 10/05
 Bill & Virginia Nylander 12/05
 Lynn French 1/06
 Barbara Cameron 1/06

Former Member returning - Welcome Back

Mike Mensinger

Memberships expiring in January

Eric Rowe

Memberships expiring in February

Don Sanford
 Donald Risen
 Raymond Nichols
 Hank Mudge
 George Ditman
 Joel Williamson
 Dick Philpot

Treasurer's Report Barb Cameron

Modesto PC User Group Financial Statement December, 2004

Income

Membership	\$ 168.00
Interest on Savings	\$ 0.00
Donations	\$ 0.00
Total Income	\$ 168.00

Expenses

Post Office Box Rent	\$ 68.00
Meeting Room Rental	\$ 100.00
Total Expenses	\$ 168.00

Current Assets

Checking—US Savings Bank, Modesto	\$1,598.91
Savings—US Savings Bank, Modesto	331.87

Current Assets	\$1,930.78
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Fixed Assets	\$ 0.00
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Total Club Assets	\$1,930.78
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Claude's Bytes By Claude Delphia, Editor Emeritus

• LAPTOP ISSUES • EMAIL TROUBLES • STORM TROUBLES • USING CD-RWS

More email issues — Two friends have mentioned that they have trouble sending email to me. Each time the email comes back. One who is not computer literate regularly has problems and I suspect it is related to her computer. Others in the same office have no problem. The other who is as literate as you can get has also had some of my emails returned.

So what's the answer? As I've reiterated in past issues, there is nothing guaranteed about sending an email. More and more each day, our ISP's are adding spam filters. In some cases we are adding spam filters ourselves without really realizing that we may be excluding people we really want to hear from. One case that I know of — some critically important emails are coming in and being sent to a delete folder.

Trick question — If you are using your computer during a storm, what is the first thing you should do? Turn it off. You shouldn't risk your computer during severe storms. At the very least you could lose the file you are working on. You could also lose your computer due to a power surge or blackout.

As I type this, a big storm is going through the area and the lights have been flickering. However I'm using my laptop computer since it is isolated and will continue running even if the power goes off. Thus I won't lose a file or damage the laptop unless lightening hits me directly. The laptop might still be OK.

Laptop issues — I've now been using a laptop computer for five or six months and have gained a lot of knowledge and experience, some of which you never hear about or think of when you are buying one. These are not listed in any particular order.

- Heat: Laptops, just like their big brothers, regular computers, emit a lot of heat. However with a laptop, you quickly become aware of the heat as it is dissipated on one side or the other. Even the top of the computer can feel pretty warm.

There was a recent newspaper report that laptop computer heat can affect men's fertility. Having now experienced that heat, I can see that it could be a concern, but only under limited circumstances where you actually do use it in your lap.

Having been recently semi-bed bound due to serious health problems, I've spent more time using my laptop while reclining in bed. I've learned a lot about its use. Heat-wise, you have to be careful to make sure that blankets or other bed clothes don't block the vents. I learned that I needed to have the laptop span an open space underneath from front to back as the whole bottom of the laptop gets pretty warm. There are also numerous vent holes on the bottom. You need to find out where the actual fan vent is on your particular brand or model. You can usually determine this by placing your hand in various spots and you will feel the heat coming out. Also test where the main vent goes in. But keep in mind that all LT's are different.

Remember that like a regular computer, if it doesn't get enough ventilation, it can kill the CPU or even the hard drive.

- I learned other considerations using the LT in bed. Since my right thigh was swollen and in pain, I could not rest the LT on it, but only on my left thigh. This caused a serious balancing problem. If you really need to use an LT in bed, you need to consider a table for this purpose, such as those found in hospitals. However many of those are pretty lousy, at least in the hospitals I've been in. Your hand placement on the keyboard could be a serious problem.

(Continued on page 8)

Phishing in shallow water by Bud Bondietti Post editor,

Welcome to 2005, and with this welcome comes a warning that even though it's a new year there are people out there who would like to make this a better year for themselves at our expense. While checking my email recently, I received a message that appeared to be from my bank, Washington Mutual. In the message, they cordially thanked me for submitting information to help them with their "final annual checking" and noted that their database seemed to be non-compliant with the information submitted in reference to a pin and/or CVV2 number. Because the information didn't match, they asked that I submit it again.

Sound familiar? Every day computer users are being scammed into handing out personal information. This info gathering is called "phishing" and is on the rise. At first notice, the email seems legitimate, and all too often, the unsuspecting user falls for the con, connects to the link, supplies all the requested information then later discovers that his account has been wiped out — all in a matter of hours. Sometimes if this is not caught in time, additional damage can be done by the bad guy — requesting verification identification be changed, credit cards ordered ... and credit ruined. After printing out a copy of the email and the header information, I took both to my local bank branch and discussed it with a service representative. The gentleman stated that he had just received another person's fraudulent email this morning with the same concept except that email wanted a response by December 24, 2004, or they would freeze the account. This person didn't fall for the scam either. The representative collected my information then suggested that I forward a copy of the email to the WAMU fraud department and gave me the address at which time I sent it on to them. Will this do any good? I don't know, but it seems that to prevent this from happening to others more information is needed. Here are a few tips I discovered.

Most reputable banks and businesses DO NOT ask for sensitive customer information by means of email or phone calls.

Information should never be given via email concerning one's personal information at any time. U.S. Postal Service mail is an appropriate means of sending this information.

Look at both the Subject and who it is from before replying to a suspicious email. Things to look for are:

The Sender – In this case the sender was "MANUAL ATM PIN CHECKING WAMU.COM [ATM-PIN-Checking@erms-02.wamu.com]

The fact that there was more to the address than wamu.com made this suspicious.

Hold your cursor over the address logo..

In this case, the http address was http:// etc, wamusk.com. This was a variation of the www.wamu.com address which would send the info to whoever registered the wamusk.com site.

Look closely at the body of the message; look to see if there are inconsistencies in grammar, spelling or text. Pay attention to any symbols, logos borders to the email. The email I received had inconsistent color bands, tall on the ends, shrinking in the center. Look for oddities such as a "thank you for your previous help" or "additional information is needed to complete our inspection".

If you have any reason to suspect fraud, do nothing, contact your bank immediately (they all have a 24 hour customer service number) and ask if they have issued this request. You may save yourself the inconvenience of having to close all of your accounts and reopen new ones, as well as protect your bank money from fraud.

Editor's note—Since receiving the first email in the early part of January, I have since received two more emails of a similar nature from this same sender. After forwarding the more recent two, I still have not heard anything from Washington Mutual concerning any of the emails.

There is no restriction against any non-profit group using this article as long as it is kept in context with proper credit given the author. The Editorial Committee of the Association of Personal Computer User Groups (APCUG), an international organization of which this group is a member, brings this article to you.

Screen Capture Tools —Windows Data At Your Beck and Call By Gabe Goldberg—gabe@gabegold.com

When you have a problem with your car, you bring it to the repair shop. When you're sick, you visit the doctor. But computer problems sometimes show up as nasty messages plopped in the middle of the screen. So it's hard to capture information needed to research and fix the problem. And someone trying to help you via email or phone may ask questions about system settings or application options which may be tedious to record and communicate. A previous article describes information that's useful for solving problems.

[\[http://www.aarp.org/computers-howto/Articles/a2004-07-12-getanswers\]](http://www.aarp.org/computers-howto/Articles/a2004-07-12-getanswers)

But sometimes the best information is a picture of what happens or what's wrong.

The good news is that all Windows versions provide basic tools to capture the entire screen or just the active application window.

You may have tried to use the PrintScreen (or PrtScr on some keyboards) key and not seen anything happen. This is because that key doesn't really *print* anything, it simply copies the entire screen (or just the active window if you press Alt-then-PrintScreen keys) to the Windows clipboard (an invisible Windows area for storing temporary data). Here's a tip: if you're capturing the entire screen and you'd like to datestamp the image, move the mouse cursor over the time shown at the right side of the Windows taskbar. That will pop up the date, which will be included in the captured image.

While you can't see the clipboard, you can paste the captured image from it into a word processing or graphics program from which you can print or save it. Open an application you like -- Microsoft Paint or its equivalent (included with Windows), Microsoft Word, or any graphics program. Position the cursor where you want to place the image and press

Ctrl-V (Ctrl and V keys simultaneously). The image will appear. If you like, you can add descriptive information such as the date, the nature of your problem, your Windows version, applications which were running, etc.

You can now print the image from the application (click File and Print); you're also close to being able to save or email the captured image! To save it, within the application click File and Save As. Specify a location (hard drive, floppy disk, USB key, etc.). Programs may offer different choices of filetype for saving. Common choices are JPG (good for photographs, can be compressed), PNG (new/free standard format, good for non-photos), GIF (commonly used, produces relatively small files, limited to 256 colors), and BMP (produces large files, Windows-only format, usable if files won't be transmitted). Once the file is saved you can attach it to an e-mail.

But Windows' built-in screen capture is primitive and inflexible. That's led many people and companies to develop tools providing more functions. Searching Google for "screen capture" produced about 227,000 choices! Many of these are free, available for download. You can find good choices at Web sites such as Tucows Downloads [www.tucows.com]. Some are shareware -- free to try, priced to continue using. A modestly priced choice that is powerful and easy to use is CaptureWizPro from

PixelMetrics [www.pixelmetrics.com].

Costing \$30 and requiring a one-megabyte download, it provides a small toolbar that allows capturing any part of the screen, not just the full screen or the active window. The toolbar can be docked anywhere on the screen edge. It will hide until you mouse near it, then several selection tools (area, frame, scroll, etc.) allow precisely selecting what to copy.

(Continued on page 9)

The Digital Home ... by Sherry Zorzi

Will 2005 be the year your home entertainment goes digital? For many families, it will be. Welcome to the Digital Home!

In the digital home, you can listen to your PC's digital music on your stereo or home theater system, on your portable music player, or on your wireless notebook computer. In the digital home, you can view the photos stored on your PC on your TV or home theater, on your wireless PDA or wireless notebook computer, or on a digital picture frame.

In the digital home, you can access your broadband Internet connection from any PC in your home, or on your TV or home theater. In the digital home, you can access the videos or home movies from your PC or its DVD drive and watch them on your TV or home theater, or on your wireless PDA or notebook. In the digital home, you can view a video feed from a home webcam on your PC, a wireless PDA or notebook, or any Internet connection.

In the digital home, you can record live TV on your PC. You can program the PC to record every episode of a particular show or every show that features your favorite actor. You can pause and playback live TV. In the digital home, you can play multiplayer online games wirelessly on your gaming console, PC, and notebook computer.

Does this sound like a futuristic dream? Well, the future is now, and it's surprisingly affordable! Here's what you'll need to make your home a Digital Home.

Start with a PC with an Intel P4 processor with HTT (hyper-threading technology.) This will give you the power needed to drive all that multimedia. The hyper-threading technology allows for parallel processing, making it speedy as well as robust. Use Windows XP Media Center Edition 2005 as your PC operating system. This gives you a simple, built-in interface for all your digital media experience and can be controlled by wireless remote.

Make that PC the hub of your home network. It's powerful enough to handle the digital entertainment, the network, and still be used for running regular computer programs – email, Internet browsers, word-processors, and the like. You can have other PCs and notebooks connected to it with a wireless network router, or you can use a wired connection to other PCs. You'll need a broadband Internet connection for accessing online TV guides, digital music and video download sites, and online radio. Add a TV tuner card for connecting to your TV or home theater system.

You'll want a DVD burner if you'd like to burn recorded TV to DVD so you can take it with you for viewing on a notebook computer. A Digital Media Adaptor will allow you to stream your music, photos and video to any room in your house. You can use your current TV and stereo system so long as they are not antique!

To top it all off, throw in a portable MP3 player and PDA so that you can take all that media with you as you travel.

The beauty of the Digital Home is the seamless connection of the personal computer, Internet, TV, stereo (or home theater system), laptops and portable music and PDA devices. You can access any media over any device in any room at any time. Now that's entertainment!

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Hard Drive House Keeping Is Vital ...

by Dennis Schulman Tampa Bay Computer Society

For those of you who surf the net on a regular basis - and that includes those who use dialup access as well as cable or DSL - it is absolutely crucial that you take your hard drive housekeeping more seriously than you ever thought necessary. Many users think that by having a suite of utilities, such as Norton or McAfee, that you are protected. You might be, but I seriously doubt it for so many reasons I won't go into it now except for three:

You use auto update and auto scan. This requires that your computer be online at the time to run the auto update. In the case of cable or DSL, that is possible, but the computer has to be on at the time also. In the case of dialup, the computer won't go online unless your password is saved and used automatically. That, of course, defeats keeping friends and annoying children from messing up the computer without your knowledge. So, you might want to run your antivirus update manually, just to make certain it worked and there were no errors.

The second reason is based on the fact that if you did not clean house before scanning, you risk the possibility of the antivirus finding a virus it could not delete or quarantine and you did not know it. You also risk the possibility of not knowing if the auto update was not run successfully for one of many reasons (and time and space won't permit that discussion at this time) and consequently your subsequent full system auto scan may not be able to recognize the latest nasties you have managed to acquire.

There is a third, more obtuse, reason. If you don't really know if your system is truly clean and clear of all the bad stuff, how will you know what to do when you get a message that says something to the effect: "It has been determined that your computer has been sending messages infected with the _____ trojan horse virus to what appears to be the email listing of your address book. If you do not take appropriate action immediately, your email service will be discontinued. If your anti virus program has failed to protect you, please download the following trojan horse removal tool and run it immediately."

So, here is a housekeeping procedure I use - which is manual - because then I am more certain that I know the status of my files than most of the "suite" programs. And it doesn't use much - if any - of my system resources except when I use it. Just in case you think you have all the utilities you need, let me comment that I am not an expert on your system, but I spend more time now than ever before on systems that have too many over-burdensome utilities that are truly unnecessary and in some cases more dangerous than what they claimed to be designed to do. What I am proposing is basically using 3 little free utilities that only work when invoked, along with utilities that already come with your computer.

Run Disk Cleanup (under System Tools under Accessories on the Programs menu) and process all options (don't worry about compressed files, but do them at a later time when you have nothing else to do, since it could take quite a while if you haven't done it the first time.)

Clear your browser cache (In Internet Explorer go to Tools, Internet Options. Delete cookies and delete all offline files.) In Netscape Communicator go to Edit, Preferences, Advanced, Clear Memory Cache and Clear Disk Cache)

Open Windows Explorer (right-click on My Computer, select Explore), Select the folders/View option and select show all files except system files (You can leave it this way.) Find any folders called tmp, temp, or cookies. Unless you have a good working knowledge of what cookies you need or do not need, you probably don't need the contents of any of the temp, cookies, or temporary internet folders except the index.dat file (you might want to save the contents of the History folder)

Empty the Recycle Bin

Update and run the latest core version of Adaware SE Personal Edition (currently version 1.05). Once the scan is complete, click on an object found, right-click a lined item and select all, click next and remove all.

Update and run the latest version of Spybot (currently version 1.3.) Before running the scan, run immunize. Then run Look for Problems. Once problems are found, select them all and click on Fix Problems.

Note: Some spyware may be associated with programs you want to use, so read the help section for a further under-

(Continued on page 8)

(Claude's Bytes continued from page 3)

- Most LT's come with an area that acts like a mouse when you run your finger over it. This takes some getting used to as it's really nothing like a mouse or a track ball, which is what I usually use. When I got my LT, I immediately bought a trackball to go in the carrying case with it. But that's only good for certain instances and requires some setup. As it happens, I've gradually come to use the built-in pad so much, that I probably will not use a mouse or track ball with the LT unless I am doing serious graphics editing.
- LT keyboards require a learning curve. I'm finally getting used to mine and pretty much know where the special keys, such as DEL, END and HOME, are. I'm also getting used to the key spacing. It's more compressed than a standard desktop keyboard.
- How much to spend on a LT is always an issue. Basically, the smaller it is, and the faster the CPU, and the longer the battery life, the more costly it's going to be. You pay for miniaturization. On the other hand, the larger the screen, the more expensive it's going to be. I balanced all those issues and found my price niche. I'd like a smaller, faster version with longer battery life, but I'd be looking at spending at least \$1,000 more than I did.

While some people don't feel comfortable with less than 60 gigs of hard drive space, I'm quite satisfied with 30 on my LT. I'm not using it as my main computer and won't be storing massive graphics files on it.

If I did need access to graphics files, they could be put on a CD or even a DVD.

In any case, I have an external 200 gig hard drive which vastly expands storage capacity far beyond an internal LT hard drive. Besides an external hard drive provides security by not having all your files on one hard drive. I use my external hard drive for regular backups. These drives are becoming cheaper and are easy to plug into a USB port. However, they do require a separate power supply.

Another option for additional storage for a LT is to buy lots of memory on a RAM card or Thumb drive. You should have one of these anyway for transferring files to others' computers. These portable USB memory devices will be needed more and more as floppies are phased out. In any case, their capacity far exceeds a floppy both in speed and capacity.

- There are several other problems related to LT's. First of all, they come preloaded with a lot of extra software that most of us don't want. It's really troublesome as this software won't go away easily. Also much of it requires buying a license to run it after an initial few months. Some of these licenses involve security software, such as Norton.

Another problem is that, as far as I can tell, you can't install the software that you use on your main computer. Again a licensing problem.

CD's from one computer to another — Some people are convinced that you don't need to format a CD; however, my recent experience tells me that that isn't always so. I recently took a CD-RW from my main computer to my laptop. On my laptop, it took 4 minutes to save a single Word document. It definitely said it was "preparing" the CD.

(Hard drive Housekeeping continued from page 7)

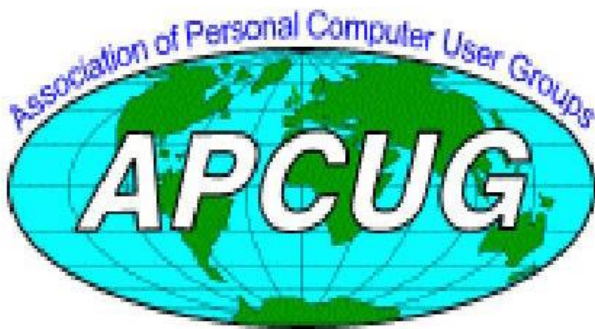
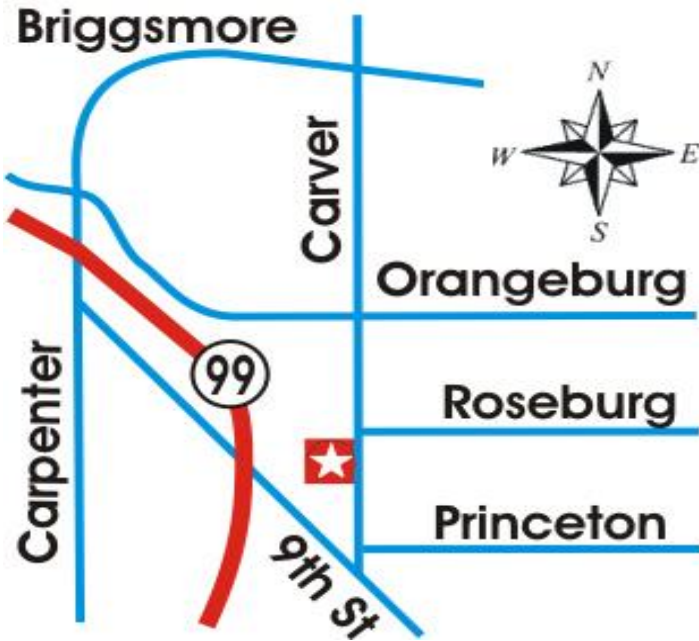
standing of the features and options on both of these programs. These spyware objects detector utilities can be downloaded from download.com or majorgeeks.com.

There is a third utility, called a hijack remover. There are many available, but I like CWS shredder.exe (current version 2.00) (use www.google.com to find the program) Just make certain you are not online and that your browser is not open when you run it. You may be surprised and pleased if it finds something and fixes it (generally really bad stuff).

(Continued on page 9)

The Club's Meeting Place

Our general meeting and the Random Access Special Interest Group are held in the Destiny Christian Center in Modesto on the west side of Carver Road, right across from Sam's Food City.



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Be sure and check our web site at least once a week at www.mpcug.net

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PC Post

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Join The Modesto PC User Group

Web site: www.mpcug.net

To join MPCUG (or just get more information about us go to our Web site and fill out the new member form or mail your check to: MPCUG, P.O. Box 5122, Modesto, CA 95352-5122. Membership is just \$24 a year and includes 12 issues of the PC Post along with participation in all meetings and events. You will also receive e-mail advising you of extra events or news.

The PC Post and Editorial Policy

The PC Post is published online 12 times per year and is available to all group members as a membership benefit. Annual group membership dues are \$24.

For information write:

Modesto PCUG PO Box 5122, Modesto, CA 95352-5122

Opinions expressed in the PC Post do not necessarily reflect the opinions or views of the members as a group or the Board of Directors.

The PC Post encourages group members to submit articles for publication. We would like to have articles which deal with the writer's experience with computer hardware and software.

An article may deal with any computer-related subject provided it contains no libelous or offensive material. We can't use information copied from other publications without written permission except for quotes.

Articles should be submitted in MS Word text. Do not spend time formatting your article such as indents or centering. Please use only one space between sentences, and do not use bold, italicize or otherwise format the submission as we can't guarantee results in translation to Publisher. Proof read and run your spelling checker. Watch

for special upper and lower case in brand names. Do not tab or indent to layout text.

If you want to include a graphic, please contact the editor for instructions.

We reserve the right to edit articles, for length or to improve readability. Longer articles may be published in several parts. We will not knowingly promote unlicensed businesses.

Letters to the editor are encouraged. All articles and letters to the editor should be submitted to the editor via email as an attached file. Call him at (209) 667-1980 before submission. Please include your name, day and evening phone numbers, and email address for contact.

The MPCUG exchanges some articles with other user groups around the country via the Association of PC User Groups (APCUG). If for any reason you object to having your article distributed to APCUG member organizations for reprinting, please notify the editor at the time you submit the article. Your wish will in no way affect publication of your article in the Post.

Production notes: Prepared using **Microsoft Publisher 2003**, MS Office 2003, Minolta laser color printer and a lot of sweat and a few tears.

Special Interest Groups

SIG meetings are held at the discretion of the leader and participants. Sometimes the date, location and time have to be changed or a meeting cancelled. Give the leader a call before the meeting if it is your first time.

SIG Name	Leaders	Phone#	Date / Time / Note
Beginners' SIG	Bud Bondietti	667-1980	6:30 p.m., 2nd Monday, Denny's 1525 McHenry Ave.
Board Meeting	Mike Kumler	531-2262	7:00 p.m., 1st Wed. of the month. Call for place.
Digital Photography.....	C. Delphia	537-9604	On hiatus
Random Access Q&A			6:30 p.m. before general meeting
Website SIG	Jim Goodman	579-0122	Looking for a place to meet.
Genealogy SIG	C. Delphia	537-9604	On hiatus
Women's' SIG	Liz Leedom	523-4218	On hiatus

Membership renewal: As with all organizations, MPCUG is run solely by volunteers. That means that when your membership comes due, someone must send you a reminder, sometimes several times. We try to cut back that need by e-mailing you that your membership is expiring. Please help by renewing your membership in a timely manor. It saves user group money and volunteer time.



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