

'Bridges to Technology' on June MPCUG agenda

Zela Owens, who heads up the computer instruction program for the Stanislaus County Public Library, will talk about what she does and who she needs to help her do it, when the Modesto PC User Group meets on Thursday, June 22.

The library and all its branches host one-and-a half-hour sessions, mostly for beginning computer enthusiasts, in a variety of programs. Also offered are computer classes for the absolute beginner and beginning and more advanced Internet classes.

Teachers are volunteers from the community, some of them bi-lingual.

The meeting will begin at 6:30 p.m. with the Random Access Special Interest Group, where members can get their most pressing computer questions answered. After refreshments at 7:30 p.m., Owens will offer her program.

The meeting, as usual, will take place at Destiny Christian Center on Carver Road just south of Roseburg Avenue. Members should park on the south side of the building.

And don't forget, this is the meeting at which we choose new officers for the coming year.

We will vote in a short business meeting just before the presentation. You will find the nominations by the nominating committee on page 5. In addition, nominations will be accepted from the floor for any member in good standing.

**For directions to the meeting place
see page 10.**

**Next Meeting
Thursday, 22, 7:30 p.m.
Random Access SIG
6:30 p.m.**

**Vote for new officers
at this meeting.**

Inside This Issue

President's Comments	2
Membership Report	2
Claude's Bytes	3
Backup Month	4
Nominating Committee Report	5
Accessing Family Accounts	6
Computer Hysteria	7
Essential Processes	8

Next board meeting
Come have dinner with the board,
7 p.m. Wednesday, July 5,
Ridgeway's restaurant, Modesto.

Be sure and check our web site for last minute information www.mpcug.net



Presidents Report Mike Kumler

Welcome to summer. According to the temperatures, I think it has arrived.

One of the items discussed at our last board meeting was the Digital Photo SIG. Due to circumstances beyond anyone's control, the SIG has become inactive. What the board realizes is that new leadership is needed, at least temporarily, and lacking a clear course, it is difficult to ask anyone to assume that role. Therefore, it was decided that we should have a "reorganization" meeting. At this meeting, we will attempt to define what objective(s) the SIG will have and how to achieve each of them. The meeting will be hosted by the entire board (or as many of us as can be in attendance), and we encourage all members who have (or think they might have) an interest in the subject to attend. We are **especially hopeful** that all of those who have been so faithfully attending the SIG meetings will join us and help steer us into the future. The board's goal will not be achieved without good quality participation from the membership. Please bring your ideas and questions and be prepared to share!!

The meeting will be held on Saturday, July 8 at Denny's on McHenry Avenue at 9:30 a.m.. Your board is committed to the success of this SIG and will lend the support necessary to see that it does succeed.

Does everyone enjoy the Apple Computer ad campaign as much as I do? The most recent one I have seen: two guys are just climbing out of their boxes and the Apple guy ends up telling the PC guy to go ahead with loading programs, reading manuals, but he is just going to start doing stuff "right out of the box". That ad agency should get a raise.

That's it for this time. I hope to see everyone at the next general meeting -- remember it is election time, and remember our motto....

"User helping User"

Membership Report Hank Mudge

Members renewing - Thank you for your support:

Philip Anselmo 4/7 Terence Fix 6/7 Stan Loeb 6/7 Richard Lutz 6/7

Members' dues expiring since March and April:

Joel Williamson (March) Hubert VanVaught (April)

Members' dues expiring in May:

Lester Maxfield Vincent Kerrigan

Members' dues expiring in June:

Dick Currie Pete Ball Jerry Pack Alfred Kaufman
Robert & Barbara Meyer Pat Bradbury Allan Romander Gene Richards

Members' dues expiring in July:

Nick & Lorna Crooker Richard Hitchcock Paul Martelli

Members' dues expiring in August:

Donald Thill Joyce Frost Dorothy & Roy Schmidt

Claude's Bytes

By Claude Delphia, Editor Emeritus, Modesto PC User Group

Retouching photos • Adobe Elements • Photo editing good news • Selling using photos

Retouching photos — After doing the presentation at the May Digital Photo SIG, I did a lot of thinking about how I actually fix or retouch photos.

Basically I ran out of time at the point of using Adobe Elements. But even so, it would take a whole meeting to show off Elements built-in features. And that would only touch the surface.

Several points have surfaced as I've been editing other photos. But first a story. Jim Goodman related how Eric Johnston, the Bee expert explained it. First of all, he was demonstrating photo editing using Power Point. He wasn't using a photo editing program live. When asked how he did it so fast, he explained that the Power Point presentation only made it seem fast. The truth, as he explained, is that editing photos takes lots of time, even hours depending on what you want to do.

You might think that an expert in editing would take less time. The answer is yes and no. If it is a basic fix, the editors' knowledge of simple techniques and where to start can be of great help. But when it comes to changing some key element in the photo, the expert may take longer in order to do it carefully and camouflage the changes made. Sometimes an expert will enlarge the photo and change just small parts of the photo to blend the changes. It could take hours to make a photo look like it had never been retouched.

The point of all this is that you shouldn't assume that an expert program is going to make things easier. Most of these high-end programs just do it better and allow more precise changes. And there are more ways to make changes which I just touched on at the last Photo SIG.

Photo editing good news — A friend sent me a photo of a monitor he was trying to sell on the Internet. He'd taken a photo, but it turned out to have some problems so he sent it to me for a few fixes, the main one being that the monitor was bluish instead of off white.

I went into Elements and the first thing I did was to hit the Auto Fix button in the Quick Edit list. It immediately changed the blue tinged parts of the picture into a reasonable off white. I don't usually use this button because most of the time it doesn't make the changes that I want. But this time it was the right choice. I did go into the color adjustment section and warm up the image just a bit.

To finalize it, I used the Smudge tool to wipe out some background distractions. This tool which is available in some programs, but not others, is a quick and dirty method of fixing photos. Basically it just takes the background and "smudges" it over the problem area. It's a sort of blending tool. It's great for a spot on someone's face or defects in old photos. It's ideal for fixing dust spots and it only takes seconds.

Selling using photos — Sometime it's a waste of time to try to sell something on the Internet using a bad photo, and even if you do sell it, if it is an auction such as eBay, your sale can be way lower if you use a poor quality photo. You need to always ask yourself, "would I buy this item given the way it looks in the photo?"

And Finally — There just is no way to do photo editing without taking time to learn the program. And you are better off to learn one program. You can use the quick fix buttons in your program and it should be your first choice. But don't hesitate to use the Undo button right after using the quick fix. You don't have to be stuck with the program's idea of how to fix your picture. Each program's quick fix button works differently since it is a program that someone has invented and it's based on that person's idea of what and how the fix should work. As is usual with software, some programs will work better than others.

(Claude Continued on page 9)

Backup Awareness Month

By Ira Wilsker, APCUG Advisor; Columnist, *The Examiner*, Beaumont, TX; Radio & TV show host iwilsker(at)apcug.net

WEBSITES: <http://www.backupawareness.com> <http://www.ntius.com> <http://www.symantec.com>
<http://www.backupawareness.com/bestpractices.html>

In case you had not heard, June is Backup Awareness Month. It is not a federally recognized holiday, nor is it one acknowledged by resolution from some governmental authority, but an awareness service of one of the largest manufacturers of hard drives, the newly merged Maxtor and Seagate.

Sure, Maxtor and Seagate will benefit if we all rush out and purchase a large capacity hard drive so we can backup our critical data in the event of a hard drive crash, or other tragedy that can damage or destroy our computers. This is really more of a win-win situation, as there is a very valid need for timely and comprehensive backups of our data. Lessons still unlearned from Rita, Katrina, and Wilma, as well as other countless disasters, fires, thefts, and other debacles should teach us that if we have a good backup of our files, we can easily survive a catastrophic data loss, and be back in operation promptly.

Imagine in any business or other commercial environment how much information is stored on hard drives. Hard drives are electromechanical devices, and as such will indeed fail at some time. Murphy's Law dictates that a hard drive will always fail at the most inopportune time. Now imagine what would happen to that business or organization if suddenly all of its critical information was gone. No accounts receivable; no accounts payable; no client lists; no purchase orders; no employee or student data; no payroll and tax records; no correspondence; no records of any kind; and a plethora of other potentially devastating losses. Next imagine the time and cost that a company would incur if it had to rebuild that amount of information from paper records, if the paper records indeed exist. Can you conceive the utter devastation that a company would suffer with a catastrophic data loss?

Data loss is not just a corporate or organizational threat, but a personal one too. On my home computer, for example, I have countless family photos, tax records, family financial information, archives of correspondence and other important documents, music, bookmarks, address books, email, and other information that would probably be irretrievable in the event of a complete hard drive failure. I really do not think that the IRS would accept as an excuse the fact that my hard drive crashed, losing my financial records.

We can backup our data in many ways without any substantial expense, or we can utilize sophisticated backup solutions. Backing up can be as simple as copying critical files to CD, DVD, flash drive, or other storage media, using the integral copy function available on all computer operating systems. We can use software, such as NTI's Shadow or Backup NOW! to manage our backup functions to our chosen media, or we can use utilities such as Symantec's (Norton) Ghost, to make a bit by bit copy of our hard drive which can be copied to a new hard drive, making it a mirror image of the original, ready to go. Now that broadband internet connections are more of a rule than an exception, there are commercial services that will do online remote backup and storage at off-premise locations, secure and separate from the host or home location.

Seagate/Maxtor have published some "best practices" (www.backupawareness.com/bestpractices.html) defining the tasks necessary to insure the ability to recover our precious data. These practices can be summarized by the following tips (details on the website):

Develop a backup schedule – Make it routine, and not a task that we have to remember to accomplish. Most modern backup software and utilities either backup in real-time (NTI Shadow), or can be scheduled at predetermined times (NTI Backup NOW!).

(Continued on page 5)

(Backup Awareness, continued from page 4)

Back up everything – it is not necessary to waste time sorting data, as the speed of backup utilities, hardware, and hard drives, as well as the large capacity of new hard drives, make it unnecessary to determine what to backup

Give yourself room to grow – The rule of thumb listed on the site recommends that the minimum size of backup drives (or other media or storage solutions) should be at least double the current size of the hard drives being backed up.

Back up automatically – Referred to in the industry as “Set it and Forget It”, is a viable adjunct to backing up on schedule. Some real-time off-site backup services use a high speed internet connection to automatically back up all new data to an external location. Many software utilities are almost transparent, and perform backups automatically, and unattended.

Rotate backups – Use more than one drive or other system for backup. There are always risks that the backup itself can be damaged or otherwise flawed, and there is safety in redundancy. It is a good practice to store at least one current backup physically away from the location being backed up such that a catastrophe (fire, flood, etc.) at the host will not destroy the backup. It is also a good idea to be able to take a backup with you in the event of a crisis, such as when I took my external hard drive with a current backup of all of my files, when I evacuated from Hurricane Rita. With this external drive, I could also access critical files from another computer if needed, prior to returning home.

Don't procrastinate – Do not put off until tomorrow what you must be doing today. The complete Murphy's First Law of Computing is, “A properly backed up hard drive will never fail, but the first time that you do not have a current backup, your hard drive will always fail at the most inopportune time.” Sadly, all too many of us learn the importance of a backup immediately after our hard drive fails, as we come to the realization that all is lost.

June should not really be backup awareness month; every month should be backup awareness month!

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Nominating Committee Report

.by Bud Bondiotti, Committee Chair

As required by the MPCUG bylaws, the following list of nominees has been presented to the board for consideration in the next MPCUG election to be held on our June meeting date. The chairs for president, vice president and director at large are up for re-election. The following members in good standing are running for these offices:

President	Mike Kumler (Incumbent)
Vice President	Liz Leedom (Incumbent)
Director at large	Hank Mudge (Incumbent)

Nominations are still being accepted, and also nominations from the floor will be considered on the night of the election. The following are members of the nominating committee:

Bud Bondiotti (chairperson)
Ray Nichols
Terry Fix

Accessing Family Accounts in Cases of Emergency

By Gabriel Goldberg, APCUG Advisor; Columnist, AARP Computer & Technology Website,
www.aarp.org

We know it's important to maintain current wills, powers of attorney, medical directives, and other such documents. With much data now stored electronically, emergency preparedness includes planning for family members, trusted friends, and advisors to access personal information stored online, on computers, and in electronic gadgets. More >>>

Access Family Accounts in Emergencies

It's clear how important it is for each of us to maintain current wills, powers of attorney, medical directives, and other such documents. And family members, trusted friends, and advisors such as lawyers need quick access to them. In their absence, at stressful times, important actions and decisions become needlessly difficult.

With much data now stored electronically, emergency preparedness requires that loved ones or advisors can access personal information stored online, on computers, and in electronic gadgets like cell phones and PDAs (personal digital assistants, Palms and Pocket PCs). This preparation merely adds our electronic lives to a readiness checklist. It's no more exotic or worrisome than opening joint bank accounts or giving a house key to a trusted neighbor.

Actions we should take are as unique as our legal, medical, and financial profiles. Preparation is especially important because laws and business practices don't match today's technologies.

News stories highlight some of today's challenges and risks. A soldier in Iraq used e-mail and a Web site to communicate with the world. When he was killed, his parents wanted to preserve what he had created. But his ISP refused to allow access or provide the data, citing privacy concerns. Similarly, when a Texas man's wife died, he cancelled her cell phone. The company also disconnected his phone, which had been on the same account. He couldn't reactivate it, leaving him isolated at a difficult time.

Where to begin? Many such legal and logistical problems can be avoided by simply including two names on accounts such as online banking and investing, mortgage service, bill paying, e-mail, and Web services. This way either person can deal with accounts on the other's behalf. But ensure that both names aren't required for routine actions.

Then record account names, passwords, and Web addresses for family members, trusted friends, or a lawyer, accountant, or executor. They needn't have the list until it's to be used so just ensure that they can find it and that it's kept updated.

Those of us in the baby boomer "sandwich generation" may have parents and children to look out for and with whom to share our technology preparation information. Preparation requires replacing the common mindset of independence with one of readiness and collaboration. An estate attorney can be a valuable resource, providing legal documents, objective advice, and what-if scenarios.

Commercial services are arising to help. Denver-based Family Matters USA [www.familymatters.com] claims to have "identified, researched and solved over 120 tasks that an estate executor or family could perform". They believe that while privacy issues affect all sorts of accounts, proper legal forms, a legitimate need, and perseverance (sometimes escalating to a supervisor) will yield the desired information.

While organizations typically handle employees' work information during emergency situations, supervisors and individuals should inventory what they use on the job and how others might need to access it.

(Continued on page 9)

Computer Hysteria: Pew

by **Berry F. Phillips**, a member of the **CCOKC** and a regular writer for the **CCOKC** website and the **eMonitor**—www.ccokc.org; [bfpdata\(at \) gbronline.com](mailto:bfpdata@gbonline.com)

"Pew" could conjure up several images in your mind. For example, you might think of a human expression uttered upon inhaling the exotic perfume of a skunk! Perhaps you might think of an aching back from that hard wooden pew at church! What does pew have to do with computing? Perhaps nothing caution because you are reading in the CHZ, the Computer Hysteria Zone!

The Pew Charitable Trusts, an independent nonprofit, was established between 1948 and 1979 by the children of Sun Oil Company founder Joseph Pew and his wife, Mary Anderson Pew, with the creation of the Pew Memorial Foundation honoring their parents' memory. In 2005, the foundation invested \$177 million to fund the various trusts including the founding in 1999 of The Pew Internet & American Life Project which studies the social and civic impact of the Internet, often considered the most far-ranging, behavior-changing communications innovation since the invention of printing.

The Project produces reports that explore the impact of the Internet on families, communities, work and home, daily life, education, health care, and civic and political life. The Project aims to be an authoritative source on the evolution of the Internet through collection of data and analysis of real-world developments as they effect the virtual world.

The basis of the reports are nationwide random digit dial telephone surveys as well as online surveys. This data collection is supplemented with research from government agencies, academia, and other expert venues, observations of what people do and how they behave when they are online, in-depth interviews with Internet users and Internet experts alike and other efforts that try to examine individual and group behavior. The Project releases 15-20 pieces of research a year, varying in size, scope, and ambition.

Latest trends from the project reports show the number of adult users are now almost equally divided between men and women representing 73% of American adults who use the Internet which currently represents approximately 147 million people. Here is what we do online: Send e-mail (91%), use a search engine to find information (91%), search for a map or driving direction(84%), look for health/medical information (79%) , research a product or service before buying it (78%), check the weather (78%), look for information on a hobby or interest (77%), get travel information (73%), get news (68%), buy a product (67%), surf the web for fun (66%), buy or make a reservation for travel (63%), look for political news/information (58%), and for lesser percentages of use on online activities visit www.pewinternet.org whose website was used to research this article with my appreciation.

While researching this Pew article, I began wondering if the article might be good enough to be submitted to win a "Pewlitzer" Prize! On second thought that would be just plain "pewlish!"

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Be sure and check our web site at least once a week: www.mpcug.net
For the latest club and computer information

Essential Processes, How You Can Tell

By Vinny La Bash, Member of the Sarasota PCUG, Florida

www.spcug.org; labash@spcug.org

Every other computer article these days seems to be about Windows Vista, a long promised operating system that won't make its appearance for almost another year. Why all the fuss about something that doesn't even exist yet? It's as far advanced over Windows XP as Windows 95 was over 3.1, that's why. That's nice, but we don't have Vista to take us to Nirvana today. We common folk have XP. That's not bad, but we don't have Vista as promised. Maybe this time next year I'll be writing about a Vista tip to make life easier while we're all anticipating the release of Vienna, the follow on to Vista. While we're waiting, here's something to make the wait easier.

If you press Ctrl+Alt+Delete to bring up the Windows Task Manager and then activate the Processes tab, you see a long list of computer services that run in the background while you're working with your system. You've undoubtedly received recommendations that you should shut down or disable the unessential processes to improve system performance. This is sound advice, but how can you tell what's essential from what could be shut down without clobbering your operation? Try the following to get a fighting start in that direction.

Restart your system and when it begins to reboot press F8 repeatedly until the Start Up menu appears. Select the Safe Mode option from the menu. If you get another screen asking you to select the operating system, choose the one which applies to you. In most cases, you will see one choice and it will be Windows XP Home Edition, Windows XP Professional Edition or Windows XP Media Center Edition. A bunch of programming gibberish may fill up your screen next and your system may appear to be 'frozen' for a minute or two. Relax, but don't touch anything, especially the keyboard or the mouse.

Eventually something like the normal Windows Welcome Screen will appear and you will be asked to sign in. If you are the only one using your system and your user profile has full Administrator privileges, you can safely log on to Windows Safe Mode. If you're not certain, use the Administrator Profile.

You will now be confronted with a formidable looking dialog box containing an ambiguous explanation of Safe Mode. Click the Yes button. When the desktop appears, don't panic. The icons may look very different, but nothing is wrong. One of the characteristics of Safe Mode is to load only the minimum number of video drivers that will support the lowest resolution your monitor can handle. This guarantees you will have a visible screen in Safe Mode. Everything will be back to normal when you restart, but you will probably have to rearrange your icons.

Press Ctrl+Alt+Delete. This time the Windows Task Manager displays a considerably shorter list in the Processes section. This list represents what's really essential to keep Windows running. Don't shut down or disable anything in this short list when you are running in Windows normal mode. You run the risk of not only crashing your system, but you may not be able to boot up again without doing a repair reinstall of your operating system. The idea here is to improve the performance of your system, not put yourself out of business.

You can make a handwritten list of the processes that are running in Safe Mode and use that as a reference, but here is another method.

1. Click on a blank area of the Windows Task Manager to make sure it is active. Click the Processes tab.
2. Press Alt+PrtScrn to capture the image of the dialog box and store it in the clipboard area.
3. Close the Windows Task Manager Dialog box.

(Continued on page 9)

(Claude's Bytes, Continued from page 3)

One aspect of Adobe Elements is clear. It is a finer program. By that I mean that you can set just exactly how much change you want to make. Sometimes the change it makes is not that apparent because it only makes a small incremental change. That's good, because other programs make changes where the increment is large and not finely adjustable. Adobe's products are designed to be the industry's best, and they are. And that is demonstrated in the fineness of its abilities.

Cardinal Rule — Never edit the original or only copy of a digital photo. Always work with a copy and keep the original safely stored elsewhere. I've had photos go weirdly bad to the point of having to start over again. Keep your original safe from changes.

(Accessing family accounts, continued from page 6)

At home or at work, the largest obstacle to emergency preparation is the wealth of information we use from memory. You can start an inventory by noting details of online accounts, Web site bookmarks saved, and passwords stored. Then make a list to share with someone who may need to follow in your electronic footsteps. Remember to safeguard your list, whether it's on paper, a PC, or a USB drive [www.aarp.org/learntech/computers/hardware/secure_usb_drives.html]. But don't hide the list itself behind a secret password!

Finally, there's a very tangible step to take. Emergency responders encourage using a high-tech replacement for traditional wallet contact-list cards [www.macmillandictionary.com/New-Words/050808-ICE-number.htm]. They commonly check victims' cell phones or PDA directories for entries filed under "ICE" ("in case of emergency") to determine whom to call.

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(Essential processes, continued from page 8)

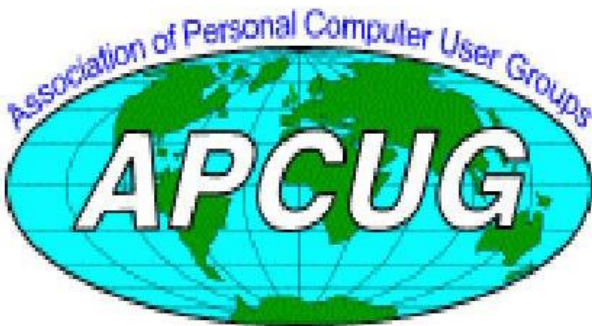
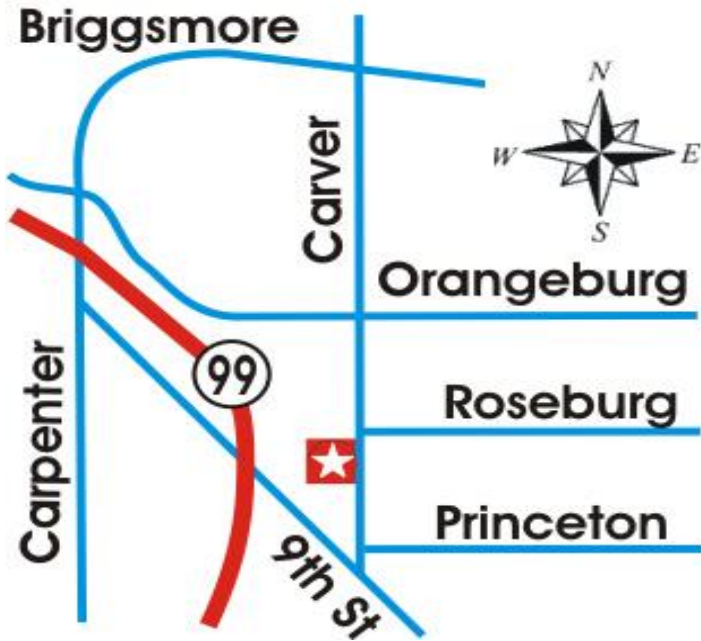
4. Click on the Start button.
5. From the Start Menu, open the All Programs section.
6. Open the Accessories Menu.
7. Start the Paint program.
8. From the Edit menu select Paste to put the stored image in the canvas area.
9. Save the image on the Desktop, the My Documents folder or in any folder where you can retrieve it easily.
10. Close Paint.
11. Restart Windows.
12. Rearrange your icons if necessary when the desktop appears in normal mode.
13. Open Paint as you did in Safe Mode.
14. Retrieve and print the Task Manager Dialog box image.

You can copy and paste the image in your word processor or another application if you prefer. When you shut down or disable any process not on your short list, you can be confident that you won't inadvertently clobber your system while trying to improve its performance. What about all those other programs running in the background? That's a subject for another article.

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The Club's Meeting Place

Our general meeting and the Random Access Special Interest Group are held in the Destiny Christian Center, 1161 Carver Road, Modesto, on the west side of Carver Road, right across from Sam's Food City.



Free classifieds for members. Email the text to the editor at editor@mpcug.net



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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

Editor: Bud Bondiotti

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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-

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:

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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 p.m., 1st Wed. of the month.
Digital Photography.....	J. Goodman	579-0122	9:30 a.m. 2nd Saturday, Denny's 1525 McHenry Ave.
Random Access Q&A			6:30 p.m. before general meeting

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



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