

PC Post



Official Newsletter of the
Modesto PC User Group.
Modesto, California

26 YEARS OF USER HELPING USER

JUNE 2008 – VOLUME 26.06

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**Urgent — Please read
the membership report
and check your status.**

**For directions to
Destiny Christian
Center
see page 8**

OUR NEXT MEETING

MPCUG to Spend an Evening with Picasa

Longtime member Ray Nichols will treat Modesto PC User Group members to a demonstration of the computer photo program Picasa at the next membership meeting on Thursday, June 26.

Nichols says he will take the free Google program through its many paces, including printing, sizing, slide show creating, cropping and touching up, as well as several other lesser known capabilities.

In addition, he will sponsor a free drawing for a "12-in-1" external camera card reader that connects to a USB port without external power.

This meeting, too, will feature election of officers to a new term. Up for election this time are the offices of president, vice president and member-at-large.

As usual, the gathering will begin at 6:30 p.m. with the Random Access Special Interest Group, where members can get their most pressing computer questions answered. Nichol's presentation will follow refreshments at 7:30 p.m.

The event will take place at Destiny Christian Center on Carver Road just south of Roseburg Avenue. Members and friends should park in front or back of the building and enter on the south side.

-- Elizabeth Leedom, eleedom@sbcglobal.net,
Web page, www.mpcug.net

IMPORTANT MEETING DATES

General Meeting — June 26 — Destiny Christian Center
Photo SIG Meeting — on hiatus
Board Meeting — July 2 — Ridgeway's Restaurant



President's Report Mike Kumler

Election Notice and Report

MPCUG is required to hold elections of officers whose terms are up each June. Normally a nominations committee is appointed in February as required by the bylaws in preparation for the vote at the June membership meeting. For various reasons, no nominations committee was formed by the president.

At the board's last meeting, it was decided that the current officers seeking re-election would be put up for the membership to vote on as they have agreed to be reelected.

Member Jack Selover has also volunteered to run for the Director at Large position.

Anyone can nominate others to run during the election process at our June meeting.

The candidates so far are as follows:

President

Mike Kumler

Vice President

Elizabeth Leedom

Director at Large

Hank Mudge

Jack Selover

Some may remember that Jack was having lunch with Bud Bondietti when he died.

Officers whose term runs for another year are: Treasurer Barbara Cameron and Secretary Terry Fix.

You can read our user groups bylaws by going to our website and click on the bylaws links in the left menu.

Dues must be up to date in order to vote at the June meeting. You can pay that night.

Membership Report Hank Mudge

Members dues expired in Mar

Skip Pringle

Members dues expired in Apr

John (Jack) Selover

Philip Anselmo

Donald Branson

Members dues expired in May

Richard & Katherine Pyle

Dorothy & Roy Schmidt

Jerry Pack

Keith Schock

Bee Hagens

Pete Ball

Alfred Kaufman

Members dues expiring in June

Robert & Barbara Meyer

Terence Fix

Stan Loeb

Richard Lutz

Gene Richards

Allan Romander

Members Dues expiring in Jul

Nick & Lorna Crooker

Orval Brewer

Richard Hitchcock

Members Dues Expiring in Aug

Dan Hunt

Claude's Bytes

By Claude Delphia, Editor Emeritus, Modesto PC User Group

Photo editing?

Picasa and other photo editing programs

As I think I wrote before, I use multiple programs to edit photos depending on the needs of the edit. For example, I recently decided to use Picasa to edit a photo of two people. First it needed cropping which was easy in Picasa as it offered several options. The most basic was three different sizes. But I almost always want to do a freehand or Manuel edit as Picasa calls it.

I then needed to do a sharpen which is listed under Picasa's effects. In Picasa, this is just a basic one click option. In Microsoft's now discontinued image editing program, which I still occasionally return to, the sharpening is by steps which offers a higher and more refined degree of sharpening.

Using Picasa again, reminds me of some of its quirks and why I don't spend a lot of time using it. It just doesn't seem to be all that intuitive, at least not for me. Member Ray Nickols would probably see it differently, but a big factor is that he uses it all the time. And that is a key to any program, whether it is photo editing or word processing. Even if a program isn't the best or doesn't have all the features, if you use it regularly, you are going to learn how to get things done one way or another.

Picasa also has some quirks that make me avoid it almost completely. In trying to edit just one image, I lost the original. It's probably my fault, but then again it could be the way Picasa handles edits. I'm not going to spend the time figuring that out.

My next edit after I recovered an original elsewhere on my computer, was in Adobe Elements. The first advantage I saw was that the sharpening feature, a standard feature right on the main menu, not a special effect as Picasa calls it, was that sharpening is infinitely variable. No jumps, just a sliding scale like you would expect in a semi professional piece of software.

Nikon advertising — It's the lens that makes it a Nikon. Well said, and it says it all. In a Nikon lens, it's the quality of the glass and the special coatings that most high level lenses have. I think this is way more important than more megapixels. I'd rather have a three megapixel Nikon lens than an six megapixel camera with a lens not of Nikon or equivalent quality.

At the June membership meeting
new officers must be elected.

When the nomination officer asks for people to step forward to fill the
various offices, please volunteer to be a User Helping User.

Dues must be up to date in order to vote at the June meeting. You can pay that night.

Bookmarks Page

by Hank Pearson, Treasurer and Webmaster, ASCIi (Arizona Association for Computer Info, inc.)
www.asciigroup.org hank.pearson(at)asciigroup.org

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Find Bookmarks with Forgotten Names

Wouldn't it be nice if you could view a searchable webpage of bookmarks for your favorite websites? You can, but why?

One reason to view your bookmarks as a webpage (as an alternative to looking in a menu) is to be able to find sites when you can't remember the first word in the name.

Let's say you have a Firefox bookmark named Carbonite Online Backup, and you can't remember Carbonite but you know you are looking for the word Backup. On your Bookmarks page (you will soon learn how to view), you can easily search for Backup.

You are using Firefox, aren't you? If you haven't discovered Firefox, download it from Mozilla (<http://mozilla.com>). It's free, fast, and secure. Make Firefox your default browser.

View Bookmark Descriptions and Tags

Another reason for a bookmarks page is to give you plenty of room to view (and find) descriptions of your bookmarks. You will learn how to add tags to improve your searches.

Zoom In and Out

A third reason to display your bookmarks on a webpage is to allow you to zoom the text in and out so you can see it clearly. To zoom any webpage, press Ctrl+Plus or Ctrl+Minus, using the numeric keypad.

DIY for Fun and Learning

So, how do you display your bookmarks as a webpage? You could download a tool to do the work for you, or download a tool to search bookmarks. But it's easy enough to DIY (Do It Yourself). It's interesting, fun, and educational. Are you just using your computer to perform certain tasks, or do you also enjoy learning by experimenting? If you like to learn, this tip is for you.

Find the Bookmarks File

You don't need to create a bookmarks webpage. It already exists on your own hard drive! The name of the file is simply bookmarks.html. Press Win+F to find it. (While holding down the Windows key (next to Alt), press F, for Find.) In the left window pane, click 'All Files and Folders'. In 'All or part of the file name', type 'bookmarks.html' (without quotes). Click Search.

If you get multiple results, it's easy to determine which bookmarks.html file to use. It's the newest one. In the View menu (of your Search Results window), click Details. In the right window pane, click the Date Modified column header (to sort the list). The file you are interested in has the newest date and time (for a file with the Type shown as Firefox Document).

Bookmark the Bookmarks File

Double-click that newest bookmarks.html Firefox Document to open it in Firefox. Press Ctrl+D to bookmark the bookmarks.html file. In the Name field, insert a hyphen (-) at the beginning (to name the bookmark '-Bookmarks'), so this new bookmark will appear at the top of the list.

Now, with your Bookmarks page displayed, press F5 to refresh the view. (F5 is a common shortcut key for

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Refresh.) Surprise? The new -Bookmarks bookmark is at the bottom - not the top. Let's address that. (This is Firefox 2.0.0.11. Future versions might vary.)

Create Another Top Bookmark

First, create another bookmark that will be displayed at the top. For example, open Google.com, press Ctrl+D, and name the bookmark -Google (starting with a hyphen).

Sort Your Bookmarks

Now, in the Bookmarks menu, right click any bookmark, and click Sort by Name. Look in the Bookmarks menu to confirm that the bookmarks are indeed sorted. Note the two bookmarks that begin with hyphen (-) at the top of the menu.

Look at your Bookmarks page again, and press F5 to Refresh. The new bookmarks are still at the bottom.

Rearrange Your Bookmarks

To force Firefox to rearrange your bookmarks page, move a bookmark in the menu. In the Bookmarks menu, drag, for example, either new bookmark that starts with a hyphen up or down to precede or follow the other bookmark that starts with a hyphen. (Having two hyphen-prefixed bookmarks lets you rearrange those two at the top without rearranging the other bookmarks.) Press Escape to close the menu.

Refresh your Bookmarks page with F5. The bookmarks on the webpage are now arranged as shown in the Bookmarks menu. (Do you need to refresh three times? No, we simply demonstrated that the bookmarks.html file is rearranged when you move a bookmark in the menu.)

Finding Bookmarks on the Page

When you are viewing your Bookmarks webpage, press Ctrl+F for Find. Type Backup, for example, and press Escape (to close the Find toolbar). To find the next occurrence of Backup, press F3. (F3 is a common shortcut key for Find Again.) When you find the desired bookmark (link), click it (or Ctrl+click to open the site in a new tab). (Or press Enter, or Ctrl+Enter to open the site in a new tab.)

Add Descriptions and Tags

To add or change descriptions of your bookmarks, in the Bookmarks menu, right-click the bookmark you want to edit, and click Properties. In the Description field, type anything (including your own tags) that might help you find your bookmark and remember what it is for. After clicking OK and pressing F5 (for Refresh), you will see your new Description in the Bookmarks page.

Make Changes through the Menu

Now that you know where bookmarks.html is located, you might be tempted to edit it directly with a text editor. Mozilla warns that it is automatically generated, so do not edit it, as your changes would be lost. Make your changes through the Bookmarks menu.

Displaying your Bookmarks as a webpage is a start in discovering many more tips and tricks related to Firefox.

Hank Pearson (hank.pearson(at)asciigroup.org) is the Treasurer and Webmaster for ASCII (www.asciigroup.org). He is a long-time member who frequently writes articles for the group's newsletter, and has served as President, Secretary, Newsletter Editor, and Presentations Coordinator.

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“Computune-up”

by **Berry F. Phillips**, member of the **Computer Club of Oklahoma City**

www.ccokc.org

bfdata(at)laccess.net

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Do you want your computer to run faster and increase your productivity? Of course; if you have major problems, you will need to contact your manufacturer and/or professional technical support. Many of those costly major problems can be prevented by doing "computune-ups" yourself. Yes, you can do it even without being a computer geek! My thanks to Microsoft for some of the information in this article.

"Computune-up" (Software)

1. Clean up your desktop! If you have not used a program for a year or one that you never use that came bundled with your system why not delete it. You will get more space on your hard drive in return.
2. Clean up your system tray to the left of time on your Taskbar! When you remove icons from your system tray that you rarely use, it will speed up your system since your computer has to locate those programs whenever you boot up. I love a little freeware program called Code Stuff Starter that shows you what is running and lets you easily turn those programs on or off.
3. Defragment your computer and your registry which will make your system run faster by consolidating fragments on your hard drive and registry. I use freeware programs like SmartDefrag and Aus Logics Registry Defrag and there are others available on the Internet.
4. Check your memory. The more programs you have running the more demand on your system memory (RAM). Adding more memory to your system will increase speed and is very easy to do without paying for expensive technical support. You can do it with minimal instruction or have a technically-oriented friend or club member do it since it only takes a few minutes to replace.
5. Keep your operating system updated and run utilities weekly! I strongly suggest you download needed freeware software for your system from "46 best ever freeware programs" thoroughly tested and rated with commentary.

"Computune-up" (Hardware)

1. Make sure your computer is unplugged before cleaning and not plugged in until your system is dry after cleaning!
2. Make sure you have the following tools available: a screwdriver, can of compressed air (available from a computer store), cotton swabs (not balls), rubbing alcohol, paper towels or anti-static cloths (available from a computer store), and water.
3. Clean the inside of your computer case! Using a screwdriver remove the side of the case opposite your

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WWW.MPCUG.NET

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motherboard. Touch as little as possible inside the computer, keeping fingers away from cards and cords due to static electricity. Blow air around all the components and along the bottom of the case, keeping the nozzle four inches away from your machine. Blow air into the power supply and into the fan from the back of your computer case. Blow air into the floppy disk and CD drives. Wipe the inside cover with a lightly moistened cloth before replacing it using your screwdriver. Clean every three months if your computer is on the floor or an especially dirty environment. Clean approximately every six to eight months in a normal environment.

4. Clean the outside of the case! Run a cotton swab dipped in rubbing alcohol around all the openings on the back of your case giving them one swipe with a dampened swab and one with a dry swab. Clean the remaining outside of your system. Do this whenever you clean the inside of your system.

5. Clean the mouse by taking out the screws and going inside with an alcohol swab. If there is a rubber ball, clean it with water, and let it dry. Then clean the outside of the mouse. Many mouse problems are simply caused by a dirty mouse.

6. Clean the keyboard! Turn it upside down and gently shake it and most of the crumbs and dust will fall out. Blow air in and around the keys. Take an alcohol dampened cotton swab and clean the top and sides of the keys. Do this monthly; your keyboard gets very dirty and can even spread germs. If you have a laptop, follow the same procedure but take extra care with your machine.

7. Clean the monitor with a moistened paper towel or a soft lint-free cloth. (You can purchase monitor cleaning products from a computer store). Don't spray liquid directly on the screen but spray on the cloth. Wipe the screen gently to remove dust and fingerprints. (Never touch the back of the monitor). I suggest you purchase a special cleaning solution from a computer store for laptop computers.

If you have finished your "computune-up," you are on your way to being transformed into a computer geek! Do not be alarmed for the "geeks shall inherit the earth"! Bill Gates, chief geek and founder of Microsoft Corporation, has already made it; he is the role model for the rest of us!

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Tip: Keep the dust away

Computer hardware runs hot, and it takes a small army of fans to pull cool outside air into the case while expelling hot air from the case. Dust, pet hair, and other detritus buildup in the fan filters or the fans themselves can impede this airflow, causing overheating, which is potentially damaging to components. Every few months, you should remove the computer's case and use a can of compressed air to thoroughly clean inside.

From www.SmartComputing.com

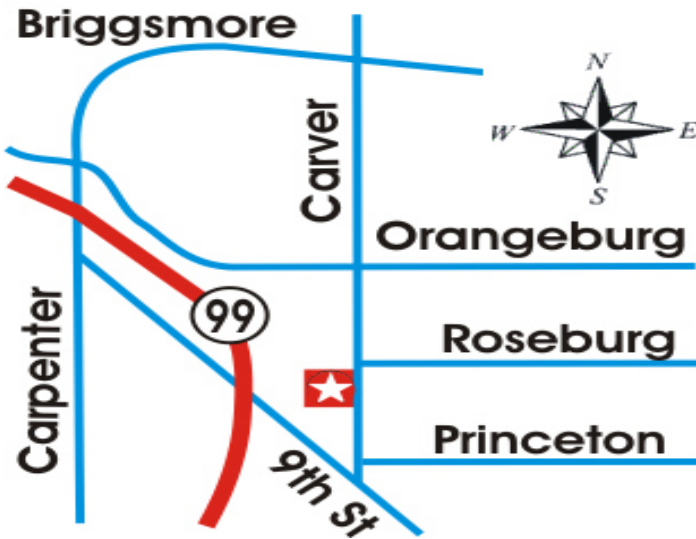
Tip: Find That icon on a Messy Desktop — this is a great tip.

If you always have trouble find the right icon on your messy desktop, this tip is for you. Just click on any blank area of the desktop, then press the first letter of the name of the icon or program you are looking for. The first icon whose name begins with that letter will be highlighted. Pressing the same letter again will take you to the next icon. Just keep pressing that letter until the icon you want is highlighted. Remember that the name of the icon is what will determine which letter you should press. If an icon is named "Microsoft Word", you will have to press "m" to find it. If it is simply named "Word", you will find it by pressing the "w" key.

Sandy Berger, CompuKISS www.compukiss.com

The Club's Meeting Place

Our general meeting and the Random Access Special Interest Group are held at the Destiny Christian Center, 1161 Carver Road on the west side of Carver across from Sam's Food City. Parking is available both in front of and behind the Center. No parking along side of the Center, please.



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Websites, Photo Editing & Graphics

209-402-1936

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

Modesto PC User Group Officers

President Mike Kumler531-2262 president@mpcug.net
Program VP..... Elizabeth Leedom523-4218 programvp@mpcug.net
Secretary Terry Fix.....524-8062 secretary@mpcug.net
Treasurer Barbara Cameron.....522-1389 treasurer@mpcug.net
Director At Large Hank Mudge.....529-1936 membership@mpcug.net

Appointed positions:

SIG Coordinator Jim Goodman579-0122 sig@mpcug.net
Press Relations Elizabeth Leedom523-4218 programvp@mpcug.net
Membership..... Hank Mudge.....529-1936 membership@mpcug.net
Web Master Jim Goodman579-0122 webmaster@mpcug.net
Editor Claude Delphia.....892-5037

PC Post

Editor: Claude Delphia

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President Emeritus Bud Bondietti — 1950-2008

Claude Delphia, Editor Emeritus

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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 \$24.00.

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 or digital photography.

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) 892-5037 before submission. Please include your name, day and evening phone numbers, and email address for contact.