

PC Post



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

27 YEARS OF USER HELPING USER

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CST Computers, Software & Training Election of 2009 / 2010 Officers

The Modesto PC User Group will meet Thursday, June 25, to hear Modesto computer repair man Moses Rogers, owner of CST Computers, discuss computer repair problems, especially those involving spyware.

The group also will elect new officers for the coming year.

The candidates so far are as follows:

President: Mike Kumler

VP/Programs: Jim Goodman

Treasurer: Barbara Cameron

Secretary: Terry Fix

The group will meet at 6 p.m. at Denny's Restaurant, 1525 McHenry Ave., for its Random Access Special Interest Group, featuring questions and problems members are facing. Following dinner at 7:30 p.m., Rogers will make his presentation.

Important Meeting Dates

General Meeting - June 25 - Denny's Restaurant, 1525 McHenry

Board Meeting - July 6 - Ridgeway's Restaurant,

Beginner's SIG Meeting - Cancelled



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Free Google Products I Use Everyday

If you have a computer, you know what Google is. In fact, even if you don't have a computer, you have probably heard of Google. The name Google has become so popular that the word "google" has made it into the dictionary. It means "to search for information on the Internet, especially using the Google search engine."

About six years ago, the that perhaps I was much. I was quite had never before the choice of topics for that I needed to write "Google was what was world." They



powers at AARP thought writing about Google too surprised because they questioned my judgment in their website. I answered about Google because happening in the tech acquiesced. Now, six years

later, Google is still what is happening in the tech world. Google has provided us with not only a great search engine, but it has been the propellant for everyone to offer programs and services for free.

Google has so many free services that I could not possible even list them all here. But today I would like to tell you about a few of the free Google services that I use every day and that I think might be worthwhile for you to try.

The first is Gmail. This is a free web-based email service. Some people use an email program like this because it allows them to access their email from any Internet-connected computer. Others use it when they need an email address for forms on the Internet, keeping their main email address more protected from spam. I use mine to keep some mail separate from my main email account. There are other free web-based email services like AOL, Yahoo! Mail and Hotmail, but Google has made Gmail one of the best. It is easy to use and has lots of additional features like the ability to call others and do a video chat with them right from the email window.

I also use the Google Toolbar. This free product lets you highlight the words of your choice on a webpage. It can also translate web pages to and from English. It has a pop-up blocker, a spell-checker, and a form-filler to name just a few of its many features.

The Google Calendar is a godsend for me. Since the calendar is online, I can access it from any Internet-connected computer. My husband and our technicians also have Google Calendars. So with the click of the mouse, I can see only my calendar or I can view all or any of their calendars.

Each calendar is color-coded, so it's easy to see who has what scheduled. Like all good calendars, the Google Calendar supports different views like daily, weekly, and monthly. It has supports reoccurring events. I have even set it up to synchronize with my Outlook calendar and my iPhone. So no matter where I enter the events, they all show up everywhere. It's a really great tool. With it, unfortunately, I have no excuse for missing an appointment.

The Google homepage, called iGoogle, is another cool tool. You can customize it to show your Gmail inbox, your calendar, the weather, news, and/or just about anything you choose.

Another Google product that I use every day is the Google Bookmarks. I often switch between web browsers using Firefox, Chrome, Internet Explorer, Safari, and Opera at various times. This created a nightmare with my bookmarks until I discovered Google Bookmarks. Now, when I use Google Bookmarks to save my bookmarks they are saved online. Then no matter which browser I use or which computer I happen to be sitting at, I always have the same bookmarks available. I can always access my Bookmarks through the Google toolbar or at www.google.com/bookmarks. As long as I am logged into my Google account, my bookmarks are always there.

For some of these services, like Google Bookmarks, the Google Calendar, and the iGoogle home page, you need to have a Google Account. However, this is free and it allows you to log in once to access all of the Google services that your use.

I also use Google Maps for directions to clients. Once you are logged into your Google account, it will remember your home location. It also remembers places that you have already mapped. Another valuable tool is the ability to email the directions to myself. I can then access the directions on my iPhone when I am on the road. I have also used this to send directions to others. When you get directions at Google Maps, you will see a camera next to each turn. Click on the camera and you will see a picture of the actual intersection where you will make the turn. Yes, the Google photo truck has even been to Pinehurst, Southern Pines, and the surrounding area. If you are interested in seeing the picture of your home or office just search for the address on Google Maps. Then use "Street View" to view it. (Remember to use your mouse to turn to the left or the right to zero in on what you want to see.)

As I said earlier, the free Google tools and services that I use are too numerous to list here. I use Google Docs to collaborate with others on word processing documents. I also use Goog411 to find business telephone numbers and to connect for free. Google Earth is fantastic for viewing just about any part of the earth. You Tube, which is owned by Google, is filled with video of everything imaginable, and Picasa is a wonderful free photo-editor which also offers a place to view and store your photos online.

You can find any of these Google services by searching for them in the Google Search engine. There is also a list at www.google.com/intl/en/options/ . Take a look, you may be surprised at all the free services that Google has.

Microsoft Releases Free Beta of New Security Software

Written by Ira Wilsker, Member of the Golden Triangle Computer Club, TX;
Columnist, The Examiner, Beaumont, TX; Radio Show Host
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WEBSITE:

http://www.microsoft.com/security_essentials (effective June 23)

Many of us love to kick Microsoft as the 600 pound gorilla who created the most popular computer operating systems and also attracted countless miscreants who locate and take advantage of security breaches. Microsoft has produced some very good security products, such as the anti-spyware product Windows Defender, and some mediocre products such as Windows Live OneCare. Now, Microsoft is releasing a free public beta of its newest incarnation of comprehensive security software code named "Morro", but publicly named "Microsoft Security Essentials" (MSE). The public beta release of MSE should be online by the time you read this, at www.microsoft.com/security_essentials. There are some reports that Microsoft will limit the number of beta downloads of MSE to 75,000. MSE's final release version is scheduled to be available later this year, and is planned to be a free security package designed to protect the computer from viruses, spyware, rootkits, and Trojans. MSE will be replacing Microsoft's current commercial offering, Windows Live OneCare, which Microsoft announced will be discontinued as of June 30. Initial reports that have leaked from Microsoft indicate that MSE will be a low-end security product, competing against the wildly popular free offerings from AVG and Avast, but lacking the full

featured security capabilities of such commercial powerhouses as McAfee, Norton-Symantec, and TrendMicro. MSE will be a free download, and will run on Windows XP, Vista, and the new Windows 7. Separate installers will be available for 32 bit and 64 bit versions of



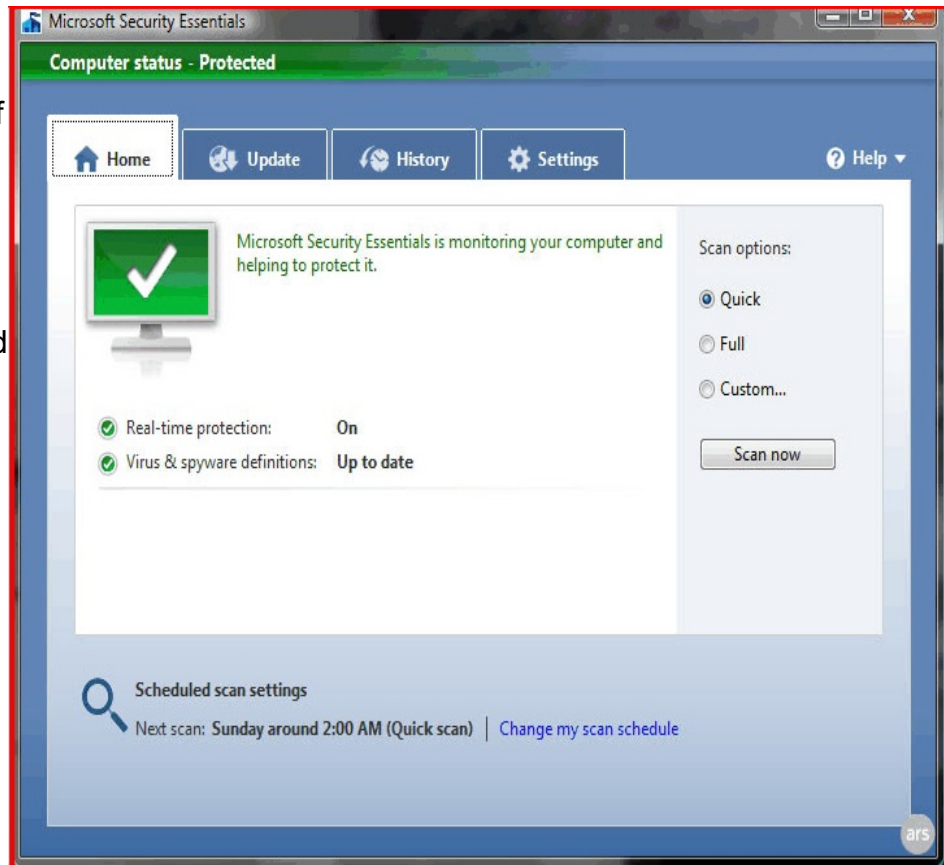
Windows, and will vary from 3mb to 7mb in download size. It should be noted that only users of genuine licensed copies of Windows will be able to download and install MSE, as Microsoft

claims that the MSE installer will be able to detect illicit copies of Windows and block the installation.

Preliminary anecdotal reports leaked about Morro, the precursor of MSE, indicate that it will install with a wizard that will require the uninstallation of any antivirus software that is on the computer before MSE can be installed. MSE will also deactivate Microsoft's Windows Defender anti-spyware if it is installed on the computer, as it will no longer be needed.

MSE will offer free frequent updates of virus and malware signatures, as well as system scans on demand and at scheduled times. MSE was designed to minimize the impact on system resources, and not significantly degrade system performance. The user interface (UI) is simple and clean, much like Windows Defender, and does not require any technical skills to properly operate. Microsoft designed MSE to be a simple but effective free security utility to protect Windows computers lacking effective antivirus and anti-spyware software. At present, it does not appear that MSE will be offering additional security features and benefits included in the top-selling commercial security suites. "This is security you can trust," said Alan Packer, general manager of Microsoft's anti-malware team, when asked to define how it differs from rivals, both free and not. "And it's easy to get and easy to use." "Rather than scan and clean, which it also does, it's trying to keep you from being infected in the first place," Packer said.

In addition to malware signatures which will be updated frequently, MSE will use a feature Microsoft calls "Dynamic Signature Service" which links the computer with MSE installed to Microsoft's servers. If MSE detects



suspicious behavior, but does not have a digital malware signature in its database, MSE will query Microsoft's servers. "If it sees something new, like a new binary, the client queries the back end," Packer said. "The server can then ask for a sample, which the client sends as a hash." The user can control and consent to the sending of the potential malware to Microsoft, as MSE will ask for permission to send it. If Microsoft has already created a digital signature and remedy for the malware, the server will instantly push the signature to the computer. "We have a

list of known good software, of course, but outside that, if a program is doing things like hooking Autostart points in the registry, or trying to kill other processes, Essential will query the servers." Packer said.

It is too early to tell about the quality of protection offered by MSE, as it has not yet been tested and rated by the independent services that test and rate security products. It also needs to be noted that the current software is a "beta" or pre-release version, and may contain unresolved bugs or other problems that will likely be resolved by the final release later this year. Still, if your PC is lacking effective security software, or your subscription to a commercial product is about to expire and you are willing to take the risk of having beta software provide basic protection to your computer, then Microsoft Security Essentials may be a worthwhile consideration.

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Microsoft Windows Vista Unleashed, 2nd Edition

Reviewed by Jim Krill, a member of the North Orange County Computer Club, CA

Orange Bytes, June 2009

www.noccc.org / [editor\(at\)noccc.org](mailto:editor@noccc.org)

Microsoft Windows Vista is the operating system everyone loves to hate. It's constantly being criticized. This reviewer bought a new Dell Inspiron 1525 in November 2008 and had planned on removing Windows Vista and installing a copy of Windows XP Professional based on the news stories critical of Windows Vista. I decided to give it a month and see what happens. Well, nothing happened. It worked well and continues to work well. I have no plans to remove it and will probably delay purchase of the new version of Windows when it's released later this year. That being said, I needed a good reference manual for Windows Vista. I'm thinking that Windows Vista Unleashed is that book.

Search Amazon and you will discover that there are probably hundreds of books about Windows Vista. Which one is best for you? That one to answer. One solution is to get a good reference areas of Windows Vista. These large reference intimidating to the average user. (For this review I user a lay user.) Windows Vista Unleashed is one reference book. For years I've used and Missing Manual series of books. They're good but missing the information I needed or they didn't go Windows Vista Unleashed may be too much for you but is it much information or not enough information? With of Windows Vista, there is a lot to cover and Unleashed is a book that tries to cover it all.



question is impossible manual that covers all manuals can be will call the average such large, 750 page, recommended the often they were far enough. Windows better to have too five different versions Windows Vista

How many versions of Windows Vista are there? There are five versions. And Windows Vista Unleashed makes the attempt to cover all versions of Windows Vista. Not an easy task. And how does any one person know if this book is for him or her? You may be a network specialist. You may do customizations of the OS. Or, you're just a software techie who has to know how to keep individual Windows Vista machines running. Windows Vista Unleashed wants to be that reference for all types of users except one. The one exception is the lay user. After using this book I think even the lay user will benefit.

Because there are five versions of Windows Vista, it's nice to know which version is being discussed in the book. Windows Vista Unleashed uses a graphic logo to indicate which version of Windows Vista applies to a subject. Since this reviewer uses the Home Basic (Cheap) it's

nice to know that I don't have to waste my time reading up on a utility that isn't in my version of Windows Vista and it also helps to know what IS in any version of Windows Vista. It can get confusing even for the professionals. If no graphic logo appears, then ALL versions of Windows Vista apply. This small help aid was much appreciated by this reviewer. It's the simple ideas that make a big difference.

Does this book meet its lofty goal? Good question. I have been using one form or another of Windows since Windows version one and I'm not sure I'm qualified to answer that question. Then again, can a business owner know the answer, or the road warrior, or any of the above users know if this book will work for all the other users? The answer is probably yes. This is one book that most users should have. It appears to be a good primary book for Windows Vista. It may not give the deep level answers but it does provide a good overall view of Window Vista.

First, it gives excellent overview of Windows Vista. The first 300 pages is the manual you didn't get with your Windows Vista machine. Because it goes into the basics, it's a book that even the lay user should have. Yes, you may not need to know how to write Windows Scripts but you will need to know how to recover from problems and you should know how to set up and maintain a small network no matter your lever of knowledge.

All users need to understand the language used by the specialists in order to communicate with them and they with you. Most problems you encounter will probably involve being able to tell the specialist what is wrong in a way that will help them fix the problem. I don't know how many times I've had to talk to someone with a Windows problem who had no idea what I'm asking. Because Windows Vista Unleashed covers all levels of the OS, it will enable the everyday user to understand the language of the specialist. If you don't know what the specialist is asking you should be able to get the definition from this book.

This reviewer uses a laptop for everything and there is some useful information for laptop users that you don't find in most books. I thought I knew everything I needed to know about power management but I was wrong. I, for one, didn't know you could configure the power buttons. Very useful. I actually played with the power options as I was reading the book. In the Control Panel, there is one entire section for the Mobile PC Control Panel. If you have tried to use the tools in Windows Vista, like I have, then here is a book for you.

One feature of the book that I really did like was how it treated a subject as if you needed to know how to use it. It gives step-by-step instructions. I usually would get more confused than I was BEFORE I started reading a subject in other books but not Windows Vista Unleashed. Going to the chapter on networking, Windows Vista Unleashed gives step-by-step instructions on using the network tools in Windows Vista. I would have liked to test this method with the chapter on networking but I did see its usefulness when reading the chapter on the Mobile PC Control Panel.

I do recommend this book for any user of Windows Vista. You may be a Home Premium user and have no use for knowing about other versions of Vista. All versions of Windows Vista have more in common that their names imply. Forget you're a Home Premium user and just

remember you are a Windows Vista user. Even though this reviewer uses the Home Basic (I did say I was cheap.) Windows Vista Unleashed is still an excellent reference and HELP manual.

One idea I have tried to put forward was that a business or IT center should select one book that ALL users should have and use that book as a support tool. Windows Vista Unleashed qualifies as one possible selection. I do recommend IT centers purchase the book and try it out on their lay users.

Microsoft Window Vista Unleashed, Second edit ion, by Paul McFedries . Published by SAMS, 800 East 96th Street, Indianapolis, Indiana 46240.

List Price: \$49.99. To order from the publisher :
<http://www.informit.com/store/product.aspx?isbn=067233013X>.

Help Desk Humor





Smart Computing Tips & Fun Facts

www.smartcomputing.com

Dial Up Digital Radio

For many Americans, the essence of "going mobile" has always been about hopping behind the steering wheel and taking to the open road. What has changed for many highway dwellers, however, is where they get the tunes to pass the miles with. Though traditional FM/AM radio, DAPs (digital audio players), and satellite radio have been options for years, an emerging choice is HD Radio, which provides free over-the-air digital radio broadcasts in CD-quality for FM stations and FM-quality for AM stations. With an HD Radio deck with built-in receiver and tuner, HD Radio offers more musical formats to choose among, and the deck can display artist, song title, weather, traffic, sports, and other information on-screen.

Efficient Computing

There are good reasons to turn in your desktops for laptops. You can look at things in terms of either total power draw or total efficiency, meaning performance per watt. According to EfficientProducts.org, "the average desktop computer (without its accompanying monitor) now consumes 200 to 400kWh per year of electricity (nearly as much as a highly efficient refrigerator). Laptops consume about 80 to 140kWh per year."

But although a laptop consumes one-third to one-quarter of the power of a desktop, it definitely offers more than one-third of the performance. CPU and graphics manufacturers have made tremendous strides in bringing their mobile products to parity or near-parity with desktop components. Chip cores are often made using the exact same architectures. Only customizable details, such as frequency, amount of memory, and bus speeds, tend to vary between desktop and mobile processors.

Good Photos Under Sunny Skies

Now that summer's here, you'll most likely be taking photos outdoors under the bright, hot sun, trying to preserve all of your favorite beach memories. To ensure your pictures turn out, here are a few tips. Turn the flash on—it will eliminate the dark shadows that can hide your subject. Also, try to take pictures in the shade or raise your hand to block the sun from hitting the camera. This will prevent a washout effect. Also, use the appropriate white balance setting. And finally, make sure you position yourself so the sun is to your side.

Dedicated Backup Hard Drive

In order to avoid a data loss disaster, invest in an external hard drive. This device will serve as a separate location where you can save your PC's photos, music, and important documents from a data loss disaster. Most external hard drives have preloaded backup software that will help you choose the files or folders you want to automatically back up, so be sure to look for that feature.

CD/DVD Issues

Reading errors with CDs or DVDs are usually due to smudged, scratched, or defective discs. Clean a troublesome disc with a CD/DVD cleaning spray from a consumer electronics store. The water vapor from your breath can do in a pinch. Wipe the disc's recorded surface in straight lines from the inner hole to the outside edge with a clean, soft cloth. Never rub a disc sideways or in circles. Any contact with a cloth leaves microscopic scratches on a disc, but scratches that run radially from the center of the disc outward usually won't cause skips like ones that follow the spiral track of data around the disc. Occasionally run a special lens-cleaning disc through your drive or disc player to remove dust from the laser lens. If all else fails, try reading the disc in a different drive.

PPC Locking HDMI Cable

A Hardware Review by Bob Clyne, Member-at-Large, SEMCO (Southeastern Michigan Computer Organization, Inc.)
SEMCO Data Bus, June 2009 Issue
www.semco.org / [clyne\(at\)mich.com](mailto:clyne(at)mich.com)

For those of you not familiar with it, HDMI is the current cable standard for carrying digital audio and video signals between pieces of equipment such as TV sets, DVD players, Blu-Ray players, AV receivers etc. Some computers also have a HDMI output so that you can feed the audio and video from the computer to your TV set. HDMI combines both the audio and video which makes it much more convenient than other types of connections that use separate cables for audio and video. If you would like more information about HDMI, visit <http://www.hdmi.org>.



One of the few problems with HDMI the sockets. PPC solution to that problem with the

The cable comes in the ubiquitous heavy plastic blister pack. Manufacturers love this packaging, but consumers hate it. The advantage of this packaging while protecting the contents from damage or tampering is that it is extremely consumer resistant. Getting the product out of the package requires a sturdy cutting implement. A knife will work, but there is considerable risk of injuring yourself or damaging the product due to the force required. A sturdy pair of scissors will also work and gives your hand considerable exercise in the process.

cables is that they are prone to fall out of <http://www.ppc-online.com> has a PPC Locking HDMI cable.

heavy plastic blister pack. Manufacturers hate it. The advantage of this packaging while protecting the contents from damage or tampering is that it is extremely consumer resistant. Getting the product out of the package requires a sturdy cutting implement. A knife will work, but there is considerable risk of injuring yourself or damaging the product due to the force required. A sturdy pair of scissors will also work and gives your hand considerable exercise in the process.

The cable is a HDMI Category II cable, which means that it can carry the highest definition signals for which there is a current standard. It is capable of handling not only 1080p signals but also 1440p. The cable has both foil and braided shielding to shield the signal from outside interference. The cable appears well made, with a braided outer covering on the cable and a plastic covering over the connectors. The cable is quite flexible.

The locking connectors are what sets the PPC cable apart. The connectors just push onto the HDMI sockets on your equipment. No special sockets or adapters are needed. You may hear a slight click when it seats. Once seated in the socket, the cable is quite resistant to being pulled out. I did not test to see just how much strain they could take, but I pulled fairly hard on the connector and it remained firmly seated in the socket. I think the amount of tension that I applied would be more than would be encountered in normal use.

To remove the cable, you press on the tab on the side of the connector while pulling it out. I found that with some sockets, quite a bit of pressure was required on the release button but you, presumably, won't be removing your HDMI cables every day. One possible problem that I can foresee is if you had a series of HDMI connectors closely spaced in a row, you might not be able to get your fingers between them to press the release button. In this case, you would have to start removing them at one end until you got to the one you wanted to remove. But this is a small price to pay for not having to re-plug cables that have fallen out. There is also the danger that a cable pulling out while live could cause electronic damage to your equipment.

PPC Locking HDMI Cables are available in 3', 6', and 9' lengths for \$48.99, \$59.99, and \$72.99 respectively directly from PPC at <http://connect2ppc.myshopify.com/products/locking-hdmi-jumper-1> and you may find them for lower prices from resellers.

Computer Term of the Month GUI (Graphical User Interface)

Stands for "Graphical User Interface," and is pronounced "gooey." It refers to the graphical interface of a computer that allows users to click and drag objects with a mouse instead of entering text at a command line. Two of the most popular operating systems, Windows and the Mac OS, are GUI-based. The graphical user interface was first introduced to the public by Apple with the Macintosh in 1984. However, the idea was actually taken from an earlier user interface developed by Xerox.

For the latest information about the MPCUG — Check our website at

www.mpcug.net

The Club's Meeting Place

Our general meeting and the Random Access Special Interest Group are held at the Denny's at 1525 McHenry Avenue

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

Need help hooking up that new PC, or installing DSL-Cable?

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Modesto, Ceres Area



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Resumes, letters, applications, articles, newsletters, press releases, theses

Elizabeth Leedom

An advertisement for "Modesto Find-HG.Info" home & garden. The ad features a house icon at the top. The text includes "sources for area home & garden", the website "artsandhome.com", and "Claude Delphia, publisher". At the bottom, it says "Websites, Photo Editing & Graphics" and the phone number "209-402-1936". The entire ad is enclosed in a decorative orange border.

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PC Post

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President Emeritus: Bud Bondietti – 1950 - 2008

Join The Modesto PC User Group

Website: www.mpcug.net

To join MPCUG (or just get more information about us, go to our Website 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.

Opinions expressed in 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 unformatted MS Word RTF text. Proofread and run your spell checker; watch for special upper and lower case in brand names. If you want to include a graphic, please send it as a jpeg attached to the E-mail submitting your article. Please note in the article where the jpeg should be placed.

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