

ACPCUG Newsletter

July 2009

A K R O N - C A N T O N P C U S E R S G R O U P

July 6th 2009

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July Meeting
July 6th, 2009, 6 pm
Internet/PC Security Do's, Don'ts and Best Practices, James Wright of ACS
John Torok Community Center
4224 Massillon Rd
Green, Ohio 44720

PLEASE NOTE

Due to construction on Massillon Rd, you must follow the posted detours. Take Town Crossing south from Massillon to Steese. Take Steese east to the fire station. Park behind the fire station and walk across the parking lot to the Community Center. Please see the map on page 14.

ACPCUG Web site

Acpcug.org was deleted by the web host. It has been restored from backups that are old. We are in the process of bringing it forward.

From The DealsGuy For July 2009 by Bob (The Cheapskate) Click, Greater Orlando Computer Users Group

Attendees walk into a trade show and the glitter and glitz greets them, but they have no inkling as to what goes into setting up an impressive show floor. My wife and I worked the SAP/ASUG Sapphire show <http://www.sap.com/community/events/sapphire_online_2009/index.epx>, and it was the most impressive set-up with respect to just the suspended trusses with attached equipment. There were fourteen JLG High lift platform machines working from 8am to 10pm for 9 days, along with 10 battery operated hydraulic scissor high-lift platforms, all needed to assemble and raise the many trusses, signs, lighting and necessary equipment high above the 1.1 million sq. ft. of show floor in the Orange County Convention Center building in Orlando.

You've seen those so-called cherry pickers on four wheels, and the larger ones are hybrid types with a propane gas engine to drive a generator and hydraulic pump. The body can rotate on its mobile frame and the platform's high-lift boom extends in sections that can be manipulated to a great extent. They're completely controlled by the operator using a control panel located on the platform railing, including driving it around, even fully extended. Per OSHA rules, an operator must be properly licensed to operate a boom-lift or scissors-lift.

These trusses aren't the triangular type supporting a home's roof, but are square frame structures made of tubular aluminum for mounting all kinds of necessary paraphernalia used above booths, and other areas above the show floor. Equipment attached to the trusses might be lighting, including computerized lighting (sometimes very elaborate), projection systems and other electronic gadgetry, drapery and drapery traverse rods, among other things.

Most suspended trusses in this show were heavier (20" square), but some were 12" square. They mostly come in 10' lengths and bolt together end to end, although there are also corner, curved, and angled pieces, depending on the configuration they want. There was almost FOUR MILES of truss suspended in the Sapphire show, and there were over 1,000 1/2 ton electric winches attached to raise and suspend them. The winches to put them up there are interesting because when the workmen get the trusses and equipment assembled, there will be multiple winches attached to each one.

While it's called a winch, a better term would be "chain lift" because there's no cable and drum to wind it around. When lifting, a chain runs through the winch, but then falls over the side into a cloth storage bag until the winch is reversed. These were three-phase (electrically) and are mounted according to whether the winch has to lift itself, or something else. On each truss assembly, every winch's power-cord is connected to a master control panel so that when an assembly is elevated from the assembled position on the floor, the control panel operator simply presses one button and the entire truss assembly, no matter how large, immediately rises in unison retaining the established level position to the required height. Each winch can also be operated individually if needed to adjust individual truss heights.

One I noticed began with a 125' long 20" truss with seven winches attached to the top of it (each winch will pull itself and its attached truss up). The winch's hoisting chains were attached to the roof structure. Then seven more winches were assembled to the bottom of that truss to raise and suspend another truss; and hanging drapery was attached on each side of the top truss. It was raised to the desired height. Then another truss 8" wide by 12" high, and 125' long was attached to the lower winches' chains and a heavy-duty traverse rod was attached to the bottom of that truss to operate a lengthy 8' high drape for the attendee entrance.

Suspended drapery cordoned off a stage and projection screen 70' long by 20' high. Several trusses above the stage held lighting equipment. This screen used four projectors behind it in two stacks of two. The top ones were backups (there's always a backup projector). Smaller projection screens were on each side of the large

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one, with rear projection, and four more screens and projectors were hung back above the seating area, along with speaker systems.

Entering the show floor from the lobby, attendees saw two giant projection screens showing SAP hype (positioned in a V shape) that were each 30' high and 60' wide. Their projectors were mounted on a truss, in this case, in front of the screens, and there were four projectors (two stacks of two) for each screen, each one producing 30,000 lumens of light. The bottom projector in the stack is the main one and the top one is for backup. If a projector goes out, the backup takes over and you would hardly know anything went wrong. Each projector costs roughly \$100,000.

Some assembled trusses above the show floor were 200' long holding special lighting and drapery to cordon off areas. There were about 50 riggers (workman who work high up) hurrying to accomplish just this work, not the actual show floor exhibits, which were assembled by 200 other workers. The stage area was the most complicated with its lighting, sound and projectors; and most of these productions use about a million dollars worth of equipment that usually takes two eighteen wheelers to transport. In this show, it took three trucks to bring in just the necessary truss sections.

The exhibitor area uses smaller ones, but most other projectors used in this show ranged from 20,000 to 30,000 lumens of light output. They were water-cooled and used three-phase power (if you know electricity); and they use from 30 to 50 amps. The lenses alone can cost \$10,000. The makes were mostly Barco, but some were Christie, a more expensive brand. I was told resolution was 2200 x 1480. They had to change a few of the Christies to something else on hand, because those particular Christies didn't deliver the desired resolution. There was seating for 9,000 attendees. The production folks don't install the elevated projectors and lighting because of the installation height. I'll put some pictures of the trusses, and audio/video production equipment and consoles on my Web site if you would like to see them. <<http://www.dealsguy.com>> Don Henley was the featured entertainer on the last evening of the show.

***Consider This!**

Bob Elgines, President and Editor of Colorado River Computer Club, writes an interesting monthly column that is carried by many editors in their newsletters. I loved his comment about the \$29.97 he paid for 1.42 ounces of black ink. He says that in comparison to gas, it works out to \$2700 per gallon and that perhaps somebody should start drilling for ink. If that wasn't in your newsletter, now you know about a possible new business venture. With this economy, I'd try anything.

***Help With Your Data Disk Cataloging**

Nowadays, people may own hundreds of CD and DVD data disks. How do you find the necessary information on disks without endless inserting and ejecting disks? SearchMyDiscs is a handy software application that helps people with a large CD and DVD collection quickly find the disk that has a needed file, photograph, music track, or movie clip.

First, you individually insert every CD or DVD that needs to be indexed into your PC and the program will automatically scan the disk, cataloging its contents. The program will store the file structure of the disk, thumbnail images for photos and movies, EXIF tags for digital photographs, ID3 tags for MP3 tracks and many other file properties (video codec information, textual documents' content, etc.). The program is then ready for use. Next time you need to find a certain program or photograph, simply enter the name of the file or other search parameter, like the name of a song, performer or album, digital camera model, etc., and SearchMyDiscs will show exactly what CD or DVD contains the desired data.

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The new version 4.0 contains a new powerful report generator that can export reports on files to many popular file formats: PDF, XLS, RTF, HTML, Open Office, CSV, etc.

SearchMyDiscs 4.0 is available at <<http://www.searchmydiscs.com/>> for a free 30-day trial download. The cost of registering it is \$29.95 US Dollars, but user group members get a 25% discount with coupon code (DKLS-TRG2).

System Requirements: A PC with Windows 95/98/ME/NT4/2000/XP

Download: <<http://www.searchmydiscs.com/searchmydiscs-setup.exe>>

Order Link: <<http://www.searchmydiscs.com/order.shtml>>

That's it for this month. I'll have some more new product announcements on my Web site that didn't offer discounts. Meet me here again next month if your editor permits. This column is written to make user group members aware of special offers or freebies I have found or arranged, and my comments should not be interpreted to encourage, or discourage, the purchase of any products, no matter how enthused I might sound. Bob (The Cheapskate) Click <bobclick at bellsouth dot net>. Visit my Web site at <<http://www.dealsguy.com>>.

Computer Performance Considerations

Written by Gary Bentley, editor, SouthWest International Personal Computer Club (TX)

Throughput, April 2009

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When I evaluate what might be done to maximize the performance of a computer system, whether that be a system already in use or one I might be specifying for order (i.e., specifying the hardware with a particular level of performance in mind for the intended application) I look at several key factors.

The most critical factor is how much system RAM is available (if you are ordering a new system then you can also order faster RAM and be cognizant of addressing issues). I will state flatly that, all factors being equal, the more RAM available, the faster your computer system will operate. In the same vein, if you want to make full use of that system RAM, get an external graphics card with its own RAM so you don't force your system to share RAM with the video display. If you are specifying a new computer, get the fastest FSB (front side bus) speed you can afford with the microprocessor and then match the RAM bus speed to take advantage of that high bus speed. Don't let a computer maker fool you with a low system price while handing off old slow RAM to you when the motherboard and processor would support faster bus speed RAM. New systems will always use DDR RAM, so that should not be a consideration (and older systems will not be able to use it). Don't be confused by discussions of virtual memory and page files. If you have a large amount of

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RAM (1 GB or more with Windows

XP—3 or 4 GB with Vista, the OS memory hog of all time), your system will rarely need to page out process memory onto the hard drive paging file. You can check that in Task Manager (hit CTRL SHIFT ESC or CTRL ALT DEL or right click the Task Bar and select

Task Manager) by looking at the Performance tab and the Physical Memory Total in conjunction with the Commit Charge. The Physical Memory Total is the amount of RAM you have in your system. The Commit Charge is the total memory allocated to programs and the operating system. If the Commit Charge (Total or Peak) doesn't exceed the amount of RAM, then the hard drive pagefile is rarely if ever being used and your system should be running at full RAM speed without hard drive performance issues (except when loading the OS and starting an application, etc.). You can also use Performance Monitor (Start, Administrative Tools, Performance) and look at the Memory, Pages Output/Sec parameter. Even if the amount of committed memory exceeds available RAM, if the actual Pages Output/ Sec is low or zero most of the time (quoting Microsoft) there is no significant performance problem related to available RAM. I doubt there would be any reason for the typical home user to require a 64 bit computer in order to utilize sufficient RAM.

The second most critical factor is the performance of the hard drive, i.e., the amount of utilization of your hard drive (present or anticipated for the application), the speed at which the drive platters rotate, and the speed of the interface to your hard drive. You never want to reach 50% of capacity of your hard drive. The more data you have on a hard drive the farther the disk drive read/write head has to move inward on the spinning platter to get to the data (on the average). This increases the seek time, the time required for the read/write head to position itself over the desired concentric data track on the spinning disk platter. So, use a hard drive with sufficient storage that you do not exceed 40% or so of the storage capacity (high performance server hard drives often are destoked or short stroked, i.e., limited to 40% or less so as to keep the data on the outer edge of the platters where it can be quickly reached). Once the read/write head reaches a track then the rotational speed of the platter comes into play, introducing latency, the time required for the desired sector of the track to rotate into position beneath the head. How do you reduce latency? Get a hard drive that spins as fast as you can afford. Most desktop hard drives now spin at 7200 RPM (don't let them slip you a 5400 RPM drive on your desktop or your laptop!). If your drive has a slower RPM, you can increase performance by purchasing a 7200 RPM drive. Note that high performance server drives spin at 10,000 and 15,000 RPM, but those drives are expensive. If you are evaluating a replacement drive (or specifying the hard drive in a new system), look at the access time parameter for the drive. This will generally be around 11 milliseconds for 7200 RPM desktop PC ATA/SATA drives. The access time will include seek time and rotational latency. As for the type of interface, ATA drives (which peaked at around 133 MB/sec interface performance, setting aside internal data rate of around 60 MB/s and PCI bus rate considerations) are no longer offered, so you will see SATA (serial ATA) drives in a new computer. I wouldn't bother attempting to replace an ATA drive in an old PC with a SATA drive. You would need a SATA controller card as well as SATA drive and you might as well just purchase a new computer. The current SATA interface rate is 3 Gbps (the initial SATA interface was 1.5 Gbps), i.e., 3 gigabits per second. That translates to approximately 300 MB/sec. However, the actual rate that the read head can read the data off the spinning platter of the drive is closer to 100 MB/sec (the internal data rate). You therefore can benefit by having a drive with a large cache memory, where a large amount of data has been read internally by the hard drive before the interface is accessed, at which time the interface can burst perform at the full interface speed of 3 Gbps/300 MB/sec. I note that even the expensive server grade SCSI and SAS drives have about that same external interface transfer rate, i.e., 300 – 320 MB/sec, so their increased performance is coming directly from the high rotational speeds (10 – 15 K) and fast seeks, giving access times of 3 – 5 ms vs. 11 ms or so for desktop SATA drives. Defragmenting your drive regularly will help keep the drive operating at peak efficiency.

A less critical factor is the speed of the microprocessor itself (FSB considerations aside as they relate to RAM access speed). A faster microprocessor or a dual or quad core processor will allow applications, their processes and threads to execute faster (to actually run the microprocessor instructions of which a program is composed)

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once the instructions and data reach the microprocessor.

So, if you have processing intensive applications like video or music (studio) production and editing (or scientific number crunching), faster and more core processors will speed things up considerably, but only if you have plenty of RAM and a high performance hard drive.

Mr. Bentley studied electrical engineering at the University of Texas, began working in the electronics industry in 1978 with GTE Network Systems (Lenkurt), then software engineering with various startups in the 1980's, designing and implementing, among other things, pre-Internet email communications systems multi-tasking on Intel platforms and MSDOS PC's. 1984 - 1986. Gary now provides Information Technology consulting services in the El Paso, Texas and Las Cruces, New Mexico areas. Gary has edited and contributed articles to the award-winning Southwest International Personal Computer Club monthly magazine, "Throughput", since December, 2003.

Fun & Games with Ubuntu

Written by Brian K. Lewis, Ph.D., Regular Columnist and member of the Sarasota PCUG, Florida

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As I said in my last article in the Monitor, this one would be about my experience getting Ubuntu up and running on my new Asus laptop. I had been running version 8.04 (Hardy Heron) on my old laptop. Since it seemed to be quite successful I decided to use it for the initial install on my new computer. Perhaps I should point out that Canonical, producers of Ubuntu, turn out a new version of their OS every six months! Compare that with Microsoft and its multi-year production cycle. Hardy Heron is a long-term support version with guaranteed support until April 2011. That's three years from its original release date. In the meantime, version 8.10 (Intrepid Ibex) was released in October 2008 and will be supported for two years. However, the latest version is 9.04 (Jaunty Jackalope) which was released on April 23, 2009. Since I was starting my installation the end of March, I decided that installing Hardy Heron should be fine. A bad guess, as it turned out.

The process of installing any Ubuntu version is very similar to installing Windows. The exception being when you want it to share the hard drive as a dual boot system with Windows. Then a few extra steps are needed. The first step is to download Ubuntu. This will be an ISO image file. That is a compressed file in the format specified by the International Organization of Standardization. It is almost 700 megabytes in size, so it's best to have a broadband connection for your download. (If you don't have a broadband connection, you can request a free CD from Canonical and have it mailed to you.) Once the file is on your hard drive it has to be decompressed and the image burned to a CD. Most commercial software can burn the ISO file image to a CD. I used CDburnerXP, a free Windows program, to burn the image to the CD. That gave me a bootable CD that either runs Ubuntu from the CD or it can install the OS to a hard drive as a dual boot with Windows/Vista or it can take over an entire drive. If you have two hard drives in your computer you could have Ubuntu take over the second drive and dual boot with Windows. There is also an option to install it as Windows software allowing you to run it within Windows or Vista. I haven't tried this option. It just seems to me that running Ubuntu under Windows you would lose many of the benefits of Ubuntu, especially its stability.

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The hard drive on my laptop was already partitioned into C and D drives and formatted with NTFS. (That's the file system XP and Vista use.) My intention was to install Ubuntu on the second partition as a dual boot system. As I found out, if your hard drive is not already partitioned, don't change it. Let the Ubuntu installation do it for you. That is much easier. I ended up doing a more manual preparation of the hard drive which requires a better understanding of how Linux systems need to be set up. You can find the info on the Ubuntu site, but why make things any harder than you have to! Once the drive was set, Ubuntu spent some time installing all the files needed for my hardware and the additional software. If you are interested in the details of installing Ubuntu, check out this web site: <https://help.ubuntu.com/community/GraphicalInstall>. They have a detailed graphical presentation (screen shots) of the steps involved.

During the installation Ubuntu asks for a user name and a password. I used my initials and a fairly secure password. I recommend that you do not shirk this password setup. It will help to protect your computer from problems caused by outside entry of worms or trojans through the Internet connection. The password has to be entered for software installation or any other administrative function. So using a strong password is advisable.

Now I was ready to do my part of the setup. I had to program my new USB modem so I could connect to the Internet. That requires some knowledge of the command line functions in Terminal. I had done this on my previous computer but some of the information for the new modem was different, so I had to find that first. It took a little hunting, but everything worked once I had the commands right. The other thing I had noticed was that the sound didn't seem to working and the video resolution was not right. So I investigated both of these through the Ubuntu forums. That turned out to be far more difficult than I imagined it would be. My laptop has an NVidia graphics card. It turned out Hardy Heron did not have the drivers for my card, it was too new. The drivers available on the NVidia web site also didn't seem to help. My sound card was part of the Intel chip and the drivers just didn't seem to want to work with it no matter what I did. Then I also found that Hardy Heron didn't recognize my eSATA port. After doing more research in the Ubuntu Community forum, it seemed like I needed to try the Intrepid Ibex upgrade or maybe I would have to wait for Jaunty Jackalope to solve my problems.

So, next I downloaded the ISO file for Intrepid Ibex and burned it to a CD. That gave me a bootable CD that I could use to test how well this version would work with my laptop. When I booted from the CD, although it took some time to load, the video setup was perfect. It recognized my NVidia card and gave me the 1200x800 resolution that I had with Vista. It also had the expected 3D effects and other graphics features that my card supports. Next I tried the sound and had no problem playing some WAV files I had stored in the Linux partition. Better and better. With previous live CDs I had never been able to connect to the Internet with my old wireless modem. But I clicked on the wireless Icon on the top bar of the window and it gave me a list of several local wireless networks and it also had a choice of a wireless broadband connection. So I tried the broadband connection and within seconds I was connected through my Verizon wireless modem to the Internet. This live CD also recognized my printer, but didn't have the drivers to print to it. However, everything was working much better with Intrepid Ibex than it had with Hardy Heron. So, I decided my next step was to upgrade to Intrepid Ibex.

If I had done an install from the live CD, it would have wiped out many of my files that had been created using Hardy Heron. It wouldn't affect my documents as they were backed up to my external drive. However, there were other files that I had created to help with hardware compatibility and additional software I had downloaded that would have disappeared. So I went back to the Ubuntu site to find out how to upgrade, rather than install Intrepid Ibex from the CD. It turned out to be much easier than I had anticipated. In the System-Administration menu there is a selection for "Software Sources". This contains the information on locations

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where the Synaptic Package Manager will find additional software. On the Update tab you will find the options for operating system updates. Mine had been set for “long term support” updates only. I changed that to “standard updates”, clicked OK and exited the window. The package manager told me that there was an update available, version 8.10, and it could be downloaded. It also gave me an estimate of the amount of time it would take with my connection. The estimate was two hours, but it ended up taking 30 minutes less. Once the download was complete, the upgrade installation started. About an hour later, the screen announced that the system needed to be rebooted. Since I still have the live CD for Intrepid Ibex, I automatically have a backup CD, should problems occur down the road.

After the upgrade, the first thing I noticed was that the dual-boot menu reflected the new version of Ubuntu. Next, it took far less time for the user name/password request to show up. Then, very quickly, on the desktop there was the Intrepid Ibex. I will be replacing the Ibex graphic with my own wallpaper, another very easy task. But, I had noted there was no sound. So I clicked on the sound icon and found that the sound had been muted! Once I corrected that, it worked perfectly. First problem solved! Then I clicked on the wireless icon and there was the broadband choice. I selected it and within seconds I was on the Internet. Second problem solved. However, the screen resolution didn't seem right. With some hunting I found an NVIDIA X Server settings on the System – Administration menu. That allowed me to change the resolution to 1200x800. Third problem solved.

Next, I realized I hadn't tried to use the eSATA port when I was running the live CD, so now was the time to try that out. I plugged in my external drive and all three partitions appeared in the Places menu. I clicked on the main partition and all the files come up in the file manager (nautilus) window. So, everything that I had problems with under Hardy Heron seemed to be working with Intrepid Ibex. And, the improvement came without having to do anything with the Ubuntu command line. In my mind, that makes Ubuntu much more ready for the average user. With an easy install, either single or dual boot, a great selection of software that is easily available through a graphics interface, it is becoming something that anyone can try and, probably, enjoy using. As for crashes, in more than 10 years of using various flavors of Linux, I have yet to have one crash. I certainly can't say that for Windows over the same period of time.

My next step will be to download a live CD of the latest version, Jaunty Jackalope, after the initial surge of business slows down. I really don't want to be trying to download almost 700 MB of data at a time when thousands of other Ubuntu enthusiasts are trying to do the same thing. By trying out the live CD version I can be sure that it will work with my hardware before doing an upgrade. I have already seen the problems that occur when you have to remove a newer version and revert back to a previous version. That is something I really don't want to do again. Windows has similar problems as those who replaced Vista with XP found out. I am also considering downloading the 64 bit version of Ubuntu. I am very curious as to how it would work with my hardware. You may be sure I will share the results with you.

So for all of you Windows/Vista users who are curious about Ubuntu, the easiest way to test it on your hardware is to download a live CD. From the home page, www.ubuntu.com, you can download either the latest version, or an earlier version. I would recommend that you not go back any further than version 8.10, Intrepid Ibex. You really should give it a try and download the CD, especially if you have a broadband connection. You'll also find the Ubuntu has a large selection of games that come with the installation. So, have some fun and games with Ubuntu!

Dr. Lewis is a former university and medical school professor of physiology. He has been working with personal computers for over thirty years, developing software and assembling systems. He can be reached at bwsail@yahoo.com.

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THE EMERGENCY TOOL IN THE PALM OF YOUR HAND: Your Mobile Phone

Written by Lorin Goldstein, a family member of The PC Users Group of Connecticut

www.tpcug.org

[jerryg \(at\) attygoldstein.com](mailto:jerryg(at)attygoldstein.com)

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Your mobile phone can actually be a life saver or an emergency tool for survival. Check out what you can do with it:

UNLOCK YOUR CAR FROM MILES AWAY

You've locked your keys in your car and you are at least an hour from your house. Does your car have remote keyless entry? Your cell phone will open your car for you.

You will still need someone at home to find your spare keys. The deal is they don't have to drive out to you if you have your cell phone handy. Call someone at home on their cell phone from your cell phone. Hold your cell phone about a foot from your car door and have the person at your home press the unlock button, holding it near the mobile phone on their end. Your car will unlock.

Distance is no object. You could be hundreds of miles away, and if you can reach someone who has the other 'remote' for your car, you can unlock the doors (or the trunk).

EMERGENCY 112

The Emergency Number worldwide (outside the US) for Mobile is 112. It will work even when you find yourself out of your mobile network's coverage area. Dial 112 in an emergency and the mobile will search any existing network in your area to establish the emergency number for you. This number, 112, can be dialed even if the keypad is locked! I'd tell you to try it but give the emergency operator a break and wait until you really need it to try the number.

HIDDEN BATTERY POWER

Your cell phone holds a secret. You will only discover it when your cell battery is very low. Press the keys *3370# to activate your cell's reserve battery power. Your cell phone will restart with the reserve and will show a 50% increase in battery. This reserve will get charged when you charge your cell phone next time.

DISABLE A STOLEN MOBILE PHONE

Once again you left your cell phone behind. This time you don't have to worry that someone else is stealing all your data. That is if you move quick enough before they act.

You will need your cell phone's serial number to do this. To get your cell phone's serial number key in the following digits on your phone: *#06#. A 15-digit code will appear on the screen. This number is unique to your handset. Write it down and keep it somewhere safe.

If your phone gets stolen, you can phone your service provider and give them this code. They will then be able to block your handset so even if the thief changes the SIM card, your phone will be totally useless. You probably won't get your phone back, but at least you know that whoever stole it can't use/sell it either. If everybody does this, there would be no point in people stealing mobile phones.

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FREE DIRECTORY SERVICE FOR CELLS

Have you used your cell phone to call 411 information for a telephone number? Like your local telephone company, cell phone companies charge us \$1.00 to \$1.75 or more for 411 information.

The trick is to not use your cell phone company's 411 service. When you need to use the 411 information option, simply dial one of the free 411 services instead. Try any of these numbers and you won't be charged any fee:

(800) FREE411 or (800) 373-3411 Sponsored by McDonald's

(800) GOOG411 or (800) 466-4411 Sponsored by Google

You will have to listen to a quick ad and be prompted to dial for some service but the call is FREE. That is as long as you don't dial out to the advertised company after the short sales pitch. If you have free text messaging you can even get the number texted to you free. Otherwise text messaging fees from your provider will apply.

Don't leave all these numbers to memory. Save them to your cell phone and you'll have them handy when you need them.

SO MANY TIPS SO LITTLE VALUE

If you have been trying these tips as you read them you would know that, for the most part, they are not true. That is because they are from an email I have repeatedly received from friends and family. The email is a bunch of junk (mostly) and possibly contained a virus or spyware at some time (my IT person/ geek -- otherwise known as my husband) has my computer with all sorts of virus protection and anti-spyware to protect my computer so the information may have been pulled and forwarded in a clean email but it is still mostly junk.

A good parameter to follow with deciding whether to forward email you receive is if it sounds too good to be true it probably is not true. In which case, the best way of stopping the email is not forwarding it on again.

If you are not sure about something you received you can always check at www.snopes.com. You can also Google the topic and will probably come up with a bunch of sites that will help. This email I found at an urban legends [website](#). I don't normally read these web sites (who has the time) but I do check out the things I receive before I become part of the junk and spam mail problem.

FOR THOSE WHO HAVE NOT CHECKED YET

1. **Unlocking your car: FALSE** Cell phones and car key remote locks work on different frequencies..
2. **Emergency 112: MOSTLY FALSE** It works pretty much only in Europe. Stay with 911 here.
3. **Hidden Battery Power: FALSE** For some Nokia phones this code this code will enhance voice quality but at the cost of battery power loss.
4. **Disable stolen cell: NOT ALWAYS & WHY BOTHER** On some phones this will cause your account information to be displayed but your provider already has this information. Just call them tell them the phone was stolen.
5. **FREE411 TRUE But** The only part that may not be true is that McDonald's may not be the sponsor when you call. The sponsor varies regularly and so far I do not recall having McDonald's as a sponsor when I have used it.

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So the next time you feel the need to send on your words of wisdom, be sure they ring true.

Happy emailing.

*** If you have not figured it out yet, the real title for this article is: *EMAIL AWARENESS***

Free Software Helps Caregivers

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An article with the title "Caring for the Caregiver" appeared in the in the November/December 2007 issue of AARP magazine¹. Here is an extract from that article:

"A cascade of studies in recent years has shown that caregivers stand at particular risk for a host of mental and physical illnesses, many of which have roots in stress, exhaustion, and self-neglect—symptoms some medical professionals have begun calling caregiver syndrome. . . . According to a 2004 national survey by AARP and The National Alliance for Caregiving, nearly 23 million households are currently home to a caregiver, most often a woman who is taking care of someone 50 or older. Some 43 percent of these caregivers are over 50 themselves—13 percent are over 65—and they spend good chunks of their weeks on a heady range of chores, from medication management and bathing to feeding, clothing, and arranging health care services. . . . Unfortunately for many friends and family members of caregivers, it is difficult to know when to step in—or what to do...."

I recommend this article to all caregivers, and to friends and family members of caregivers. Yes, it is difficult for friends and family members of caregivers to know what to do. It can also be overwhelming for a caregiver to add another task—coordinating help from those friends and family members—to an already burdensome schedule.

Both caregivers and those willing to help may find a scheduling solution with a web site called [Lotsa Helping Hands.com](http://LotsaHelpingHands.com). This web site allows a caregiver or family member to:

"Create a free of charge, private, web-based community to organize family, friends, neighbors, and colleagues – a family's 'circles of community' — during times of need. . . ."

There are three primary templates:

1. Caregiving
2. Eldercare and Long Term Care
3. Military and Veterans Families

There are four additional templates:

1. Volunteering
2. Parenting
3. Schools

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4. Religious Groups

These templates allow one person to coordinate the activities of others by identifying the needs and allowing volunteers to accept tasks. All of this activity takes place online, relieving the caregiver of the burden of many phone calls and separate schedules. For those familiar with Google Documents™, there is a slight similarity between the two. However, the Lotsa Helping Hands templates are designed specifically for caregiving situations:

“Each community includes an intuitive group calendar for scheduling tasks such as meals delivery and rides, a platform for securely sharing vital medical, financial, and legal information with designated family members, and customizable sections for posting photos, well wishes, blogs, journals, and messages.

Now, when someone asks ‘what can I do to help?’ the answer is ‘give me your name and email address’ – the system takes over and allows people to sign up and start helping.”

A web based service such as Lotsa Helping Hands is certain to generate questions about privacy and security. You will find answers to these questions in the “Terms of use” page of the web site. Included in the Terms are descriptions of the data security, data integrity and access (among other) protections.

[Note: The scheduling features are not dependent upon the use of private information. It is not necessary to include medical, financial or legal information on the web site—although that information is protected].

Lotsa Helping Hands has many non-profit partners, including the Alzheimer’s Association, the Family Caregiver Alliance, The Leukemia & Lymphoma Society and many more. Check the Partners page of the Lotsa Helping Hands web site for more information.

You can read what national media, such as Business Week, NY Times and others have to say about Lotsa Helping Hands by clicking on the links on the Media page of the Lotsa Helping Hands web site.

I have not personally used this service, although there was a time, not so long ago, when I would have used it had I known about it. After reading the description of the service, and the “How It Works” section of the web site, I am convinced that the service is, indeed, very valuable and also secure. I recommend that caregivers try this service. There is at least the potential to reduce your levels of stress and exhaustion associated with your role of caregiver.

1. Crute, Sherre, “Caring for the Caregiver.” AARP Magazine, November and December, 2007

Speed Demons

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There is an issue that I feel must be addressed, since the issue continues to come up on a regular basis. As a PC technician I constantly get asked why the clients' computer has become so slow, and if there is anything wrong

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with it.

The first thing I tell the client is that there are two main culprits that contribute to a PC becoming very sluggish. The first being lack of RAM memory. This answer usually elicits a quick response from the user that they "only do e-mail, Internet and word processing" or some similar response. I then go into a discussion with the user that there are two kinds of memory in a computer: hard drive storage, which holds all their music, pictures, documents, etc. and RAM, or working memory. A user could have plenty of hard drive space to store all of their documents and stuff, but when they don't have enough RAM, the computer will, over time, become slower and slower.

Why you ask? When the computer was originally purchased (usually somewhere between 2 and 5 years ago) Windows XP, in this case, required about 512MB of RAM to run properly. As Windows critical security updates and service packs are installed, as well as upgrades and updates to all sorts of programs used on a daily basis (antivirus, Internet Explorer, AOL, Adobe Reader and Flash Player, printer updates, etc), the programs NEVER get smaller, always bigger.

Now, several years later and the programs being used are double or triple in size, but the computer is the same one with the same specs as when it was purchased. Adding more RAM memory is a quick, cheap way to improve performance to an aging computer, and extend life before a replacement is in order. Windows XP should have at least 1024 MB (1GB) of RAM to run properly, and Windows Vista (32bit) needs 3GB of RAM. More is not better in the case of Vista for technical reasons I will not go into in this article.

This is only half the battle. The other half is to beat down what I will call the "moochers". Years ago when I would inspect a computer for sluggish performance, it was usually because of a rogue game that was installed. Back then quite a few games adopted the theory that the only reason you owned your \$3000 or \$4000 computer (yes, it was that much back then, even more depending on how far back you go) was to play some ridiculous \$49 game. The game would change many settings that allowed the game to work properly, but made it miserable to perform simple tasks like type a letter.

Now, in 2009 every program under the sun assumes that they are the main focus, and must be given priority at all times. What does this mean to you, the end user? Each time when an upgraded revision of Adobe Reader comes out it always wants to include the new "MSN Toolbar" or "Yahoo Toolbar" etc. This adds unnecessary junk to your browser, which slows down getting online. In addition, many of these programs load an additional program when Windows starts to speed it up when starting it. This is just lousy practice that is a very poor substitute for tight efficient programming. If the program was small and lean there would be no need for "speed loaders," which make your computer take an exorbitant amount of time for Windows to start.

Not to pick on, but a classic example of this is how much Apple's iTunes has grown through the years. iTunes 6 which was released in January 2006 was about 35MB in size. iTunes 7.5 was 52MB and iTunes 8.1 (the current release) is now up to 70MB. The program is twice as large only three years later, and loads a number of programs when Windows starts to aid loading this memory hog.

What to do about this? In short be mindful when installing updated programs to unselect add on toolbars and, if available, to kick them out of starting up when Windows loads. I have discussed at our local computer club meetings to do your best to keep running processes to a minimum. By clicking control, alt, delete once (with no programs active) will bring up the task manager and show how many processes are running. A good number for Windows XP is less than 35, and for Vista it's about 45.

Startup Cop and the free CCleaner utilities have the ability to disable or remove programs from starting, but I would check online in a Google search before disabling anything unless certain. I do hope this article sheds

Map to John Torak Community Center

