

Thursday, March 11, 2004, 7 P.M.
Lecture Hall of the Carr-Gottstein Academic Center
Main Campus, Alaska Pacific University

This month the meeting will include refreshments and . . .

Wayne Sturm, a web developer and specialist in accessible web pages, will present on accessible web pages and accessible Adobe PDF files.

Wayne is a certified web technologist and co-owner of [Creative Conservation](#). His presentation will focus on preparing accessible web sites and PDF files. This interactive presentation will raise awareness of obstacles people with disabilities face when accessing electronic information.

The Alaska Computer Society is a nonprofit educational organization. Our meetings are always free and open to the public. We meet the second Thursday of each month, usually at the Carr-Gottstein building at APU.

For further details about our group visit our web site at www.acs-pcug.org and for a map to the meeting location visit www.acs-pcug.org/map.htm. Scroll down to see greater detail of the building locations on the APU Campus.

Serving Alaskans since 1983.

Contents

1 February Meeting Report	2
2 The DealsGuy	2
3 What's Next?	6
4 The Editor's Keyboard	6
5 Friends of ACS	8
6 The Back Pages	9

1 February Meeting Report

Sonya Owens and Chris Ashley of the IRS spoke on electronic tax filing and electronic tax payment. They and their topic were well received.

Call to Order:

Gene White, President of the ACS-PCUG, called the regular monthly meeting to order.

Announcements

Gene asked for a volunteer to take over the web site from Mike Jacquot, Vice-President and (now: former) Web Editor. Quick as a wink, Carl London volunteered. Gene invited him to the regular meeting of the board on the following Thursday.¹

2 The DealsGuy for March 2004

by Bob Click,
Greater Orlando Computer Users Group

¹Thanks Carl! ed.

Alaska Computer Society - PC Users Group

PC NEWS

March 2004

Vol. 21, No. 5

This Is No Hoax

This may sound like a broken record, but I find this stuff interesting. In the 12/22/03 issue of InfoWorld, columnist Ephraim Schwartz wrote an article about exploding batteries in cell phones and laptops. It concerns the change from nickel metal hydride to lithium-ion batteries. Seems the new technology can lead to “thermal runaway.” He says it is not a frequent problem for a battery to explode, but it is certainly a distinct possibility and has happened, although he did not mention anything about gas stations. <G> His article should be posted at

www.infoworld.com/article/03/12/19/50OPreality_1.html

Two of my readers told me that gas stations in their area have signs posted forbidding cell phone use while pumping gas. I’m not the only one who wants to be careful. I’ve also had messages explaining to me that Hydrogen power is NOT any safer than gas.

In other news of note, one of our favorite vendors is being bought. It was reported that VPN and firewall vendor “Check Point Software Technologies Ltd.” acquired desktop firewall maker Zone Labs Inc. for \$205 million. It was said that Check Point must integrate more security into the desktop and that they plan to do that. I hope the free version of Zone Alarm remains free for home use.

You might be interested in knowing that Microsoft is reconfiguring the jobs of the managers in charge of operating system development. It is supposed to improve the product quality and a lot of other things. Haven’t we heard that one before? I hope it works. I imagine it does become a big problem when you sell the most prolific operating system in the entire world and all the hackers lay awake nights trying to exploit it, and often succeed before it is even officially released.

In the category of old business, I’ve received only a couple of messages with comments about my possible plans for the monthly column. After doing it for over nine years each month without a miss, I have established an excellent network to many user groups and would hate to see it come tumbling down. I still have a little material so we’ll see where it goes. Since I have tons of announcements for new products, I may start posting some of them on my Web site for the time being although so far I have heard little interest in these mostly unknown products.

Why Pay For Income Tax Preparation!!

If you have a simple income tax to make out, don’t pay for the tax return prep because you just might qualify for the IRS’s very own FREE File Service. Check

Alaska Computer Society - PC Users Group

PC NEWS

March 2004

Vol. 21, No. 5

further for that at

www.irs.gov

and if you feel its really not that simple, or you are a klutz with the computer, call 1-800-829-1040 to find the closest Volunteer Income Tax Assistance location. That free service is meant for the elderly, low-income people, disabled folks, or people with problems speaking English. My wife says I seem to qualify in all those ways when she has a honey-do job. Don't forget the free income tax service for uncomplicated tax returns by AARP volunteers, most of whom are actually specialists donating their time. Call your local AARP chapter for more information.

How's Your Credit These Days?

With identity theft so rampant today, people should do themselves a favor and occasionally check their own credit. You can't be too careful and a simple way to get the most information is to check with Equifax where you can get reports from all three credit-reporting agencies (Equifax, Experian and TransUnion) for just \$29.95. Yes, I know they are working on a law for you to get your credit report at no cost, but don't hold your breath for that right now, even though it's in the works. Most people don't know that if you have a low score (around 600) for your credit rating, your interest rate will be higher than if your credit rating was near 800. That could mean thousands extra for a mortgage.

Free Phone Calls - Yup, All Over The Globe

My thanks to JB Hillard of Chautauqua Cyber Club who sent me this item for the DealsGuy column. Check out

ui.skype.com/help_faq.html

where you can set up an account to make free phone calls all over the globe. It uses peer-to-peer technology and is presently available only to Windows XP and 2000 operating systems. They say it may work with ME or Win98, but that is not promised. The download is free and right now you would be a beta tester. However, later when they are further along with the development, there may be a subscriber fee. Check it out.

This One Does it Better

I received a message the other day from Colleen Toumayan of Executive Software telling me they are offering Diskeeper Professional Edition 8.0 bundled with Undelete Home Edition for just \$49.95.

consumer.execsoft.com/home.asp

(Diskeeper will not install on Microsoft Windows Server Operating systems, although they do have a version that will for more money.) Colleen was kind enough to send me the software because I had never used it before. After trying it out, I became convinced. I am used to starting the defrag in Windows and leaving the room to do something else while it works, but Executive Software's Diskeeper has shown me there was a better way.

Undelete does what it says and can sure be handy in some cases. I often delete things by holding the shift key so it will bypass the Recycle Bin. Once in a while I regret doing that and Undelete helps with that problem. I'm not sure how long this special offer will last. By the way, if you delete something from a floppy or external drive, they don't normally end up in the Recycle Bin either.

It's interesting that Undelete replaces the Recycle Bin with a "Recovery Bin." What is the difference — too much for me to explain here, but it catches much more than the Windows Recycle Bin does, such as items I just described. Go to

consumer.execsoft.com/home.asp

for more information and to order this bundle at the special price.

Get Out Of Here You #&% Spies!

Most of you know about spyware that sometimes finds its way on your computer, and some freeware to get rid of it such as AdAware and SpyBot. Here is something called Spyware Blaster that is said to prevent spyware from even being installed on your machine. I read about it in a users group newsletter, but neglected to make a note so I could credit the person who recommended it, but the concept sounds interesting.

www.wilderssecurity.net/spywareblaster.html

is the place to take a look and see what you think. Since it is free, trying it is cheap. However, the developer does ask for a small donation if you like it. Remember

that sometimes trying to remove trial software can be a problem. I have not tried this product so I cannot speak from experience. Try it at your own risk. If you read through the material on the Web site, it is said to also do other tasks.

That's it for this month. 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@mindspring.com

Visit my Web site at

www.dealsguy.com

for past columns and many interesting articles I have taken from various users group newsletters.

3 What's Next?

Looking Ahead:

Dragon Naturally Speaking

The April meeting will feature Rich Saunders of the Assistive Technology Library of Alaska who will demonstrate various software accessibility products, one of which will be, **Dragon Naturally Speaking**.

The regular meeting of the ACS-PCUG will be April 8, 2004, in the Carr-Gottstein building on the APU Campus at 7 pm.

4 The Editor's Keyboard

Well, I am back in the saddle again. This is my first effort after several months of just not feeling too well.

One improvement since my last effort (September 2003) is this new, hand-me-down, box I am using to produce this month's newsletter. The old one was also a hand-me-down, made up from parts, with a purchased 40G hard drive.

Alaska Computer Society - PC Users Group

PC NEWS

March 2004

Vol. 21, No. 5

To get up and running, I took the hard drive out of the old box and put it into the new box. It booted without problems, but then I decided to make things better. The old cpu was an AMD-K6, and there was a Pentium III (Coppermine) 930 MHz (Wow!). I reasoned, I would get the maximum performance (that I could expect) by using a kernel suited to the PIII instead of just continuing to use the one suited to the AMD. Ha!

You see, I am using the Debian/GNU/Linux distribution which comes with a variety of kernels. I had been using version 2.4.18-k6 (for the AMD) so I decided to install version 2.4.18-1-686 (which is for the Pentium series of processors).

The installation went smoothly, but somewhere along the line I forgot something. I couldn't boot the machine. I took me several days last week including most of the Iditarod weekend to figure out what I had done wrong. I spent Monday morning installing "grub", the Grand Unified Bootloader and getting the boot sequences worked out. I actually have three kernels on the master IDE drive (I didn't throw away the old K6 kernel), and I have a slave IDE also which I can boot.

My main problem was the cruftiness of the old hard drive. I had one partition that I had stopped using because it was too small. It had an even older kernel which I was trying to use when I was setting up the boot configuration after installing the new kernel. I also discovered some errors in the partition table only revealed by the new machine's BIOS setup. Well, that is another project for another day, ah . . . er, week or so.

Fielder George Dowding
Editor and Publisher
PC NEWS

Alaska Computer Society - PC Users Group

PC NEWS

March 2004

Vol. 21, No. 5

5 Friends of ACS

We thank those businesses and individuals listed below and the many others who have donated all or a portion of some of the services, materials, and time required to help make the Alaska Computer Society succeed.

AARP – resource center, classroom space, and meeting space in the Northway Mall.²

Alaska Pacific University – General meeting room, special pricing.

Michael Ardaiz of Mad Dog Graphx – ACS PCUG logo.

Brown Bear Software – iCal program used to create the monthly event calendars.

Lewis & Lewis Computer Store – door prizes for the annual technology show and monthly meetings.

Microsoft Corporation – software for user group support functions and door prizes for monthly meetings.

Application for Membership Alaska Computer Society — PC Users Group

Name _____

Address _____

E-Mail _____

Dues are \$25.00 per year. Please make your check payable to, the Alaska Computer Society. Thank you.

²Ed.:The initials used to stand for “American Association of Retired Persons”. However, one does not need to be retired to join.

6 The Back Pages

The Alaska Computer Society – PC Users Group (ACS–PCUG) publishes *PC News* monthly via the Internet. This newsletter is copyright © ACS-PCUG 2003. The current edition and the archive of the newsletter may be found at the ACS-PCUG web site:

<http://www.acs-pcug.org>

ACS Board of Directors

President *President{at}ACS-PCUG.org*³
Gene White

Vice-President *Vice-Pres{at}ACS-PCUG.org*
—and,

Web Editor *WebMaster{at}ACS-PCUG.org*
Mike Jacquot

Secretary *Secretary{at}ACS-PCUG.org*
—and,

Evaluation Coordinator *Evals{at}ACS-PCUG.org*
Howard Bonar

Treasurer *Treasurer{at}ACS-PCUG.org*
—and,

Membership Coordinator *Membership{at}ACS-PCUG.org*
Fred Erickson

Program Chair *Programs{at}ACS-PCUG.org*
—and,

Community Services Chair *Programs{at}ACS-PCUG.org*
Dawn Scott

Newsletter Editor and Publisher *Newsletter{at}ACS-PCUG.org*
Fielder George Dowding

³Replace the “{at}” in the address with the “at-sign” to contact one of the volunteers. I have mangled the address to thwart harvesting by spam-bots.

Alaska Computer Society - PC Users Group

PC NEWS

March 2004

Vol. 21, No. 5

ACS Board Meetings

Board meetings are held on the third Thursday of the month at the AARP meeting room. Great effort is expended to start the meeting at 7:00 P.M. and to end the meeting before 9:00 P.M. The board meetings are open, and the board encourages members to attend.

ACS PCUG Volunteers

The ACS-PCUG is a volunteer organization. The members of the board are volunteers. Nothing happens without our volunteers who make it happen. Here is the current list of volunteers, who, in addition to the board members, make things happen:

Publicity Coordinator *Publicity1{at}ACS-PCUG.org*
Holly Hawkings

Public Service Announcements *PSA1{at}ACS-PCUG.org*
Marjorie Feldberg

Publications Coordinator (Position Open)

SIG Coordinator (Position Open)

E-Mail Addresses:

1. The policy of *PC NEWS* is to make e-mail addresses accessible to human beings but inaccessible to robots.
2. Members who volunteer are assigned an e-mail address from the pool available within the *ACS-PCUG.org* domain. This is the address that will be published unless a volunteer requests a personal address be published.

The Final Word:

DISCLAIMER: Neither the Alaska Computer Society nor the "PC NEWS" endorse any of the products or services that appear herein. Opinions of authors whose work appears in "PC NEWS" are not the opinions of the Alaska Computer Society, its officers, members of its board of directors, or volunteer workers unless so stated.