
The Computer Club At Willow Valley

Special points of interest:

- The Newsletter has a new format. See page 3.
- This issue also introduces a new column, *Computer Security and Privacy*. It starts on page 5 and is in the electronic version, only.
- Also available only in the electronic version is the article *Is Your Computer Slow?* on page 7.
- A notice about a serious security problem for unencrypted Wi-Fi networks and travelers is on page 7 in the electronic version.

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The President's Pen by Sid Paskowitz

Membership Your Computer Club has 527 members at this writing, including 83 Lifetime members.

Expanded Newsletter This Newsletter is the inaugural effort by Al Williams, our new Newsletter Editor. Al is introducing a new approach: the first four pages of the Newsletter will be published and distributed in paper form and will contain computer and Internet basics. An expanded electronic version will contain the same first four pages, but Al will include more technical information on additional pages in a PDF formatted document. This will give Al an opportunity to present what computer users need

to know about security, privacy and the "care and feeding" of computers.

The electronic version will be distributed via email to Computer Club members who have elected to receive the Newsletter electronically. It will also be available online one week after the emails are sent. At Information Central click on the Newsletter link in the left column or by accessing the following Internet address: <http://eventregistration.willowvalley.org/kiosk/cclub/p/Newsletter.pdf>.

To get future Newsletters in elec-

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Casual Cursor by Willy Webster

Some Holiday Hopes For 2010 Readers of this column know I'm an Information Central enthusiast. I've described how to find it, how to shortcut to it and how to find a variety of the practical, everyday bits of information tucked away in its cavernous treasure trove of golden nuggets.

Much of my mission has been to get you to mine them.

The nuggets cover just about everything you need for dancing through life here at Willow Valley. "Just

about," but, alas, not "all."

"All" is a perfection that even Willow Valley's Information Technology (IT) Department, the daily updates of our diligent Computer Club chieftain, Sid Paskowitz, and the watchful regularity of a few other updating specialists can't assure without some help.

First of all, it requires an all-Resident buy-in to the fact that evolving computer dependency, even here at Wil-

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Coming Programs

January 7, 2010
Resident Sid Paskowitz
Speech Recognition

February 4, 2010
TBD
Mac Computer Systems

March 4, 2010
Resident Larry Gallagher
Round Table

*All programs are
held in the
Education Room at
the Cultural Center*

President

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tronic rather than paper form, send an email to Dick Dressel at dresselrj@dejazzd.com.

Current E-mail Addresses Needed When the Weekly Insider and December Community Calendars failed to include information about our December Computer Club meeting, we sent email announcements to all Computer Club members with an email address in our membership records. We sent out more than 400 emails; however, more than 30 of those emails were rejected due to invalid, outdated, or other insufficient address information. Please send an email to Dick Dressel if you change or cancel your email account. Your email address is the fastest way we can communicate with Club members when we need to send you urgent information.

Room Monitors Needed One of the realities of living in a retirement community is that Residents who volunteer their time and energies find they are no longer able to do the things they used to do. We are realizing this reality in the staffing of the Lakes Manor and Manor North Computer Rooms. We need more volunteers as monitors in the Computer Rooms. If you can help, please contact Dick Dressel for the North Computer Room or Gene Simasek at esim_37@yahoo.com for the Lakes Computer Room to get more information.

Lakes Computers Updated Gene Simasek has upgraded hardware in the Lakes Computer Room to Windows 7 units. This will enable classes on Micro-

soft's new operating system, Windows 7, and allow Residents to see how Windows 7 performs.

Training Bob McRobbie and his committee have done an outstanding job at putting together a variety of computer-related classes for inclusion in the Spring Renaissance publication. You may sign up for those classes when the Renaissance is distributed. A list of planned classes is available in Information Central by left-clicking on Courses Scheduled by Computer Club or by accessing the following Internet address: <http://eventregistration.willowvalley.org/kiosk/cclub/p/ClubCourses.pdf>. Be ready to sign up for classes when the Spring Renaissance is distributed.

Nominations We will be holding an election of Club officers at the April 2010 Club meeting. A Nominating Committee will be appointed by 1/31/2010 and the Nominating Committee will announce its results at the March 2010 Club meeting. Larry Gallagher will be chairman of the committee.

Copyrighted Files Copyrighted files should not be put on Willow Valley equipment without appropriate approval. No violations have been attributed to the Computer Club. Help keep our record clean.

Thank You, Volunteers We appreciate Residents volunteering to help improve the quality of life for other Residents.

Casual Cursor

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low Valley, makes something like Information Central the best medium for communication. Members of the "I'm-past-that" clan, avoiding computers because they've "never needed" them, are finding themselves increasingly handicapped and fewer in number. An excellent array of Computer Club classes is available to bring them aboard.

Yes, we all have our "Weekly Insiders", our colored monthly calendars, our first-class "Renaissances" as much-improved, printed guides to the current line-up of events. But they can't plug in last-minute changes as fast as Information Central. They aren't as easily accessible as Information Central. And they don't have the space to be an always-tappable store-house of basic information that Information Central has become.

Secondly, the "All" requires leadership in every organization to keep Information Central up to date. Those mentioned above who try hard to input updates can update with only what they're given.

A look for emergency steps in Information Central will find a line-up of Willow Valley sites with all but Spring Run's saying nothing but "to come." How soon will the Resident Council listings be updated in Information Central to reflect the December and January elections? Mid-year changes in officers for other Willow Valley organizations will take place

later in 2010. How fast will new officers be put in Information Central? All it really requires is sending the updates to Sid at wvrccc@yahoo.com.

And how about scheduling and, more specifically, avoiding conflicts in scheduling? Information Central has great potential for being the central coordinator of all event scheduling and logging for the Willow Valley communities. Willow Valley has a wonderful array of events and attractions. But getting to some often requires being in two places at once. Many of these conflicts might be avoided through computerized tracking.

A central, computerized, readily-available listing of dates and times for all authorized Resident events in Willow Valley would not only be a single authoritative guide for Residents but also a unified guide for those who schedule the events and work on the publications that promote them. This all could be possible through Information Central.

It's "holiday time" again with New Year's hopes and resolutions part of the game. Total updating, centralized scheduling and a full constituency of Residents all actively using Information Central to get them sounds good to me for 2010.

Willy Webster, who aims his column primarily at those less-acquainted with computer use, lives in Willow Valley, but you won't find the name "Willy Webster" in the directory. Willow Valley Computer Club president Sid Paskowitz isn't Willy, but he knows where to find him, so send any comments, protests, suggestions via Sid.

About This Newsletter by AI Williams

This newsletter was produced using Microsoft Publisher, which is designed to support the preparation of publications.

Many thanks to Wally Gordon and Wendy Williams for advice on how to further improve this newsletter.

Need Help?

The Club is pleased to provide help Monday through Friday at 1:00 pm at the Lakes Manor Computer Room, C-217, and the Manor North Computer Room, M-107. Help is not available on the first Thursday of the month because the Club meets at 2:00 pm on that day.

The Equipment Corner by Ed Dahrsnin

Refurbished Systems The following refurbished systems are available:

#191: Gateway G6-233M, tower, Windows 98SE, 233MHz Pentium II, 30.39GB free space, 96MB RAM, and HP DeskJet 722C printer

#192: Gateway-Comp, tower, Windows XP Professional, 350MHz Pentium II, 37.88GB free space, 192MB RAM, and Canon 1470D printer

Miscellaneous We have 3 volt CR2023 batteries (suitable for motherboards to keep the system clock running) and a variety of CD-ROM's, floppy disk drives, keyboards, 2 button mice, power supplies, and cables. Please contact Ed Dahrsnin.

Donations For now, we are not accepting the donation of any used computers or printers except working laptops with batteries and power units, Windows XP towers, and flat screen monitors.

Apple/Macintosh For Apple/Macintosh parts, please contact Bob Handler or Lee Wermuth.

The Mission

The Mission of the Willow Valley Computer Club is to:

Provide the means to educate beginners or interested non-user on how to use a computer.

Arrange for speakers to talk to the Club about subjects that would be of interest to those with some background and experience in computer use.

Provide a forum for interchange of computer information among members.

For more information about the Club, contact Sid Paskowitz at 464-2127 or wvrccc@Yahoo.com

The Leadership

Officers

President: Sid Paskowitz

Vice President: Robert Kemp

Secretary: Gert Skelly

Treasurer: Dick Dressel

Community Representatives

Manor: Robert Kemp

Lakes: Gene Simasek

Committee Chairpersons

Program: Robert Kemp

Training: Bob McRobbie

Equipment: Ed Dahrsnin

Technical Support: Larry Gallagher

Website: Sid Paskowitz

Publicity: Wally Gordon

Newsletter: Al Williams

Mac Interest Group: Lee Wermuth

Room Coordinator: Dick Dressel

Microsoft Liaison: Ed Dahrsnin

Speech Recognition: Sid Paskowitz

Past Presidents

Chuck Lewis

John Lockhard

Larry Gallagher

Computer Security And Privacy by AI Williams

The importance of computer security and privacy to users of computers continues to escalate as black-hat hackers become more and more sophisticated in their attempts to steal money from banking accounts and deceive individuals into revealing their credit card information. These are the obvious events; even more is happening. My goal in this column is to explain what is happening and help you use your computer safely. My starting point in explaining what is happening is you, the user.

A Series of Comparisons Users of computers have differing levels of skill. I think it is helpful to compare computer users to drivers of cars. The driver with basic skills can operate the car and knows that stop signs, speed limits, and other rules of the road. This driver also knows that the car needs routine preventative maintenance and that on occasion repairs will be necessary.

The driver with intermediate skills can successfully operate the car when encountering unmarked roads, closed roads or other situations requiring better than average ability to navigate. This driver has tools such as maps and GPS to ensure that they will easily get to their destination. This driver has a good car and knows how to perform routine maintenance.

The driver with advanced skills can successfully operate the car when on snow, ice, sand, mud or other hazardous conditions. If the hazard is unanticipated, the car will be a good vehicle but if anticipated it will likely have 4-wheel drive, high clearance axles, high-mounted air intake and other features that increase the likelihood of successfully completing the trip. This driver knows how to make repairs.

Many computer users have basic skills. They know that they need anti-virus software and that some-

times they will need help to repair their computer. They know not to click on links in e-mails and that there are web sites on the Internet that cannot be trusted. They know to use Alt + F4 when they see unexpected pop-ups. That knowledge is good but it is not sufficient in today's world. They need additional skills and knowledge.

Security and Operating Systems Is it possible to select an operating system for home use that is totally secure so that you do not need additional skills or knowledge? No. Is there better security in one of the operating systems available to home users? Many Mac or Linux/Ubuntu users will say that their systems are secure. There are two answers to those claims. First, both the Mac and Linux systems have been penetrated in the past and the developers of both systems actively and frequently issue security updates. Second, there are two approaches to security: prevention and obscurity. Prevention is the use of techniques to keep malware out and it is the implementation of those techniques that are in the security updates.

Obscurity relies on the operating system being relatively unknown. Microsoft's Windows 2000, XP, Vista, and 7 are on 91.3% of all personal computers, Mac on 5%, and Linux on 1%.¹ The Linux systems routinely are not targeted by black-hat hackers because there are relatively few people using Linux, including the popular version of Linux, Ubuntu. Mac systems do receive some targeting but not nearly as much as the Windows operating systems. Windows systems are generally targeted because hackers are familiar with Windows and there are a large number of Windows systems. But as the Mac and Linux community grows and becomes a more desirable target, hackers will learn how to be as sophisticated in penetrating a Mac or

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Security

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Linux systems as they now do Windows. Although the Mac and Linux operating systems are excellent, trying to achieve security through obscurity by using them will not succeed. The developers of Mac and Linux/Ubuntu issue security updates; the prevention approach is needed.

Security and Computer Systems The best way to consider security is not to focus on the operating system but to consider all of the parts of a computer system: the operating system, application software, keyboard, monitor, tower and connection to the Internet. This approach may seem formidable but in future columns I intend to help provide necessary knowledge.

No! Some users will read this column and decide that they do not want to advance beyond basic skills. I hope that you continue to read this column; you may decide that it is desirable to advance.

Some will want a computer that does not require them to do preventive maintenance. The Willow Valley Resident Kiosk computers are preventive maintenance free because Willow Valley IT does all

the maintenance. But your personal security can be penetrated using those computers.

Some will say that I use my computer only to read my e-mail or an on-line publication, or to check the weather or the stock market. It has been demonstrated that an unprotected computer put on the Internet could become infected with malware in a few minutes.² New computers come with some protection but unless you take steps to further protect your computer, it will become infested with malware doing things that you don't want. It will be sluggish to use as well.

If you want your computer to continue to be yours, you need to learn how to protect it.

In future columns, I'll talk more about security and privacy problems and protecting your computer and yourself at the intermediate and advanced levels.

Endnotes:

¹www.grc.com/securitynow, Steve Gibson, Security Now, "Listener Feedback #81", December 10, 2009, page 5 of the transcript

²www.grc.com/securitynow, Steve Gibson, Security Now, "HoneyMonkeys", August 25, 2005

Key Willow Valley Web Sites

Here are URL links to key Willow Valley web sites. Please copy the URL to your browser's URL space, open the site, and then add them to Favorites/Bookmarks or create desktop icons.

Information Central: <http://eventregistration.willowvalley.org/kiosk/cclub/index.asp>

Kiosk Home Page: <http://eventregistration.willowvalley.org/kiosk/default.htm>

Resident Phone Directory: <http://eventregistration.willowvalley.org/kiosk/cris%20files/phonesearch.aspx>

Service Request: <http://eventregistration.willowvalley.org/kiosk/wo.htm>

Computer Club Newsletter: <http://eventregistration.willowvalley.org/kiosk/cclub/p/Newsletter.pdf>

Is Your Computer Slow? by Larry Gallagher

There are many possible reasons why your computer is slow. If the slowdown is rather recent, running System Restore may correct the problem by restoring the system to an earlier date.

If running System Restore doesn't correct the problem, then deleting unused files and cleaning the registry is usually a good idea. You may want to try a free program designed to do that.

First, create a System Restore point so that you can restore your computer's settings if you encounter a problem. Then, run CCleaner. If you do not have the program, it is available on a disk you can borrow from the Computer Room. Monitors in the Computer Rooms can help residents on CCleaner .

Check that you have at least 500 MB free space on the C drive (your hard drive). Left Click My Computer, left click C drive, single right click Properties and see your free space. If you have less than 500MB, close programs running in the background and then see if you can delete any programs. You

may also see if you can save pictures on a disk or flash drive rather than on the C drive since pictures use more space than most other files.

Make sure that your anti-virus and Microsoft Windows programs are up to date and run your virus scan to insure that no viruses are being detected.

Defragment the disk. Click Start, click Programs, click Accessories, click System Tools, click Disk Defragmenter, click Analyze. The analysis may take time depending on how fragmented your disk is. Click Defragment and do something else such as going to dinner as this may take time.

Running CCleaner daily or weekly will keep the computer clean and minimize slowness by cleaning off programs which leave data on the disk such as AVG when it updates the virus program. Running Disk Defragmenter on a schedule based on computer usage will also minimize slowness especially if you use a program such as Family Tree Maker quite often.

Serious Security Problem for Unencrypted Wi-Fi Connections by Al Williams

In mid-November of 2009, it was revealed that there is a serious problem in the Secure Socket Layer/Transport Layer Security protocol that is used to establish and ensure secure connections from your computer to on-line retailers, banks, investment firms, and any other web site where security is desired. Hackers have discovered how to conduct a man-in-the-middle attack at a hotel or motel room (using either a Wi-Fi or hardwired connection), or via an unencrypted Wi-Fi connection such as at a hotel lobby, airport, Community lobby, home, apartment, or the Cultural Center.¹

An attack is invisible to the user. Until the flaw is

fixed, users should do on-line shopping, banking, or investing using only their DSL or cable connections or an encrypted Wi-Fi network that uses WPA and AES (not WEP). When the flaw is fixed, an update stating the flaw has been fixed and describing any steps that the user must take, if any, will be in the next newsletter.

Endnote:

¹www.grc.com/securitynow, Steve Gibson, Security Now, "A Security Vulnerability in SSL", November 19, 2009