

BITS AND BYTES

The Newsletter of the Midland Computer Club

March 2009

GENERAL CLUB MEETING 7:00 P.M.

Meets 4th Wednesday of the month at the
Midland Community Center

2001 George St., Midland, MI

<http://mcc.apcug.org/>

This month's date: March 25th

**THIS MONTH'S TOPIC: Demonstration
of the beta version of Windows 7 will be
presented by Howard Lewis.**

PROGRAM COORDINATORS

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What you missed!

In **February** Joe Lykowski showed the ease of connecting to your home computer so that you may access information on your home computer when you are away from home. By using a website called LetMeIn, Joe was able to securely access his computer home computer. He also demonstrated several alternative methods that various businesses use to allow support for remote computers without having to travel to those machines.

Upcoming Activities

In **March**, Howard Lewis will be giving a demonstration of the beta version of Microsoft's new operating system called Windows 7. With a release date of either later this year or early 2010, we need to know what is coming

(Continued on page 2)

The President's Corner

I recently read an article on TechRepublic that was somewhat disconcerting (<http://preview.tinyurl.com/dhtvl3>). By way of a synopsis, the article says that spammers can use shortened URLs (e.g., those generated by TinyURL, etc.) as a way of fooling people to go to malicious sites. This is due to the fact that when you click on the shortened link, it takes you to the site which shortened the URL (e.g., TinyURL) who then redirects you to the correct site. Since the link will take you to TinyURL, you may miss the redirection to a malicious site since the shortened names are frequently just a random grouping of letters and numbers. Fortunately, a number of the sites which provide shortened names, also provide the ability to stop at the site so you can see where you are going before sending you on to the site. In the above link, I am sending you to the preview site at TinyURL which displays the site that you will be going to and allows you to continue to the site knowing where you are going. If someone sends you a link to a shortening site, you might want to check out if that site offers the ability to preview the destination before actually going there. I do know that if someone sends you a TinyURL link, you can type that into your browser and manually insert *preview.* before pressing *Enter* Hopefully this will make your web browsing a little safer.



If you have any comments or feedback, please let me know.

— Howard Lewis

(The above comments are the opinion of the author and do not necessarily reflect the views of the Midland Computer Club.)

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(Continued from page 1)

down the road so that we can make decisions on if or when to update our systems. You won't want to miss this meeting as we talk about the next version of Windows.

Larry Piper will be doing a presentation in **April** on Open Source Software. Many of us are currently using some version of Firefox, which is open source software. This will be an opportunity to learn more about some of the open source alternatives to the big bucks applications.

Don't forget to check on the web for upcoming computer trade shows within a few hours of home:

<http://www.gibraltarttrade.com/Shows/shComp.html>

Fivestarshows.com

Board Meeting

The next board meeting will be 7 p.m., April 14, 2009, at Chapel Lane Presbyterian Church, 5501 Jefferson Ave., Midland.

See YOU at the next computer club meeting,
Wednesday, March 25th. 7 pm. Remember, our usual meeting room is in use for tax season. There will be someone to direct you to where the meeting is being conducted. Use the same entrance into the senior center.

Membership Enrollment form

NAME _____ PHONE _____
ADDRESS _____ CITY _____
ZIP _____ EMAIL ADDRESS _____

Membership dues FAMILY (\$20) STUDENT (\$15) NEW Member ____ renewal ____

Please fill out the above form and mail it along with payment of check or money order to :

MIDLAND COMPUTER CLUB Attn: membership chairman
P.O. box 132
Midland, MI 48640-0132

you may also pay for membership at a regular club meeting

Useful, useless and strange (in no particular order) Web Sites:

<http://www.missingmoney.com/>

<http://unclaimed.org/>

With times being tight right now, we can always use some extra money. You might want to enter your name and see if these sites have any hits on some of the reported unclaimed money.

<http://preview.tinyurl.com/dhour3>

Here's a fun brainteaser type of game. See how high of a score you can attain.

<http://preview.tinyurl.com/csahon>

If you thought physics class was boring and dry, maybe you should sit in on these lectures. This guy makes physics fun!

www.findlaw.com

If you have a legal question, you might be able to get it answered at this site.

www.wikileaks.com

This is a site that documents (in Wiki style), "leaked" information from various countries around the world. Visit WikiLeaks and find out some of the unethical things going on all over the world.

Tips, Tricks & Techniques

Faster Searching In Windows With Keywords

Windows allows you to add keywords to certain file types. This makes it easier to search for a specific file by using the keywords when doing a file Search. Generally speaking, you can assign keywords to the following file types:

- TIFF** and **JPEG** images
- MP3** and **WMA** audio files
- WMV** video files
- Microsoft Office files

To assign keywords to a file, find the file on your computer. Right click on the file and select *Properties*. Next, click on the *Summary* tab (*Details* tab in Window Vista). Now in the **Keywords** field (**Tags** field in Vista), enter in the keywords that you wish to use for the file and click *OK*.

To locate all of the files based on the keywords:

- 1 In Windows XP — open the *Search* function. Click *All files and folders*. Type in one or more of the keywords under the field entitled '*A word or phrase in the file.*' Click *Search*.
- 2 In Windows Vista — type the keywords into the *Search* box in **Windows Explorer**.

Change The Format Of Page Numbers in Microsoft Word 2002/2003

If you have inserted page numbers into a Word document, you might want to change the way that they look. To change the formatting of your page numbers you need to use the **Header and Footer** toolbar. To do this, follow these steps:

1. From the *View* menu, click *Header and Footer*.

(Continued on page 4)

(Continued from page 3)

2. Click the *Switch Between Header and Footer* option on the toolbar to go to the header or footer containing the page numbers.
3. Select a page number.
4. On the **Formatting** toolbar, select a new font using the drop down arrow beside the **Font** box. Increase or decrease the font size using the drop down arrow beside the **Font Size** box.

Access Frequently Used Folders Via Favorite Links (Microsoft Vista and later)

If you use specific folders for storing your documents in Microsoft Office, you can rapidly get to those folders by adding a shortcut to the **Favorite Links** bar in the **Open** or **Save As** dialog boxes. (The **My Places** bar in Windows XP and before was renamed to **Favorite Links** in Windows Vista.)

To add a new shortcut to the **Favorite Links** bar in Word 2007:

1. Click the *Microsoft Office Button* and click *Open* or *Save As*.
2. Navigate to the location that you want to create a shortcut to in your folder structure.
3. Right click the folder and drag it to the *Favorite Links* bar (where the popup says **Create link in Links**).
4. Release the mouse button and select *Create Shortcuts Here*.

Your new shortcut will now appear in the **Favorite Links** bar.

How can I keep my PC clean and tidy?

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Like changing your car's oil or replacing your home's air conditioner filter, a little PC cleaning pays off with a faster, more reliable, and longer-lasting computer.

Although nothing suggested here is either rocket science or inherently dangerous, always follow the medical adage, "First, do no harm". So don't do anything that makes you uncomfortable (perhaps have a more experienced person clean up while you watch and learn), and back up your system and data. Then reboot, to get a clean start, and don't open any programs,

Before starting, to measure what your cleanup deletes, determine how full your hard drive is. Open My Computer, Right Click your hard drive (usually labeled "Local Disk (C:)"), and click Properties. Note how much space is used and free, then close the dialogue box.

Next, use Windows' built-in disk cleaning tool. Click Start, All Programs, Accessories, System Tools, Disk Cleanup, and the drive to clean, likely C. Choose what to clean; default selections are usually what you need. To be extra thorough, if your system has been running problem free, click the More Options tab and then Clean Up System Restore. Confirm your choice and click OK.

(Continued on page 5)

(Continued from page 4)

Delete Web browser temporary files. Using Internet Explorer, click Tools on the Menu Bar, Internet Options, and Delete Files under the General tab. Other browsers provide similar functions, sometimes using "cache" to refer to the collection of temporary files.

Delete unneeded personal files, items outdated and no longer used. While most Microsoft Office programs (Word, Excel, etc.) store their files in the My Documents folder, you may have changed this default location. And other apps likely have their own favorite places to stash files. Look around, since cluttered files make Windows work harder to get things done and waste time and resources when they're backed up. If you collect photos, music and such, delete those you no longer want or need, perhaps saving them on CD/DVD or ISB drive. Sorting files by size or date helps find deletion candidates.

If you run PC-based email software, it's worth periodically purging Sent and Trash folders, perhaps pitching material older than a certain date. Then look for a Compact Folders option, sometimes on the File pulldown menu, which squeezes out unused space from email folders.

Weed out software no longer used or useful by uninstalling applications with Window's Control Panel Add/Remove Software tool.

The Recycle Bin, which preserves erased files for recovery until it's emptied, has likely grown during this cleanup process. To empty it, Right Click its Windows desktop icon and click Empty Recycle Bin. Note that programs such as Norton Utilities may offer other cleanup options for the Recycle Bin and other Windows components.

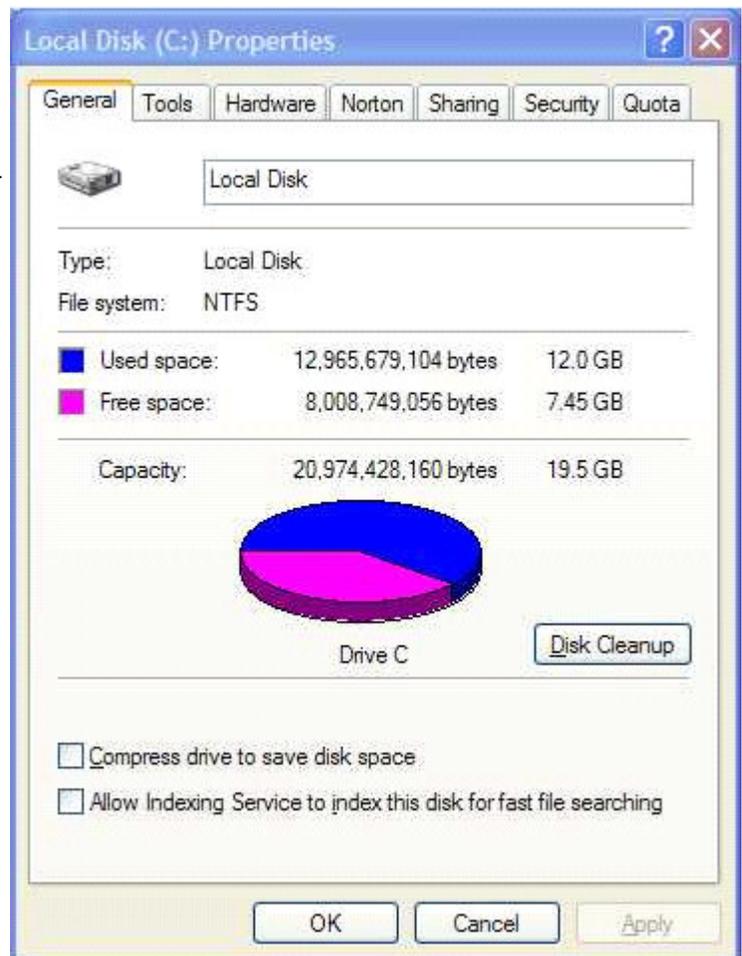
Finally, remember that when writing to your hard drive, Windows places bits of each file in the next available open space on the hard drive.

While Windows can reassemble them, having many files fragmented slows access to them. So, to store all files as single entities, periodically defragment the hard drive. To do this, click Start, All Programs, Accessories, System Tools, Disk Defragmenter, select a drive, and click Defragment.

When finished, compare the amount of hard drive space used and free to what you saw initially. If this is the first cleanup you've done in a while, the amount of space recovered may surprise you.

Many books give much more detailed instructions for PC cleanups. Search Amazon.com for "degunking windows" and "cleaning windows" to see choices (but don't be distracted by instructions for cleaning house, office, and car windows!).

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Magic Word Brings Email to the Offline World

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If you've ever wondered how to bring email to the techno-phobe in your life, the answer isn't Abracadabra, it's Presto.

If you're reading this online, you own or have access to a computer. But you likely have friends or relatives -- perhaps elderly, budget-restricted, technophobic -- who don't. So they're not in close touch and can't share online family or community activities.

Presto <<http://www.presto.com>> is a combination color inkjet printer and paid Web-based service which allows people without computers to receive email, including attachments.

Setting it up is simple: after purchasing the device, someone with just a bit of tech savvy creates the account, picks an email address (such as gabeg99@presto.com), and lists people allowed to send email to the address. At specified times of day, the printer dials a toll-free telephone number, downloads accumulated email, and prints it.

With only two controls -- Volume and Stop -- it's easy to operate. It plugs directly into a telephone jack and doesn't need a separate phone line or jack or even a splitter, since an existing telephone or accessory (answering machine or Caller ID device) can plug into it, daisy-chain style.

Presto is ideal for letting seniors receive email from children, grandchildren, friends, former colleagues, military buddies, etc. And it's useful when businesses request customer email addresses to conduct or simplify transactions. It handles pictures and many attachment formats nicely, printing them as if it was a FAX machine. So it allows sharing any online or computer content as PDF files such as maps and directions, travel itineraries, Web pages, spreadsheets with financial or family contact information.

Simple steps authorize new people to send email, and when ink runs low, the printer is smart enough to either alert the person who set up the account or automatically order new cartridges.

After failing for a dozen years to excite my in-laws about email -- they steadfastly resisted being online -- my retired Navy father-in-law fell in love with a Presto I loaned him, discovering that it let him hear from his old Navy buddies around the world. And receiving color pictures of the grandchildren sealed the deal.

The printer costs \$150 or less (always comparison shop online!) and the service costs \$12.50/month with yearly subscription. The only thing missing is the printer downloading paper and ink through the phone line -- but that would need real magic!

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Tech News That Affects Everybody

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Some of us scour the technology and business sections of the newspaper and the Web to get the latest news. Some of us head for the lifestyle and community sections, without much of a care about technology. Yet, today's technology news is often news that will affect everyone's life in one way or another.

Let me give you a few examples. The Pope recently announced opening of the Vatican YouTube channel (www.youtube.com/vaticanit) which will feature short video clips of Pope Benedict XVI's activities and links to news and information about the Catholic Church. The Pope is posting two or three videos each day. Most are short clips showing the Pope's speeches, activities, and participation in important events. In a recent speech, the Pope praised the Internet as offering rich opportunities for dialogue, friendship and spreading the Christian message.

There is a lot of irreverent stuff on YouTube, but the Pope's participation shows how mainstream this popular video website has become. YouTube, FaceBook, MySpace, and other social networking websites have become more and more popular. If you haven't yet visited any of these, YouTube is a great place to start. (www.youtube.com)

Another recent news announcement was the Palm Pre, which is a smartphone that will be available in a few months through Sprint. You might think that this is just another phone, and you would be right. But the implications for cell phones are quite dramatic. Palm has developed a totally new version of the operating system for this phone. Google now has their own cell phone operating system as do Microsoft, BlackBerry, and Apple. These are some pretty big name and you will notice that the software that runs these phones is called an operating system. That's because these phone are really mini-computers that can do email, surf the web, and perform many other functions. Cell phones are changing dramatically. They are turning into handheld computers that will change the lives of those who use them.

We also should not overlook Apple's recent announcement that they will be dropping the DRM (digital rights management) for all songs in their iTunes store. The DRM crippled the songs so they had limited use. For instance, they could only be played on a certain number of devices or be copied a certain number of times. So music lovers the world over will be rejoicing to see that by April of this year, all of iTunes 10 million songs will be DRM-free. There is one caveat. Those who have previously purchased music and/or videos on iTunes that included Apple's DRM will now have to pay to get the DRM removed. Apple will be charging 30 cents a song. iTunes has sold six billion songs since going online in 2003. They did not offer any DRM-free music until recently. So most of those six billion songs had DRM. If every purchaser pays Apple 30 cents for taking away the DRM, Apple would make \$180,000,000. A boon to Apple, a pain-in-the-rear for honest music lovers who previously used the iTunes store.

Microsoft was also in the news recently with their announcement that the beta testing version Windows 7, their next operating system could be downloaded and tried for free. Their website was inundated by curious Windows users. So many came, that they had to add more servers and download services. They originally said that they would limit the downloads to 2.5 million, but recently removed that restriction and will continue to offer the beta trial until February. Don't think that you will be getting something for nothing, though. The beta of Windows 7 will stop being functional on August 1, 2009. At that time you will either have to reinstall your previous operating system or pay for Windows 7.

Last but not least in the technology news is the announcement that Western Digital has created a 2 terabyte hard disk drive. Believe it or not, this may have one of the biggest effects on individual users. As we can store more and more digital data at reasonable prices, more and more data will be digitized. We are already living in a digital world, but that world gets more reliant on technology every day.

Tech News Tidbits

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My intention in writing this article each month is to help us understand technology's emerging trends that affect our everyday lives. While researching material for this month's submission, I felt compelled to share these alarming trends with the rest of you.

Sophos, a leading U.K.-based IT security and control firm, just published their "Security Threat Report 2009", which examined the "threat landscape" over the last 12 months, and predicted the emerging cybercrime trends for 2009. Two major points in the report are very alarming:

- American computers are making a disturbingly large contribution to the problems of viruses and spam affecting all of us today."
- American websites host more malware and relay more spam than any other country

Graham Cluley, senior technology consultant for Sophos, said "Too many American computers have been compromised and are under the control of hackers, and nationally, the U.S. is carrying the most malicious Web pages. When an American Internet company, accused of collaborating with spammers and hackers, was disconnected from the net in November, the amount of spam was immediately reduced by 75%.

Sophos's research reveals that in 2008, organized criminal gangs tripled their attacks against innocent websites, injecting malicious code to infect visiting home users and businesses. They also documented an average of five new scareware websites (hackers posing as legitimate anti-virus vendors) each day, with the intention of scaring users into believing that their computers have been compromised.

By the end of 2008, Sophos was also tracking five times more malicious attacks arriving through e-mail attachments than at the start of the year, proving that hacking has become mainstream among organized crime.

As the Internet has matured into the foremost information resource on the planet, cyber criminals have refined their methods. Hackers are using automated systems to break into vulnerable websites and/or generate new variants of their malware throughout the world!

According to Sophos's findings, China was responsible for hosting more than 50 percent of all web-based malware in 2007, but this position was taken over by the U.S. in 2008. Their breakdown of the top malware hosting countries follows:

1. U.S. 37.0 percent
2. China (including Hong Kong) 27.7 percent
3. Russia 9.1 percent
4. the rest of the connected world 26.2%

Symantec also found the U.S. to host the most malware of all nations, but with lower percentages, and did not include Russia in their results.

We haven't devoted a lot of time to security issues recently, but if you've participated in some of the discussions we have had, you know there are numerous effective strategies for protecting yourself from attacks. Avoid being connected to the Internet unless protected by:

- Dependable antivirus software (with current updates)

(Continued on page 9)

(Continued from page 8)

- Products include Avast, AVG, Norton, and McAfee
- Malware detection and removal software
 - Products include Spybot Search and Destroy, Adaware, Spyware Blaster, and Advanced WindowsCare
- Software firewall
 - Products include Windows Firewall (protects only against incoming threats in XP), Zone Alarm, and Kerio
- A healthy dose of common sense
 - If you receive a popup telling you that your computer has been compromised, advising you to: “Click here to correct the problem”...**DON'T TAKE THE BAIT!**

If you have no strategy, do yourself (and the rest of us) a favor, learn to protect yourself. Maybe you should attend more ICON functions?!

SIGNIFICANT BITS, February 2009

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On Software Installations

I received as a Christmas gift Ahead's Nero 9 – a CD/DVD burning suite with some authoring and backup tools as well. I have a combination of software pieces already on my laptop that in some way do some or all of what Nero 9 claims it can do. However, the promise of having all these tasks integrated into a single package seemed appealing, so I decided I'd give it try. I had also recently reinstalled my copy of Nero 6 on my downstairs PC and was pleasantly reminded how much better I liked Nero 6's interface, so this was another push to try Nero 9.

The Nero 9 installation took 45 minutes on my laptop. One colleague mentioned that maybe I should have tried the install with my antivirus software turned off to speed up the process. Except for operating systems, I'm curious why a software package would take 45 minutes to install in this day-and-age of high-speed processors and drives.

Nero 9 is much more involved than Nero 6 and similar versions, where Nero 9 includes media players, some authoring tools, and looks like it will replace the need for other software items. In my case, my laptop had separate programs already for viewing DVDs and authoring DVDs/VCDs.

Remember when installing any software, and especially anything that's a “suite” to make a restore point first and backup your system. I'd also recommend if the install left some installation related files, to keep those around, since some software titles need the leftover installation files to uninstall themselves.

First impressions of Nero 9 are that it will extensively “hook” into the Desktop environment, changing file extension associations, and adding context-menu options. For myself, I'm more fond of applications that do not touch the registry and or are “portable” in nature, so Nero 9 has already a bad score in my book before I've even done anything with it yet. While the installer gives options for which components and templates to install, there is no expert mode to prevent Nero 9 from messing with the file extensions. Also, Nero 9 claims some file extensions that are common or else used by another application.

Opera Mini and Palm TX Part II

You'll recall I had mentioned previously about using Opera Mini on my Palm TX. After a month or so of us-

(Continued on page 10)

(Continued from page 9)

age, I'm finding that it works okay most of the time, but it is not really optimized for different networks. In one instance I had to delete all the scanned entries for other Wi-Fi hotspots so that it would stop trying to logon to my distant and not present work network. So currently, I only use Opera Mini on my TX for home use, and the Blazer otherwise. Be forewarned, having installed the particular Java layer and Opera Mini, my Palm TX has tended to crash more when using Opera Mini or Blazer.

Editing Just About Anything

Something I find somewhat irritating when trying to help another computer user with a problem or task is when the person really has not taken the time to learn their software or operating system from a navigational perspective. I can tell they do not know the software well if they do not use the keyboard and/or keyboard shortcuts. (These keyboard shortcuts are also referred to as "hot keys" or "key combinations", and so on.) This is where the person helping, such as myself, says, "Please get out of your chair and let me drive." If you use a computer and do not know your hot keys, read on.

The mouse and graphic desktop are great at giving people quick access to files and a shorter learning curve for applications. However, if someone's primary way to interact with a computer is by way of the mouse, then they may likely take longer to do a task, especially spreadsheet work. The reality is that people are capable of typing (keyboarding?) faster than they can point-and-click (or speak), menu diving or clicking around the screen at teeny-tiny hieroglyphs that may-or-may-not be a link.

A quick way to learn all the key combinations for your desktop and applications is to go cold-turkey and simply to take the mouse off of the computer, have a list of shortcuts and go from there. Here are some hot keys in Windows XP that are pretty common to help get you going. (Check your manuals and or on-line for your particular desktop, application and operating system if different.)

Ctrl-Esc	Start Menu	Alt+F4	Close window, application, or Windows itself
F1	Select or highlight whatever is in the location field, if present (browsers, directories)	Ctrl-F1	Hide help
F2	Show help	Ctrl-c	Copy selected area into the 'Clipboard' aka the buffer
Ctrl-v	Paste from the Clipboard (buffer)	Ctrl-z	Undo last action

One of the reasons I think laptop manufacturers get away with their unique (and thus horrid) keyboard layouts is that most people never take the time to learn how to use the control key in combination with the page keys, arrow keys, and home keys. If people used the navigational keys and hot keys more, I'm guessing the random placement of these keys on laptops would not occur. (Pet peeve: Control keys not being the outermost key on the spacebar row.)

The other thing to consider is that the availability of hot keys are what make local applications so much easier to use than Web applications. Below are some links that list more Windows XP keyboard shortcuts.

LINKS

- Keyboard Shortcuts for XP <http://support.microsoft.com/kb/301583>
- Excel 2003 Keyboard Shortcuts <http://office.microsoft.com/en-us/excel/HP052037811033.aspx>

Sean N. Henderson is regular contributor to DACS.doc. More information at <http://seannhenderson.net/dacs.html>.

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Our mission.... Striving to help people use their computers more effectively.

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New member, or need to renew ?
There is an enrollment form on the
bottom of page 2.



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business site, send us an e-mail!)**