BITS AND BYTES

The Newsletter of the Midland Computer Club

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: September 23rd

**THIS MONTH'S TOPIC: Laura Hammel
will give a presentation on the "One Laptop Per
Child" project.**

PROGRAM COORDINATORS
Contact : Co-Chairpersons
Larry Piper   larryP56@chartermi.net

Joe Lykowski   joseph@lykowski.com

What you missed!
In addition to our annual club picnic, we also had Joe
Lykowski talk about the steps and equipment necessary to
upgrade your home wiring for your computer, television
and phone. With some fairly inexpensive tools and some
work, you can get your home up-to-date to handle today's
technology.

Upcoming Activities
In **September**, Laura Hammel will give a presentation on
the "One Laptop Per Child" project. The presentation will
include a demonstration of one of the OLPC laptops. After
the presentation, we will also have a discussion on mem-
bers expectations from the club and where they would like
to see us go. Be sure to come prepared to talk about your
interests.

For **October**, Frank Koenig will talk about how to setup

President's Corner

At the last board meeting, while we were
discussing future programs, the question
was posed as to what the membership
would like to see happen at the meetings.
With that in mind, we decided that in
addition to the program being done by
Laura, we would like to have an open
discussion on what you would like to see
at the meetings in 2010. Basically, we would like you to
think about three questions in advance for discussion at
the meeting on September 23. These are:

- What operating system and software do you run
on your computers.

- How do you use your computer.

- What items of interest would you like to know
more about in technology.

At the meeting, I plan on passing around a questionnaire
with these three topics and ask you to fill them out. Then
we will discuss the questions and hopefully this will pro-
vide the board with the information necessary to continue
to provide you with meaningful information. Thank you
for your input.

— Howard Lewis
*(The above comments are the opinion of the author and
do not necessarily reflect the views of the Midland Com-
puter Club.)*

your own "hotspot" at home and what is necessary to
keep

your computers safe from people who may be using
your "hotspot."

Bill Tower will also give a presentation on backups and
the use of online storage as a way of saving your data

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Board Meeting

The next board meeting will be 7 p.m., October 13th, 2009, @ Chapel Lane Presbyterian Church, 5501 Jefferson Ave., Midland.

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

www.beatmyprice.com
Looking for the best price on something? Enter what you want and this site will tell you of the best offers others have found.

http://www.lowcards.com/
With this site, you can compare interest rates of various credit cards. If you carry a balance on your credit cards, you can find significant savings with a card with lower rates.

www.alternativeto.net
Do you have a software program that you really like, but it's too expensive? Then look here as you may find some less expensive (or even free) software suggestions that you may want to investigate. Most major software packages have alternatives available.

http://www.appleseeds.org/Dig-tool-shed.htm
You will find plenty of tools on this site to help you in your media endeavors, whether it be video or audio.

http://preview.tinyurl.com/buwnbp
Did you know that monkeys mirror humans when it comes to alcohol. Watch this video and laugh, but it might give you second thoughts on imbibing too much.

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

Tips, Tricks & Techniques

Quick Launch Toolbar (Windows 7)

One of the first things you might notice when using Windows 7, is that the **Quick Launch** toolbar has been disabled. Some people never use the Quick Launch toolbar in Windows XP or Windows Vista and therefore will not miss it. But others have found it to be a convenient timesaver. To re-enable the Quick Launch toolbar:

1. Right-click the **Taskbar** and turn off *Lock the taskbar*.
2. Right-click the **Taskbar** and select *Toolbars/New toolbar*.
3. In the **Folder selection** dialog box, type in *%userprofile% \AppData\Roaming\Microsoft\Internet Explorer\Quick Launch* and click on **Select Folder**.
4. The **Quick Launch** toolbar will now appear next to the **System Tray** (on the right end of the **Taskbar**).
5. Right-click on the *divider* between the **Taskbar** and the **Quick Launch** toolbar and disable *Show Text* and *Show title* and make sure the **View** is set to *Small Icons*.
6. Next right-click on the **Taskbar** and click on *Lock the taskbar* (if desired)

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Add A Comment In Excel 2007

If you wish to tell a user about something that you have done in a particular cell of a worksheet, you can add a comment to that particular cell to inform them. To add a comment to a cell in Excel 2007:

1. Click the cell to which you wish to add a comment.
2. In the **Comments** group, on the **Review** tab, click *New Comment*.
3. Type the information you wish into the comment box and then click outside the box.

A small red triangle will now appear in the upper right-hand corner of the box to which the comment is attached. When someone clicks on that particular box, the comment will be shown.

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Add A Comment In Word 2007

To add a comment in Word 2007, the process is very similar to that used in Excel 2007. To add a comment to a location in Word 2007:

1. Click the location in the document where you wish to add a comment.
2. In the **Comments** group, on the **Review** tab, click *New Comment*.
3. Type the information you wish into the comment box and then click outside the box.

A red box will now appear where the comment was inserted and the comment will be displayed on the right side of the document.

Wolverine F2D Slide Scanner
By Joe Nuvolini, Pikes Peak Computer Application Society, Colorado
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Over the years, I have amassed about 3,000 color slides. I have been wanting to scan them into my computer, but up to now, had not seen a scanning product that would allow me to get the job done in a reasonable time. One day I came across the Wolverine F2D 35mm Film to Digital Scanner while surfing the Internet. It looked like the answer I was looking for.

I read a number of reviews and found a wide variety of opinions. People seemed to love it or hate it but the positives were greater than the negatives so I decided to try it. I was not disappointed. The unit is self-contained, though you can connect it to a computer USB port for power. However, no computer is required to use it. In fact, I am using it on an island in my kitchen. The unit comes with two film holders; one for slides and one for color or black and white negatives. The unit saves the images to an SD card in JPG format. Before saving the images, they can be mirrored or rotated, if necessary.

The package includes the unit, the two film holders, an AC adapter you can plug the USB connector into for power, a brush to clean the internal screen, a 1-GB SD card, and a 19-page manual. The first thing I did was go to the Wolverine Website (**http://wolverinedata.com/f2d**). I downloaded a PDF copy of the manual so these tired old eyes could better read it. I also downloaded the latest firmware update and installed it. I then started my project. I can scan 125 slides in about 30-35 minutes. The more images that need to be rotated before saving, the longer it takes. They advertise 5-MP images and I found the file sizes ran from 900 KB to just over 1 MB.

There are a couple of things to watch out for. The most important is to make sure your slides (up to 4) are properly seated in the tray. If they are not, the tray will bind up in the scanner. I have had a couple of close calls on this one. Also, I have found that for no good reason the image on the screen of the unit will shift to black and white or have some goofy colors. I have found in most cases pressing the mirror button twice will fix the problem. If not, turning the power off and back on will do the trick for sure. There is one other item the manual warns about, and that is not to tip the unit backward to better view an image on the unit's screen. The reason is that the connector on the USB power cable plugs in near the bottom on the back of the unit. The connection is a small USB connector, like the one on your camera. Repeated tipping can place stress on the connector causing it to fail.

Pricing varies. A Google search for "Wolverine F2D" brought a range of prices from $119 at the Wolverine site to $99.99 on the Costco site. I am quite satisfied with the product. If you take care in using it, you will be too.

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Is It Time To Switch To 64 Bit Windows?
Written by Brian K. Lewis, PhD, a Member of the Sarasota PCUG, Florida
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This article has been obtained from APCUG with the author's permission for publication by APCUG member groups; all other uses require the permission of the author (see e-mail address above).

In my February 2008 article in the Monitor comparing 32 bit and 64 bit computing, I was still advising caution for

those wishing to upgrade. Today every new computer is capable of running a 64 bit operating system. As a result there are many voices saying if you have the capability to run a 64 bit operating system, you should take advantage of it. Microsoft had previously indicated that Windows 7 would be available only in a 64 bit version. However, they now say both 32 & 64 bit versions will be sold. There some speculation in the computer industry that Windows 8 may only be 64 bit. So it appears to be time to reconsider the move to a 64 bit operating system (OS). There are many advantages for 64 bit over 32 bit, but in order to better understand them, we need to take a brief look at how these will affect your decision.

To start with we should recall a little history. In the early days of personal computing the processors instruction sets were designed for 8 bit "words". This was the data size that could be used to express a single character. A bit is either a "1" or a "0". Eight bits were then referred to as a "byte" and that was considered a computer "word". In those days the CPUs we had were the Intel 8080, the Zilog Z80, Motorola 6800, and the MOS Tech 6502. These were all 8 bit processors with 8 bit data paths. The Apple I/II/IIe and Commodore Pet all used the 6502. IBM designed the first x86 CPU which was called the 8086 and it was a 16 bit processor. However, when IBM produced their first personal computer in 1981 it used their 8088 processor which was an 8 bit version of the 8086. The next step was to the 16 bit processor with the 80286 processor in 1984. The software changes rapidly followed this advance. The change to 16 bit processing allowed the central processor and the data bus to transfer data in increasingly larger sizes, referred to as double words. The 32 bit processor arrived in 1989 followed by the 64 bit in 2005. As this history shows, the 64 bit computer is just one more generational step in processing power. In addition, a computer "word" is now considered to be 16 bits, not 8 bits. So a 64 bit processor can handle a quadruple word (4x16). Naturally, the increase in the width of the CPU/data path does increase processing speed.

Every time the hardware has changed, there has been a delay while the software manufacturers play catchup. Applications have to be rewritten to take advantage of the hardware changes including the new instructions in the CPU instruction set. Only then can the application take advantage of the added processing power. Although Windows has been available in a 64 bit form since XP was released, it adoption has been quite slow. Many software manufacturers did not make 64 bit versions of their applications. This coupled with the limited acceptance of Vista has markedly slowed the shift from 32 bit to 64 bit. Another factor in this process is the development of 64 bit drivers for peripherals such as printers, scanners, graphics cards, wireless modems, network cards, etc. Microsoft has also indicated that Windows 7 will not install 64 bit drivers unless the software is "Microsoft Certified". Some manufacturers have obtained certification for some of their 64 bit drivers. For example, my Brother multi-function machine has a certified driver for 64 bit Windows. If you don't have a 64 bit certified driver, your peripheral will not work under Windows 7. Neither Vista64 nor Win7-64 will accept 32 bit drivers. Something to check out before you pop for a 64 bit OS. However, if you are buying an upgrade version of Windows 7, several of them are supposed to come with both the 64 bit and 32 bit versions in the box, but not in the OEM versions. This specifically applies to the Home Premium, Professional and Ultimate versions (as of this writing and may be subject to change by Microsoft.).

Another advantage of a 64 bit processor is in its memory management. By now I would hope that everyone understands that the 32 bit generation of computers can address a maximum of 4 gigabytes of RAM. This is the maximum number of addresses that can be handled and is calculated from 2^32 or two to the thirty-second power. This includes addresses needed by the system as well as the data. A 64 bit processor can address 2^64 addresses or roughly ten billion more than the 32 bit processor. The catch here is that both the hardware manufacturers and Microsoft have imposed limitations on the addressable memory. Generally, new personal computer's are limited to 128 GB of memory or less. Some manufacturers configure their laptops for a maximum of 4 GB of RAM. Windows OS software is also highly variable in its limits. Some versions of Vista limit addressing to as little as 8 GB (Home Basic & Premium). It is expected that these limits will be raised in Windows 7. For the present, these levels should be more than adequate for most people. If not keep in mind that it is the Ultimate versions of Vista and Windows 7 that have the maximum addressing ability.

The next thing to consider is the software compatibility. Just because you have a new operating system, no one really wants to have to upgrade all their software from 32 bit to 64 bit. For that reason both Intel CPU's and AMD CPU's are not true native 64 bit processors. They are, in fact, hybrids. By this I mean that they allow 32 bit code to run in an emulation mode. Consequently, 64 bit Windows has an emulation mode, Windows on Windows, which allows 32 bit software to be run. WOW intercepts system calls to the operating system made by a 32-bit application and switches the CPU to 32 bit mode. It can switch the CPU between 32 bit and 64 bit as

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needed. This also allows the 64 bit AMD/Intel CPU's to run a 32 bit OS. The only true 64 bit, non-hybrid operating systems for PC's are found in Intel's Itanium processor (IA64) and the various 64 bit versions of Linux. Systems using these CPUs will give you all the benefits of 64 bit computing, but require all 64 bit software. Windows WOW64 also allows for some 32 bit software to run on the IA64 CPU by converting 32 bit calls to 64 bit. Windows XP, Vista and Win7 contain large numbers of dll files. These are system libraries, many of which are loaded into memory when the computer is booted. In the 64 bit OS, these libraries can not be used by 32 bit software so instead, there are duplicate libraries written in 32 bit code included in Windows. Microsoft has devised a system so that these libraries can co-exist on the hard drive and in RAM without overwriting the files or accessing the wrong file so that 32 bit code can be run under the 64 bit OS. Sounds good, doesn't it? Yes, it does work, but with some caveats. Adding an emulation layer does slow the overall processing of software instructions. Also, there is an increase in the amount of memory (virtual memory included) needed for the additional 32 bit libraries that are loaded along with the 64 bit dlls at boot time.

There are other problems, but to a somewhat lesser extent as it affects fewer software applications. Some 32 bit applications still use 16 bit loaders. Since Windows 64 does not support **ANY** 16 bit code, these applications will not run, unless Windows can transparently substitute an installer with 32 bit code. Hopefully, all 32 bit software will eventually have 32 bit loaders or be replaced with 64 bit code. Additionally, some 32 bit software requires the use of 32 bit drivers. These drivers will not run on any 64 bit Windows platform. So until the drivers are available in a 64 bit form, these applications can't be used with Windows 64.

Another consideration is that any utility software that works at the hardware level must be 64 bit. This generally includes anti-virus software and other anti-malware products. Those few manufacturers I have checked do have 64 bit versions of their applications available. This includes some which provide free utility applications. This is just one more item that should be checked before you decide to move to a 64 bit OS.

If you decide you want to upgrade to the 64 bit version of Windows 7 when it is available, then you have several more things to consider. No matter which 32 bit Windows version you are currently using, you will have to do a "clean" install of the 64 bit version. That means backing up your data to an external medium and formatting your hard drive or at least a part of it (one partition). You can install Windows 7 in a new partition and dual boot with it and your current Windows version. Or you can install the new version in the space reclaimed from your old version. Either way you will have to reinstall software and drivers. Then you can restore your data. Only if you upgrade to the Windows 7 32 bit version from Vista can you do an "in-place" upgrade. If you are still running XP you have no choice but to do a clean install to convert to the 64 bit version. Of course, if you buy a new computer with the 64 bit Windows 7 installed that reduces your problem to just installing applications and data from your old computer.

I have already pre-ordered a 64 bit version of Windows 7. So, you see, I have answered the question I posed in the title of this article. When it arrives, in October, I will be installing it, then testing drivers and applications. You probably won't see any of my experience until the December Monitor. In the meantime, I have obtained a 64 bit version of the Linux OS, Ubuntu. Over the next few months I will be installing and testing it on my computer. So you will be seeing more about 64 bit computing. I hope it will help you as the entire industry continues to move into a fully 64 bit era. Just think, the next move, in a few years, will probably be to 128 bit computing!

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.

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Open Office.Org 3.0

An Evolutionary Improvement

Written by Bill Wayson, LINUX SIG Leader, Channel Islands PCUG, California

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OpenOffice.org (OO.o) is Free and Open Source Software's (FOSS) premier alternative to the Microsoft Office productivity suite. It offers a high level of compatibility with many of the ever-changing MS

Office formats, provides many of the same features as MS Office, and works similarly to MS Office. This month, we will explore the recently released OpenOffice.org 3.0, which is available for Microsoft Windows, Linux, Apple's Macintosh, Sun's Solaris, and several other operating systems. Many, if not most, users of MS Office who require the broad, deep range of features of MS Office could change to OO.o and become productive after a very shallow learning curve.

If your requirements are more for just compatibility with Microsoft's Word document formats in a word processor, you can consider more streamlined FOSS alternatives such as AbiWord.

OO.o is a full-featured office productivity suite comprised of six integrated applications: the Writer word processor (which also has a Web page editing mode), Calc spreadsheet, Draw graphics program, Impress presentations program, Base database program, and Math equation editor.

OO.o 3.0 is an evolutionary improvement on the application suite, with new features, enhancements, and user interface improvements. Users of Apple Macintosh OS X systems benefit greatly from OO.o 3.0, which will now run as a native OS X application.
OS X users will also have support for Microsoft's VBA macro language and the Calc Solver component, which allows solving optimization problems where the optimum
value of a particular spreadsheet cell has to be calculated based on constraints provided in other cells. Both of these features are missing in MS Office 2008 for
Mac OS X.

All users of OO.o 3.0 benefit from its improvements, including the two above. Another area of significant improvement is one where OO.o is breaking out of Microsoft
mimicry mode: support for open document standards. OO.o 3.0 supports the latest OpenDocument Format (PDF) specification. In fact, ODF is the OO.o default document
format. ODF is gaining wider acceptance worldwide, being adopted by more companies and governments as the standard for documents, and becoming supported by an increasing number of applications. OO.o will also read and write many other formats, including those of various versions of MS Office and Word, plain text, and several PDA document formats.

Additionally, it will read the newest formats introduced in MS Office 2007. Exchanging documents with users of Microsoft's products should not be an issue. The Writer
screen now sports a handy zoom slider control, making it quick and easy to change the zoom level of the view. Additionally, it will automatically display multiple pages of
the document as the zoom level is lowered. Writer now displays notes — notations added to a document that are not necessarily meant to be printed — at the edge of the editing window to the side of the document, making it easier to read them and see their context in the document. In addition, notes from different users are displayed in different colors, together with the editing date and time, facilitating collaborative work on a document.
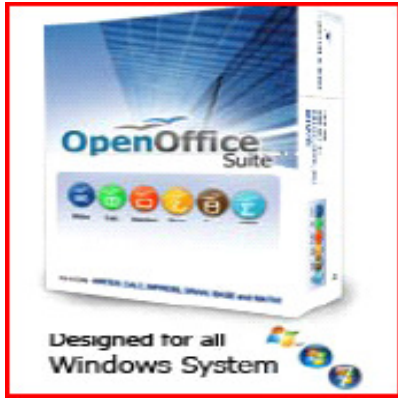
Calc sees some useful improvements. One is in the charts feature. Now, custom error bars can be included, and regression equations and correlation coefficients can be
displayed right in the chart. Another is a new feature, spreadsheet collaboration through workbook sharing. This feature allows multiple users to work collaboratively on a spreadsheet while avoiding editing conflicts. The users share a spreadsheet, each adding their data. The spreadsheet owner can then easily integrate the new data with a few clicks. And Calc now supports 1,024 columns per worksheet.

Draw now lets you crop images the same way that most other graphics programs do, by dragging han-

dles located at the edges and corners of an image. This same improvement appears in Impress, too. Additionally, Impress now natively supports

inserting tables into presentations. Tables can be added directly into the presentation and edited within Impress as native Impress objects.

Improvements affecting the entire suite include a new set of icons, expanded feature support when exporting to XML, and a new gateway to the suite called the Start

Center, which makes it more intuitive to get to where you want to go in the suite.

There is nothing revolutionary in OO.o 3.0. What is new are several improvements and enhancements that will keep the suite in contention with its competitors. And we have not touched at all on the features OO.o already had before 3.0. If you need a productivity suite with both a broad and deep set of features and, particularly, if you are not married to Microsoft Office, you should give OO.o a look. It costs you nothing to try, you may just like it, so it just may save you hundreds of dollars.

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Broadsides

Compiled by Ron Broadhurst, a member of the Space Coast PC Users Group, Inc., FL

The Space Coast PC Journal, June 2009

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Dear friends,

These ideas are compiled from years of accumulations from various magazines, books, on-line sites and my own personal experience. I claim neither originality nor ownership to any of its contents. My only intent is to share the various "tips, "tricks", & "hints" in hopes of helping & maybe enhancing your computing experiences. They are all intended for anyone who uses a PC. It is for beginners as well as advanced users. Enjoy and use as you will.

——Ron Broadhurst

TURN OFF INDEXING TO SPEED UP XP

Windows XP keeps a record of all files on the hard disk so when you do a search on the hard drive it is faster. There is a downside to this and because the computer has to index all files, it will slow down normal file commands like open, close, etc. If you do not do a whole lot of searches on your hard drive then you may want to turn this feature off:

• Open My Computer.
• Right-click your hard drive icon and select Properties.
• At the bottom of the window you'll see "Allow indexing service to index this disk for faster searches," uncheck this and click ok.
• A new window will pop up and select Apply to all folders and subfolders.

It will take a minute or two for the changes to take affect but then you should enjoy slightly faster performance.

CORRECTING SYSTEM HANG AT STARTUP

If your system hangs about 2 or 3 minutes at startup, where you can't access the Start button or the Taskbar, it may be due

to one specific service (Background Intelligent Transfer) running in the background. Microsoft put out a patch for this but it didn't work for me. Here's what you do:

• Click on Start/Run, type 'msconfig', and then click 'OK'.
• Go to the 'Services' tab; find the 'Background Intelligent Transfer' service. Disable it, apply the changes & reboot.

CHANGE THE START MENU STYLE TO CLASSIC

Does the new Windows XP Start menu take up too much space on your desktop? You can easily change the look back to the Windows Classic Start menu by following
these steps:

• Right–click the Start button, and then click Properties.
• Click Classic Start menu.
• Click the Customize button to select items to display on the Start menu.

By default, selecting the Classic Start menu also adds the My Documents, My Computer, My Network Places, and Internet Explorer icons to your desktop.

DISPLAY YOUR QUICK LAUNCH TOOLBAR

• Right-click an empty area on the taskbar, click Toolbars, and then click Quick Launch.
• Easy as that your Quick Launch bar appears.
• To add items to your Quick Launch toolbar, click the icon for the program you want to add, and drag it to the Quick Launch portion of the taskbar.

KEEP YOUR FAVORITE PROGRAMS NEAR THE TOP OF THE START MENU

Do you have a favorite program that you frequently use? Elevate its priority on the Start menu by putting it at the top of the list. This ensures that the program will remain on
the Start menu and cannot be bumped by other programs, even if you use the others more frequently.

Right-click the link to your favorite program on the Start menu and select Pin to Start Menu. Your program will be moved permanently to the top part of the list, just below
your browser and e-mail programs.

CHANGE OUT YOUR POINTER SCHEME

Tired of seeing your pointer as an arrow or an hourglass all the time? Windows XP offers a number of alternative pointer schemes, such as Dinosaur, Ocean and Sports:

• Open the Control Panel, double-click Mouse, and select the Pointers tab. (If you start in Category view, select Appearance and Themes, then click Mouse Pointers under "See Also").
• Next to Schemes, click the down arrow and select a scheme to preview its pointers.
Click OK to apply the scheme to your desktop.

CREATE A PERSONAL SCREEN SAVER

For a great way to put your digital photos to work, try creating a slide show presentation for use as a screen saver.

• Right–click an empty spot on your desktop, and then click Properties.
• Click the Screen Saver tab.
• In the Screen saver list, click My Pictures Slideshow.
• Click Settings to make any adjustments, such as how often the pictures should change, what size they should be, and whether you'll use transition effects between pictures, and then click OK.

Now your screen saver is a random display of the pictures taken from your My Pictures folder.
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The Best Things In Life Are Free
Written by Lou Torraca, President, The TUG, HI
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The moon belongs to everyone,
The best things in life are free.
The stars belong to everyone,
They gleam there for you and me.
The flowers in spring, the robins that sing,
The moonbeams that shine, they're yours, they're mine.
And love can come to everyone,
The best things in life are free.

So goes the song, written in 1927, way before PCs were all the rage! Well, guess what, some of the best programs and utilities for your PC are also free, yup, I said free! I have been asked a lot of questions recently about some of them so I decided to do a list of the ones I use plus others I know about and have been tried and recommended.

Thinking about a new computer? Are you a bit techie? If so, you could save yourself some money as well as have the satisfaction of putting your own together by yourself. Not so inclined? You can still save on programs and utilities. Without further ado, here is a list for you to consider.

First for the techie who wants to put together their own PC…an operating system that is totally free.

What is Ubuntu?

Ubuntu is a community developed operating system that is perfect for laptops, desktops and servers. Whether you use it at home, at school or at work Ubuntu contains all the applications you'll ever need, from word processing and email applications, to web server software and programming tools.

Ubuntu is and always will be free of charge. You do not pay any licensing fees. You can download, use and share Ubuntu with your friends, family, school or business for absolutely nothing.

New versions are released every six months. That means you'll always have the latest and greatest applications that the open source world has to offer.

Ubuntu is designed with security in mind. You get free security updates for at least 18 months on the desktop and server. With the Long Term Support (LTS) version you get three years support on the desktop, and five years on the server. There is no extra fee for the LTS version, we make our very best work available to everyone on the same free terms. Upgrades to new versions of Ubuntu are and always will be free of charge.

Everything you need comes on one CD, providing a complete working environment. Additional software is available online.

The graphical installer enables you to get up and running quickly and easily. A standard installation should take less than 25 minutes.

Once installed your system is immediately ready-to-use. On the desktop you have a full set of productivity, internet, drawing and graphics applications, and games. Pretty neat isn't it? Download: http://www.ubuntu.com/

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Now for everyone else, here are some really excellent programs and utilities you can have at no cost. (BTW, many of these free programs and utilities have a donation button where you can voluntarily help the developer with updates, new apps, etc. I suggest you try the app first and then if you really like it and decide to keep it, you can make a donation, however this is strictly a voluntary thing.)

First is the number one priority…anti virus. I've used both AVG and Avast for a long time and, knock on wood, have never had a problem. Both also have pay versions that include lots of other stuff, but I'll be listing all those types of apps as we go along.

To download AVG: http://free.avg.com/download-avg-anti-virus-free-edition

To download Avast!: http://www.avast.com/eng/download-avast-home.html

Both of these work well and provide you with protection from viruses, but do yourself a favor and read the information that both provide and follow the instructions…this applies, of course, to all programs, apps and utilities!

Next, you need a firewall and the most popular and the one I use is Zone Alarm which for a free app, provides a lot of flexibility and prevents the bad guys from getting into your computer as well as making your computer invisible to anyone on the internet. To download the free version: http://www.zonealarm.com/security/en-us/zonealarm-pc-security-free-firewall.htm

10 years of malware experience combined in one dynamic application. Ad-Aware - Anniversary Edition offers radically improved performance and efficiency, along with comprehensive malware protection. With real-time monitoring, threat alerts, and automatic updates you can rest easy knowing that you are protected. Download: http://www.lavasoft.com/products/ad_aware_free.php

SpyBot-Search and Destroy complements adaware.

…if you see new toolbars in Internet Explorer that you didn't install, or you experience other problems, you may have spyware. This program helps prevent marketing companies from gathering information about your Web surfing and purchasing habits, and selling it to advertisers. Download: http://download.cnet.com/Spybot-Search-amp-Destroy/3000-8022_4-10122137.html

Windows Defender is a free program that helps you stay productive by protecting your computer against pop-ups, slow performance and security threats caused by spyware and other potentially unwanted software. All 3 of these programs work to keep your PC running smoothly. I use them and they definitely make a difference.

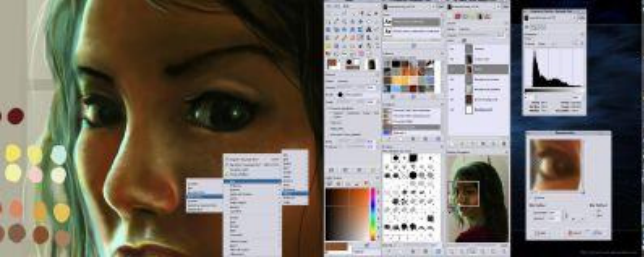Now you have your PC pretty well protected, how about productivity apps?

No problem; OpenOffice.org 3 is the leading open-source office software suite for word processing, spreadsheets, presentations, graphics, databases and more.

It is available in many languages and works on all common computers. It stores all your data in an international open standard format and can also read and write files from other common office software packages. It can be downloaded and used completely free of charge for any purpose. Sounds like the big guys Office? It does and it also does pretty much everything that other guy does! Download: http://download.openoffice.org/

Next, a free program that rivals Adobe Photoshop…and we know what that costs!

The name is a bit misleading but the program is spectacular! GIMP can be used to process digital graphics and photographs. Typical uses include creating graphics and logos, resizing and cropping photos, changing colors, combining images using a layer paradigm, removing unwanted image features, and converting between different image formats. GIMP can also be used to create animated images using an improved layers method. The full capabilities of the GIMP extend much further, however, and include advanced image editing, manipulation, and professional graphics creation. It is often used as a free software replacement for Adobe Photoshop, which is the dominant bitmap editor in the printing and graphics industries. Download: http://www.dphotojournal.com/download-gimp-photo-software/

To keep your system running at its best, CCleaner is a freeware system optimization, privacy and cleaning tool.

It removes unused files from your system - allowing Windows to run faster and freeing up valuable hard disk space. It also cleans traces of your online activities such as your Internet history. Additionally it contains a fully featured registry cleaner. But the best part is that it's fast (normally taking less than a second to run) and contains NO Spyware or Adware! :) Download: http://www.ccleaner.com/ While you're there, I'd also recommend downloading their defraggler, another app which will help keep your system running smoothly. You can schedule daily, weekly or just manual defrags…it's pretty easy to use and does an excellent job.

Last, but not least, a program I can't live without. Yankee Clipper III, a powerful Windows clipboard extender/memory-now in its third generation. Handles Pictures, Richtext, URLs, etc-any size. Features printing, drag and drop, optional permanent storage of clippings. Familiar "Outlook" interface. Just a couple of its features: Saves past 200 text and RTF, 20 BMP and Metafile, and 200 URL clipboard entries. Has the ability to save and re-use "boilerplate" clippings. Simply right-click on the item and select "send to boilerplate". Unlimited boilerplate collections can be created. Download: http://www.intelexual.com/products/YC3

That's it until next time. If you like the freebies on this list, login at the top of the page and let me know; there are lots more out there. Enjoy all the goodies, but remember to be careful as the bad guys are lurking!

Aloha, Lou