



# BITS AND BYTES

September 2010

Newsletter of the Midland Computer Club

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

## GENERAL CLUB MEETING 7:00 P.M.

Meets 4th Wednesday of the month at the Midland Community Center 2001 George St., Midland MI

**This month's meeting date:**  
**September 22, 2010**

**This month's topic:** Joe Lykowski discusses Windows Registry and Local Policies

- The **Windows Registry** is a hierarchical database that stores configuration settings and options on Microsoft Windows operating systems
- **Local Policies** determine the security options for a user or service account. Local policies are based on the computer a user is logged into, and the rights the user has on that particular computer .

## PROGRAM COORDINATORS

### Contact : Co-Chairpersons

Howard Lewis                      lewis3ha@chartermi.net

Joe Lykowski                      joseph@lykowski.com

**What you missed! August meeting** was the summer picnic. Good food, good conversation, and equipment swap.

## President Piper's Ponderings



Our initial Board Meeting for the upcoming year has identified a number of interesting and timely topics for the coming season: Registry by Joe, Utilities by Howard, Facebook by Frank and Scams by Joe. I suspect we will also touch on the subjects of Graphics and Office 2010.

As always, topics (and speakers) are encouraged from the general membership. Also ideas for raffle prizes and meeting agenda are also welcome.

As I searched for a general topic for this month's Presidents column, I realize that I have no lofty and noble causes like Howard did: Security and Backups.

Rather my 'soapbox' issue would be web site development. Frankly, I am a little selfish in that I wish I had more Club experts whom I could ask web questions.

I know at least three of our Club members who boldly go into the web environment. Frank has a business need that dictates he have a web presence. Carol has learned web development as part of her previous job, and she keeps our Club web site in great shape. Shirley also can find her way around the web as she blogs and keeps her family and friends up to date with her life.

So once again I will put forth my plea. For the cost of \$100 per year (which is less than most people's monthly cable bill, or cell phone bill or entertainment bill) you too can have a web presence. Don't know what you would do with the space? Let me count the possibilities. Keep your family and friends up to date about your life. Write about your hobbies. Write about your adventures. Become the webmaster for your other social activities. Organize and display all those photos. And most importantly, use the virtually unlimited space as the ultimate backup location.

So, jump into this learning experience and give your own meaning to the term of cloud computing.

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

## 2010 MCC OFFICERS

### **POSITION**

President Larry Piper larryP56@chartermi.net  
 Vice Pres. Bill Tower stressed@tir.com  
 Treasurer Laura Hammel Lhammel@gmail.com  
 Membership Gary Ensing btiger6@gmail.com  
 Editor  
 Webmaster Carol Picard webbyte@yahoo.com

### **EMAIL:**

### Special Interest Groups:

### **CLUB PROGRAM COORDINATORS**

Co-Chairman Howard Lewis  
 lewis3ha@chartermi.net  
 Co-Chairman Joe Lykowski  
 joseph@lykowski.com

### **BOARD MEMBERS**

Al Adams  
 Rich Holbrook

### **PUBLICITY**

Kathy Bohl kbohl30265@aol.com

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

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

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

Annually Bridgestone America conducts a Safety Scholars Contest in which students compete for prizes for the best driving safety video. I can't believe that no one was hurt in the third place video by Tom Leduc, age 18, Dearborn, MI, who shows the dangers of speeding.

<http://www.recalls.gov/>

Sign up for e-mail notification on recalls as they are announced.

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

Enter the plant number on that carton of milk and this site will tell you where it was produced.

<http://www.createthegood.org/fightfraud#>

Get some tips on how you can help to fight fraud.

## Board Meeting

The next board meeting will be 7 p.m.,  
 October 12, 2010, @ Chapel Lane  
 Presbyterian Church, 5501 Jefferson Ave.,  
 Midland.

### ***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**  
 P.O. Box 132  
 Midland, MI 48640-0132

**Attn: Membership Chairman**

You may also pay for membership at a regular club meeting

## Tips, Tricks & Techniques (submitted by Howard Lewis)

### Open the Windows Command Prompt from any Folder (Windows Vista/7)

Normally, when you type *cmd* into the search bar in Windows Vista or Windows 7, the resulting command window opens into the user's home folder. Then you must move over to the particular folder from which you wish to run the commands. Windows Vista and Windows 7 have simplified this process. Simply locate the folder in which you wish to run your commands within **Windows Explorer** and then hold down the *Shift* key and *right-click* that folder. The **Context Menu** will now contain an entry *Open command window here*. Simply click on that option and the resulting command window will open into that folder.

### View Photos & Videos Full Screen

When you use **Windows Photo Viewer** to look at your photos, the photo opens up in a window. This window can be maximized to show a larger image of the photo, but if you want to view it larger, you can view the photo in full screen mode. When doing this, the title bar and the taskbar are hidden to allow extra room to view the photo. To utilize full screen viewing, simply press the *F11* key on your keyboard. This will enlarge the image to its maximum size after hiding the title bar and the taskbar. To undo the full screen mode and restore the window to its normal view, press the *Esc* key on your keyboard. By the way, this tip also works when viewing videos in **Windows Media Player**.

### Reopen Your Last Closed Tab in Internet Explorer 8

When you have multiple tabs open in Internet Explorer 8, it is easy to inadvertently close the wrong tab. IE 8 has made it easy to reopen the last closed tabs during that browsing session. To reopen your last closed tab in IE 8 simply press *CTRL-SHIFT-T*. This will restore the last tab that you closed. If you need to reopen more than one tab, repeat the key combination and tabs will be restored in the reverse order that you closed them. This can be repeated up to the limit of ten tabs.

---

## Excel 2010: The Missing Manual

*Matthew MacDonald, O'Reilly Media, Inc., ISBN 978-1-449-38235-3*

*A Book Review by Howard Lewis—Midland Computer Club—Michigan*

Most of today's software packages do not include a user manual that documents all of the ins and outs of that package. To fill this gap, O'Reilly Media began publishing a series of manuals called *The Missing Manual*, which is a boon to those who would like "how to" help on using that software. I have used several books in *The Missing Manual* series in the past and continue to find them extremely useful in using some of the features of today's software packages.

*Excel 2010: The Missing Manual* is the latest book in that series that I have had a chance to use and it continues to impress me on its usefulness in using everything from some of the simple features of Excel to some of the advanced "power" user features. Whether you simply want to customize the Quick Access Toolbar or the Ribbon (both new in Excel 2007) or dig into some of the more advanced data analysis features using Pivot Tables or Sparkline graphs, this manual gives simple step-by-step instructions that makes using these features easy. The book starts out by helping you set up your first spreadsheet including how to enter data, format the cells, move data around and finally print out the results. From there a number of chapters deal with creating graphs, using the multitude of functions and formulas and providing detailed information on writing your own Macros. There is even a chapter on using Visual Basic within Excel.

*(Excel 2010—tTe Missing Manual—continued from page 3)*

This is one book I can recommend for both the beginning Excel user along with the advanced user who wishes to utilize some of the more sophisticated features of the package. The book contains 871 pages and has a suggested price of \$39.99; however, you can get a 40% discount when ordered through O'Reilly with the user group discount. Contact Howard Lewis for information on how to use this discount.

---

## October is National Cyber Security Awareness Month

*by Ira Wilsker*

### WEBSITES:

<http://www.microsoft.com/protect/promotions/us/cybersecurity.aspx>

<http://www.staysafeonline.org/content/events>

[http://www.dhs.gov/files/programs/gc\\_1158611596104.shtm](http://www.dhs.gov/files/programs/gc_1158611596104.shtm)

<http://www.staysafeonline.org/content/about-ncsam-2010>

<http://www.staysafeonline.org/content/ncsam-tip-sheets>

<http://www.staysafeonline.org/content/additional-awareness-resources-2010>

<http://www.staysafeonline.org/content/get-involved-1>

<http://www.staysafeonline.org/content/banners-posters-more>

[http://www.staysafeonline.org/files/NCSAM/PalmCard\\_FINAL.pdf](http://www.staysafeonline.org/files/NCSAM/PalmCard_FINAL.pdf)

<http://www.www.ic3.gov>

<http://www.staysafeonline.org/content/additional-awareness-resources-2010>

<http://www.staysafeonline.org/content/resources-smallmed-sized-businesses>

Organizations, employers, school teachers, computer clubs, senior citizen centers, and a variety of other institutions are often in search of some type of topic or event that they can use as a theme for meetings and presentations. For those looking for an October topic (but can really be done during any month), October has been declared by the president as National Cyber Security Awareness Month.

Someone may ask, "Why even have a National Cyber Security Awareness Month?" We all need to be aware of the risks involving our computers, and how those risks can impact us personally. The news is rife with stories about viruses and malware, such as the recent massive attack by the "Here You Have" trojan that wreaked havoc on millions of computers in a single day. Identity theft and other economic cyber crimes are depriving individuals and businesses of billions of dollars every year. Social networking websites are being utilized by pedophiles to lure thousands of children into dangerous, and even life threatening, liaisons with miscreants. Hackers and crackers will frequently try to break into our home and office computers for malicious purposes, trying to steal our private information, or otherwise hijack our computers to send out spam email or launch coordinated cyber attacks on other computers. Fraud of many types is rampant online, from phishing schemes designed to trick the user into giving his username and password to the crooks, to counterfeit products, get-rich-quick scams, political misinformation, and medical quackery. According to several cyber security companies, spam emails constitute over 90% of all email hitting our servers. As I type this, one security website has catalogued over 14 million different viruses, worms, trojans, and other forms of malware just waiting to infect our computers, with literally tens of thousands of new threats appearing every day. The average computer is unaware that we are currently engaged in an active cyber war, with foreign nationals hammering our government, military, and industrial computers looking for that hole that will grant them access to valuable information. Cyber espionage, the obtaining of military secrets or classified industrial projects, is rampant.

So, why have a National Cyber Security Awareness Month? While many of us are complacent, and compute with blissful ignorance, we are also all soldiers in the front lines of this battle, so we must first be aware of the threats, and then take appropriate actions to mitigate them.

*(Continued on page 5)*

*(October: National CyberSecurity Month—continued from page 4)*

National Cyber Security Awareness Month was first implemented by a Presidential Order from President Bush in 2001. The president declared that every October be National Cyber Security Awareness Month, a declaration recently ratified by President Obama. For 2010, the program is under the auspices of "The National Cyber Security Alliance (NCSA), a public-private partnership focused on educating a digital citizenry to stay safe and secure online. NCSA, along with the U.S. Department of Homeland Security (DHS) and the Multi-State Information Sharing and Analysis Center, sponsors National Cyber Security Awareness Month." While the Department of Homeland Security is the primary public agency promoting this activity, several private companies provide much of the funding and manpower used for this project. These private companies include AT&T, Cisco, General Dynamics, Google, Lockheed-Martin, Microsoft, Symantec, McAfee, Verizon, and Visa. Dozens of other companies, organizations, governmental agencies, and colleges have publically endorsed the project, and are actively participating in its promotion.

The NCSA has a "Get Involved!" website at [www.staysafeonline.org/content/get-involved-1](http://www.staysafeonline.org/content/get-involved-1) where different groups can get information on how to promote the event. Specific resources and instructions are available for home users, educators, businesses, college students, college administrators, libraries, local law enforcement, and local government. With the resources provided, these and other groups can easily present an audience appropriate presentation. Posters, flyers, pamphlets, brochures, bookmarks, and other printed materials are available in both PDF and Word formats, such that the presenter will have little original work to prepare.

Customized examples of the content for each constituency are freely provided, and easy to use on the "Get Involved!" website. For example, the home users are instructed to use a comprehensive security suite that provides frequent automatic updates, update their operating systems and browsers as soon as patches are released, use complex passwords, be cynical about giving others your personal information online, turn off your computer when not in use, know that security applies to mobile devices (such as smart phones) just as much as it does to a computer, know the symptoms of a compromised computer, teach his children about online safety, backup his data frequently, lookup himself and family members on the major search engines to see what is posted about them, and maintain vigilance and awareness of contemporary threats.

Teachers and college faculty should encourage good cyber security practices every time their students are online, as well as integrate cyber security and safety into lesson plans and course content; arrange for a competent cyber security professional to speak to classes and parents; incorporate cyber security and safety into faculty in-service training; require all students to change their password in October to one that is long, complex and not easy to guess. It should not only be the teachers that should be involved, but administration needs to also be involved. The NCSA has resources for administrators as well, at [www.staysafeonline.org/content/what-college-administrators-can-do](http://www.staysafeonline.org/content/what-college-administrators-can-do).

Local law enforcement needs to be involved, as our citizens are often victimized by online criminals. There is no net difference in the pain or loss suffered by a victim who has been robbed locally, or one robbed online. Too many of our children are victimized by pedophiles who troll for naive children online. Law enforcement should get on board with the program. Local law enforcement are looked to for security guidance and protection from criminal activity; that protection should not just be the traditional protection from street crime, but should also include community education on protection from cyber crime. Local law enforcement agencies should present cyber security topics at external community events, and internal training, including at roll call. The distribution of cyber security literature should occur along with other crime prevention literature. Departments should implement a written policy on dealing with citizens who have been cyber victimized (such as Internet fraud or identity theft), and encourage them to report it to the FBI's Internet Crime Complaint Center ([www.ic3.gov](http://www.ic3.gov)). Appropriately trained and skilled officers should speak at local schools, businesses, religious institutions, and other organizations on cyber crime and cyber security; a police officer (or deputy sheriff) has a cache' of authority that many other speakers may lack.

*(Continued on page 6)*

(October: National CyberSecurity Month-continued from page 5)

Businesses, both small and large, have become the primary targets for many cyber thieves. These crooks are utilizing a variety of ingenious online tricks and tools to defraud businesses, many of which can be mitigated if only the employees (and management) are appropriately trained, and proper policies are implemented. Cyber security policies and procedures need to be reviewed frequently, and updated as appropriate, as the threats are dynamic and constantly changing. The NCSA and Symantec published a small business cyber security study which shows what businesses are doing ([www.staysafeonline.org/content/2009-smb-security-study](http://www.staysafeonline.org/content/2009-smb-security-study)). Hold periodic employee meetings, such as brown-bag lunches, where cyber security practices can be openly discussed. Post security tips in break rooms, work rooms, and company newsletters, as well as distribute handouts to employees. Businesses need to create an environment where employees can freely raise security concerns. Make sure that your customers and clients, including online customers, know that you are adequately protecting their personal and private information. Make it a policy that computers should be shut down at night and at other down times. Managers need to be kept informed in a timely manner of any evolving security threats that can impact the business.

Whatever the event or group, there is an abundance of educational and training materials freely available for cyber security training. There is a large assortment of cyber security "Tip Sheets" available from [www.staysafeonline.org/content/ncsam-tip-sheets](http://www.staysafeonline.org/content/ncsam-tip-sheets)

. These Tip Sheets, available for free in both PDF and Word formats, include documents about gaming safety for kids and parents, Internet Safety and Security Tips For Parents, Mobile Safety Tips, and Social Networking Tips 2010. Under each of the groups listed at [www.staysafeonline.org/content/get-involved-1](http://www.staysafeonline.org/content/get-involved-1) (home users, businesses, law enforcement, etc.) are links to additional resources. Still more resources are available online at [www.staysafeonline.org/content/additional-awareness-resources-2010](http://www.staysafeonline.org/content/additional-awareness-resources-2010).

While October is indeed National Cyber Security Awareness Month, we need to make every day a security awareness day. We lock our cars, and we lock the doors to our homes; we need to lock our computers as well to prevent others from accessing them and doing harm to us and others.

---

## Another Low Cost Internet Phone Device - NetTalk DUO

by Ira Wilsker

WEBSITES:

<http://www.nettalk.com>

<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Voip>

<http://www.magicjack.com>

I am always on the lookout for bargains, and ways to save some money. Like many of my readers, I am not using my telephone landline as much as I have in the past, but still receive a sizeable monthly phone bill. I have not used my landline phone for long distance calls in eons, because of the easy long distance access on my cell phone, supplemented by the MagicJack internet phone service that I wrote about in early 2009.

There has been explosive growth in the popularity of VoIP (Voice over Internet Protocol), much to the chagrin of the traditional telephone industry. Millions of customers have forgone the convenience and cost of traditional phone service, in favor of cell phones, and VoIP services. It is nearly impossible to turn on the TV and not see an ad for a cell phone carrier, or internet based phone service. None of my four adult children have a traditional home phone, but use their cell phones and VoIP phones exclusively at home.

For the past 18 months I have been using the widely advertised and inexpensive MagicJack to supplement my cell phone for making long distance phone calls from home, as well as a method of

(Continued on page 7)



*(Another Low Cost Internet Phone Device-continued from page 6)*

making calls while traveling away from home. At home, I have been using the MagicJack to make long distance calls during the day on weekdays, rather than burn prime cell phone minutes; evenings and weekends, with unlimited cell phone minutes, the cell phone is my chosen device. My landline is only occasionally used to make local calls, and rarely to send or receive a fax; financially, with such little actual use, my landline is becoming an expensive anachronism. When traveling, I have sometimes taken my MagicJack with me to use to make local phone calls from the internet in my hotel room, without expensive hotel phone charges, or consuming prime cell phone minutes.

Mostly, I have been happy with my MagicJack. I have the base unit of a multi-handset cordless phone plugged into it, which allows us to use the MagicJack throughout the house, with cordless handsets in most rooms. My only issues with it have been that it takes a lot of time to load after I boot my computer, and that the computer must be on in order for it to function, as it must be connected to an active and powered USB port in order to work. Since I turn my computer off when I am not using it, the MagicJack is unavailable, unless I boot my computer. Other than that, the MagicJack works well, offers unlimited local and long distance calling, was extremely easy to install and setup, and does everything that it is advertised to do, for a very low cost (\$39.95 for the device and the first year's service, \$19.95 per year thereafter - that is the advertised \$1.70 per month).

In July, a lesser known competitor, NetTalk ([www.nettalk.com](http://www.nettalk.com)), released its second model of a competing device, the NetTalk DUO. Just like the MagicJack, the NetTalk DUO is very small (2.7 inch x 1.5 inch x 0.9 inch), extremely easy to setup, requires a broadband internet source, and has a phone jack which can connect to any standard corded or cordless phone. Similarly, the NetTalk DUO offers unlimited local and long distance calls to the U.S. and Canada, at a low fixed price. Where the NetTalk DUO primarily differs from the MagicJack, is that it can connect directly to a broadband router, and does not require a connection to a computer. Since a router connected to a broadband service is typically always on, the NetTalk DUO is also always on, providing 24/7 VoIP service, without the need to have a booted computer. As long as there is a functional router, there is actually no need to even have a computer connected to the internet in order to use the NetTalk DUO. For those cases where there is broadband internet service but no router, such as in a hotel room, internet cafe, hotspot, college dorm room, or other such location, the NetTalk DUO also has the ability to connect to the USB port on a computer, just like the MagicJack. Apparently the "DUO" in the NetTalk moniker means it has the ability to connect via two methods; USB or router. The NetTalk DUO comes complete with all necessary cables, and an AC adapter.

This enhanced functionally comes at a price, though not a very high one. The NetTalk DUO sells for \$69.95, and includes the first year of unlimited local and long distance phone service; subsequent phone service is \$29.95 per year, or about \$2.50 per month. Even though the device itself is \$30 more than the MagicJack, and the subsequent second year of service is \$10 more (per year, not per month), there have been some pundits who have claimed that the NetTalk Duo is actually less expensive to operate than a MagicJack, when energy savings are considered. Since the NetTalk DUO does not require that a computer be turned on, the extra 80 cent additional monthly cost of the NetTalk DUO (less than 3 cents additional per day) would be more than made up in energy savings. I have not personally verified this claim, but it does not seem unreasonable.

The NetTalk DUO offers a free U.S. Phone number at activation, but according to some published reviews, local phone numbers are not yet available for all locations. According to a NetTalk support forum response, NetTalk will try to add more local numbers as they are requested. NetTalk also offers call waiting, 3 way calling, caller ID, free 411 (directory assistance), enhanced 911 service, priority call forwarding, and works with most fax machines to send and receive faxes (subject to the limitations of VoIP technology). Free voice mail service is included, as well as the capability to automatically send the voicemail message to the recipient via email. Calling other NetTalk customers anywhere in the world is free, and calls to other international destinations are deeply discounted. The NetTalk DUO can be used in a home or office environment as a replacement for traditional phone service. At present, phone number portability is not yet available, meaning that users of the NetTalk DUO will receive a new phone number,

*(Continued on page 8)*

*(Another Low Cost Internet Phone Device—continued from page 7)*

rather than be able to use an existing phone number. This lack of phone number portability may be changing, as most competitive services either already have or will shortly have phone number portability, so I will assume that NetTalk will have to follow suit. About the only con of replacing a traditional landline with NetTalk (or any other VoIP provider), is that NetTalk requires that there be power, and will not work during a power failure, or if the internet connection is otherwise unavailable; most landlines do not require an external power source. NetTalk does not require an annual contract, unlike some of the other VoIP providers.

For those who travel internationally, the NetTalk DUO can be used anywhere there is a broadband connection, allowing the user to call the U.S. and Canada for free, as well as receive calls from the U.S. and Canada without the caller incurring international long distance charges.

NetTalk uses the trademarked expression "Fire your phone company!" If it works as well as my early experiences show, that may be a viable option.

---

## Before Sending an Email

*By Hewie Poplock, Central Florida Computer Society*

I get a lot of email. I mean a lot! I am sure that most of you do, too. I have some suggestions for you and for you to pass on to your friends and family.

On average, 51.1% of readers spend less than 2 seconds looking at your email, according to a blog from a company that tracked over 4 million email opens. Of course they were tracking advertising campaigns, but every email that you send should be just as important to you and to your recipients. I have unscientifically found that most people trash your mail if there is no subject. If there are several topics in the email, you will be lucky if they notice or remember 1 of them. If the important stuff in the message is below the first paragraph and especially if they have to scroll to see it, it probably will not get read at all.

If the message is in all caps or all lower case, it may not get read or may be blocked by a security program. If there is no way to tell who sent the message, it may not get read. Who the heck is bigfoot1000@\*\*\*\*.com? Sign your message and use your full name. I know more than 1 Mary and more than 1 Mike. If you mention that you read an article or saw some information, give a link and make it a link. Most email programs will interpret a complete URL as a link (<http://www.hewie.net>, but not just the domain (hewie.net). Give credit to the original author. When I see a tip and the article says, "I did...", I expect it to be you and not Kim Komando!

Don't forward a lot of jokes. Your friends don't really want them and most don't think all of them are that funny either. Sending one once in a while is nice, but it is Spam if you send several. If you find a link where you see a lot of jokes, forward the link, not the jokes.

If you send a message to several people, use the BCC so that your address book doesn't become someone's Spam list. If you are replying or forwarding a message, clean it up. You should remove the >>> in the message or other indicators that the messages has been forwarded a bunch of times. If it contains an ad, delete the ad. If you care enough about the topic and the recipient, take the time to make the message presentable and readable.

In summary (and a few more items):

- Keep the message to 1 subject
- Include a Subject and keep to it, if in a thread
- Change the Subject if the thread changes
- Try to keep your message to 1 paragraph or 1 screen
- Separate paragraphs with a blank line
- Keep the main thought at the top

*(Continued on page 9)*



*(Before Sending and E-Mail—continued from page 8)*

Use as good English as you are able. Use upper & lower case and punctuation.

Sign your message with your name. In most cases use your full name

Include links and use the full link

Clean up replies and forwards

Keep the jokes at a minimum. If you find a good source, send the link.

Be sure to use the BCC for addresses if sending to a list of people

Delete ads and repeated info in replies and forwards

Look at your message before you send it. Do want a message like this?

If it is hard to tell your family or friends about some of the best practices for sending an email, send a copy of this article.

---

## Can You Really Watch Free TV on Your PC?

by Ira Wilsker

### WEBSITES:

<http://toolbar.tv-fox.com>

<http://www.watch-live-online.tv> (Live TV)

<http://www.hulu.com>

You may have seen ads on the internet or on TV that tell you that you can watch free TV on the internet, and that you do not need cable or satellite to watch thousands of TV channels. Some even go as far as to say that you should cancel your cable or satellite, and use the free services, rather than paying for expensive TV service. Several others advertise software or hardware devices (for a fee) that allow you to watch hundreds of TV channels online for free. There are even websites that allow you watch TV in your browser or on your desktop, either for free, or for a subscription fee. While these offers are generally real, they should not be confused with the selection of channels available on your local cable system or satellite service as they generally do not offer the major commercial channels, and rarely offer the major local channels. Some services, generally located overseas, offer illegally pirated feeds for a fee, and should always be avoided. Other services, such as the well respected Hulu ([hulu.com](http://www.hulu.com)) legitimately offer thousands of already broadcast and older TV shows and movies provided by the networks and movie studios that are either advertiser supported (for free), or without commercials (by subscription, sometimes for a fee).

One service that I frequently use is TV-Fox, or its sister product, LIVE TV. The selection of channels on LIVE TV is virtually identical to those on TV-Fox. Alternatively, for those who do not want to download a toolbar or plug-in, these same channels can be viewed directly online at [watch-live-online.tv](http://www.watch-live-online.tv). It may be necessary to have Windows Media Player (or some similar compatible player) installed to view these stations. Most of the stations can either be viewed in a small window, or opened to full screen by double clicking on the video.

TV-Fox is a free plug-in for the Firefox browser ([toolbar.tv-fox.com](http://toolbar.tv-fox.com)), and currently offers "2780 Live TV Channels sorted by country & category, the TV-FOX allows you to watch thousands of TV channels freely available on the internet." It is installed as a short toolbar, and includes a pair of directories that display the available channels. The first icon (purple) opens a directory containing a listing of about 100 countries; moving the mouse cursor over the country displays the currently available TV stations that stream online. If the selected station has a circle icon with a right arrow (triangle), that indicates that the selected station is always online; if the icon is a small clock, that means that the station is only available for specific hours. The viewer should be aware of the time differences around the world, as what is prime time in the mid-east, for example, may be the early morning here. While I enjoy watching live foreign TV, I am not capable of understanding all of the languages, so I prefer the English language stations available

*(Continued on page 10)*

*(Can You Really Watch Free TV on your PC—continued from page 9)*

in many of the countries listed. Under the listing for the United States is approximately 60 stations, all but a few being broadcast in English. These US based stations include such well known stations as Bloomberg Business, CBN, CNBC, Home Shopping Network (HSN), Fox News, MSNBC, NASA, NBC News, and several prominent local stations from a variety of cities.

The second icon (green) on the TV-Fox toolbar opens a directory based on genre'. Categories include sports, news, business, music, kids, lifestyle, government, religious, education, shopping and weather, as well as a listing of about 50 live web-cams from around the world. Personally, I am a news and information junkie, and spend significant time on the news listing, which has live news feeds from about three dozen news sources from about 20 different countries, many of which are in English. Sports fanatics may enjoy the sports selection, consisting of 28 stations from about a dozen countries. While I may not understand the announcer on many of these sports stations, the live or recorded sports events are often quite understandable to the viewer. Music fans would appreciate the almost 50 TV stations that stream music. While many of the music stations are from France, Italy, Poland, and India, the viewer will almost always find music of interest. I have found that many of the foreign music stations which play their native music are very intriguing and entertaining.

Investing and business is of universal interest, and TV-Fox offers 19 business channels, including Bloomberg-UK, Bloomberg-Asia, and Bloomberg-USA. Those stations, along with CNBC and NBR can provide business and economic information for the majority of investors and others interested in business.

Sometimes we need content to entertain our children, or the child in us adults. The kids section contains a dozen channels, three of which are American, two of which are cartoons. My favorite kids channel is the "Classical Cartoons" which shows old time cartoons, many of which are from the 30's and 40's, most of which today's children would not otherwise have an opportunity to view.

There are 22 movie channels listed, of which eight are from the US, and include sci-fi, comedy classics, thrillers, and WSTV (White Springs TV, also known as "The Golden Age of Movies Channel") which is a Florida and Oregon based network that streams old movies over satellite and on the air in about a dozen cities, as well as online. If I feel like watching a movie stream on my computer, I can usually find something of interest on one of these movie channels.

The two dozen religious TV channels that stream over the internet cover almost all of the world's major religions, in a variety of languages. There are 27 educational channels available, many from major universities around the world, including Texas A&M's KAMU-TV. Shoppers may like to see what the 22 shopping channels offer, including the six American shopping channels. Some of the products promoted on the foreign shopping channels are very interesting, despite the frequent language barrier; the foreign sales techniques are often very entertaining as well. The 14 weather channels, including nine American weather channels provide more weather information than most viewers can utilize.

Sometimes it is interesting just to see a live webcam from some notable location. The live webcams available on TV-Fox include such diverse places as Times Square (NYC), the Hogs Breath Saloon in Florida, France, Germany, Kathmandu (Nepal), Israel, Japan, the Netherlands, Poland, Russia, Switzerland, and other US locations.

While not a complete substitute for local TV and the domestic cable and satellite services, there is enough free TV available online to entertain and inform almost everybody.

---

## **INTERNET SHOPPING - A VIEW OF ONE OF THE BEST**

### **(Part 1 of 2)**

*By Ron Hirsch - Boca Raton Computer Society*

It's probable that everyone who uses the Internet has purchased online at one time or another. Of course there are many sites where one can shop. Some are well known, such as Amazon. But there are also many sites, possibly numbering into the millions, where one can purchase items of every description. And, it is difficult to know what is really behind the web pages that one can view while on an unknown site.

*(Continued on page 11)*

*(Internet Shopping—A View of one of the best—continued from page 10)*

Remember, anyone can design (or have designed for them) a very elaborate and impressive site, even when there is very little behind the front that is displayed. So, sometimes it is hard to evaluate with whom you are dealing. There are various services where one can get “ratings” of many of these sites, but not all sites are listed or rated. So, what is one to do?

Usually, getting recommendations from friends, or reviews from known sources will aid in this activity. And, your own personal experiences should serve you well here.

The purpose of this article is to give you my recommendation for a particular company with whom I’ve dealt for many years. While I have always had a high regard for them, my recent experiences totally solidify and enhance my feelings about them. This company is NEWEGG.

### **NEWEGG - AN EXTRAORDINARY COMPANY**

This is the first time I’ve ever written an article about a supplier that I use. But this company, Newegg, is indeed a one in a million, and I feel that my experiences with them do rate the praise that I will be bestowing upon them. Even though I have been dealing with them for years, recent experiences have given me an added new perspective on their operation, and dedication to customer service, and customer satisfaction.

### **WHO IS NEWEGG??**

If you never heard of Newegg, then you probably have not bought many computer parts in the past. And, if you have bought one or more computers or computer components since you got interested in computers, then they were either bought at local retailers such as Costco, or large online sellers such as Amazon, or Buy.com.

### **WHAT DO THEY SELL??**

The company probably started out selling parts mainly to home computer builders, but has since expanded to cover far more than that. Their offerings now include just about every computer part that one can conceive, in addition to complete computers. Plus they offer TV’s, digital photography items of all kinds, and also many electronics devices currently in the marketplace.

Newegg is a company that only sells online, and only via placing an order on their site. They do not have any retail stores, nor can you place an order verbally by speaking with a representative. But they do have staff with whom you can talk to on all appropriate matters. And, they do have a web site which is actually a great experience. And below I will explain why this is so.

### **WHY IS THEIR SITE SO GREAT?**

When you first log onto their site, their home page will be presented, and you can use their search box to start your activities there. You can type in a product’s model number, a manufacturer’s name, a product’s type, such as “monitors”, or a general area such as “cables”.

When the search results come up, you can then refine them via a variety of sorting choices, such as “lowest price”, “highest price”, “most popular”, “manufacturer”, etc..

Up to this point, other sites do have similar features, but here’s where it gets much better.

**REVIEWS** - on every product page, on the right, there will be an area where you can bring up product reviews, and there will also be a display indicating the average review score of all the reviews listed. And,

*(Continued on page 12)*

*(Continued from page 11)*

each reviewer rates the product in question, on a scale of 1 to 5. At the top of this section is a summary of the scores from all the reviewers, and you can also read the complete review. This can assist potential buyers in deciding about the item they are interested in buying.

**IMAGES** - For most products, there is a small display of thumbnail photo images of the product. These images display the product in various views, and the other items included in the product package. Clicking on the small thumbnails provides a larger image to view.

**SPECIFICATIONS** - Clicking here will bring up a list of the specifications for the product involved. This is usually quite complete.

**MANUFACTURER** - But if added info is wanted, there are tabs to click on, which will take you to that product page on the manufacturer's site, or to the home page there. Also included are phone numbers for the manufacturer in question. Very often, when I am having difficulty locating a phone number for a manufacturer, I go to Newegg's site, and bring up that manufacturer, and then note the phone number.

**PRODUCT AVAILABILITY** - If the product you bring up is not available because it is either out of stock, or discontinued, there will be an "Unavailable" notation alongside the product. Newegg will not accept orders for a product which is not currently available in their stock. But, you can request an email notification when it does become available, at which time you can then place your order. Often, the product is not available because it has been discontinued. And ultimately, it will then be removed from their site.

**SHIPPING & DELIVERY** - Newegg does of course have many products that include "Free Shipping". Those that do not will note the shipping charges during the course of placing an order. Their charges are always reasonable. And the shipping time is usually only a couple of days. And if you are ordering several items, the shipping charges will usually be less the total of the individual charges.

This is the end of part 1. Next month, part 2 will offer you the more details on the cream of dealing with Newegg. There is no question that other companies may indeed share some of the great positive features that Newegg offers. But to find a single company that does all of them, is extremely rare.

*If you find this material useful, you may want to download this article in PDF format, from our web site <http://www.brcs.org/hirsch.php>. This allows readers to keep the material either as a PDF file, and/or print it out, and place it in a looseleaf notebook for future reference. Remember, the PDF version offers full color, which could not be used in the Boca Bits hard copy. So, if there are color elements in the original, the PDF copy will display them that way.*

---

## National CyberSecurity Awareness Month Our Shared Responsibility What Home Owners Can Do

Home computers are a common target of cybercriminals. Home users keep large amounts of personal data on their computer, such as tax records, banking information, and lists of contacts. In addition, home computers have become the family archive of photos, documents, and other sentimental items, that, if lost, would be devastating. There are actions you can take to help protect your family's privacy and decrease your odds of a cyber attack. Consider doing the following during National Cyber Security Awareness Month:

- Use a suite of automatically updating security tools that includes anti-spyware, firewall, and anti-virus software.
- Be sure your operating system and Web browser are set to automatically update.
- Update all other software as updates become available.
- Use long, complex passwords for both your computer and your network router that include numbers, symbols and letters, and change them periodically.
- Maintain vigilance online and be skeptical about giving up personal information. Visit <http://www.staysafeonline.org/content/top-cyber-security-practices-tip?page=0> for more information.
- Turn off your computer when you are not using it.
- Remember your mobile device may also be connected to the Internet, so employ the same online safety behaviors when "surfing" on a mobile device.
- Be on the lookout for signs of an infected computer including slower processing times, unwanted pop-up ads and unknowingly sending spam out to your contacts.
- Talk to your kids about good online safety and security habits, including protecting their personal information and their reputation.
- Know what Web sites your children are visiting online, and check their social network activity regularly. Request your children either friend you or provide you with a password to their account.
- Regularly back up your data either online or to an external media source (and store in a secure location).