Bits of Bytes

The Prez Sez

by Joe Nuvolini, President, P*PCompAS

Many thanks to O'Reilly's Marsee Henon and Ilene Steinkruger for Mike Halsey's excellent presentation on Troubleshooting Networking in Windows 7. The feedback Ilene received on the evaluation sheets was very positive.

I recently sent a copy of APCUG Reports Q1 to you all to read. There are a few items of interest in this issue. First on page 7 there is an article on the demise of the Colorado Senior Network User's Group. In reading it, it appears that Don Singleton got his information from former CoSNUG Vice President Larry O'Neil. Larry feels the club failed because computer users today do not require as much help as when we booted to DOS with just a C:\ prompt staring at us. While this may be part of the problem, the main reason it failed was that no one volunteered to run the organization. Don feels that groups need to "evolve and think creatively." Well some of us did try that approach. Some P*PCompAS members who belonged to both groups wanted to implement "around the room," one of our group's more valuable features, but the idea was "shot down" by the group's president at the time. But even with that, if there is no leadership, a group will ultimately fold.

Next, a thanks to Bill James, the Region 9 Advisor, for his kind words on page 38 about the P*PCompAS

Web site.

Finally, there is news on three APCUG Regional Conferences on pages 20 through 23. The first is the APCUG/CAMUG Regional Conference July 12-14 of this year. It is being held on the Walsh University campus in North Canton, OH. Details on this event are on page 20. Next, as I mentioned last month, there is the Computer Technology Conference from March 22–25, 2012. The details on this event are on page 21. Finally, as always, The Florida Association of Computer Groups (FACUG) will be hosting a Computer and Technology Conference at Club Med, Sandpiper Bay Resort, in Port St Lucie, Florida, February 25–28, 2013 (yes, 2013). This one, though a bit pricey when you add in the airfare to get there, sounds delicious. Info on this one is on pages 22 and 23.

Frank Fraser, Ilene Steinkruger, and I attended CES 2012 January 10th through the 13th. We will be doing a presentation, as we do every year, at the February 4th meeting. Looks like this will be Steve Ballmer's last CES keynote speech. Microsoft recently announced that though it will have a presence at future Consumer Electronics shows, they will no longer have a booth on the floor. Don't miss this meeting as I will show a 26-minute video on Windows 8. It is truly different from any other version of Windows! ☺

Steve Ballmer

Next P*PCompAS meeting: Saturday, 4 February 2012
Joe Nuvolini, Ilene Steinkruger, and Frank Fraser will describes their experiences at the Consumer Electronics Show in January.

Meeting Minutes

by Pat Krieger, Secretary, P*PCompAS

President Joe Nuvolini called the 6 January 2012 meeting to order at 9:00 am. First order of business was to introduce guests Lois and Ray Weirkart. They joined as members before the meeting was over and were mugged by membership chairwoman Ann Titus. Welcome to our club, Lois and Ray. Glad to have you aboard.

Vice President Bonnie Snyder said next month we would have the CES Report. In her position as program chairwoman, she asked members who know any program well, not only computers but radio or any other program that would be of general interest, to make her aware of it and consider presenting it as a program to the club.

In This Issue

Articles

Officers
President: Joe Nuvolini
nuvo@nuvolini.com

Vice President: Bonnie Snyder
bonniels21@gmail.com

Secretary: Pat Krieger
pkrieger@earthlink.net

Treasurer: Jim Way
beckynjimway@comcast.net

Staff
**APCUG Rep/Webmaster: Joe
 Nuvolini**
Editor: Greg Lenihan
Librarian: Paul Major
Membership: Ann Titus

Committees
Hospitality: Pat Krieger
Programs: Bonnie Snyder
Publicity: Bonnie Snyder
Nominating: Bill Berkman

Board of Directors
Joe Nuvolini
Gene Bagenstos
Bill Berkman
Toni Logan
Norm Miller

Meeting Minutes (Continued from page 1)

OFFICER REPORTS

Treasurer Jim Way said we had $5773.67 in savings, $548.39 in checking, for a total of $6322.06.

Editor Greg Lenihan reported we have $48.42 in the coffee fund to start the year. Greg also said we are in an APCUG user group program where we get two hard copy books and 3 e-books from O'Reilly Press each quarter.

President Joe Nuvolini reported that Laura at Starbucks, who gives us coffee for our meetings, thanked him for the club coffee mug we gave her. Joe said he was leaving next week for the Consumer Electronics Show in Las Vegas and would give us a report at the next meeting. He will be there early for the press meeting the day before the show officially begins. His facial expression assumed an intense dreamy drool of anticipation as he described the lavish free buffet and open bar provided at these press meetings.

Joe also, as our APCUG representative, gave the dates and locations of upcoming APCUG conferences: March 22–25, Phoenix, Arizona; July 12–14. Akron, Ohio. In February of 2013 the conference will be in Ft. Lucy, Florida, at Club Med.

OLD BUSINESS

Bill Everett suggested that we give the church more Internet speed as our annual gift of appreciation for their letting us use their facility for our meetings. Joe said he will check with them to see if they would like more speed.

Bill also informed us of a good deal on telephone service offered by Page Plus. One service costs

only $12 a month. One phone offered costs $40 plus $5 shipping. For further information, go to PagePlusWireless.com. I printed out their Internet ad and will bring it to the February meeting.

Ann Titus (R) mugs our newest three members in January

AROUND THE ROOM

Phyllis Butler has returned to the club after an absence during which she underwent three surgeries. She thanked the club for our good wishes toward her and said the newsletter made her feel part of the group during her convalescence. Welcome back, Phyllis.

John Linder said the Colorado Springs Library is giving lessons on downloading e-books.

Chuck Harris wanted to know if there is a calendar program for scheduling appointments and other dates. Ilene Steinkruger recommended Google Calendar.

Chuck Blaney said with relief that all four of his computers are working. His com 1 port, however, hasn't been available for 5 months. It worked on XP, but won't work on Windows 7. John Pearce said to get rid of com 1, as it is a serial port.

Norm Miller paid $5 to get

A little nostalgia this month. Does anyone (other than me) remember the series of articles Joe Nuvolini wrote titled "Take a Bite Out of DOS?" In that series, Joe described most every DOS command and how to use it. At one point, I was reasonably good at writing batch (.BAT) files to accomplish various repetitive tasks.

When Windows came along, most everything was done through menu selections, radio buttons, or check boxes. As Windows 95/98 matured and Windows NT/2000 came along, the command line and the use of the command interpreter (cmd.exe) faded into the background. They didn't go away completely because you still needed the command interpreter to run programs like PING and IPCONFIG.

In the last few years scripting has made a big comeback. Windows system administrators and support technicians got tired of the menu based way of managing systems, particularly when they had a large number of systems to manage. Microsoft has improved the batch language in Windows and improved Windows Script Host (WSH).

WSH has been around since Windows 98 although many people are not aware of its existence. WSH had to be installed with a separate

Nybbles and Bits
by John Pearce, P*PCompAS

executable on Win 95 and NT4. The versions that followed included WSH already installed. Wikipedia has an article on WSH at http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Windows_Script_Host.

The default installation of Windows Script Host processes JScript and VisualBasic. Other script languages can be added to WSH, for example Perl, which is strong in character string manipulation. The Wikipedia article referenced above has a list of script engines that can be added to WSH.

Why the interest in scripting? My job. The basic task was to retrieve all the file names in a particular directory (file names similar to abc_20120125_9147), extract the date from the file name, then compare it with today's date. If the date in the file name is less than or equal to today's date, start a second script using the file name as a parameter. Working on this task was interesting and a nice diversion from what I normally do at work. There was also a touch of nostalgia back to the days of writing batch files in DOS 5 and 6. ☺

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into a Web site through USAA that offered protection for Internet and Web phone. Two days later he learned his e-mail address was sold on the Internet by another hacked site. USAA cancelled his VISA card and now everything is back to normal.

John Pearce said his wife wants him to get a new printer that will print beautiful pictures of their grandchildren. Suggestions? There

were a plethora. Chuck Blaney recommended the Canon 6000 which does a good job and one can refill the cartridges. He bought two of them and 6 extra cartridges. When ink ran out, he put the head in distilled water, which cleaned it, then filled it again and it worked fine. Joe Nuvolini said prints from an HP 10 come out better than the originals; in this one, you must replace the whole cartridge. Toni Logan said the HP 6000 uses both black and colors. Bill Everett said to use photo paper with HP printers for good results. Gene Bagenstos said the HP 8500 has colors not available on other printers and it does a good job of printing photos. Someone said don't get an Epson.

Ilene Steinkruger lost the toolbar for e-mail on

Thunderbird and wanted to know how to get it back. Searching Google didn't work. Bob Blackledge said to hit ALT to see if menu bar was unchecked. Go to View, toolbars, see if OK. Ilene did; problem fixed. Also, Yousendit has a downlink that zips files. Ilene said she zipped a 175 MB file to 77 MB, and it took only a few seconds.

PROGRAM: Troubleshooting Windows 7

Before the program started, Ilene said anyone who goes to the O'Reilly Web site can find Troubleshooting Windows 7. We can also order an e-book.

Here are some best practices from the program:
- In troubleshooting, sometimes just reset.
- Windows updates can cause problems. All computers are

I had a couple of interesting things happen recently. The first occurred while I was visiting relatives over the holidays. On earlier trips, I used to get a decent signal on their wireless network but this time it was very weak. I asked what had changed and they said that they had moved the wireless router into a cabinet. I didn't see why that would make such a difference until I examined the cabinet. It turns out it was a metal cabinet. After taking it out for the duration of my visit, the problem was resolved. Just some food for thought.

As you know, I like to report my Acronis True Image success stories in my Nuggets column. Well this one was a bit different from the ones I had in the past. After installing a number of Windows updates, as is often the case, I had to reboot. As it was rebooting I decided to plug in a headset into the front audio jack. There must have been some static electricity, because as I plugged it in, the computer shut down in the middle of rebooting. When I tried to reboot, it ran scandisk and found a trashed file or two. Well, they were important files as the computer would

Nuggets from Nuvo
*by Joe Nuvolini, P*PCompAS*

no longer reboot! Luckily I had made a True Image back just a day or so before. I booted from the True Image recovery disk and restored the image of C: drive and all was fine. One more Acronis save.

Finally, when I got up to get ready to leave for CES 2012, I was working on my main desktop computer when it quit. I could not get power to it with the power switch. I figured the power supply had failed. Since this is the computer I leave on when I am on trips so I can access it with "LogMeIn.com," I wanted to get it back up and running. Luckily I always keep a spare power supply handy for just such an occasion. I grovelled around the floor and managed to get a new power supply installed in record time. Sure enough, that solved the problem, and as I am writing this, I am accessing that very computer. Having several desktop computers, I always keep a spare power supply handy. It has saved me on a number of occasions. While in Las Vegas at CES I ordered another spare from **3btech.net**. ☺

Tips and Tricks for Enhancing the PC Visual Display, Part 1
*by Bonnie L. Snyder, P*PCompAS, BonnieLS21@Gmail.com, http://tvvip.org*

If you are in need of assistance in seeing the screen on a PC, there are several options available to help you do this. If you are using Windows 7, for instance, there is a built-in screen magnifying program that is head and shoulders above the one in Windows XP. You can run it at any time (provided your video can use the Win 7 Aero display) by pressing Windows key – plus on the keyboard. Pressing Windows key – plus additional times will increase the magnification with each press, and Windows key – minus will decrease the magnification with each press. Once you are in the magnification program, you can set up the program with the options you want. To do this, go down to the taskbar and click on the magnify icon. A window will open toward the top of the screen and an icon that looks

like a "gear" will allow you to choose your options, including having the magnification load automatically at startup. You can change options on the fly by using Windows key – L for Lens mode, Windows key – D for Dock mode, Windows key – F for Full screen mode.

An interesting freeware program you might want to try is aRuler for Windows. It works under Win XP and Win 7. Initially it loads a ruler that you can use to help focus on the line of text you wish to read. It is configurable in length, and the ruler's visual display can be changed to the user's preference. It also includes a screen magnification option from 1X to 4X.

One of the things that can cause visual fatigue when reading on a computer screen is the brightness of the display. There is a freeware program called TintedWindow which works in both Win XP and Win 7 that can mitigate this problem. Once loaded (it is a Java executable so it doesn't install), TintedWindow comes up in a small window. Right-click on that window and you can set up the color of the tint you wish. The window also allows for full screen or just a lens.

I would recommend that you do a Google search to find the two freeware programs referred to here.

I have a bunch of other freeware programs to help with video access, and I will write about them in my next few articles. ☺

CES 2012
by Joe Nuvolini, P*PCompAS

The trip to Las Vegas was uneventful except for having to restart the #1 engine before leaving Salt Lake City. After settling in at the Roadway Inn, and a trip to the nearby liquor store for a jug of Pisano and some bottled water, and an extension cord at Walgreens, it was off to the Las Vegas Convention Center (LVCC) to pick

Shrimp at CES Unveiled

up my press badge holder. From there I caught the shuttle to the Venetian for the "CES Unveiled" press event. The food and beverages were great but trying to get to visit the vendors stationed around the room was impossible as the crowd was almost too much to bear. I didn't stay too long and headed back to the Roadway fairly early.

Monday, Press Day, was a bit better. I did get to attend several press events. Intel discussed the new Ultra Book. It will be extremely thin, runs Windows 8, and will feature a touch screen as well as the traditional mouse and keyboard. Partnering with Nuance, it should also feature voice commands as well, in nine languages. Next was the Netgear presentation. They featured a number of new products. First was a dual

An Ultrabook

band (2.4 & 5GHz) range extender for those whose dwelling is large enough to have areas with low coverage. Next was a Media Storage Router. It has four ports plus two USB ports and has 2 TB of storage along with firewall security. The Powerline 500 Nano and N900 convert a conventional wall outlet into a high-speed network connection. Their Push@ TV WiDi adapter will allow you to wirelessly push your laptop video display to your TV with 1080p support. They also discussed the forthcoming 802.11ac which will up wireless speeds from 200 Mbps to 1 Gbps.

Later it was on to the VOXX International Conference. I didn't stay too long at that, but they did discuss a number of devices by one of their partners, RCA. One was a wall outlet, that along with one standard AC plug outlet, had one or two USB outlets for charging your USB devices. They will also feature a new assortment of clock radios with USB charging outlets on them. The low end one started at $14.95. They also have a nightlite with a USB charging outlet.

Finally, just before lunch, Dish Network had a presentation featuring their new receivers, Hopper and Joey. Their mascots were wallabies with those names. Hopper is the master receiver and you can have up to four satellite receivers, Joeys in other rooms. They will be capable of recording up to six programs at the same time and the receiver will have a 2 TB hard drive capable of recording up to 2,000 hours of content. You will be able to record the whole prime time content of the major networks for up to eight days with the push of a button. Dish will also be carrying Sirius XM radio content.

The private room at the Country Buffet was being used for renovations, but the club digerati did not seem to mind. Most are geeks and are used to overcoming challenges. The January breakfast and the comraderie was just as filling as ever.

Meeting Minutes (Cont. from pg 3)

different. The drivers are not always compatible. Updates are not guaranteed to work. If an update is newly installed, check to see if it is causing the problem.

- Sometimes other PCs cause problems. Is someone gaming, viewing a HD video, or downloading? Wait until they finish.
- To fix, shut down everything, including the router, and restart. Sometimes works.
- Passwords? Someone outside the house can be piggybacking on your WiFi.
- System Restore keeps snapshots of the Windows operating system and drivers for awhile, maybe 2 weeks. Access system by typing System into the menu box when starting.
- Are cables loose or unplugged?
- In-depth fixes: Which piece of hardware is causing the problem? Unplug all—Xboxes, TV, kids' stuff, etc.
- Problem on all computers? Yes—what do all have in common? NO—problem on one computer.
- Could it be the telephone line? Check to see if others in the neighborhood have the same problem. If they don't, call your ISP. If you have dial tone, type in the number.
- Single computer? Go to **http://support.microsoft.com/kb/299357**. Open CMD from Start > Run menu. Type in `netst.int.ip.reset c:\resetlog.txt.` Shut down completely, restart.
- Reinstall drivers. Make sure you have a copy of your network drivers backed up or available on CD or flash drive.
- Always make sure you have 2 passwords: One for WiFi access (router has 2 passwords on it), and another for the Admin interface. If you don't,

your computer is open for criminal purposes.
- Is your computer stuck just before the Windows loading screen? If your BIOS is set to allow booting from a network device and PC won't start, unplug.
- Turn computer off and on again.
- Try a different USB socket. Have you recently unplugged a dongle and plugged into a different USB port, then try a different USB one.
- Delete the WiFi network. WiFi settings can become corrupt. Access the network and sharing center from the taskbar and delete the network, recreate it, then reconnect. Change the channel. WiFi routers can use 14 separate radio channels. Some routers are set to a specific channel, some are set to automatic. Try changing your channel settings in the router interface.

Put Mike Halsey's name in YouTube for videos. A new book or video on problems in Windows 7 is scheduled to come out January 12th, but I'm not sure if it is from O'Reilly or Mike. Check with Ilene for info.

DRAWING

Data transfer cable—Gene
    Bagenstos
Snag It—John Pearce
Map Send—John Eure
Camera for Skype—Carol Stanton
Card Game—Donald Skarke
Hallmark Card Program—Lois
    Weikart
Herman cartoons—Pat Krieger
Silent Hunter—Bob Blackledge
Card Game—John Linder

Just a post script: I had Earthlink for years. Recently when I got my bank statement, I found they had been charging me $8 a month for security I hadn't ordered because I had other security installed. When I asked for a refund, they said it was against their

policy to give refunds. I promptly cancelled, but they wouldn't release their access for a month, so I was without e-mail.

I tried to get Comcast, but because of the location of my house, the installer said it would take 450 feet of cable and it would be a two-man job that might take 3 days. From the pleading look on his face, I could tell he was begging me to say "Forget it," which I did.

I next tried Qwest, now CenturyLink. Their records showed I had a Qwest modem, so no problem. On the day my new service was to start, nothing happened. I called customer service and explained to a girl in Salt Lake City what was wrong, and after a long conversation she said she didn't know anything about Internet. She transferred my call to a tech in Georgia who gave me instructions that made no sense and asked if there was anyone else in the house she could speak to (obviously convinced I was an idiot), then said she'd send out a man to set up the service and it would cost $85. I hung up, called the customer service number again and got another tech, this time in Nebraska, who said the problem was my modem. I ordered a new one. I installed it, but I had a little trouble setting up an e-mail account. I called customer service, and the fun began again. It took 10 phone calls and many hours. Every time I got a rep who tried to tell me what steps to take; nothing worked, so he or she transferred me to a tech. Each time I was cut off and had to call back, getting a different person in a different city every time. Finally I was connected to a tech in the Philippines. He was a perfect snot, but he knew what he was doing, and I got e-mail.

I used to be a service representative for the telephone company, and we prided ourselves on our excellent service. Now they have about the worst service in the world. I was going to get cable TV through them, but NO WAY. ☺

The Final Word on 2012 International CES
by Kim Komando (Tip from 01/17/12)

For those who aren't aware, the annual Consumer Electronics Show is the must-visit event for tech companies. This is where they show off their cutting-edge products and future prototypes to tens of thousands of attendees.

This year, more than 150,000 people attended to find out what the future holds for the tech industry. You would expect to see jaw-dropping technology everywhere you turn.

Unfortunately, the 2012 International CES in Las Vegas wasn't all that impressive.

Don't get me wrong; there was some interesting technology displayed. However, I didn't see any game-changing or breakthrough products. And I have a feeling that this isn't just a fluke this year.

Surprisingly, televisions were the kings of innovation this year.

Toshiba unveiled a whopper 65-inch 3D TV and a smaller 56-inch model, both furthering the concept of 3D without special glasses.

Toshiba calls the technology, which has been around for a few years already, auto-stereoscopic. I call it still not quite ready for primetime.

For the 3D effect to work, you have to sit directly in front of the screen. Not good for family or crowd viewing. Plus, the projected retail cost is $10,000!

Still, it's a step forward for the lagging 3D TV market. Affordable technology that doesn't use glasses could be the tipping point that finally gets consumers to embrace 3D at home.

The other big news in TVs is OLED screens. That stands for Organic Light Emitting Diode. Again, not new technology, but it's definitely improving.

Unlike LCD TVs, carbon-based OLEDs don't need a backlight. OLED TVs are brighter and offer superior refresh rates and contrast. Sign me up!

Samsung and LG both debuted 55-inch OLED units less than an inch thick. The LG model won best of show. However, don't expect to see those at the store anytime soon, or at an affordable price.

The days of the TV remote appear to be numbered. Most of the TVs on display at the show this year featured some kind of voice- or motion-control technology. They're trying to compete with Microsoft's Kinect system.

Sharp introduced a cool, 80-inch touch display called the Aquos Board. Blowing up pigs in Angry Birds is much more satisfying on that baby.

It wasn't all TVs, though. Manufacturers are increasingly serious about home audio. Expect to see plenty of high-quality audio products ranging from sound bars to full home theater systems

CES 2012 (Continued from page 5)

I stopped by the Sling display and asked about the Slingbox interface with Dish Network. Turns out with my new 722 receiver, all I needed is a connection to my router and a small device that plugs into my receiver to be able to watch live programming anywhere in the world on a computer. The price of the unit is $99. Sling had a half price sale during the show. After checking with Dish Network we found that they would be selling it for $30 starting on 1 February. I called Dish the next evening and found out that if I bought it now for $99, I would get a credit card with $99 worth of purchasing power. I figured this was the best deal so I ordered it. Now when I'm in Italy during football season and there is a game I want to watch, I can do so!

Plantronics helped me out this year. On the second day I lost my bluetooth device for my cell phone. They had committed to sending me one for evaluation after the show but after losing the one I had, they were kind enough to replace it with their M20 model. It's really nice and has noise cancelling which my old one didn't. Many thanks to Plantronics!

Since, this is supposed to be Microsoft's last show with a display, I made sure to get over there. It was almost impossible

Windows 8 Display

to get to the display where they were showing Windows 8. However, the next day I did stop by and take a video of the presentation. I also got to see the new Ultra Books being offered by a number of vendors. They are really slick. I found that several manufacturers are making sliders. ☺

Windows 7 Has It All
by Vinny LaBash, Columnist, Sarasota PCUG, Florida, www.spcug.org, labash(at)spcug.org

OK, maybe Windows 7 doesn't have everything, but it has many great features that make your computer experience easier, safer, and more reliable than any previous version. Windows 7 is different enough to make obsolete much of your ideas about why you need third party utilities.

You don't need a separate disk partitioning utility anymore. Windows 7 does an excellent job even though it is not a complete disk portioning package. The vast majority of people sitting at a keyboard simply don't need more than what Windows 7 provides, and Windows will not mess up your disk drive. If you are running a dual boot system with multiple operating systems, Windows 7 won't measure up, but those folks comprise a small fraction of one percent of the computer community.

The only drawback to Window 7 partition manager is finding it. Click on the **Start Orb**, select **Control Panel,** open **Administrative Tools**, and double click on **Computer Management**. Wait a few seconds for Windows to gather information, and when the **Computer Management** window appears, click **Disk Management** located under the **Storage** heading.

If you are not sure of what to do, click the Help icon. It looks like a question mark on a blue background. The help section will guide you through any disk management task including troubleshooting. The partitioning tool won't be of much help if your disk drive is too full because

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debuting this year.

For those who like to change gadget cases as often as shoes, you'll see a flood of options in stores soon. Designers have really been going all out on these products.

Many newer cases include charging solutions. You can recharge your gadget while making a fashion statement.

There are cases to fit iPhones and iPads, of course, as well as the most popular Android smartphones and tablets.

Advanced hobby and professional photographers will want to keep an eye out for the Fujifilm X-Pro 1, a retro-looking, mirror-less camera that can use interchangeable lenses. It won the innovation award in the camera category.

As you'd expect, Android gadgets were everywhere at the show. And, as in years past, every one of them claims it is going to topple the iPhone and iPad.

Yawn. Wake me up when the iPad 3 arrives.

Ultrabooks were everywhere. As the PC answer to the Macbook Air, these should be exciting, but I was disappointed.

Several manufacturers seem to be roundly ignoring Intel's specifications for the category. Many laptops with the Ultrabook name are just regular laptops. Learn the requirements for a true Ultrabook.

These would-be competitors of the svelte MacBook Air could fade into obscurity, as netbooks did when the iPad was introduced. If you are looking for a slim, powerful laptop, I would still recommend the MacBook Air.

Speaking of dead, you would have been hard-pressed to find a budget camcorder or standalone GPS unit at this show. Smartphones have nearly killed both product categories.

Microsoft continued to spin its broken record. It's coming out with a smartphone to rival the iPhone. Not now - but soon. And a tablet computer. Oh yes - Windows 8 is coming, too. Not now - but soon.

The software giant said this would be its last CES. Like Apple,

Microsoft will launch products on its schedule and at its own events.

That's not very surprising. One of the reasons the show felt lacking is because of the Internet. Companies don't have to wait for a yearly event anymore to announce new, cutting-edge products.

Most of the technology on display had been announced or leaked online already. And genuinely new technology was often hidden away.

For example, I found smartphone-controlled telepresence robots roving about, and a cute robotic seal designed to treat and comfort Alzheimer's patients. Both were well off the main floor.

And after several days of endless displays and demonstrations, I began to think that maybe the CES is like the world's fair of yesteryear. The spectacle might be fun for a day, but as a major event, it may no longer be necessary.

The tech world changes rapidly. I've got you covered when it comes to making decisions about new technology. ☺

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you won't be able to keep and move files during partitioning. The obvious solution is to clean out your disk before partitioning. Unless you are a computer professional, you probably don't need a third party program for portioning your drives. With today's disk drive technology, you may not need to partition at all.

In the **Accessories** folder open the **System Tools** folder, and then select **Disk Defragmenter**. The dialog box on the screen displays the defrag schedule, the last time the disk(s) were defragged, and the degree of defragmentation on all your disk drives. If you have an SSD drive, Windows 7 will not defrag it which is a good thing.

Defragging reorganizes data so the operating system can retrieve information quickly without having to reassemble files that may be broken into pieces and stored in separate disk areas. Only highly defragmented disks will show any noticeable operational slowdown. There is great controversy in the computer community about the value of defragging your disks, making the purchase of an outside program of dubious value. Windows 7 defrag tool is all you need.

At last Windows has an engine that performs search operations quickly and efficiently. Most search programs outside of Microsoft came about because Vista search routines often resembled someone rummaging around in a dark room with their eyes closed, and then coming up empty. Indexing now works properly in the background without bringing your system to a crawl. There is no longer any need for third party services.

Registry cleaners may have been useful, even necessary with XP and Vista, but happily that is no longer true. The Windows Registry is a giant database on your hard drive where Windows makes records of information it may need in the future. The Registry contains

important information that Windows requires about system settings, user profiles, applications, and hardware among other things.

Vendors who sell registry cleaners are fond of pointing out that your registry gradually becomes out-of-date with invalid information because of everyday actions like removing applications, changing drive letters or simply moving or copying files. These errors gradually accumulate and corrupt the database, causing everything from a slowdown to a complete system crash. To take care of these problems and avoid having them in the future all you need to do is buy their PC registry cleaner. Hogwash, I say!

A registry cleaner is the most useless and potentially the most dangerous program you can install. Most of them do nothing to reduce the size of the registry, which might result in a slightly faster PC, but only slightly. If you removed a program last year, and the registry still contains a pointer that no longer points to anything, you can remove it, but why take the time, trouble, and effort? There is no longer any action associated with the pointer, and it's completely harmless.

People may disagree, but registry cleaners have become infamous for trashing systems. Be cautious with sites that invite you to perform a free Registry cleaning, and then claim you have been the victim of some kind of mal-ware. Ponder, if you will, that Microsoft has stopped using its own registry cleaners, but has remained mysteriously quiet about the reasons why.

Windows has had a firewall capability since XP was introduced. In Windows 7 the firewall is straightforward and works well at keeping mal-ware out. Some critics say it's inadequate because it works inbound only. Is an outbound firewall necessary? When an

unauthorized program tries to send data out of your computer, an outbound firewall alerts you. That's the idea, but reality is far different. Many outbound firewalls give incessant alerts usually with indecipherable warnings. When you track them down it's almost always some obscure Windows service attempting to complete an operation. When the annoyance becomes unbearable, people turn off the outbound half of the firewall, totally defeating its purpose. In practice, an outbound firewall turns out to be severe overkill, and it can easily be defeated by a sophisticated mal-ware program.
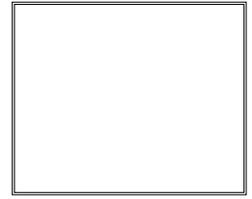
Windows Firewall is present in every Windows 7 installation, is thoroughly integrated with the operating system, works well, doesn't cost extra, and is turned on by default. Use it and don't pay for a "full function" firewall that in all probability you don't need.

You can make Windows 7 work better, but not by buying superfluous utilities. Get a faster Internet connection or a more reliable one. Take the money you saved by not buying unneeded software and get a 24" monitor for a real "WOW" experience. Another good use for saved cash would be an SSD primary drive for true blazing performance. An ergonomic keyboard and mouse wouldn't hurt either. ☺

Ilene Steinkruger introducing the Mike Halsey O'Reilly program in January

P*PCompAS Newsletter
Greg Lenihan, Editor
4905 Ramblewood Drive
Colorado Springs, CO 80920
e-mail: glenihan@comcast.net

Coming Events:
Next Membership Meeting: **4 Feb, beginning at 9 am (see map below for location)**
Next Breakfast Meeting: **18 Feb, 8 am, Country Buffet, 801 N. Academy Blvd.**
Newsletter Deadline: **18 Feb.**

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