

C:\BPCA NEWS

BROWARD PERSONAL COMPUTER ASSOCIATION, INC.

WWW.BPCA.COM



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BROWARD COUNTY, FLORIDA

DECEMBER 2008

Zoomware

Presented by

Gerry Gerstenberg

BPCA 1st Vice President Treasurer

Gerry will be giving a demonstration and overview of ZoomWare 1.0 from Ai Squared.

ZoomWare is a magnification program, to make hard to read text larger, clearer, and easier to read. In addition to the magnification abilities, it also allows you to control screen colors, contrast and glare, as well as cursor size and applying locators to the cursor.

Some features of ZoomWare are as follows:

Four Levels of Magnification

Three Magnified Views

Color Enhancements

Pointer Enhancements

Cursor Enhancements

For more information, prior to the meeting, go to:

<http://getzoomware.com>.

If you have trouble view your computer screen, this presentation will be of interest. Come and check it out.

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Statement of Ownership

C:\BPCA NEWS is published monthly by the Broward Personal Computer Association, Inc., a Non-Profit Computer Users Group, located in Broward County, Florida, (Fort Lauderdale area).

Mailing address: 3933 Carambola Circle North, Coconut Creek, Florida, 33066.

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Submissions

Members of the BPCA are encouraged to submit articles for publication in C:\BPCA NEWS.

Format: Any word processor or text editor capable of producing ASCII text files may be used to write your article. We will also accept WordPerfect and Microsoft Word documents. Please do not justify your text. (Lines should be "wrapped" with no carriage return at the end of a line.) Please do not indent paragraphs, use tabs, nor hyphenate words to fit on lines. Use all capital letters to type headlines or emphasize words. Include any special formatting requests in a note to the Editor at the end of the article.

Please include your name and telephone number so we can contact you if we have questions.

We reserve the right to edit all submissions.

Call the Editor for further submission guides or go to: <ftp://ftp.bpca.com/Guidelines>

Transmission

Please upload all articles to [sefc AT bpca.com](mailto:sefc@bpca.com).

Indicate in the description that the file contains a submission and send a voice message to the Editor, so that we know to look for your submission.

If you do not have a modem, you may hand deliver (at a meeting), or mail your article on diskette or CD to:

C:\BPCA NEWS Editor
Steven E. Costello,
3933 Carambola Circle North
Coconut Creek, FL 33066
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Deadline

Deadline for each issue is the last Tuesday of each month for the following month (three weeks prior to the General Meeting).

Advertising Rates

Non-commercial classified ads for computer related merchandise are published at no charge to BPCA members, subject to space availability.

Limit one ad, per member, per issue.

Contact the editor for information on commercial advertising rates and sizes.

2008-2009 Executive Board

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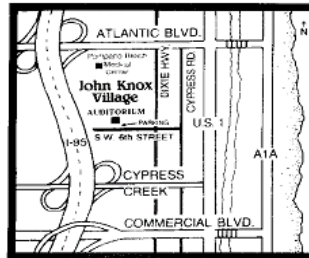
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ABOUT

BROWARD PERSONAL COMPUTER ASSOCIATION, INC:

The Broward Personal Computer Association, Inc. (BPCA) is a 501(c)3 Non-Profit Computer Users Group located in Broward County, Florida, (Ft. Lauderdale area). Our General Meetings are held on the third (3rd) Tuesday of each month at 6:45pm in the auditorium of John Knox Village in Pompano Beach.

Please stop at the guard gate and tell them you are there for the Computer Group Meeting. Handicapped parking is available in front of the auditorium, additional parking is located on the street behind the building.



Meetings generally start with a 45 minute question and answer period followed by the business portion of the meeting. This is followed by a presentation of software or hardware of interest to the members.

Our General meetings are open to the public and you are invited to come and learn with us. Everyone is invited to Our General Meetings which start at 6:45pm.

SPECIAL INTEREST GROUPS

BPCA has a number of Special Interest Groups (SIG's) which meet on various nights of the month and focus on a particular area of interest in a more in depth manner. We have SIG's for everyone from beginners to experts

HELP LINE

BPCA also has a Help Line available for members. This is a list of members who make themselves available to answer questions that may arise while using a program or trying to install or use some piece of hardware. Help is available both over the phone and through the use of E-Mail.

EXPIRING MEMBERSHIPS

02/28/09

None

01/31/09

None

12/31/08

None

RENEWAL MEMBERS:

None

New Members:
Welcome

None

(SB)=Snow Bird \$15.00
(FM)=family \$30.00

Membership Application and Information Form

Items Marked With An Asterix (*) Are Required, Those Without Are Optional

Make checks payable to: **BPCA, Inc.**

Mail to:

BPCA, Inc. % Gerry Gerstenberg
 418 S. Cypress Rd. #103
 Pompano Beach, FL 33060

Annual Dues:

\$25 Individual
 \$30 Family
 \$15 Snowbird

New or Lapsed Memberships:

Plus an initiation fee of \$200.00, or a reinstatement fee of \$200.00, if membership has lapsed.

* First Name:	
* Last Name:	
* Address:	
* City, ST Zip:	
* Phone:	
* Primary E-Mail:	
Secondary E-Mail	
Operating System(s):	
Primary Software:	
* Signature:	
* Date of Application:	

Minutes of November 18, 2008 General Meeting

The meeting opened with the customary Q&A at 6:45 PM. Questions were:

Skype not working, it was determined that her internet connection was not working at the time

Should the hard drive be removed if getting rid of an old laptop, it was determined that the answer for this particular laptop is yes, as the motherboard is no good.

Gerry Gerstenberg gave a presentation regarding Portable Applications and Thumb Drives, in which she described what a thumb drive is, and showed various portable applications (both U3 and regular). For more in depth information see her Gerry Says column, elsewhere in this issue.

Respectfully submitted,

Steve Costello, Secretary

Minutes of November 25, 2008 Executive Board Meeting

The meeting began at 4:47 PM and was attended by President Bob Dooley, First Vice President/Treasurer, Gerry Gerstenberg, Second Vice President/Program Chair, Norma Searle, and Secretary/Editor Steve Costello.

Minutes of October Executive Board approved as published in the November newsletter.

Reviews of November 12, 2008 DIET SIG restaurant, in progress. Suggestions for next DIET SIG location requested, preferably with wifi access. No scheduled DIET SIG for December, next date and location to be announced.

General meeting date changed to the second Wednesday of the month, beginning with January 14, 2009, due to scheduling conflicts. Meeting place to be determined and announced in the newsletter each month, until a regularly scheduled space can be obtained.

January 14, 2009 presentation will be regarding Quicken, given by Bob Dooley.

The meeting adjourned at approximately 5:05 pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Steve Costello, Secretary

SIG News

There is no DIET SIG meeting scheduled for December 2008.

As with all SIG meetings, attendance is limited to paid BPCA members. This is particularly true of the DIET SIG, and will be strictly enforced, as BPCA will pay the cost of the meal.

To suggest a location, preferably with wifi access, send an e-mail to bobffl@Juno.com, with all the particulars.

The DIET SIG met Tuesday November 12, 2008 to be held at Southport Raw Bar at 6 PM.

Southport Raw Bar is located 1536 Cordova Road, Fort Lauderdale .

(Continued on page 6)



Presidentially Speaking

by Bob Dooley, President BPCA

I have never been the head of such a small club, group, or organization before and as such it creates a complete set of different opportunities and challenges.

One of these is our meeting place. While we have the continued use of the very large, well-appointed, temperature controlled, lighted and centrally located facilities of John Knox Village, and without cost or other obligation, they do lack wi-fi access.

Wi-fi is almost a sine qua non today. So much of what most of us do today is so dependant on fast internet access – and most of us have it in our office and/or home. If not for e-mail and VOIP, it is to download and upload and to search for information. We buy and sell on the web. We communicate on the web. Most of us therefore wish to know more about the use of the internet.

As a result, two of the three last meetings were re-located to the recreation room in my condo, to avail ourselves of wi-fi accessability. Even our new DIET SIG is trying to hold its meetings at food locations with wi-fi.

Being a small group we will continue to look to hold our meetings where, while maybe not as nice as JKV, they will give us the fast connection we need. This is one of the present challenges of the day. But being small does give us the adaptivity to accommodate this need..

Another of our challenges is to find a speaker, or speakers, willing to address such a small group. Hopefully suggestions of the group, and its friends, will lead us to those who have information to share, but would be over-whelmed by addressing a large audience, but could and would be willing to share with a smaller group. Our program chair is working on this. Maybe you could help her.

"I am Bob Dooley and I approve of this message."

(DIET SIG Continued from page 5)

Reviews have been submitted to several websites, such as:

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

<http://southflorida.menupages.com/>

<http://dine.com/>

<http://metroguide.com/>

<http://tripadvisor.com/>

<http://yelp.com/>

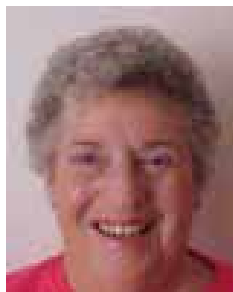
Review Links:

Lew Aron http://www.tripadvisor.com/ShowUserReviews-g34227-d474014-r21841834-Southport_Raw_Bar-Fort_Lauderdale_Florida.html

Steve Costello http://www.yelp.com/user_details?userid=Id7iVh2aR72J3UaxFqq5lw

Bob Dooley <http://reviews.metroguide.com/d.asp?pi=66777>

Gerry Says: Thumb Drives



By Gerry Gerstenberg, BPCA 1st Vice President

Flash drives are getting cheaper and can hold even more data. In today's ads I saw a Sony USB drive, 8GB for \$28. I want to rush out to the store and purchase it before they are all gone – maybe. Even though I already have sixteen – I did not know I had so many until I counted them for this article. No wonder I can not find information I have stored on a particular one. I think I will just organize the ones I have.

I call them thumb drives (TD).

What are TDs?

They are portable storage devices no bigger than 4 inches, and weigh less than 2 ounces. They can store from 64 MB to 64 GB and getting better all the time.

They are also known as memory sticks, memory keys, USB Smart drives, key chain drives, jump drives, flash drives, pen drives.

They use a USB port to connect to a computer.

Computers no longer have a floppy drive (1.4 Mb of storage), and I think the CD drive (800 Mb of storage) is on the way out.

Last year vendors sold 85 million thumb drives according to Market Research Firm Gartner.



Uses

TD have many uses, some of the uses are:

- Files can be easily and quickly transported from one computer to another computer or multiple computers.. They are compatible with MAC and PC computers so files can be shared by both OS. Not all files are compatible with both platforms.
- Your complete medical history can be copied on a thumb drive and kept with you..
- Carry your desktop in your pocket.
http://www.pcworld.com/article/123793-6/23_things_to_do_with_a_thumb_drive.html
- Install assorted applications so that they run directly off your thumb drive (Portable Apps)
<http://portableapps.com/>
- Carry games and books with you to entertain yourself during waiting periods.
- Carry your music around and listen to it anywhere.
- Can be used as a portable boot disk.
http://www.pcworld.com/article/123793-6/23_things_to_do_with_a_thumb_drive.html

(Continued on page 19)

COOL WEBSITES - New Year's Eve Ball 09

by Gerry Gerstenberg, BPCA 1st Vice President

Each month I will present some of the most interesting websites that have been submitted by members and/or guests.

Click on and enjoy these sites.

During the past 100 years revelers have gathered in Times Square to celebrate the New Year. The main attraction was the descent of the "Ball". The first New Years Eve Ball, made of iron and wood and adorned with one hundred 25-watt light bulbs, was 5feet in diameter and weighed 700 pounds.

This year the new Times Square New Years Eve Ball is a 12 foot geodesic sphere, double the size of previous balls and weighs 11,875 pounds.



Covered in 2,668 Waterford Crystals and powered by 32,256 Phillips Luxeon Rebel LEDS, the new Ball is capable of creating a palette of more than 16 million vibrant colors and billions of patterns producing a spectacular kaleidoscope effect atop One Times Square. According to Jeff Straus, President of Countdown Entertainment and co-organizer of Times Square New Year's Eve "The new Times Square New Year's Eve Ball will be a bright sparkling jewel atop One Times Square entertaining New Yorkers and tourists from around the world not only on December 31st, but throughout the year.

The history of the dropping of the ball is told at this site. Also the history of the new ball is told in great detail including the names of all who contributed to the Ball.. There are beautiful pictures of the ball presented on this site.

There is a section on frequently asked questions. Another section has prepared a schedule for the events surrounding Times Square. Go to this webSite and be prepared for New Years Eve. http://www.timessquarenyc.org/nye/nye_ball.html

If you have an interesting site that you would like to share you can submit it to: <http://www.bpca.com/links/>.

Please give a short description of the site.

Happy surfing.

See you next month.

ru XPerienced? Delete Corrupted AVI Files

by Lee Reynolds, Member BPCA

Yes, the title of the column is a play on the old song by Jimi Hendrix. But in this case, what is being asked is this: do you know everything you need or want to know about Windows XP? If not, then join me in learning all about it together...

Like to see the total collection of these tips on the web?

Point your browser at this:

<<http://home.earthlink.net/~lreynol929/ruXP> >



Files with the file extension of .AVI are Windows Video files. The letters AVI stand for Audio Video Interleave.

These "movie" files can be played with Windows Media Player (as well as other programs of the same type) and can be downloaded from the internet in many different places. Sometimes when you download one, it may be corrupted and will not play correctly. If you try to delete it in Windows Explorer, often you find that you cannot! You will get an error message such as this:

Error deleting file or folder

Cannot delete (name of file): It's being used by another person or program. Close any program that might be using the file and try again.

Usually, there will be no other program trying to use the file.

You find you cannot rename, or copy, or move it to another location, also.

The problem lies in a known fault with XP's Windows Explorer:

XP Windows Explorer Fault

When you click on an AVI file in Windows Explorer, the operating system will attempt to read the entire file in order to determine the dimensions, duration, bitrate, etc. of the file. During this process you might experience 100% CPU usage. If the file is broken or not fully downloaded, you will have problems trying to copy, move, rename, or delete it.

Solution

In order to solve this problem, you will have to use the Registry Editor. Click the Start button, click Run on the Start Menu, type in REGEDIT.

Navigate on the left pane of the Regedit window to the following key:

HKEY_CLASSES_ROOT\SystemFileAssociations\avi\shell\PropertyHandler

Then, in the right pane, after clicking on the PropertyHandler key in the left pane, you will see the Default value which should be:

{87D62D94-71B3-4b9a-9489-5FE6850DC73E}

Right click on the value and select Delete from the Context Menu.

Then close Regedit.

Hasta la Vista - Vista Disk Partitioning

by Lee Reynolds, Member BPCA



I'm told the literal meaning of "hasta la vista" in Spanish is "until the seeing." Or maybe a more adequate translation is "see you later". But in this column, I'm using that phrase to invite you to take a look at Microsoft's latest version of Windows: Vista.

True to its apparent ambition of wanting to take over the world, Microsoft has now added an improved partitioning ability to Windows Vista. In a lot of cases, you now no longer need to buy a commercial product like those from Symantec (Partition Magic), or Acronis (Disk Director Suite).

Microsoft's offering is described here:

<http://windowshelp.microsoft.com/Windows/en-US/Help/f2e9a502-e63c-413d-8804-87326ef4f4cc1033.mspx>
Windows Vista Help: Can I repartition my hard disk?

Differences In XP and Vista

Windows XP had a disk partitioning tool built in, located the same way as you find it in Vista: under Disk Management, but XP's version allowed you only to create a new partition or extend an existing partition using unallocated space already present on the disk. Vista now allows you to create this unallocated space by "shrinking" an existing partition that isn't full. It does this without destroying any data on the partition to be shrunk.

You must be logged on as an administrator to do it. Begin by clicking the Start orb, selecting Control Panel, clicking System and Maintenance, then Administrative Tools, and then double clicking Computer Management. In the Navigation pane of Computer Management, under the item labeled Storage, click Disk Management. You will be presented with a screen showing all your disk volumes. You then right click the volume you want to create unallocated space on and click the option Shrink Volume from the Context Menu that flies out.

A screen will appear that tells you the partition's size, how much you can shrink it by, and letting you type into fields where you specify the desired amount of shrinkage. Then you click on the button labeled Shrink. After the process finishes, you can then use the right click method on the unallocated space to select Create Partition. Or, if you already have another partition that you would like to add the unallocated space to, you can right click that one and select Extend Partition. In each case, you are presented windows telling you the amount of free space you're working with and allowing you to enter the amount you want to use for the new or extended partition.

There are some important limitations to the Vista partitioning tools that you should keep in mind: you can only shrink and expand NTFS or RAW (unformatted) partitions; when you shrink, there are some unmovable files such as page files or shadow copy storage areas that inhibit the amount of shrinkage allowed; you cannot extend a partition into unallocated space to the left (lower disk addresses) of the partition to be added to; you cannot move around unallocated space; if you have too many bad clusters on the disk, then you cannot shrink a partition on it.

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(Hasta la Vista Continued from page 10)

Many of these limitations are removed by commercial products such as those from Symantec and Acronis...

Conclusion

I used Vista's partitioning tools on my own new computer soon after I bought it, because I wanted to create three other partitions: two for moving most of my data files to, and a third for use in installing my old Windows XP system into, as a virtual OS. (I made use of a free download from Microsoft called Virtual Pc 2007, which is compatible with Vista, in order to do that.)

I was happy to get by with the built-in partitioning capability of Vista, so I wouldn't have to buy still another version of Partition Magic (over the years, I've had three, and the latest, version 7, is not compatible with Vista.)

Activity Calendars

Day	December 2008	Time
Tue 16	BPCA General Meeting - Q&A	6:45 pm
Tue 16	BPCA General Meeting - Zoomware	7:30 pm
Wed 17	BRCS Q&A	6:15 pm
Wed 17	BRCS General Meeting	7:30 pm
Tue 23	BPCA Executive Board Meeting	4:30 pm
Tue 30	C:\BPCA News Deadline	12:00 pm

Day	January 2009	Time
Wed 14	BPCA General Meeting - Q&A	6:45 pm
Wed 14	BPCA General Meeting - Quicken	7:30 pm
Wed 21	BRCS Q&A	6:15 pm
Wed 21	BRCS General Meeting	7:30 pm
Tue 27	BPCA Executive Board Meeting	4:30 pm
Tue 227	C:\BPCA News Deadline	12:00 pm

From The Deals Guy For December 2008



by Bob (The Cheapskate) Click, Greater Orlando Computer Users Group

***Lost In Space**

A lot is written about cloud computing lately, and I wonder how many of you are as confused about what that really is as I am. It would seem that cloud computing has to do with keeping your data stored on some distant server or storage service where you hope it is safe.

To me, that's a new name for an old concept, uploading it to some distant storage service on the Internet. On the other hand, in any offsite concept of storage, things must go right no matter what the concept is. In reality, it's still possible that things could go terribly wrong.

Read this short article from Information Week magazine about Nirvanix ,whose service turned sour because of a third-party vendor assisting in providing their service. A bad experience like that can shatter your confidence in Software as a Service, or Cloud Computing. The article is "Beyond Online Storage" and the crisis description is near the end of the article.

<<http://www.informationweek.com/news/software/hosted/showArticle.jhtml?articleID=210602537&pgno=4>>

Perhaps you could do your own "Cloud Computing." For example, put some servers in grandma's house. She might have a spare bedroom, now that the family no longer lives there. <G>

Perhaps there are ways to do cloud computing yourself, which would make it as secure as you like, and if something goes wrong, you should still have the data, physically. That might also be an advantage, since DNS hijacking is becoming more prevalent these days. (I couldn't resist a tongue-in-cheek comment!)

***Don't Trust Anybody!**

I'm on my soapbox again this month. We purchased a new microwave oven (above the stove type) from Best Buy, after considerable shopping, because they were the cheapest at the time. Some of you might remember my lawsuit against Best Buy several years ago. We had written them off for shopping, but decided to try them again since this was a different store.

We bought the unit and when they loaded it into my pickup, I checked the box closely before accepting it, and it was not damaged. That led me to believe that the microwave oven was in good condition. Later on, I had a professional installer over to help me with the installation, because of the difficult mounting space over the range. When we opened the box, the microwave's metal case was badly bent and the door alignment was bad. The installer said the unit had obviously been dropped. Needless to say the unit would not work.

(Continued on page 13)

(Deals Guy - Continued from page 12)

When I tried to take it back to Best Buy, they said that once I took possession of the unit, it was my responsibility and they would not replace it, since I had probably damaged it myself. However, they sent it to their repair facility for evaluation. Obviously, Best Buy's service facility would not repair the damaged unit under the warranty and said it could not even be repaired.

As a last resort, I tried calling Best Buy's corporate headquarters, but to no avail. That conversation lasted about one minute before I got the same response as the store gave me and a quick goodbye, so there went \$300.

No more dealings with Best Buy by us, although perhaps other stores would have also taken that attitude. I guess it could be said that you should check the contents of the box and not take anything for granted when picking something up yourself.

It was suggested by a friend to also call Samsung, which I did; but they didn't seem to care either. For what it's worth, the metal in the Samsung microwave's case was very thin and flimsy. The installer suggested not replacing it with another Samsung.

***A Repair Suite For Your Computer**

Want to clean up your computer? I published this product last winter and some liked it. It's been updated so I asked them for a discount on the new release and they agreed. Their description is below:

YL Computing, Inc. announced the new version 6.2 of their WinUtilities software product. Actually, WinUtilities is not a software program, but is a kind of shell that comprises 20 tools allowing users to tune up the operating system and generally speed up the performance of their computers.

This bundle of tools allows you to perform a number of optimization and cleanup operations from disk and registry cleanup to protecting your executable files with a password. It works with any Windows version starting from Windows 98, and including Windows XP SP3 and Windows Vista (for both 32-bit and 64-bit systems).

The tools are grouped into six categories. System Cleaners allow you to clean up your disks, the registry and all kinds of history files. You can view all found files before you go to the last step (that is, removing files, moving them to the Recycle Bin, or to a separate folder), but even if you delete some files you may need, the tool can create a Restore Point for you to get back to the state before erasing files. The same precautions are used when you clean the registry. The operating system stores a lot of history files and logs about your activities both on the computer and on the Net. Deleting these entries and history files not only frees space on your drives, but also takes care of your privacy. A one-click maintenance tool is now available that can be used to clean up everything with one click, without opening each separate tool.

System Optimizers deal with "dead" shortcuts and duplicate files. You can remove the former and analyze the latter. You can optimize your memory usage (the program can do it automatically) and your network connection (if you are not sure about these settings, there are recommended options available).

The tools in the System Control category allow you to actually control your system from editing your system configuration files to allowing you to shut down your computer automatically at a certain time. You can also use this category to remove the browser helper objects and startup items that you don't need.

System Tools provide you with access to tools available in the system. Registry tools allow you to back up either the entire Windows registry or only certain keys (and later restore them). You can simply search the registry for certain keys and values. Simple Search sounds simple, but it actually provides you with more search options than the standard Windows Registry Editor.

(Continued on page 14)

(Deals Guy Continued from page 13)

The File Tools: Here you will be able to view deleted files, and if necessary, restore them on NTFS and FAT volumes. Or, you can completely wipe files off with the Shredder tool so that even experts will not be able to restore them. Also, you can split large files into smaller ones (for example, to move them to another computer) and glue them back together. Last, but not least you can protect any executable file with a password or disable this protection, and you can schedule almost any operation available in this suite of tools using the built-in scheduler.

You can download WinUtilities 6.2 for free from the developer's site at <www.ylcomputing.com> and try it for 30 days before making a decision about purchasing it. DealsGuy readers can get a 30% discount using the following URLs.

DealsGuy note: These URLs for ordering are mishandled by MS Word when converted to hypertext so you should copy and paste them into your browser's address bar. The entire URL must be on one line in the address bar. I also tried TinyURLs, but they wouldn't work from my document.

WinUtilities Personal License w/30% discount:

<[https://www.paypal.com/cgi-bin/webscr?cmd=_xclick&business=paypal%40ylcomputing%2ecom&item_name=WinUtilities\(Personal License\) Special Offer&item_number=7019-8-1&amount=28&no_shipping=2&no_note=1¤cy_code=USD&lc=US&bn=PP-BuyNowBF&charset=UTF-8](https://www.paypal.com/cgi-bin/webscr?cmd=_xclick&business=paypal%40ylcomputing%2ecom&item_name=WinUtilities(Personal%20License)%20Special%20Offer&item_number=7019-8-1&amount=28&no_shipping=2&no_note=1¤cy_code=USD&lc=US&bn=PP-BuyNowBF&charset=UTF-8)>

WinUtilities Family License w/30% discount:

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Product page link: <<http://www.ylcomputing.com/content/view/9/27/>>

Direct download link: <<http://www.ylcomputing.com/download/wuinstall.exe>>

***Do You Have Memory Problems With Your Passwords?**

Why not give KeePass a try. Many people try the wrong methods for managing passwords, such as using the same one for everything so it's easy to remember. All the thief has to do is obtain that one password and he can have you hurting.

KeePass will help you be better organized and perhaps you will develop better and safer password methods. KeePass is FREE and also open source.

Check it out at <<http://keepass.info/>>

That's it for this month. I'll have more new product announcements on my Web site (most not offering a discount). Meet me here again next month if your editor permits.

This column is written to make user group members aware of special offers or freebies I have found or arranged, and my comments should not be interpreted to encourage, or discourage, the purchase of any products, no matter how enthused I might sound. Bob (The Cheapskate) Click <[bobclick at bellsouth dot net](mailto:bobclick@bellsouth.net)>. Visit my Web site at <<http://www.dealsguy.com>>.

My Favorite FREE PC Utilities – Part 5 - Malware Scanners



By Ira Wilsker, APCUG Director; Columnist, The Examiner, Beaumont TX; Radio & Talk Show Host

WEBSITES:

<http://housecall.trendmicro.com>

<http://safety.live.com>

<http://www.threatfire.com>

Introduction

On my weekly radio show (Mondays, 6-7pm, KLVI 560AM) I frequently receive calls from listeners who may have been infected by a virus, worm, Trojan, or other form of malware, despite having antivirus software installed. This is actually more prevalent than many users realize, as there are many so called “zero-day” threats circulating for which the antivirus companies have not yet released protective digital signatures to detect and remove the threats.

As I have reiterated countless times, it is important to note that there is a lag time, sometimes substantial, between the appearance of a threat, and the distribution by the antivirus companies of protective digital signatures. During this lag time, the computer is vulnerable to new threats.

Another parallel issue is that people typically do not update their protective security software as often as they need to, often relying on a default setting that may be too long. I have callers who are furious that they are infected, despite the fact that they have name brand, reputable and often expensive security software that they update on a daily basis; that is inadequate considering the high rate of new security threats that show up on a continuous basis.

An analogy would be this morning’s newspaper; it may have today’s date on the masthead, but it is really yesterday’s news. Somewhat similarly, this morning’s antivirus updates are for viruses and other threats found last night, leaving us unprotected from today’s threats.

Checking Your Antivirus and Antispyware

It is a good security practice to periodically determine if your antivirus and anti-spyware software has been breached, a risk that may not be apparent. Fortunately for us, there are several free online utilities that will perform a security scan on our computers, utilizing the latest, continuously updated signature files.

Trend Micro’s Housecall

The granddaddy of the free online scans, and arguably one of the most popular, is Trend Micro’s Housecall, online at housecall.trendmicro.com (also still available from its classical URL, housecall.antivirus.com). The process of performing a Housecall free scan is simple. Open the page, and click on the “house” icon.

(Continued on page 16)

(Malware Scanners Continued from page 15)

It will first lead to a page offering the option to purchase Trend’s Internet Security Suite (HouseCall Figure 1), but clicking on the “Launch Housecall Free Scan” icon will open the free scanning utility (HouseCall Figure 2).

The screenshot shows the Trend Micro HouseCall website. At the top is a red navigation bar with links for HOME, HOME & HOME OFFICE, SMALL BUSINESS, MEDIUM BUSINESS, ENTERPRISE BUSINESS, and PARTNER. Below this is a secondary navigation bar with links for Products Overview, Support, Education, Newsletter, and Trial Downloads. The main heading is "Trend Micro HouseCall" with social sharing options for Save & Share, Tell a friend, and Print This Page. The central content area features an icon of a house with a magnifying glass over it. Text describes the service as a free online virus scanner that checks for infections and vulnerabilities. A red button says "Scan Now. It's Free!". Below this, it encourages users to donate to Schools Online after scanning. A news item mentions "Housecall 6.6 arrived - >Try the new version now!". At the bottom, there are sections for System Requirements, Hardware, Operating System, and Software, each with a list of specifications.

HouseCall Figure 1

The screenshot shows the Trend Micro HouseCall installation page. It features the Trend Micro logo at the top left. Below the logo is a navigation bar with links for Starting HouseCall, Terms of Use, and Support. The main content area is titled "Status" and has a sidebar with links for Introduction to HouseCall, Terms of Use, and Updating and starting HouseCall. The main content area has a "Start" tab and "Encyclopedia" sub-tab. The heading is "What is HouseCall?". The text explains that Trend Micro HouseCall is an application for checking for infections and removing them. A "Feature overview:" section lists several capabilities: detecting and removing malware (viruses, worms, trojans, etc.), detecting and removing grayware and spyware, restoring damage caused by malware, notifying about vulnerabilities in installed programs and network services, multi-platform support for Windows, Linux, and Solaris, and being easy-to-use with Microsoft Internet Explorer and Mozilla Firefox. At the bottom, there is a checkbox for "Yes, I accept the Terms of Use" and a "Launch HouseCall »" button.

HouseCall Figure 2

(Continued on page 17)

(Malware Scanners Continued from page 16)

Housecall will run on almost any reasonably modern computer with Windows 98SE or later (Vista is not listed), and a contemporary browser (Firefox, Mozilla, or Internet Explorer). Housecall will also run on a Mac with OS X 10.4 "Tiger", LINUX, and SOLARIS.

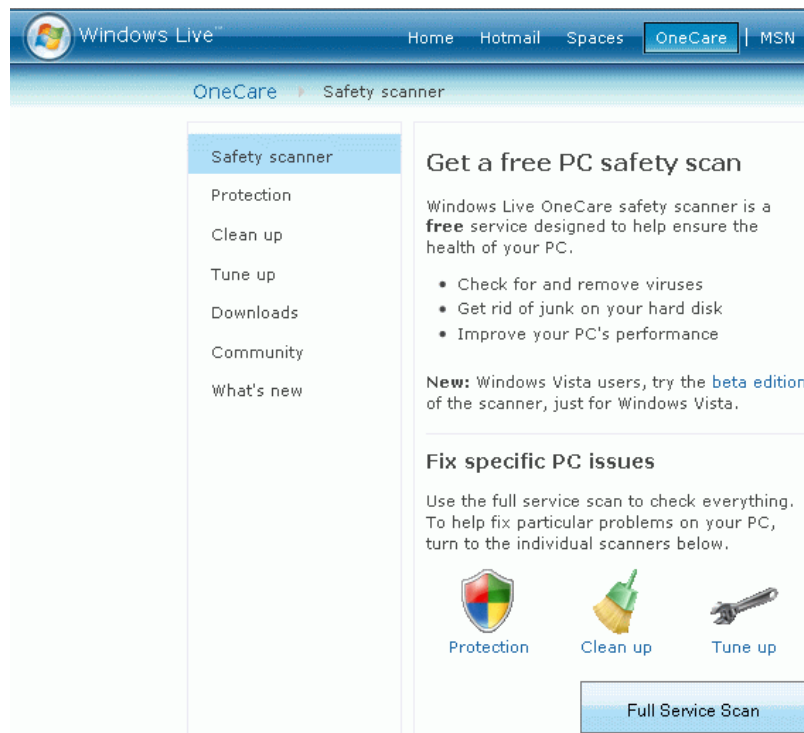
Depending on the browser used, Housecall will install either an ActiveX (Internet Explorer), or Java (Mozilla and Firefox) utility that includes the core engine. Once installed, the utility will detect and remove malware, consisting of viruses, worms Trojans, grayware, and spyware.

If spyware or other malware is detected and removed, Housecall will attempt to repair any damage they caused to the system. Housecall will also scan for vulnerabilities of installed programs and network connections. Depending on the speed of the computer and the size of the hard drive, Housecall may take minutes to hours to run. If Housecall says the system is clean and free of malware, it likely really is.

Windows Live OneCare

Microsoft is a "Johnny come lately" to the free online scan business, with an online version of its OneCare product at safety.live.com. Being ActiveX based, the OneCare online scan requires Internet Explorer with ActiveX enabled.

After opening the web page, the user has four icons to select from in the center of the page, Protection, Clean up, Tune up, and Full Service Scan.



Windows Live OneCare Figure 1

The "Protection" icon will run Microsoft's free online malware scan, which is now a very capable product. It will scan for viruses, worms, Trojans, spyware, and other malware, and will attempt to remove any malware that it finds. In side by side tests, it is comparable in detection and speed to Housecall.

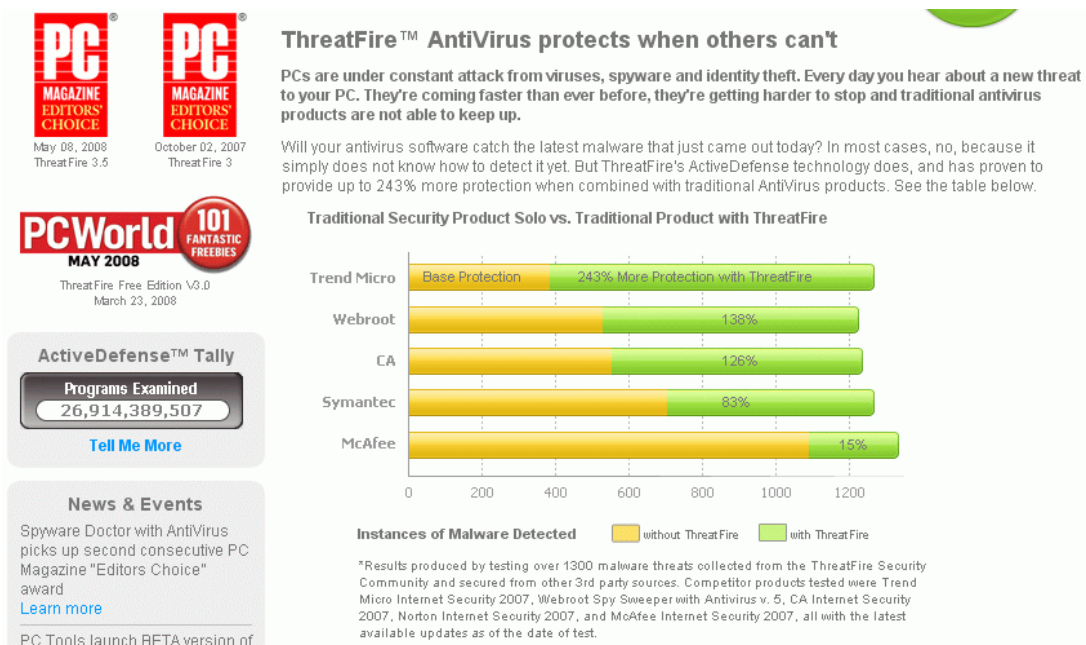
The other icons on the page can be used to remove junk files from the hard drive (Clean up), or improve performance through defragging and other services (Tune up). Click on the "Full Service Scan" icon to run all three services sequentially, which is not a bad choice for periodic maintenance.

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(Malware Scanners Continued from page 17)

ThreatFire

No security software is perfect and invulnerable, and an additional layer of security is desirable. PC Tools Software has a freeware version of its popular Threatfire software (www.threatfire.com), which runs on top of any antivirus software installed, improving the level of protection without interfering with the original security software.



ThreatFire Figure 1

Published reports and tests indicate that Threatfire plugs holes in the name brand security software, greatly enhancing combined security effects through synergy. Threatfire is not a free standing product, but instead intended to run with other security software.

In a published report of the efficacy of Threatfire when run with several of the top selling software suites (2007 versions), increased detection and protection of malware from 15% to 235% occurred, compared to the base security software without Threatfire.

It should be noted that unlike some of the security software, Threatfire is not a resource hog, and utilizes only minimal system resources when running, and does not significantly degrade system performance.

I have Threatfire installed on all of my computers, regardless of the other security software installed. I notice from a "balloon" that it updates automatically several times a day, but it is not dependent solely on digital signatures, like most of the other security products. Threatfire detects malicious behavior, such that it can protect against known threats (with published digital signatures) and unknown and "zero-day" threats, for which no signatures are currently available. The quality of Threatfire has been recognized by the technical press, with numerous awards and other recognition. PC Magazine has twice acknowledged the excellence of Threatfire by awarding it its "Editors' Choice Award".

Conclusion

By periodically running one of the free online scans to verify that the computer is free of malware that may have slipped through its defenses, and installing an additional layer of defense like Threatfire, the user can do much to improve the security of his computer. These tasks can be accomplished for free, and they are well worth the price.

(Gerry Says Continued from page 7)

- Can be used to repair a virus infested PC.
http://www.pcworld.com/article/123793-4/23_things_to_do_with_a_thumb_drive.html
- They are fast. Some can speed up a computer using an installed program called Ready Boost.

Portable Applications

A portable application, or portable app for short, is a computer software program that does not need to be installed or copied onto a computer's mass storage device to be executed, running instead from a removable storage device such as a CD-ROM drive, USB flash drive, flash card, or floppy disk.

Portable applications can be run on any computer system with which they are compatible; they usually require a certain type of operating system (Microsoft Windows XP or above, any Linux, etc).

Portable software is usually designed to be able to store its configuration information and data on the storage media containing its program files.

Software

Some of the software that can be completely installed and used from a TD are (These can be downloaded from www.portableapps.com/):

- Mozilla Firefox, Portable Edition (web browser)
- Mozilla Thunderbird, Portable Edition (email)
- Mozilla Sunbird, Portable Edition (calendar/tasks)
- ClamWin Portable (antivirus)
- Pidgin Portable (instant messaging)
- Sumatra PDF Portable (PDF reader)
- KeePass Password Safe Portable (password manager)
- Sudoku Portable (game)
- Mines-Perfect Portable (game)
- CoolPlayer+ Portable (audio player)
- OpenOffice.org Portable* (office suite)

Disadvantages

Some of the disadvantages of TDs are:

They have a limited number (100,000) of write and erase cycles. Read cycles are unlimited.

Most USB flash drives do not include a write-protect mechanism, although some have a switch on the housing of the drive itself to keep the host computer from writing or modifying data on the drive. Write-protection makes a device suitable for repairing virus-contaminated host computers without risk of infecting the USB flash drive itself.

They are easily misplaced, lost, or left behind. I have left mine in other computers many times. This is a particular problem if the data they contain are sensitive. They can be attached to key chains, necklaces and lanyards. Also the protecting cap is easy to lose.

Compared to external hard drives, USB flash drives have a high price per unit of storage and are only available in comparatively small capacities; but in the smaller capacities (4 GB and less), USB flash drives are much less expensive per unit of storage than the hard drives they have replaced.

BPCA HELP LINE

Steve Costello Help Line Coordinator, (954) 978-9010 help @ bpca.com

The following is a listing of various software and the volunteers willing to answer questions about the software. Note that some of our volunteers will only take questions via e-mail, while others may be contacted by phone or fax. Please use the volunteer's preferred method of contact.

The Help Line is for BPCA Members who need answers to technical questions. Please remember that all the Help Line people are volunteers that have other things in their lives that might take priority. Do not expect to get immediate answers, although I am sure the volunteers will make every effort to provide prompt responses. If you should have a question for which there does not appear to be a volunteer, contact me via e-mail and I will try to find someone to help you, or assist you in any way I can. If you would like to become a Help Line volunteer, see me at the General Meeting or E-Board meeting, or contact me via e-mail.

Volunteers: Make sure all information in the attached listing is correct. If any changes in information are needed please contact me.

PROGRAM	VOLUNTEER	METHOD OF CONTACT
America Online	Joe Kluepful	Phone (954) 721-7721
DOS	Lee Reynolds	LeeTutor @ earthlink.net (e-mail preferred) (954) 972-4961
Family Tree Maker	Joe Kluepful	Phone (954) 721-7721
FileMaker Pro	Steve Costello	Help @ bpca.com
Graphics Applications	Esther Schare	Cher1 @ aol.com (Subject: "BPCA Question") (954) 721-7721
MS Works	Joe Kluepful	Phone (954) 721-7721
Professional File	Steve Costello	Help @ bpca.com
Professional Write	Steve Costello	Help @ bpca.com
Quicken	Joe Kluepful	Phone (954) 721-7721
Shareware	Lee Reynolds	LeeTutor @ earthlink.net (e-mail preferred) (954) 972-4961
Windows 9x	Lee Reynolds	LeeTutor @ earthlink.net (e-mail preferred) (954) 972-4961
	Steve Costello	Help @ bpca.com
	Joe Kluepful	Phone (954) 721-7721
Windows XP	Lee Reynolds	LeeTutor @ earthlink.net (e-mail preferred) (954) 972-4961

Next Executive Board Meeting

Imperial Point Library
5985 N. Federal Highway
Fort Lauderdale, FL 33308

For More Information:

<[http://mylibraryservice.org/directory/
Branches.cfm?BrnchID=22](http://mylibraryservice.org/directory/Branches.cfm?BrnchID=22)>

December 23, 2008 - TUESDAY 4:30 PM

All members are invited and urged to attend!!

The E-Board meeting is on the Tuesday aft the
regular meeting.

NEXT MONTH'S MEETINGS

WEDNESDAY,
JANUARY 14, 2009
MEETING PLACE TBA

6:45 PM
Q&A

7:30 PM
QUICKEN

THE BPCA MEETS THE 2ND
WEDNESDAY OF EACH MONTH

VISITORS AND GUESTS ALWAYS
WELCOME

Notes From The Editor

By BPCA News Editor Steve Costello

For the December 2008 *BPCA News*, my thanks go to:

From BPCA:

Gerry Gerstenberg, 1st Vice President
COOL WEBSITES – New Year's Eve Ball 09

GERRY SAYS – Thumb Drives

Lee Reynolds, Member
r u XPerienced? -- Delete Corrupted AVI Files
Hasta La Vista -- Windows Vista Disk Partitioning

Monthly:

Bob (The Cheapskate) Click, Greater Orlando Computer Users Group
From The Deals Guy For December 2008

Feature

Ira Wilsker, APCUG Director; Columnist, The Examiner, Beaumont TX; Radio & Talk Show Host
My Favorite FREE PC Utilities – Part 5 - Malware Scanners

Without the efforts of the above, and many others in the past, it would be very hard to keep providing quality information.