



OMUG

<http://www.oly mug.org>

NEWS



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Olympia Microcomputer Users Group

September 2005

One good event; one not so great

By **Bill Gortz**
OMUG President

August has come and gone and OMUG had one very successful event and one that was a little disappointing in attendance (but those who did attend seemed pleased with the results).

The first event was the Scatter Creek Rest Area Coffee "Safety Break" booth. Thanks to the many OMUG members and their families who volunteered for one or more shifts and/or made cookies to be given out at the booth; this event was a huge success. Almost everyone agreed that the home made cookies and a friendly comment or smile from the booth attendants were the greatest factors in making this such a success. I would like to extend a special "Thank You" to everyone who made cookies for this event.

Next year OMUG is signed up be at the Maytown Rest Area (on southbound I-5) from 2 a.m., on July 1 until 2 p.m., on July 3. This will be the Fourth of July weekend and we should be able to equal, or better this year's scholarship



donations.

For those who are not aware of it, all the proceeds from donations received at the Rest Stops go to the OMUG Scholarship Fund.

The other event was the OMUG Picnic and as I said, not as many members showed up as we expected. Almost everyone I have talked to had some other event also scheduled for that day and it was just a matter of which event to attend. In my case I had two picnics scheduled that day and made the choice for OMUG, but I could just as easily have gone to the other picnic instead. Those members who did attend seemed to have a good time. Next year the picnic is scheduled for Aug. 12, also at Priest Point Park. This time it will be at Shelter/Kitchen #3, next to where we had it this year. Please mark the date

on your calendar and hopefully there won't be as many conflicts to choose from next year.

This months general meeting presentation will be from 4th Dimension Computers in Olympia. The subject will be the Microsoft Media Center Edition of Windows XP. In case you are wondering what this is, the official description from the Microsoft website is:

"Windows XP Media Center Edition 2005 is an operating system that enables you to enjoy the best in home entertainment, personal productivity, and creativity on your home PC in an easy, complete, and connected way. With Media Center Edition 2005, you can store, share, and enjoy all of your photos, all of your music, all of your home video, and even recorded TV in one sleek and easy to use place.

"Computers powered by Windows XP Media Center Edition 2005 are called Media Center PCs. They are complete Windows XP-based PCs enhanced for

See PROGRAMS, Page 3

Watch out for Pharming attacks circulating

By **John Pearce**
Pikes Peak Computer Application Society, Colo.

First, there was phishing trying to collect personal information. A new attack called pharming is

trying to do the same thing in a more technologically-sophisticated way.

Pharming is a way for the bad guys to redirect your web browsing to a site which they control. Pharming is also known as DNS (Domain Name System) cache poisoning. DNS is what converts

human friendly names like webboard.apcug.org to numerical addresses like 192.160.122.122. The bad guys want to impact the largest number of Internet users possible so

See PHARMING, Page 2



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PHARMING

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

ISP's and large corporations are the most likely targets of pharming attacks. One goal is to download spyware or adware to your PC.

Protecting yourself from pharming attacks takes a little effort. Start by keeping your browser updated with all the security patches. Next, you should be sure the padlock icon is displayed on any page where you enter personal information such as username, account number, or password.

The padlock icon indicates you are connected to the legitimate owner of the URL and the data you enter is protected by SSL encryption during transmission. The bad guys would have to know the private key of the site in order to make the padlock appear. You can view the security information by double clicking the padlock icon on your browser. You can also use a tool like SpoofStick to confirm the URL of the web page you're viewing.

Being aware of phishing and pharming along with a little care and caution will keep your web browsing safe from the bad guys.

There is no restriction against any

non-profit group using this article as long as it is kept in context with proper credit given the author. The Editorial Committee of the Association of Personal Computer User Groups (APCUG), an international organization of which this group is a member, brings this article to you.

Thanks For Renewing

James Gunnells

Loren Freeman

Bill & Dora Murray

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**James & Sharon
Reddick**

Elizabeth & Keith Ross

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Harlin Baker

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Richardson

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Helen Wilder

Don Hertzog

George & Arleen Cruz

Welcome New/Returning Members

Darlynn, Charles, &

Kris Wright

Arlene Kapner

David & Cris Campbell

Stick Wilder

Board approves new secretary

By Pat Sonnenstuhl
OMUG Webmaster



The OMUG Board convened Aug. 18. In attendance were John Marshall, past president; Bill Gortz, president; Max Whipps, treasure; Sandra Pishner, newsletter editor; James Gunnells, director at large; Christie McCormick, director at large; and Pat Sonnenstuhl. Absent members were L. D. McNall, and Shirley Bellinghausen.

The meeting was called to order at 7 p.m.

Reports of Board Members:

We need to increase our membership and our newsletter mailing list to maintain our reduced mailing rates. It was suggested we contact all of the local libraries and mail each of them a newsletter. Shelton library keeps them in a notebook for patrons.

We need a coordinated system to be certain new members get onto our reflector as quickly as possible. Max, James and Pat to work that out.

The board approved a purchase that John made for a cable to facilitate our sound system with the Senior Center. With the remodeling going on, we need to change how we set up our chairs in the larger space

Much appreciation to the Senior Center for all of our benefits. Bill Gortz will write a letter of thanks to them for being so flexible with us.

Larry Jensen has consented to be our new secretary and the board approved this recommendation. Larry will start in September and Max will obtain the secretary books and transfer them to Larry.

The Rest Stop fund-raiser was a tremendous success, clearing more than \$1,000, which will go toward our OMUG

scholarship fund. The home baked cookies were a big hit, as was the friendly attitude of our members to folks visiting the cookie station. We were able to save a lot of money by furnishing the home baked cookies rather than purchasing cookies. We are scheduled for Maytown on July 4th weekend in 2006, so start baking your cookies now. Thanks to everyone who participated!

The Internet SIG has moved to the daytime, same day (first Wednesday each month). This was well attended, and some new members attended who prefer the daytime time slot. This is a great SIG for the daytime, and a great way to make new members feel welcome.

The Windows SIG will be held on the fifth Thursday in September (29th) as Max will be out of town until through the normally scheduled fourth Thursday.

Programs for the remainder of the year were discussed and more ideas generated.

Several board members are attending Raincoast. Bill hopes to make contact with some of the vendors and encourage them to come and talk to us. Check the web site for more information: <http://www.raincoast.info/>

PROGRAMS

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

home entertainment. These computers represent the evolution of home PCs into digital media hubs that bring together your entertainment choices and allow you to access them with one remote control.”

To find out what this really means and how it can change the way you use your computers, come to the general meeting on Sept. 8. The meeting starts at 7 p.m., in the Olympia Senior Center. Remember the meet and mix from 6 to 7 p.m., for coffee, cookies, and a social hour before the meeting. Directions are on Page 7 of this newsletter, if needed.

I hope to see you there, it should be an interesting meeting.

OMUG Income & Expenses July 2005



Income: \$208

[Dues-\$200, Postage Reimbursment-\$4,
Interest-\$4]

Expenses: \$1,185

[SSSS Donation-\$25, Newsletter Copying & Postage-\$291, General Meeting Handouts & Supplies-\$69, Insurance-300, 2005 Scholarship Award-\$500]

Net Deficit: (\$977)

| | | |
|------------------------------|--------------|---------|
| Checking Account Balance: | \$122 | 8/25/05 |
| Savings Account Balance: | \$3071 | |
| Scholarship Account Balance: | \$1839 | |
| Bank Accounts Total: | \$5032 | |
| To Be Deposited: | <u>\$160</u> | |
| Current Treasury: | \$5192 | |

Windows: Better Safe (Mode) Than Sorry

By Gabe Goldberg
APCUG Advisor

Though the Windows operating system isn't usually dangerous, it includes a special "Safe Mode." This is a handy way to boot a PC to investigate and fix problems.

You may have read advice about when to use this, and even how to run it. But scarce and fragmented Safe Mode information can make it sound more exotic than it is.

Windows XP books' indexes provided surprisingly few entries for "Safe Mode." I found the best coverage in two O'Reilly books [www.oreilly.com], "Windows XP Pro: The Missing Manual" and "Windows XP Home Edition: The Missing Manual."

Naturally, Google found a gazillion hits. But they're mostly "just the facts" write-ups targeting people who already know "what" and "why" and just need "how" information. So this article provides background for this built-in Windows facility.

Over the years, as it became more powerful and reliable, Windows grew significantly from its slender 1992-era Version 3.1 self. There's no free lunch; learning new tricks required more software. But that complexity gets in the way when problems occur.

Just as doctors rarely diagnose patients through heavy winter coats, Windows

needs to shed layers to expose problems' causes.

Safe Mode slims Windows down; only loading and running specific pieces needed for basic operation. So your video

display looks strange in Safe Mode because Windows doesn't load the monitor's specific driver program. This lets you recover from problems caused by buggy drivers you may have just installed.

There are other restrictions: you likely can't get online and may not be able to print. But Safe Mode lets you perform tests, fix problems, and install/uninstall programs.

If you think your PC may have a virus or spyware, it's worth installing the antidote in Safe Mode, since some malware prevents installing anti-virus software. If installed anti-virus software can't remove a virus, Safe Mode may let it succeed. (Some experts recommend always running virus/spyware scans under Windows in Safe Mode.)

If defragmenting your hard drive never finishes, Safe Mode may remove programs that keep interrupting it. And, it lets you erase files that Windows normally says are in use (though only do this when you're sure what you're

Bottom Line

Safe Mode is a good tool for when our computer troubles you.

doing).

Windows XP defines two kinds of user accounts: "administrator" and "limited." An administrator can install/ remove software,

change settings, etc., while a limited user can only run programs and use facilities. Even if only one account is defined, a secret companion called Administrator is available. Booting in Safe Mode lets you access this account, handy when normal accounts won't work — for example, uninstalling software that doesn't want to leave.

Enter Safe Mode by repeatedly pressing F8 as your PC boots, just after BIOS information displays; then select Safe Mode from the options list.

Leaving Safe Mode is simple — just reboot via the Start button and your usual procedure; Windows will return looking normal again, not holding a grudge for being run in diagnostic mode.

Here's an important point: It's worth practicing booting into Safe Mode when you're relaxed and your PC is working properly.

Consider running a PC in Safe Mode to be like starting your car's engine with the hood up at a service station. It's routine; there's nothing alarming about it. But just as you wouldn't want to open

the hood for the first time (Where *is* that latch release?) when something is wrong with your car, you shouldn't first use Safe Mode when you're already worried about a PC problem.

And a PS: It's sometimes hard picking between a dozen competing books on a topic. A helpful technique for evaluating choices is searching for a few topics — like Safe Mode — in the books' indexes and judging them on coverage.

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Bigger drives, faster boot ups

By Sue Crane

Big Bear Computer Club, California

Tech Notes

AMD's Antitrust Suit

Advanced Micro Devices complaint accuses Intel of maintaining its monopoly in the PC processor market by illegally coercing customers around the world into using its products. The 48-page complaint alleges that Intel used illegal subsidies to win sales, and in some cases threatened companies with "severe consequences" for using or selling AMD products. Meanwhile, hoping to win the support of U.S. legislators and average computer users, AMD is publishing full-page ads in 7 U.S. newspapers, explaining why it filed suit and encouraging readers to read the full text of its 48-page complaint. The AMD complaint is available online at http://www.amd.com/us-en/assets/content_type/DownloadableAssets/AMD-Intel_Full_Complaint.pdf.

30Gb on a 1-inch drive

A Japanese university has shown a prototype 10GB 1-inch hard disk drive that packs data on the disk surface more densely than existing hard drives with an areal density—the number of bits per unit of disk surface areal—of 138 gigabits per square inch. The drive uses perpendicular recording technology to achieve its higher areal density. The Japanese researchers project they will be able to boost the areal density of 1-inch disks to about 500-gigabits per square inch in 2007. This could enable 1-inch drives to have capacities as high as 30GB a few years from now. Currently, the highest-capacity 1-inch drives on sale store a maximum of 6GB.

Court Rules: File-Swapping

In a unanimous decision justices ruled: companies that build businesses with the active intent of encouraging

copyright infringement should be held liable for their customers' illegal actions. The decision will likely reshape the Internet landscape in which file swapping has become commonplace.

Man vs. SuperComputer

Michael Adams, United Kingdom's strongest chess player, is the latest player to take on a supercomputer. Adams and the Hydra computer will play up to 6 games for a prize fund of \$150,000. Some experts are already predicting that Hydra will win the contest. But correspondence chess grandmaster Arno Nickel, who recently beat Hydra 2-0 in a correspondence match, has predicted that Adams could secure a 3-3 draw. According to the team that developed Hydra, it can calculate 200 million moves per second and see up to 40 moves ahead.

Tired of waiting for the boot?

Giga-byte Technology has stumbled upon a faster way to boot up PCs based on the Windows XP operating system.

iRam is a PC add-in card with four DDR DRAM memory slots, designed to be used as a PC drive. iRam uses DRAM to store information, data can be retrieved up to 60 times faster. The iRam holds up to 4Gb of DRAM in four memory slots. The card fits into a standard PCI slot, which provides power, and it uses a SATA (Serial ATA) connection for data transfer. If the PC is unplugged, the iRam has an on-board battery for emergency power that can last up to 12 hours. The iRam will be available in July.

Laptop Batteries Recalled

Batteries in some notebook computers from Fujitsu Siemens can

overheat, with a risk of fire. The company has recalled the batteries in some of its Amilo notebook computers, and will replace affected batteries free.

No IE7 for Win 2K

According to an unnamed employee, Microsoft will not be releasing IE 7 for Windows 2000 as this would involve a lot of work for an operating system that is in the later stages of its lifecycle and some of the security work in IE 7 relies on operating system functionality in XP SP2. Win 2K users argue that Microsoft is committed to provide extended support to Windows 2000 through 2010. Microsoft was also criticized for building a Web browser that cannot run independently of the operating system. IE 7 will be available in beta this summer, offering improved security features, basic tabbed browsing and improved standards support, including support for CSS 2 and PNG transparencies.

Digitally Enhanced Photos May Be "Too Good"

Kacie Powell, a photographer for Centre College in Danville, Ky., tried to get some digital photo shots printed at Wal-Mart, but employees said they looked "too professional." She ended up signing an affidavit that included pictures of college employees who were authorized to print her pictures. When a colleague whose portrait was included among the authorized photographers went to Wal-Mart with some candid shots from graduation, she got turned down too. Photo Labs, fearful of being sued by professional photographers, are in a tough spot: should they anger their customers or risk a lawsuit? Don't be surprised if your digitally enhanced personal photos are turned down by Wal-Mart and other fast-photo labs.