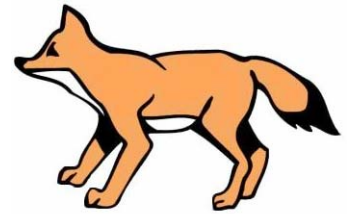


FOX TALES



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May 2009

May Tidbits

Jon Jackman – President – FVPCA

We have been in pursuit of an improved broadband connection for our general meetings, and we are exploring the option of using another location at the Park District facility at South Point on the far southeast side of Oswego. I recently walked around in the facility and was shown a very nice room that had the space that we need and which does not require moving day care furnishings around before a meeting can begin. There are even pull down blinds in the windows! We have contacted the Park District and are trying to determine if this space will work. It has been our experience that these things take time, so we remain patiently optimistic. We are hopeful that we will be able to receive an improved broadband Internet connection at this location as it is about only a mile from the main OPD office. Though in a somewhat obscure location, South Point may be a more convenient meeting place for the majority of our members in Oswego than an alternative location at Rasmussen College up near I-88. We will provide updates of our progress at our upcoming May meeting.

One of the things that we have been discussing in our meetings and in this newsletter is the possibility of broadcasting our meetings to members who may be unable to attend in person. APCUG is offering us live meeting to conduct "webinars". Without an improved broadband connection, we will be unable to take advantage of this opportunity. Playing a real time video using Live Meeting at a member's home will require him/her to have a decent broadband connection themselves. Also, persons attending a session should complete a training segment that is available at the APCUG website. More information to follow.

Last month's program on Google Earth and Google Earth over an iPhone went very well, according to the reports. Thanks Norm Hoube, Craig McGregor and Bill Powell. (I had to leave early for a wedding, and appreciate their help in taking over the second half of the meeting.) Our next meeting will be on May 16th at the Civic Center location. We will be looking at EZ Draw which is flowcharting software that I have been using on a project. We may also explore what it took to finish up the DTV project out near Apple River Canyon near Galena. (Exploring EZ Draw Flowcharting Software & A Quick Tour of TVFool.com.)

I also received a nice letter from Dan Abella, the General Manager of The First Tee of Aurora and the Fox River Valley with: "On behalf of The First Tee of Aurora and Fox River Valley, its board members, and staff, I want to personally thank you and the other members of the Fox Valley PC Association (FVPCA) for the time and effort you provided to update or computer systems. The updates you made were much needed, and they will definitely allow us to work in a much more safe and efficient manner. I really appreciate your thorough analysis and quick turnaround with this project. Thank you very much! - Dan Abella"

Our organization welcomes the opportunity to honor our motto: "Users Helping Users" by participating in community based projects like the one we had with The First Tee of Aurora program. If you have any ideas, please pass them on to us.

Lake House Antenna Project Update

Jon Jackman - President FVPCA

In previous issues of the *Fox Tales* newsletter, we had discussed the use of TVfool.com to calculate the available digital television stations for a remote location near Galena, Illinois. This was necessary to determine whether a part-time resident would be able to receive DTV signals from cities ranging from 53 to 86 miles away. Using the TV signal analysis results available from the TVfool.com website, a chart is displayed that shows the vectors of grouped signals. I was able to print out a table listing the channel information: call sign, real channel and virtual channel as well as the corresponding broadcasting network. Signal information is also listed and includes decibel readings and the distance in miles to the transmitter, as well as the true and magnetic compass headings from a given location.

Unfortunately, after setting up the new antenna (Wineguard HD8200U) I discovered that I had left the printout with the all important azimuth information at home on the corner of my desk. The lake house has no access to the Internet, so I was wondering how I might figure out what the headings needed to be. As we were headed into Galena for dinner, I brought along my Acer netbook computer. After dinner we headed into a local establishment that offered free WiFi, and I fired up my AcerOne. Using Google Earth, I was able to once again determine the latitude and longitude in degrees, minutes, and seconds for the lake house which I then converted into a decimal format using a tool I also found on Google. Using those coordinates we then entered them into the TVfool.com website and re-created the chart and table of information needed to align the antenna properly. I was able to capture the information and place it into a document which I saved on my netbook.

The next morning we finished hooking up the control line from the antenna to the box in the family room at the lake house. Eagerly, we positioned the antenna at 36° and went into the setup screen of the converter box. We were able to detect several stations which came in quite clearly on the old TV set. Using the signal strength meter display, we were able to rotate the antenna slightly so as to get the best signal. We then stored the antenna position into the antenna motor controller. We then repeated the steps for the other reported azimuth headings on the chart. It turned out that there were only three vectors which yielded receivable television transmissions. (These were labeled A, B, C.) It is important to note that after the June change over, some stations may switch to new channels as the analog channels would have been abandoned. This will require a new scan at each of the three positions for the antenna.

(Continued on Page 5)

Microsoft Releases Windows 7 Release Candidate 1

Dean Holste, FVPCA Treasurer

If you haven't heard, Microsoft has released Windows 7 RC1 for download. You must have a Hotmail, Live.com, or Technet account to download it. Since I have a Hotmail account I was able to download it a few days ago. The file is an .iso file that is about 2.93GB in size. My 3Mbps DSL connection spent a little over two hours downloading it to my desktop. You must then burn the .iso file to a blank DVD. On the download site Microsoft has all the instructions for downloading, burning the .iso file and installing it to your computer. It is emphasized that since this is a Release Candidate file and fully complete, it is stressed that you not use this as your primary computer. Since I am in the process of building a new computer, I will load the new Windows OS on it and see what happens. I'll let you know as things progress.

Power to the Pixels!

Dave Christenson – Member FVPCA

I suspect that everyone reading this has at least one digital camera. What criteria did you use when buying it? Size, features, cuteness, need, impulse? Some or all of these? Maybe. But I'll bet that two you definitely considered are price and pixel count. All other things being equal, low price and high mega-pixel count is good! Right? Not always. I'll certainly go along with the low price bit, but let's think about the pixels a bit.

Why do we want more pixels? Obviously, because the picture, or image, is made out of pixels, the more pixels we have the more detail the image can contain and the greater we can enlarge it, or more cropping we can do. If we go beyond the capabilities of the count, we get what's called pixilation, or, more informally, stair-stepping, where a diagonal line zig-zags. Also called, for obvious reason, "the jaggies." So, why don't we necessarily want the most pixels possible for the price?

Well, everything in this world is a compromise, including us. We all make unnecessary noise, so do pixels. When light from the lens hits a pixel it puts out an electronic signal, proportional to the amount of light striking it. But, there is also a residual signal in a pixel, that is, a signal that it puts out whether or not light is hitting it. This is called noise. This is on top of the wanted signal, and the lower the brightness of the image, the greater the noise appears. Thus, it shows up more in photos taken in dim light. But it's always there, and in all cameras. It appears more obvious in areas of smoothness, such as sky, or human skin, and causes the image to look somewhat rough or granulated. (To those who are used to film, it's more or less the equivalent of grain.) Altogether, noise is something really undesirable.

What's the easiest way to reduce the amount of noise in a pixel? Easy, make it bigger! Now, do you see the conflict? If we make the pixels bigger to reduce noise, then we have to have fewer of them on a given size sensor. Or, we can have bigger sensors. This method definitely works, but at a price. A bigger sensor means a bigger camera, and a higher price. Large sensors are expensive, huge sensors ridiculously so. (A giant sensor or a new car, your choice!) There is software in cameras designed to analyze the noise and reduce it. It works, but it has limitations distinguishing between noise and signal. Software packages can be purchased at varying price levels to reduce noise, they help but don't cure the noise problem, if you want to get into that.

You would think that camera manufacturers, being aware of the problem, would design their cameras to have a reasonable compromise between sensor size and number of pixels. The designers could, but specifications are given by the marketing group, who are well aware that "Pixels sell!" So, what should you do?

Well, consider how you are going to use your photos. Are you going to print 16" x 20" photos on high resolution glossy paper? Are you going to crop out an itchy-bitsy portion of the center of the picture and enlarge it? If so, I'm afraid you will have to bite the bullet and get a larger sensor camera. But if you are taking photos of birthday parties, vacations, and get-togethers, and want to print them as 4x5's or e-mail them, then I wouldn't be too concerned about pixel counts. Maybe cuteness is more important.

Dave Christensen is a member of the Fox Valley PC Association and is the digital photography guru. His articles are always enlightening.

PC Troubleshooting 101

By William Powell, Fox Valley PC Association

I received an old Compaq Presario 5000 desktop PC from a friend last week. He told me that the PC gave some error message at boot up and that it had originally had windows ME but was upgraded to XP Home at some point. He said I could have it as he didn't want to waste his time on an old PC...

I took it home found a monitor, keyboard, mouse, and a couple power cables and fired it up. It did just what he said... It booted ok but then continued to give an error message. So I booted it again in safe mode and ran MSCONFIG. I went to the startup folder, disabled all items listed, and booted again... NO CHANGE... so I booted it again in safe mode. This time the message did not appear so I knew the XP operating system was more or less ok.

By now it was dinnertime so I shut the PC off and went to eat. After I was done I went back to work on the PC some more. This time when I pushed the power on button nothing happened so I began to take the PC apart and look inside. Suspect items were the power on switch, the power supply, or the hard drive. I will say that I don't like the way this PC was built as I had a lot of trouble getting at things. The side panel came off easy but the front cover was entirely another matter. I went to the internet on my laptop and looked at how to remove the front cover and got a couple hints but I still struggled with it for some time before I was finally able to get it to give. I actually pulled the floppy drive and the CD drives out as I was trying to remove it.

Now that the cover was off I reinstalled the floppy and CD drives, reconnected all the cables and pushed the power on switch. It booted fine – but of course still with the error message. Looking at the system folder in the control panel I could see that the PC had a 60 Gig hard drive, which, for some reason, was, partitioned into a 57 Gig and a 3 Gig. It has a floppy, a CD-ROM, a CD-RW, 2 USB ports in the rear and 2 in the front, and only 128 MB of Ram. I thought it was worth trying to salvage. Worst case, I would have to reload XP.

Just for kicks I went to Microsoft Knowledge web page and looked up the error message, "wuauclt.exe has caused an error and needs to close" and found a fix. I printed the fix, followed the steps, and rebooted. At last, it worked and the system now runs... I looked through my old Ram chips and found a 64 MB chip that would fit, I plugged it in, and rebooted again. Now I have a PC with XP and 192 MB of Ram... Wow... Raw power! The system still has a few bugs so I'll probably still reinstall XP...

Bill Powell is the Membership Coordinator of the Fox Valley P.C. Association .



Lake House Antenna Project Update

Jon Jackman - President FVPCA

I had expected to maybe get four or five stations, but was surprised when we were able to receive nearly 20 stations! Upon further review of station information websites, I was able to determine whether a signal was HD or SD and, in some cases, determined the height of the transmission tower and the power of the transmissions.

Without accessibility to the list of azimuth readings, this project would have been on hold until we had figured out where to point the antenna. Using trial and error would have been very time-consuming. Fortunately, the converter box allowed for an "EZ- Add" feature which enabled us to add stations to each of the headings on the TVfool.com list without erasing what was stored for an adjacent antenna setting.

My friend was very pleased with the success of our project. The approximately \$200 cost was a one time expense and they will not be tied into a satellite TV contract. I may have a few pictures to share at our next meeting. Hopefully, I may have hooked up my homemade DTV antenna by then and had a report on that as well.



USO Memorial for Bill Swiss Submitted

We were finally able to get the listing of all of the donors who generously made contributions to the USO Memorial in Bill Swiss' name. Thanks to all of the Fox Valley PC Association members and friends who stepped up for this tribute to the late Bill Swiss, our former Newsletter Editor and Publicity Chair. A contribution to the amount of \$295 has been submitted to the USO Memorial on behalf of the Fox Valley PC Association. Donors include:

Richard Bremer	Richard Chamberlain	David Chrestenson
Kathryn Farrell	Richard Goid	Dean Holste
Jon Jackman	Howard Katz	Craig McGregor
James "Mac" McMillan	Rita Moretti	Stanley Naruz
Bill Palmer	Bill Powell	Richard Ramme

These are the names that we have listed. If you donated, but your name is not listed, please let us know. We are transitioning between Treasurers and may have omitted a name. If so, please accept our apology.



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There are a growing number of locations that offer free Internet via a wireless Wi-Fi connection! We would like to find a place where we could meet and have Wi-Fi too!

THE FOX VALLEY PC ASSOCIATION

The Fox Valley PC Association is dedicated to the task of providing computer information to our fellow members. We are a non-profit organization. The group has been active since January 1985. The dues are \$30 per year. Our meetings are held on the third Saturday of the month (except December.)

The meeting place for (May) will be at the Oswego Civic Center, 5 Ashlawn Ave, Montgomery, IL The formal meeting starts at 9:15 A.M. Non-member visitors are always welcome. If you can, please come early & help with set-up. Thanks!

"USERS HELPING USERS"

Membership Renewals

**Gwynne Barba
Kathy Farrell
Robert Jackman**

Thank-You for your continuing support!!

The "FOX TALES" Newsletter

The "Fox Tales" Newsletter is published monthly by the Fox Valley PC Association, Post Office Box 369, Oswego, IL 60543, a non-profit organization, established to provide information about IBM PCs and IBM Compatible personal computer systems (and almost anything "digital") to our members.

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Kane County Electronic Recycling Dates for 2009 **Jun 12th & 13th, Jul 10th & 11th, Aug 7 & 8**

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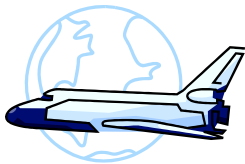
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The Fox Valley PC Association Web site is:

www.fvpca.org
Courtesy of APCUG



Have a computer hardware problem or a technical question? Head over to our website and click on the red question mark to send your question! We will research it and have an answer at the next meeting or sooner if needed.

May Program:

Exploring EZ Draw Flowcharting Software

A Quick Tour of TVFool.com

Presented by Jon Jackman

The Next Meeting Will Be at 9:15 A.M.

May 16, 2009

At the Oswego Civic Center
5 Ashlawn Ave. Montgomery, Illinois