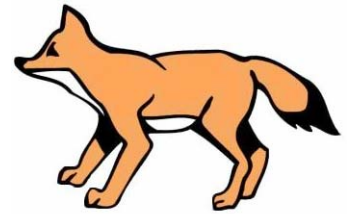


FOX TALES



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November 2008

November Elections

Jon Jackman – FVPCA

Once again we enter the month when we will hold the elections for our club officers. As far as the elections for the Fox Valley PC Association go, we will have elections for our candidates, although there were no newcomers who were nominated at our October meeting. So we will have a ballot that lists: Jon Jackman – President, Tom Anzalone – Vice President, Richard Chamberlain – Treasurer, and William Palmer – Secretary. To be eligible to cast your ballot, be sure that your dues are up to date. By the time we come together to cast our votes, the Local, State and National Elections will have been completed. We will see who the next leader of our country is. Let's pray that all of our elected officials do a great job, whomever they may be!

The program at our November meeting will demonstrate a VOIP (Voice over Internet Protocol) program called SKYPE. Tom and Dean will demonstrate it. We will also have some interesting digital toys to "show and tell." Tom Anzalone has a brief invitation/challenge for anyone interested in Kubuntu. See his Linux Challenge in this newsletter. Bill Powell also offers a tip on Google 411, a neat way to find a business using your cell phone while you are on the go. I wrote up my recent experience trying to hook up a DTV converter box at the lake house. You would be amazed at how much Digital TV is all around us over the air! Be sure to try out the tools mentioned in the article.

This month we will begin working with the First Tee of Aurora program. If you signed up, you should be receiving an update in you in-box shortly. We will also be looking at alternative meeting locations. More to be discussed at our meeting.

Dave Chrestensen may be able to share his experience using Acronis Home Version 9.0. He recently had a major Windows crash. Fortunately, he had backed it all up. We will get the update from him at the meeting...

As the leaves fall it is time to get out the rake and buy (several dozen) leaf bags. My old leaf blower/vacuum died, so I have been looking around for a suitable replacement. Last year I had used about 26 bags over the three weeks. If I am lucky this year the wind will blow most of them down the street!

See you at the November meeting! Did someone say Costco cake? Yummy!

The Linux Challenge

By Tom Anzalone

After several months of having our house on the market, we made the decision to pull it off in this declining market. But as most people do when they sell a house, we cleaned for several days. During this cleaning I came across several older, but serviceable, computers that I had acquired over the years. So rather than take them to the local Electronic Clean up day in Kane County, I have decided to issue a challenge to our group members. Have you ever wanted to learn another operating system such as Linux? Did you never try because you found it too intimidating or didn't have the time? If you answer yes to either of these questions, then I challenge you! I have installed Kubuntu (<http://www.kubuntu.org/>) on each of these machines. I am willing to give these away to anyone willing to either donate money to the club or do a review on their experiences at a monthly meeting. I am also willing to help each user with learning the system and answer questions during their experience. You will have to provide your own monitor, keyboard, mouse for these machines. Jon Jackman may be able to help with the keyboard mouse for these systems so please contact him. So will you take the challenge? If so, please email me at tanzalone@gmail.com and I will bring your box to the next meeting. I only have about 2 right now as of this article. But I should have at least 2-3 more completed soon.

Leave it up to Google to come up with something like this!!!

Submitted by Bill Powell – FVPCA

Here's a number worth putting in your cell phone, or your home phone speed dial:

1-800-goog411 (1-800-466-4411).

This is an awesome service from Google, and it's free -- great when you are on the road.

Don't waste your money on information calls and don't waste your time manually dialing the number. This phone number will give you, free of charge, the number of any business you want and then connect you to it for FREE! Let's say I am driving along in my car and I need to call the golf course and I don't know the number. I hit the speed dial for information that I have programmed (1-800-466-4411).

The voice at the other end says, 'City & State.' I say, 'Garland , Texas ' He says, 'Business, Name or Type of Service.' I say, 'Firewheel Golf Course.' He says, 'Connecting' and Firewheel answers the phone. How great is that? This is nationwide and it is absolutely free!

Click on the link below and watch the short clip for a quick demonstration.

<http://www.google.com/goog411>

DTV Approaching Quickly

By Jon Jackman - FVPCA

At our October meeting I related how I was headed out the next weekend to my friend's lake house with a couple of digital television (DTV) converter boxes. As mentioned at the meeting, we all are facing the end of analog television on February 17, 2009. There have been many notices about how this may affect us. Basically, if you presently use an over the air (OTA) antenna to receive your TV signal, you will need to see if your system will work after the analog signals are shut down for good. Here is a good overview (also linked on our web site): <http://cbs2chicago.com/digital/?nbid=693588#693588>

My friend's lake house is in a rugged remote region in northwestern Illinois. In my research to discover what channels are available, I discovered some very helpful tools that provide detailed information about existing stations, their location, expected signal strength, availability of existing digital stations, etc. One web site: www.tvfool.com was very helpful. This tool can help answer questions like:

- Which broadcasters are transmitting locally?
- How far are the transmitters from me?
- Which direction should I point my antenna?
- How strong are the signals in my area?
- What analog and digital channels are available?

And a new feature: How will things look after the analog shutoff in Feb-2009?

There is a large antenna on the roof at the lake house. The mast is attached to a motorized rotor with a control unit next to the TV in the family room. I learned that the rotor (circa 1980) came with the house and did work briefly, then failed several years ago. The antenna stopped rotating at that time and has not moved since. It is not pointed in the direction indicated in the report from [tvfool.com](http://www.tvfool.com). Consequently, it barely receives any stations. The TV in the family room is very old. In order to get any channels at all it is necessary to use the tuner in the VCR.

We climbed up a ladder and upgraded the coax cable run to RG-6. It had been RG-59, and had several connections and splitters. There was also a signal amplifier. We went with one cable run, leaving a little extra near the antenna to allow it to be extended on a longer mast next spring. The 5 conductor wire from the rotor was in very bad shape. We tried to splice one of the 5 wires that was broken where it entered the house, but the rotor still would not work. (A new rotor will be installed as an upgrade next spring after the national DTV conversion.) We eliminated one of the splitters by replacing the old signal amplifier with a 1 input/1 output signal configuration with a powered 1 input/2 output signal amplifier. When we hooked up the DTV converter box, no HD channels were detected after the initial channel scan. But not to worry, just yet. The locally available channels listed in the [tvfool](http://www.tvfool.com) report (there are only 4 in this location) have not yet converted over to digital. The DTV converter box allows for the current analog signal to pass through for the time being.

We re-examined the antenna. The [tvfool](http://www.tvfool.com) report indicated that a long range "deep fringe" antenna would be needed. In an online search we could not find the exact profile for the existing antenna, but it resembles a midrange model. We decided to wait until we re-open the lake house in the spring (after stations begin to broadcast a digital signal) and install the new motorized rotor.

(Continued on Page 4)

DTV Approaching Quickly (cont'd)

At that time, we will remotely rotate the antenna to the recommended headings and see how the reception is. If it is adequate, we would not need to upgrade the antenna. If not, we would have one handy to give it a try.

The topic of satellite TV came up. As they do not spend a great deal of time at the lake house, the cost of an annual subscription is difficult to justify. There was a thought of getting a third box and hooking it up to an extra dish, but EULA reigns! Even though the choices for OTA stations are severely restricted, there are (should be, according to the tvfool tools) a few network TV stations available for weather and news. The TV is connected to a DVD player, which gets the most use when the weather keeps people inside. If there is some sporting event that we wanted to watch, we could head over to "The Cove" (the local sports bar which has satellite TV.) Check out ZIP 61001 and see approximately what we are dealing with out there.

In regards to helpful sites to help with your own DTV assessment, take a look at: www.tvfool.com. You will be able to enter an address or choose to enter the location in decimal latitude and longitude. Finding a digital latitude & longitude presented a problem for me. I found a solution.

Using Google Maps, you can search for an address or simply zoom into a location you want to find the coordinates for. To make this work properly, the trick is to center the map on the point that you are trying to find the coordinates for. If you are trying to find the geo-location of an address for example, just type in the address and Google will automatically center the map on that point. But if you move the map, you will skew the results based on the new center point of the map. If you ever want to center the map on a specific location manually, you can right click (control + click on a Mac) on the point in Google, and use the "Center Map Here" option. Once you have your desired location centered on the map, you can retrieve the coordinates by typing (or copy-and-pasting) the following code into the URL portion of the window that has the Google Map:

```
javascript:alert(window.gApplication.getMap().getCenter());
```

if you type this in manually, make sure you do type it exactly how it is written here (and it is case-sensitive). I needed this for the Tvfool tool as I did not know the exact address of the lake house. I just zoomed in using Google maps and was able to figure it out. Another helpful DTV resource is www.antennaweb.org. It also provides detailed information on antenna positioning and channel availability.

I urge you to consider trying out both sites using your current address. You will see that there are an amazing number of HD stations out here in the Chicagoland area. Tvfool will allow to select combinations of analog, digital signals or both for the before and after 2/17/09 conversion.

There are low cost antennas available that will be sufficient to grab some of that HD content. The antenna tools mentioned earlier will help determine what sort of antenna will be needed to capture the maximum DTV channels. To apply for your \$40 government coupon for your DTV converter box go here: <https://www.dtv2009.gov>. There is additional information on DTV as well.

(Continued on Page 5)

DTV Approaching Quickly (cont'd)

I have read some blogs where some people have given up their expensive subscription TV services and gone back to OTA solutions. It all depends on what you need and what you want. In these difficult economic times, we may need to reassess our options! It will be interesting to see where the dust settles after February 17, 2009. We will keep you informed on the progress at the lake house project. Your experiences with DTV will become something worth discussing at our meetings during our, "Everything Digital" segment.

Good luck!

Computhanksgiving

by Berry F. Phillips, a member of the Computer Club of Oklahoma City
www.ccokc.org bfpdata (at) 1access.net

The Computer Club of Oklahoma City recently celebrated "Thanksgiving in August" at our monthly General Meeting when we celebrated all the members past and present who have given of their time and talents in the evolution of our computer club. As I was preparing for the General Meeting, I thought how far we have come from our humble beginnings in a small house where a few people attended to try to master DOS. Today, the Computer Club of Oklahoma City enjoys a high tech facility complete with a computer lab and is partnered with Senior Net.

The first computer club was the Homebrew Computer Club which had its humble beginnings in a garage in the Silicon Valley in California in March 1975. The club was an informal group of electronic enthusiasts and technically-minded hobbyists who gathered to trade parts, circuits, and information pertaining to computer devices. The club evolved rapidly to a large auditorium. The 1999 made-for-television movie "Pirates of the Silicon Valley" (and the book on which it was based, "Fire in the Valley: The making of the Personal Computer," describes the role of the Homebrew Computer Club in creating the personal computer. Engineers working on very expensive main frame computers in those days dreamed of developing a personal computer that would be so affordable that almost everyone could have one in their home. The rest of course is technological history.

SeniorNet was founded in 1986 by Doctor Mary Furlong in San Francisco, California and was later moved to Santa Clara, California. Dr. Furlong believed that telecommunications could enhance the lives of older adults. She faced considerable opposition in getting the project funded. The Merkle Foundation realized the potential of the project and funded it based at the University of San Francisco. Five learning centers were opened with twenty seniors, and computers were furnished by Apple Computers. Today SeniorNet has won numerous national awards and has 200 learning centers both nationally and internationally with a membership of approximately 20,000. SeniorNet is the leading technological educator of older adults and has benefited millions of seniors since its inception.

The birth of the personal computer was due to the development of the microprocessor, a single chip with all the circuitry that formerly occupied large cabinets. The early personal computers were called microcomputers and were sold as electronic kits with programming done by toggle switches and output was provided by front panel indicators such as neon bulbs. One remembers the Altair which you couldn't do much with but was of interests to hobbyists and technicians. Today due to the considerable evolution of the personal computer in 2008, one billion were sold worldwide and a projected two billion by 2014.

I am reminded of the Virginia Slim commercial, "You have come a long way, baby!" I wonder how often do we think of the thousands of our fellow citizens who have been involved with the development as well as the teaching of how to use these amazing technological devices that have so transformed our lives and indeed become a necessity and our very windows to the world? Perhaps, it is time to celebrate together a well deserved "Computhanksgiving."

Happy Thanksgiving from the Computer Club of Oklahoma City.

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Recycling Tips

Obsolete electronic gadgets -

Don't pitch them, recycle them. Check out www.epa.gov/ecycling or www.earth911.org for info about electronics recycling.

In Illinois, http://www.commerce.state.il.us/dceo/bureaus/energy_recycling/recycling and http://www.illinoisrecycles.org/byteback_text.html.



*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 (November) 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!

Membership Renewals

Cornwall, Gerald
Greshaw, Robert
McGregor, Craig
Ramme, Richard
Waldeck, Joseph

Thank-You for your continuing support!!
Don't forget to check the mailing label for your dues date!

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 2008 November 7 & 8, December 12 & 13

Location:

Kane Co. Circuit Clerk Office
540 S. Randall Rd. St.Charles, Il 8:00am-12:00pm

Items Accepted for Recycling:

Personal Computers, Monitors, Printers, Scanners, Modems, Tape, Disk, CD Drives, Cables, Keyboards, Mice, Plotters (*Limit of 25 pieces on Towers/CPU's and Monitors*)

Televisions, Camcorders, Cameras, Stereo Equipment (no speakers), Game Players, Joysticks

Telephones, Cell Phones, Pagers, Answering Machines, Typewriters, Calculators, Adding Machines, Fax Machines, Shredders, Copiers, Postage Meters

Electronic Media: Floppy Discs, Compact Discs (and cases), Videotapes, Audio Cassettes)

www.co.kane.il.us/environment/recycle



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Fox Tales

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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.

November Program:

How to talk Skype

With Tom & Dean

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

November 15, 2008

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