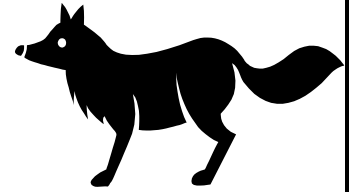


FOX TALES



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COD Shows

By Jon Jackman / President - Fox Valley PC Association

The Computer Shows at the College of DuPage had migrated their venue to the DuPage Fairgrounds this year. I had a report from one of our members that the shows for the rest of the year were cancelled, so I looked at their web site to try and find out more information. Sadly, the report was true, according to the www.codshow.com website:

"The Great Midwest Computer Show has suspended operations. At this time, there are no future shows planned. If new shows are added, they will be listed on this site. Please check back. - The Great Midwest Computer Show Staff"

I called Bill Grove, the contact person for the Great Midwest Computer Show, and discussed the latest developments. He indicated that the operations had been suspended to assess the attendance of dealers and the public. Bill went on to say that they intend to reconsider the operations and will make the necessary adjustments to get things rolling again. He said that the web site would have the details and that they would notify registered patrons once those decisions had been made. He mentioned a mailing of letters and/or cards.

The site also mentions that the COD shows have been running since 1984. I seem to recall making my first visit sometime in the late 1980's. I was amazed at the variety of computer related items for sale. Over the next decade the show grew and was THE place to go to get various parts for upgrades, system builds, software, printing supplies, memory... just about anything imaginable. Of course, Bill Swiss was a regular attendee, as the FVPCA had a booth to help recruit new members. We created a banner that was displayed over the booth to draw attention to our organization. Copies of the *Fox Tales* newsletters were available to the people who stopped by for advice and information. Bill did a great job! As interest at our booth waned, we stopped having a FVPCA booth at the show this year. There was not enough return on our time investment.

Building a PC was a remarkable learning experience. I remember going on Sunday mornings in the Fall right as the show opened. I would wait in line and try to get in early enough so that I would be able to be back home in time for the Bears game. But I would usually linger too long as I tried to find one more great deal. On those occasions I would end up listening to the game on the radio during my drive back home. Sometimes my son would tag along. Eventually we had made several machines. My son would purchase parts to assemble PCs for himself and his friends. (I am sure that these experiences led him towards his career as a computer/software engineer.) We were generally satisfied by the items purchased. However, the last machine that we built was made with parts ordered over the Internet. (I think this could be one of the reasons why the show's success has faltered.) Perhaps it is more about convenience, and even gas prices.

(COD Show... continued on page 4)

Rebate Battles

By Larry Bothe, 8/7/2006

In a recent issue of *Abort- Retry- Ignore* (the newsletter of the Computers Are Easy Users Group) John Spizzirri, in his long-running column, *The Lamp Post*, opined that when you buy a computer product that has a rebate offer, the price better be attractive without the rebate, because you may in fact have severe difficulty in getting the promised partial refund. I actually have a pretty good track record of receiving rebates to which I am entitled, but that is only because I am relentless in my efforts to make manufacturers or distributors pay up. As my friend George often says, "who promised you easy?"

If sellers intend to give all this money back, why don't they just set the price low and dispense with the expensive administration of rebate programs? *Consumer Reports* explained it very well a few years ago when they examined the rebate concept. Their research revealed that only about 5% of offered rebates ever get paid. The other 95% are kept as profits. Sellers advertise this wonderful final price (after rebate) to attract buyers, while knowing full well that they won't really have to sell at that low price, or anything close to it.

Why do the sellers end up paying only 5% of the offered rebates? The number one reason is that buyers never apply for them. They just don't get around to it. Or when they do they find out they don't have something required, like the original UPC code off the carton. The carton went out in the trash, and with it their only chance to get that \$100 back. Or if they do file for the rebate it gets refused for some technical reason. Maybe it was a few days past the deadline, or the receipt the buyer sent in was a copy instead of the original. Perhaps an unscrupulous seller just denied the rebate hoping the person applying would not be bothered to try to get the problem corrected. *Consumer Reports* said that happened in their study. When vendors finally do pay a rebate they often send the check in a format that looks like junk mail. They hope the person receiving it will just toss it out without taking a closer look. The dinky little postcard checks fall into that category. The end result is that 95% of rebates offered are not paid, and sellers are smiling all the way to the bank.

With the above background information in mind, here are two accounts of rebate battles that I have recently undertaken, and mostly won. Last October, when 19" LCD monitors finally fell in price to under \$200 (after rebate) I ordered a Fuji Plus unit from TigerDirect. As is often the case, I had to apply for an receive two separate rebates in order to get from the \$319 initial price I paid down to the \$199 advertised net price. The first \$30 rebate, which I recall was directly from Tiger, came fairly quickly, but the \$90 one from Fuji Plus would take 3 or 4 months. After 4 months I started calling. The first time they told me they would be processing my rebate the following month. I called again a month later (I have a rebate follow-up file) and was told I missed that month's processing by one week, and it would be the next month. I called again, and they said they would look into it and get back to me. Then I called again and got "disconnected". Then their phone stopped being answered. TigerDirect has a policy that they guarantee all rebates, so I called them. They told me to fill out a Rebate Guarantee Form, send in that with copies of what I had sent to Fuji, and then wait 3 more months for them to investigate. I did that, and then started calling Tiger. The first person said to fax in copies of everything I had and someone would look into it and get back to me. Af-

(Continued on page 3)

(Rebate Battles... Continued from page 2)

ter a week I called again, still polite but becoming more assertive. I guess I finally wore them down because after being on hold for a minute or so they came back and said they would issue a \$90 credit to the credit card I used to make the original purchase. That was just last week so I have not yet received the credit, but I expect I will. Note that Tiger is issuing actual credit to my credit card, not giving me "store credit" where I would have to buy something from them to get my \$90. That's a good thing. Assuming I actually get the credit in August it will have taken me 10 months to get the \$90 rebate.

The second recent rebate battle occurred over a Compaq laptop I bought from Staples. Staples and Compaq ran a really good computer special in May of this year, 4 days only, Wednesday through Saturday. They offered a complete desktop system (included a 17" CRT monitor) for \$200, and a laptop with a 3-in-1 HP printer for \$400. Both were brand new systems, not refurbished, and included the Windows XP-Home operating system. And they were custom assembled, so you could add extra memory, longer life battery for the laptop, etc. It was really a heck of a deal. I bought 3 machines in one day, on 3 separate visits. I got a laptop for me, a desktop for my cousin in Connecticut, and another desktop system for a friend here in Seymour. Oh, did I mention that shipping was free anywhere in the US?

As was the case with the Fuji Plus monitor, there were multiple rebates involved to get back to the advertised price on my laptop; one from Staples for \$100 and two from Compaq/HP of \$80 and \$50. (There was also an instant rebate in the store, and a special code to make the \$75 shipping charge go away. This was a very complicated purchase.) The \$80 rebate from HP came right on schedule. I have not heard anything on the \$50 one and I need to follow up. The \$100 rebate from Staples got turned down, twice. The first time I received a notification that the rebate did not apply to the product I purchased. I immediately went to the store manager, whom I happen to know fairly well. He said that was baloney and he would resubmit for me and I would get my rebate. About 2 weeks went by and I got a second refusal notice telling me that my purchase was outside the date range of the promotion. This time I went to the Staples rebate website and sent an appeal message explaining that they were wrong and that my receipt was dated within the 4-day promo period. They sent me a message back saying they finally agreed with me and would process my rebate check. I got it about 2 weeks after that last message. The Staples motto of "that was easy" and their little red Easy button apparently does not apply to rebates.

John Spizzirri is correct; it is very easy to get hosed out of a rebate offer. There are not many people who are willing to take the time and make the effort to collect these often-substantial sums of money; a situation upon which the sellers rely. I would not have been able to do it before I retired. I suppose I will continue to buy things with rebates because I can persevere and ultimately collect on nearly all of them. However, those of you who have real jobs and family obligations that consume most of your time should be very wary of large rebates. They can be extremely difficult to collect.

Larry Bothe is an associate member of CAEUG and an honorary member of FVPCA. He was President of CAEUG for a time back in the 90's when he lived in the Chicago area. Larry presently resides in southern Indiana where he is retired from the plastics industry and currently teaches people to fly airplanes. He also performs pilot examinations for the FAA. He can be contacted at Lbothe@aol.com.

(COD Show... continued from page 1)

Another reason may deal with the reality that the price reductions for new, brand name systems make building a do-it-yourself PC less of a savings than in years gone by, not to mention the manufacturer's warranty and support options. It is very difficult to beat the prices these days and the margins just are not what they used to be. I have also seen the smaller "PC Solutions" and "Computer Renaissance" type of stores going away. Just a sign of the times I guess.

There was another show venue usually located in Orland Park and that also had some shows at the DuPage Fairgrounds. I just checked their web site at www.giantcomputershow.com and it appears that they are still in operation. In fact, they appear to have a show on September 17, 2006 at the Orland Park location. So all hope for us computer hobbyists is not lost!

POTPOURRI

By Jon Jackman, Acting Editor

As I was looking into the COD information I came across a reference to the COD show as a place to drop off old computers... Well, that is no longer accurate. If you have a need to drop off old PC equipment to recycle try some of the ones listed below, which include Tiger Direct stores:

http://www.giveacomputer.org/html/drop_off_locations.html

Kane County also offers a recycling program for electronics:

<http://www.co.kane.il.us/Environment/recycle/electronic.htm>

But don't be in too big a hurry. Tom plans to do a program on how to use older PCs as other things. More details to follow...

Yes it is that time again: elections are approaching... Think about what you can do for our club. Consider joining us on the Executive Committee as an officer, or member at large. We will be looking into alternatives for meeting locations and dates for the convenience of our members. One suggestion was to have the Executive Board meet immediately after the regular monthly meeting at either the same location or a nearby home or snack shop. Would that do it for you? More at the next meeting! Please review you dues to make sure that you are current! (Check the label on the *Fox Tales* newsletter.) Members must be in good standing to vote.

There were numerous "Thank You" cards prepared by the students at the OLGC School where several of our members worked over the summer to upgrade the school's computer lab. These will be on display at our next monthly meeting. Great job everyone! THANK YOU!

Did you know that a BLACKOUT is caused by excessive demand on the power grid, lightening storms, ice on power lines, car accidents, backhoes, earthquakes and other catastrophes? These power anomalies can effect the current work in your Random Access Memory (RAM) or cache to be lost as well as the File Allocation Table (FAT), which can result in total loss of data stored on your hard drive? An Uninterruptible Power Supply will help protect your desktop. Don't delay, get a UPS!

CompUSA is closing stores on Rt.59 & in Lombard on Highland Ave. Head there for the discounted sales!

Just in time for Aurora's Midwest Literary Festival

By Andre Salles—Staff writer for the *Beacon News*, 09-07-06

AURORA — This year's Midwest Literary Festival will not only feature top-notch authors and speakers, but also the rollout of the city's long-awaited Wi-Fi program.

According to Aurora's new chief technology officer, Ted Beck, the first crews will install the first antenna for wireless Internet access on a light pole on the corner of Stolp Avenue and Downer Place today, with four more to follow in the next week.

"It's not the entire downtown yet, just a small footprint," Beck said. Beck assumed control of the project as part of his new duties, after being named to his position in June. He took over spearheading the effort from consultant Tony Hylton. The goal, Beck said, is to have the festival area, which covers parts of Stolp Avenue and Galena Boulevard, hooked up for wireless Internet by Sept. 15. That day also marks the opening of the Literary Festival, and Aurora's streets will be filled with visitors from other communities, no doubt curious about how this Wi-Fi thing works.

The network will be owned, installed and maintained by California-based MetroFi, one of the most visible companies offering wireless Internet to municipalities. MetroFi has established city networks in Santa Clara, Cupertino, Sunnyvale and San Jose, Calif. The company is currently working with Portland, Ore., to set up a network for that city's 540,000 residents. MetroFi's service is free to the user and is paid for through advertising. The network will be comprised of a series of antennas — 600 to 900 of them — attached to light poles throughout the city. The main hub of the network will be at the city's highest point — the top of the 22-story Fox Island Place, the former Leland Tower, on Stolp Avenue.

Though the city had hoped to have the downtown pilot area up and running by Labor Day, Beck said delays in receiving council approval for that main antenna set the project back. City officials will be happy just to have the project off the ground, according to Public Information Officer Carie Anne Ergo. Aurora is set to become the first municipality in Illinois to offer free citywide Wi-Fi, and the city of Naperville has followed Aurora's lead, signing up with MetroFi for its own network in July. "We're excited to get this started," Ergo said. "It's a huge project and obviously a big process."

Once the network is operational, anyone with a wireless-equipped computer can tap in, although in order to achieve top speeds, a signal booster may be necessary. Ergo said plans are still being drafted for ward-by-ward education sessions, for which the city may partner with the Aurora Community Technology Foundation, a not-for-profit group dedicated to teaching residents about computers and the Internet.

Though no firm plans have been established for the remainder of the city, Ergo said the goal is to have all of Aurora connected within a year's time, or by September 2007. "We would like to see it done by the end of spring next year," she said, "but it's not something that everyone has been able to commit to."

Mayor Tom Weisner said debuting the Wi-Fi system at the time of the Midwest Literary Festival was fitting. "The Literary Festival deals with the art of communication," he said, "and this fits in nicely."



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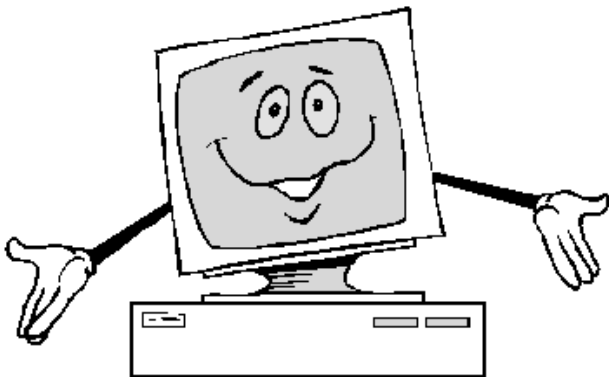
**The Batavia Public Library has WiFi !
So bring your laptop and connect during our
meeting!**

**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 this month (August) will be at the Batavia Public Library at 10 S. Batavia Ave. (Rt. 31), Batavia, Illinois. The formal meeting starts at 9:15 A.M. Non-member visitors are always welcome.

“USERS HELPING USERS”



The Following Members have renewed their memberships

E. W. Lowry, M.D.

Bill Palmer

Richard Bremer

Bill Swiss

Thank You

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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COMPUTER SHOWS

The Great Midwest Computer Show has suspended operations. At this time, there are no future shows planned. If new shows are added, they will be listed on their site. Please visit the

Great Midwest Computer Show

Web site at:

www.codshow.com

The Midwest's oldest and largest Computer Show, since 1984

Also see:

www.giantcomputershow.com/



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2006-2007

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The Fox Valley PC Association Web site is:

www.fvpca.org
Courtesy of APCUG



The title of the September
“Program of the Month” will be:
“Creating And Printing Business Cards & Labels”

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

September 16, 2006

At the Batavia Public Library location
10 S. Batavia Ave. (Rt. 31), IL (WiFi enabled)