Vero Beach Computer Group

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March 2006

THE HOMEPAGE

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Our newsletter is published monthly and is a benefit of membership. Your dues support our activities and pro-grams. Dues are $20/ year for both individuals & families.

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General Meeting, March 2006
Media Room, Main Library, Vero Beach

Our presenter for March 7th, 2006 is Gene Barlow. He gives a two part **presentation** that will help you improve the way you use your computer and protect it from security risks. Gene has presented to computer user groups for over 25 years. He is an interesting and informative presenter. He will give you lots of important information about your computer, but will do it in a way that even the beginner user can understand and use. This is one presentation that you will not want to miss.

Linda and Gene Barlow

His first topic is "Organizing and Backing Up your Hard Drive." Gene will show you the best way to setup the hard drives on your computer to keep your important data files safe from being damaged by viruses and other damages to your computer. He will also describe the best way to backup your important data files and your entire hard drive to protect it from corruption and crashes. This is an important topic to keep your computer running smoothly and to help you recover from mishaps that often occur to computer systems.

His second topic is "Protecting your Computer from Security Risks". There are many risks that you must face when using your computer on the Internet. He will describe these risks and show you what you need to do to protect your computer from these risks. These risks are real and with-out taking some precautions, you may be the next victim of Identify Theft or a damaged computer. This is an important topic for you to understand and to do on your computer.

Your Membership Expires March 1, 2006

March 1 we purge our membership records of delinquent members. We appreciate your membership, and please feel free to make comments or suggestions on what you would like to see us do more of… or even less of!

THINK ABOUT IT

We're pretty well into the "Digital Age" right now, so we can step back and take a look at where we are and where we are going. For us "Computer Types", what causes this "age" to differ from every other "age" distills down to quality, quantity and portability. Nicknamed the "Information Age", a quick look at what's going on shows us that the way we process information has made such a significant series of changes that everything new is old again, or vice versa.

Since we were thoroughly indoctrinated into iPod at our last meeting and portability is the strong suit for these devices that can store 10,000 songs or more in a box one quarter the size of a banana, music is a good example of the evolution of quality, quantity and portability. In the beginning (as some of us remember) a guy could make music by banging a dinosaur bone against the side of his cave (not the highest quality music) but he had just a few tunes in his repertory. As for portability, until he figured out how to get the bone through his nose and carry a rock along, he had to stay pretty close to the cave. Other people also wanted to become rock musicians so the amount of rock music started to increase and they began to be chased away from anyplace they congregated to make their music, so they became fleet of foot and their instruments became smaller and more portable.

The "portable" music instruments got smaller and smaller, until finally they were nothing more than manually cranked boxes with a monkey for a front man and an organ for background. Batteries hadn't been invented so the monkey was replaced by a "wind-up" phonograph which was able to play tunes off a flat disc. When the battery came along, the aPod was born (also the bPod, the cPod, etc), but not until the quality of recorded sound had improved a thousand fold, through high fidelity LP discs, 45s, 8-tracks, cassettes, CDs and.........MP3?   Somewhere along the way it was determined that unless we had access to 10,000 tunes while showering we were musically deprived, so we compressed our tunes until they fit in our ear, eliminating the part of the music they convinced us we couldn't hear anyway. Yeah....sure....that same guy told me the Grand Canyon was just a big hole in the ground. The quantity went up, the quality went down and the portability went nowhere until we could listen to the music in our SUV, a 5,000 pound enclosure we invented to carry our stereo speakers around).

We did the same thing with communications, and downsizing from drums and smoke signals requiring mountains, we progressed thru empty tin cans connected by string to cell phones to the Dick Tracy style wrist-watch Strawberry (Blueberry?) that not only communicates, but sends photos and email, all the while getting smaller and smaller and more unintelligible. The end result Entire buildings arose to accommodate wireless laptop computer users, with areas outside reserved for cell-phone users who can't get a good signal inside and everybody is buying $4.75 flavored coffee to drink with their free voice over internet long distance calls while sending email from table to table around the room. So.......even though we can now carry thousands of songs around, take millions of digital pictures and have the ability to communicate with a zillion internet sites in this information age.......we "aint seen nothin' yet", as they say.

JESS HENDELMAN, WordMaster and Ex-president

IMPORTANT NOTICE

The Vero Beach Main Library desperately needs volunteers to help with their computers, and we owe the Library **big-time** for letting us hold our SIGs and regular meeting there. The Library has two rather large sections of public-access computers with Internet access and Microsoft Office and a few computers with scanners and CD writers.

As a volunteer, you could help greatly by:

1. Signing patrons onto the computers, using a simple program called PC Reservation. Each patron must briefly visit the media desk helper (you) in order to be assigned a pin number to sign on to a specific computer. From then on the computer program keeps track of who is on what computer, how much time he of she has used it, which computers are still available, and you will be able to "see" that information.

2. Library Personnel are always around to aid the patron, plus it's very interesting and a lot of fun. Please, if you feel that this is something you can help out with, **even for only an hour or two a week or longer, contact me:**

   Lucia Robinson, VBCG Library Volunteers Coordinator —- robinson@bellsouth.net —- 772-778-1838

Library Volunteers:
Peggy Repass, Mondays, 2 - 4 pm
Randy Washington, Mondays, 5 - 7 pm

Jean Ross, Tuesdays, 2 - 4 pm
Barbara Campbell, Thursdays, 1 - 4 pm
Jesse Hendelman, Wednesdays & Fridays, 2 - 4 PM

Eleanor Ryan, Friday Mar 10 & 17, 2 - 4 pm

"Didn't you get my e-mail?"

Online Safety and Security

By Webmaster Tim Glover

"If you have a PC that's connected to the Net, even intermittently, you need to protect it. If this is news to you, put down the magazine, unplug your PC, and take up knitting"

That's a statement that I read in a recent issue of "PC Magazine" (Oct. 18, 2005). Sound scary to you? Well, it has been a subject that we as VBCG Board members and SIG leaders have discussed on more than one occasion. Our concerns are that we may be concentrating too much on the issue of threats and hazards and scaring folks from ever going on the Internet or even using their computer!

You may have noticed that the statement refers to "PCs" and not Mac computers. It is certainly true that PCs are much more ubiquitous and therefore have a much higher exposure rate, but it is also true that the Mac Operating System is less susceptible to security risks. None of this is meant to alarm anyone, but one of the functions of the VBCG is to be a self-help group and therefore we feel there is some need to at least make you aware of what to watch out for.

We all enjoy using our computers and there are so many exciting things that you can do with your home computer. At the very least, having a problem develop as a result of spyware or a virus can be very frustrating. Being vigilant and informed as to the potential risks can help you with preventing any problems and keep your computer running smoothly. I personally enjoy the challenge of staying ahead of those who would attempt to do nasty things with my computer. Making sure that you have an antivirus program installed - and keep it updated, and scanning periodically for spyware on your computer are some of the best things you can do to keep your computer trouble-free.

Here's an anecdote on a recent problem I discovered on my aunt's computer. She has Windows XP and uses Norton Antivirus software. As long as you have a current subscription to the Norton Antivirus program, it checks periodically and automatically downloads updates whenever you are online. My aunt's problem started with the fact that they were up north for the summer and her computer at home in Florida had not been used in several months, and therefore did not receive any updates. When she returned home to Florida in the fall, she ended up getting a "Trojan horse" virus, before her Norton Antivirus program had the chance to check for and download the updates it had missed while not being used over the summer.

The virus did minimal damage and in fact she hadn't noticed that there was a problem. The only thing different was that recently she was getting a notice each time she turned on her computer, saying that Norton Antivirus couldn't determine its status and may have a problem or be outdated. In fact, the subscription had expired in the meantime, which is probably what prompted the notice.

I was able to renew her subscription, but was still not able to update the software. This is when I became suspicious that the computer may have a virus. Doing an online scan revealed the problem, but it also revealed that the software would not remove all pieces of the virus. Reading more on the Symantec website (makers of the Norton Antivirus software) revealed the details of the affect of the virus. It showed numerous processes that it disabled in the computer, including any Windows Updates from Microsoft and also listed several websites that it would report information back to.

I had to download one of the free antivirus programs to remove what Norton was unable to. Once her computer was back to normal, it immediately downloaded 15 Security Updates from Microsoft!

My aunt has recently been getting lots of spam and I suspect this may be a result of the virus. So far that has been the worst part of getting this virus, which can certainly be annoying. How to have avoided this problem? If your computer has been off-line for a period of time, even for as little as several days to a week, be sure and do a manual check for any updates to your antivirus software, and do it first thing! And be advised, many of the antispyware programs don't check automatically for updates, so be sure and include them in your check too!

So overall, doesn't sound too scary does it? If so, maybe you ought to consider the knitting. Before you do though, be sure and come to one of our many meetings, ask questions and learn how you can do more and get more enjoyment out of all the uses of your computer!

MEETINGS AND SIGS

**All meetings and SIGs are held in the Indian River County Main Library
located at 1600 21 Street, Vero Beach, Florida**

March 2006

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
			1 Photoshop Elements 1:00—3:00	2	3	4
5	6	7 General Meeting 7:00--9:00	8	9	10	11
12	13	14 New to Computers 2:00--4:00	15	16	17	18 MAC 10;00--Noon
19	20	21	22 Mobile Computing & Internet 6:00--7:30	23	24	25
26	27 MS Excel 6:00--7:30	28	29	30	31	

General Meeting	**Frank Lombard, President**	**Main Library**
Security & Hard Drive Planning	**Gene Barlow**	**Main Library**
Macs	**Eleanor Ryan & Joe Piazza**	**History Room**
Adobe Photoshop Elements	**Frank Lombard**	**Multimedia Room**
Mobile Computing & Internet	**Wayne Kleinstiver**	**Media Room**
MS Excel	**Randy Washington**	**History Room**
New to Computers	**Tim Glover**	**History Room**

Vero Beach Computer Group is a self–help group that provides help to members who want to improve their knowledge of computers and accessories. Our motive is to share our experiences to give members a chance to learn and help each other. Every effort is made to share accurate information; however, no representations or warranties either express or implied are made as to its accuracy.