

Antelope Valley Microcomputer Users Group

A V M U G N ewsletter

February, 2004

Next AVMUG Meeting:

- *Wed. February 18, 2004*
- *7:00 P.M.*
- *Lancaster Senior Center*
- *777 West Jackman*
- *Lancaster, CA*
- *Information: 661/942-1912*

This month our Vice President Gerry Anderson plans on presenting a demonstration of Microsoft Office Suite. I'm sure that we can all benefit from Gerry's presentation, so come early and enjoy!



January's meeting setup, showing our new projector.

Our Leaders:

Robert Lion President
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Gerry Anderson Vice Pres.
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Marty Graham Secretary
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Ruth Moore Treasurer
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Ray Coronado Librarian
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Dick Thompson Editor
avmug.editor@verizon.net

Our Internet Site:
<http://www.avmug.av.org>

Our Phones:

AVMUG	661/942-1912
MUG Flaps	661/946-3249

Essentials for that New Computer

According to preliminary sales figures, computers were among the most popular items purchased this holiday season. Straight out of the box they may be a joy, accompanied with confusion, and some mild fears. Experience and familiarity will resolve most of the confusion, but some common essentials may help eliminate many of the fears.

Almost all new computers straight from the box were most likely manufactured prior to the release of the latest security patches, and will require the downloading and installation of all critical updates. Likewise, most computers recently made to order will not have the latest operating system updates. If operating system software was purchased separately, it also will not be up to date. It is imperative that once set up, if internet access is already established, that the user of a Windows computer immediately goes to windowsup-

date.microsoft.com and download and install at least the critical updates listed. Other non-critical updates listed may be downloaded and installed when desired, but the critical updates must be installed immediately.

Another absolute essential for that new (and old, too) com-

puter is antivirus software. While many new computers come with a limited time trial version of some antivirus product installed, there is no necessity to renew that particular product when it expires. There are many excellent titles available, often at spectacular prices after rebates. In the retail mar-



Essentials for that New Computer (Continued)

ket, the sales leaders are Symantec's Norton AntiVirus (often bundled with other Symantec Norton titles), and Network Associates' McAfee Anti-virus (also often bundled with other McAfee products). Many other excellent titles are available either at retail from the local stores, or for download. If holiday bills are a pressing problem, one of the free anti-virus products may be appropriate. One commercial bundle, including antivirus, firewall, and popup killer is Computer Associates eTrust EZ Armor Security Suite, available for a limited time as a free (for personal use) download. This full featured commercial product (\$50) is currently being made available for free download from www.myetrust.com/microsoft as a promotion cosponsored by Microsoft's security division. The free download includes a year of free updates. Once the year is up, the user will have the option of renewing for another year at the then current license fee.

Other free (for personal use) antivirus software is Avast available from www.avast.com, and AVG downloadable from www.grisoft.com.

With today's risky cyber environment, a firewall has also become an essential product for new (and old) computers. A firewall isolates your computer from hacker attacks over the internet, and also provides some protection from Trojans sending out information. While often bundled with antivirus software, many times it must be installed separately. Commercial firewalls from McAfee and Norton are available locally, as are other firewalls. There are also several excellent firewalls available for free (for personal use) by download. My personal choice is Outpost, available from www.agnitum.com. The single most popular firewall in use is Zone Alarm, www.zonelabs.com.

Also essential is a good anti-spyware program to protect your personal privacy and secu-



Essentials for that New Computer (Continued)

riety. One of the most popular and highly rated spyware detection and removal programs is Spybot Search and Destroy, available for free download from www.safer-networking.org. This program also includes an "immunize" function that will offer some protection from much of the spyware that is common on the net. The leading commercial spyware protector is PestPatrol, available for download from www.pestpatrol.com. As with antivirus and firewall software, anti-spyware software is frequently updated by the publisher, and updates must be downloaded and run frequently in order to maximize protection. One proviso; never purchase anti-spyware software from popup ads or spam mail, as they are often fraudulent or of low quality, and only encourage more spamming.

Something often neglected with that new (or old) computer is power protection. The electricity coming into our homes is

often "dirty", with electrical noise and power fluctuations, and these events may damage the sensitive electronics in our computers. At a minimum, a good surge suppressor (not a simple power strip) is a necessity to protect the computer and its peripherals from electrical damage. Surge protection is measured in "joules", and the more joule capacity, generally the better the protection. Even better is a good quality "UPS" or uninterruptible power supply, which in addition to providing clean power to the computer and its peripherals, can also safely power the computer for short periods of time in the event of a brownout or power failure, allowing for a safe and orderly shutdown, without losing data or damaging equipment. If a UPS is in your future, make sure it has enough power for your system. All surge suppressors and UPS devices should also have a UL1449 rating, an indication that it meets minimal feature

and safety standards.

Internet access has become almost universal, and has switched from a geek luxury, to almost everyone's necessity. Generally avoid the "deals" that are often preinstalled or bundled with new computers, especially for some of the overpriced national services. There are several excellent local internet service providers (ISPs) that typically offer service superior to many of the well know national providers, but at a lower price. If dialup service is wanted, check with such fine local companies as Eonet (www.eonet.net) or EXP Internet Services (www.exp.net). Broadband is available via satellite from EXP, DSL from SBC, or cable via Time Warner or your local cable company. One proviso; if the broadband provider is offering a "12 month special price," find out what it will cost after the trial period is over.

By Ira Wilsker

Ira Wilsker is the Advisor for Region 8, APCUG Representative & Bylaws Chair for the Golden Triangle PC Club, a columnist for The Examiner in Beaumont, Texas, and has two radio shows. He also graciously shares his articles with the APCUG editors.



January Meeting

Our new President, Bob Lion, opened his first meeting with a brief outline of what he would like to accomplish, this year, namely:

Increase our membership roster, and have "name tags

New membership cards and Welcome cards for 2004

Try to get our club Web site updated

Re-evaluate our contributions to the Senior Center

Up-date the club By-Laws

Need to have free door prizes and support the 50/50

AVMUG Archive established

Hands on Workshops

Suggestions for Program/Presenter leads

Donated notebooks for handouts and newsletters

Continue our monthly CD to our members

Develop a Club Talent Pool

And Best of all: Have our club be "Inter-Active" with each-other

Dick Thompson, Editor of our Club Newsletter, was presented with a plaque for his outstanding contribution of composing and editing the

newsletter each month, for many years, by our vice-president, Gerry Anderson. Dick was also bestowed a Life Membership in AVMUG.

One of our Charter Members, Tommy Arant, was welcomed back our membership, tonight. A "get well card" for Al Boyd & spouse was signed by all present and sent..

Ray Coronado, our club Librarian, spoke about his selections for our club CD this month. Ray has also accepted the position of Webmaster. Bob Swank is working on a new project, "AVMUG Brochures" that we intend to place in businesses in our community.

Our President presented a program on: Microsoft Digital Image Suite. which included comments and questions from the membership. This program, consisting of the CD and video tape presentation, was donated by Microsoft "Mindshare" to AVMUG for educational use of the club. Other programs with software were also sent to our club for educational purposes, including presentations.

The door prizes were awarded and the meeting was then, adjourned.

Respectfully submitted

Marty Graham, Secretary

President's Corner

February is here and our club Phoenix has taken flight. At the meeting, the board will bring you up to date on the various projects that are nearing completion.

I would like to express the appreciation of the club to Dick Thompson, for his extraordinary work on our fine club newsletter. Thanks to Dick, the club has had a first class newsletter to present prospective new members. The newsletter represents the only visible image the club currently has. Dick was awarded one of the few Lifetime memberships ever presented to an AVUMG member in recognition of his continued hard work and improvements to our newsletter - Congratulations Dick

It worked! I'm talking about our new room layout and use of our newly acquired media projector. For the first time in 22 years, everyone could see the presentation. Thanks to the projector donation by Mr. Patrick Linstruth, of QNET, one



President's Corner (Continued)

of our most loyal presenters. Also special thanks to Gerry, our Vice President for his coordination, liaison work and follow through

Special recognition is given to Robert Swank (Talent Pool Member) for volunteering to assemble the club brochure, club picture, and club application into one document. He has also provided two club logo designs for consideration.

Also, JB Brown (Talent Pool Member), has volunteered to be our membership chairman. He will help us to achieve a 100% increase in our membership by next January. He will also act as our club/user group communication liaison. His expertise in design layout is also proving invaluable.

In addition, Ray, our Librarian has also volunteered to take on the substantial job of resurrecting the club website and acting as webmaster. A web page will be an invaluable tool for new member recruitment.

Those members who are

willing to donate some of their time and efforts are making AVMUG a much better place for everyone. As opportunities arise, and you can help, please contribute to our club's improvement. That's the spirit that AVMUG was founded upon. Also, please continue your support of our 50/50 raffle as it funds many of the free door prizes. As long as we can continue to maintain our budget, we won't have to raise dues

I was pleased to see a nearly 100% turn out at our last meeting. Please note that our means of reaching you is through your email address. If a meeting date is changed due to circumstances beyond our control, we will let you know via newsletter or email notice. If you change your email address, please notify Marty, our Secretary

Last month, Dick, published an article on monitors in the newsletter. Those members who picked up notebook binders at the January meeting, can

print this article and keep it in your notebook. It along with other reference handouts throughout the year can be kept for future reference. I recommend you put a CD sleeve in your binder and keep your club CD there also. You should find it easier to keep track of club presentations/events with your club notebook

Bob Lyon

