Bits of Blue

A Monthly Publication of the Tampa PC Users Group, Inc.

June in Tampa

Meeting

No
Meeting in June

INSIDE THIS ISSUE

Meeting Preview: The June 14th meeting is cancelled and will not take place. As noted in the article on Page 3 by the President of TPCUG, we are considering not having any meetings over the four summer months of June thru September. No final decision on this summer hiatus for meetings has been made, so you are encouraged to check in on the TPCUG website to confirm when the next meeting will be held, which could possibly not happen until October 2017. Read President, John Witmer's article regarding this on page 3.

Editor's Comments

By William LaMartin, Editor, Tampa PC Users Group
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To *be, or not to be, that is the question* is a famous quotation from Shakespeare's *Hamlet*. It is also the quandary that now faces our club. We have existed since 1984. I joined in 1991 and have been doing the newsletter since December of 1995. Some of you have been in the club almost from the beginning. At one time we had in excess of 200 members. Now it is around 30 with sometimes as few as a dozen attending the monthly meeting. At one time we had national presenters such as Microsoft, IBM, Corel Draw, Harvard Graphics, Delrina, and Word Perfect – many of which no longer exist. Perhaps the TPCUG should no longer exist; perhaps it has served its purpose of educating person computer users. I know I have benefited much by being a member and contributor. But now we have the Internet, which seems to be enough for most people. Read John Witmer's letter on page 3, think about the situation and let's come to decision over the summer. ◆

June Meeting: Cancelled

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However, for business concerning this newsletter, Bits of Blue, please contact the Editor, William LaMartin, at 813-251-3817, or william@lamartin.com.

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RENEWING YOUR MEMBERSHIP?

WE CERTAINLY HOPE YOU WILL

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Minutes of the May Meeting

By Merle Nicholson, Secretary,
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The Windows Special Interest Group (SIG) opens our monthly meeting. Merle Nicholson, the SIG moderator introduces new or little known products and technological developments for discussion by the group. He accepts questions and requests for help in solving problems from attendees.

Merle Nicholson (myself) moderated the Windows SIG portion of the meeting and then moved on for the rest of the evening with "A Sticky Math Problem". I had an ulterior motive in that I wanted to introduce my favorite computer language to the group, hoping that perhaps someone may be interested in it. But what intended to accomplish was resolving a way to express the gearing on my 21-speed bicycle in terms that are easily understood, and to be able to introduce the variables (variables are cadence and physical gear set replacements) to demonstrate my current dislike of my gear ratios. I used APL, (A Programming Language) one of the oldest computer languages and fairly unique in that you can use the full capability interactively. That is, see immediate results and then choose if you want to include it as a program so you can introduce variables to see what different results may be obtained. In my case I wanted to show the entire 21 speed range expressed in Miles Per Hour and to recalculate it with different cadence (cadence being how fast you are pedaling) and a different cogset (the rear set of 7 gears) that are commercially available. Some of the members had useful suggestions along the way, and perhaps some interest in APL. The program content was a bit unusual for our group, but I think pretty successful. See http://www.dyalog.com for free software, tutorials, books and other documentation, be sure to look at years of annual symposium presentations available online at http://video.dyalog.com , and http://tryapl.org. ◆

Message Regarding the Current Status of the TPCUG

By John Witmer, President, Tampa PC Users Group
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Fellow Members of the Tampa PC Users Group: The June meeting scheduled for June 14th is being cancelled at this time and will not be held. We have at least three Board members who will not be able to attend, including Merle Nicholson, our SIG moderator and one of our main presenters. Doug Mullis will also be out of town, and he has not been able to secure any presentation for June. Additionally I am gone for the rest of the summer and early fall. I also know of several regular attendees who cannot be there in June, so it makes the decision to cancel the June meeting as the only reasonable course of action.

I think this is the first time I can remember that a meeting had to be cancelled entirely. With our dwindling attendance at the monthly meetings, it is time to address the question of how much longer will we continue to be a viable computer club, and what, if any, action needs to be taken to keep the club open for meetings and a source for information to be shared among the members. TPCUG also serves as an opportunity to meet periodically with fellow members sharing the same interests and insights into the world of computing. We have been very fortunate to be able to continue to meet at the Pepin facility long after I retired from there. I do not see that changing in the foreseeable future, so a place to hold meetings is not a consideration in the discussions about our future, unless there is a feeling the Pepin location is not suitable for some reason.

This year we suspended the collection of dues from those members who were paid up and current as of 12/31/16. Our bank balance indicates we do not need to continue collecting dues for the foreseeable future. I think this makes sense, and yet allows us the ability to continue having a newsletter printed and mailed to each of us, and pays for the Holiday Party we have each December.

The factors affecting our TPCUG are no different than those affecting other computer clubs and organizations across the country, including the Florida Association of Computer User Groups, and the APCUG national

organization. As Treasurer for the FACUG, I can see firsthand that membership by clubs in the state continues to drop, from over forty clubs 5-6 years ago to less than 20 this year. Some clubs are disbanding or dissolving, and others exist solely within the residential community they draw membership from and are a quasi-social club in addition to being a computer club. Outside speakers and presentations are virtually non-existent, and all clubs have this same problem. With our ever smaller group, we rely on just a couple of members for providing each month's program, and so far, it has worked pretty well for us. But even these presenters grow tired of the monthly obligation to provide a meeting topic and presentation. So, what are our options? Listed below are a few that come to mind, and you may have some of your own to contribute to the discussion. We need to begin having this discussion to determine where we go from here. I have been asked to get the discussion started.

The obvious solution would be to join the many other clubs that have dissolved and no longer exist or meet. It might be the easiest answer; however, I personally would prefer to not go this route if at all possible. I would like us as a group to come up with a workable answer that takes some of the huge burden off of certain members, and gives them a periodic rest from the monthly obligations of a newsletter and program.

My initial thought would be to do like many of the computer clubs in South Florida, and suspend activities over the summer months when members are traveling and returning to other places they have back up north. We could make the months of June thru September as non-meeting months with no newsletter created or provided, and then resume monthly meetings in October until the following May, after which we would again take the summer months off.
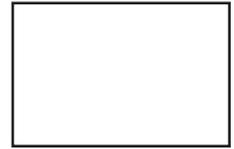
Members would be able to reach out to each other during the summer to get questions answered, or problems resolved, but just not in a formal meeting setting. I would think and hope that those technical savvy members who provide assistance would be willing to do so over the course of the summer, and that this would not be an inconvenience for the limited investment of their time and talent. Perhaps website content or a different form of communication could be provided for any member wishing to communicate an event or story they want to share

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☐ *Member: Your membership is up for renewal*

President..........Continued from page 3

with the group or perhaps some other form of staying in contact.

There are other options that can be considered, and I leave it to you, our members and officers, to offer what else you would like to be considered. I hope you will respond to the email sent out to you and all the other members and reply to all, so that your comments and suggestions can be shared within our group, and help foster a dialogue as we move forward on what course of action the group members would like to see.

Sincerely,
John Witmer
President, TPCUG ◆

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