Bits of Blue

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

Vol. 25 No. 1 | January 2012 | January in Tampa

Meeting

Bob LaFave
on
Several Interesting Items

Wednesday, January 11, 2012

6:30 PM

Pepin Distributing Co.
4121 N 50th Street
Tampa, Florida

Meeting Preview: Bob LaFave will demonstrate using a tuner and Windows Media center for recording encrypted TV and other topics.

Editor's Comments

By William LaMartin, Editor, Tampa PC Users Group
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This has been a rough month to get out the newsletter, but we again made it with the help of Merle Nicholson, John Witmer and Rob Davis as contributors. It really is not difficult to write an article for the newsletter. Just describe some problem you solved or some new item you purchased that is computer, smart phone, digital camera, etc. related. I know you can do it, and it would greatly be appreciated.

Most of my computer activity in the past month has been writing apps for the Windows Phone 7. I did manage to complete the yearly directory for our Hyde Park neighborhood. It is a booklet of 44 five inch by eight inch pages. The layout is done in Adobe InDesign. The neighborhood data is maintained in Microsoft Access, and I use a Microsoft Visual Studio program I wrote to extract the data from Access in a format that I can then use in InDesign. So it is a bit complicated and almost assures that I will never find anyone else in the neighborhood who will be willing to take over the project.

February Meeting: To be announced

Bits of Blue is published by the Tampa PC Users Group, Inc., a State of Florida registered non-profit corporation, to provide educational information about personal computer systems to its members. Our mailing address is P. O. Box 3492, Tampa, FL 33601-3492.

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

MAIL YOUR CHECK AND ANY
ADDRESS OR NAME CHANGES TO:

TAMPA PC USERS GROUP
PO BOX 3492
TAMPA, FL 33601-3492

$25 Individual $35 Family
$60 Corporate = 3 employees + $20 each add'l employee

Go to our web site http://www.tpcug.org and click on the
About Us | Join link to join or renew online

Check the address label for your renewal month

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We acknowledge
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Affiliations

Florida Association of User Groups

Association of Personal Computer User Groups

Minutes of the December Meeting

By Merle Nicholson, Secretary,
Tampa PC Users Group
merle@merlenicholson.com

Our usual meeting was suspended in favor of our annual club dinner at Pepin Distributors, hosted by our TPCUG President, John Witmer. This year the dinner was held in one of the Pepin meeting rooms. John did his usual fine job of ordering food and getting it set up for our little group. This year, large round tables were set up encouraging conversation. It was a very nice addition. As usual, the food was excellent, and John was a great host. Thanks for the hard work, John and for the whole year as well. Our thanks and best wishes go to Pepin Distributors also.
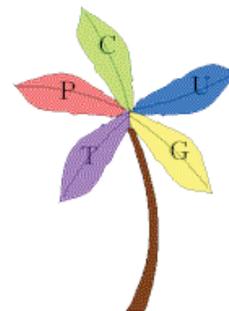
Our slate of TPCUG Officers remains unchanged for 2012.

John Witmer, President
Kevan Sheridan, Vice President
Doug Mullis, Treasurer
Merle Nicholson, Secretary
Ron Weinberg, Member at Large

Appointed positions:
Doug Mullis, Program Coordinator
William LaMartin, Editor and Webmaster
Bob LaFave, Windows SIG

Happy New Year.

Merle Nicholson, Secretary ◆

What Are You Doing Feb 25-28, 2013? Need A Getaway?

By John Witmer, FACUG Treasurer
president@tpcug.org

Most of us don't plan that far in advance, but the Florida Association of Computer User Groups is, and they have a very unique opportunity being pursued currently to obtain the buyout of a luxury resort for exclusive use in holding the 2013 FACUG Technology Symposium. The 2012 Technology Conference cruise is about to depart Miami on January 23rd of this year, and it is too late for you to reconsider attending it. But, that doesn't mean you should be left out of the 2013 conference. At the request of many attendees to these last couple of cruises, the FACUG will move to a land-based Conference in 2013 provided we can get the initial support to make the financial commitment to the resort.

So, what resort are we talking about? It is the only all-inclusive CLUB MED location in these United States, and it is located in Port St. Lucie, FL on the east coast of our fair state. Only a couple of hours away by car, if you are thinking of a great vacation getaway in early 2013, this is something you should seriously consider. There are huge advantages to being able to buy out the resort for our exclusive use and pleasure, and I would like you to check it all out by logging into the http://www.facug.org website, and selecting the 2013 Conference from the menu on the left. Here is where you can read all about the plans, dates, cost, and get a look at what awaits you if you should decide to join the FACUG in this once in a lifetime opportunity for learning and playing all at the same time.

Why am I promoting this event that is 14 months away? First, I signed on to be the Treasurer for the FACUG early last year and have become acutely aware of what FACUG is doing and offering to Florida PC User Groups, as well as groups outside the state. I will be participating in the 2012 Conference in a couple of weeks and look forward to the whole experience. I am a supporter for the 2013 Conference that will happen provided that we can get enough participants to register and put up a deposit by February 14th

next month that will ensure the financial viability of FACUG putting down a non-refundable deposit to buyout the resort for its use in February 2013. So, I am asking if you have the desire and means to participate in the 2013 Technology Symposium, check it out on the website and make a commitment to attend. Let me know if you have any questions, and I will get you the answers. I am getting the impression that those land-based conferences that we attended in Kissimmee and Zephyrhills a few years ago for FACUG are no longer viable, and participants want a much bigger experience to draw their interest. The FACUG is trying to provide such an opportunity, and it is working as we have over 400 participants from across the country on the Norwegian Sky attending the 2012 Conference/Cruise. Give it some thought! ◆

2012 Election of Officers

By John Witmer, President,
Tampa PC Users Group
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At our Holiday Party meeting on Dec. 14th, the following slate of candidates for the officer positions shown was presented and unanimously approved for the coming year 2012. These candidates are presently holding the same position in 2011 and had previously agreed to continue in that same responsibility for the New Year 2012. There were no other candidates that volunteered for a position or came forth for consideration. Elected to represent the TPCUG in 2012 were:

President: John Witmer
Vice-President: Kevan Sheridan
Secretary: Merle Nicholson
Treasurer: Doug Mullis
Member-at-Large: Ron Weinberg

Also appointed and continuing in their same position with the Group for 2012 are Doug Mullis as Program Chair, and William LaMartin as our Newsletter Editor and Webmaster.

Verizon Wireless Home Connect

By Merle Nicholson, Secretary,
Tampa PC Users Group
merle@merlenicholson.com

I switched my home phone land line to wireless. It's still a home phone, is on the cellular network, but uses no wires. (Actually, there are about ten feet of wires involved).

For background, like many of our members, I have FiOS. FiOS is fibre-optical cabling to the house. It was supplying TV, Internet (25/25) and house phone. I had traditional copper wire until FiOS was installed, and to my surprise they insisted my house phone be switched over to FiOS. I said no, they said yes. It was a package deal, and I agreed to it, so I would have known the details if I'd only read the fine print. So the line was physically patched into the FiOS box, and the copper to my house has been abandoned. Actually that's good. Fibre-optic is much more rugged and reliable than old copper.

The FiOS-supported phone was still a "traditional" phone line in that the calls went to the local switching station that is a part of the local phone network. The next step up is to convert this line to "Digital". This is something that is done remotely – my impression is that it's a computer thing, there are no physical changes – that takes you off the local network. There are two apparent changes when going digital. One is that you must start using the area code even when calling inside your own area. OK. The other change is that your bill will be reduced – my reduction will be about $6.50 because it will no longer be subject to a federal tax. Actually I have mixed feelings about this. I think when government spending and indebtedness increases, reducing government income isn't the best idea. Duh.

Verizon people on a couple of occasions have "offered" to convert us to a digital home phone, but aside from the $6.50 monthly reduction, they couldn't present a case for it. I think the advantage is all theirs, and I knew I would lose a couple hours on the phone either getting it to work or getting the billing right. Kind of

like living with the devil. But one person told me that I was going to be switched over to digital within a month or so with or without my participation. I figured if I am going to change, and my billing is going to change, I may as well look at all the options. So I looked at wireless.

Wireless using a cell phone:
Scouring Amazon got me very quickly to a Wireless cellphone/Bluetooth option. There are two types of devices. Both require you to buy a new – or use an old – cellphone with Bluetooth. You add this phone to your cellphone account (everyone has one), and ask that they use your land line number. You put the cellphone down, turn it on, attach a charger to it, leave it on a table and never turn it off. It communicates using Bluetooth with the new device Amazon shipped you . Of the two types of devices, one device is just a black box and has a telephone jack on it. You plug your house phone to that jack. You don't even have to tell your family what you've done, because everything works the same way. The house phone just isn't plugged into the wall anymore. The other option works exactly the same way except that it includes new house phones, and is all in one. It communicates via Bluetooth, has an answer machine built into the base station and one wireless phone. Then – depending on the model, you have one or more – maybe six – handsets placed all over your house that communicate wirelessly to the base station. Mine are made by Panasonic. I've used these for many years with a conventional plug; I'm on my second set that has a base station and three handsets for total of four. I'd have seven except for my policy of never answering the phone from a bathroom. I let it ring until the "survey" company gives up.

OK, so you've just added a cell phone to your family plan, discontinued the land line, reused the home phone number and plugged in your current telephone, and your family doesn't know the difference because you pay the bills – which have gone down because you no longer have the $30 land line. You've discontinued the inside wire maintenance fee, and lost a federal tax. Your wireless family plan has gone up only $10/month, and you got a new free flip phone with no features except Bluetooth for free; it can't even take

Internet Picture of the Month

Sarasota Chalk Festival From flickr at http://www.flickr.com/photos/dufois/6320944911/. The description is: "3D street painting made by Leon Keer, Ruben Poncia, Remko van Schaik and Peter Westerink during the 4th Sarasota Chalk Festival in Florida US"

pictures. Oh, and there is no longer a monthly access fee because you don't need a long distance carrier. That's gone, too.

Here's the bad:
Your new house phone now uses your wireless family minutes. Better keep an eye on that! More on that below.

Last Option – the one I picked.
I'm not sure how I found this. I was looking at the Verizon Wireless phones and plans and stumbled on a tab for "Home Phone Connect." It is shown in the picture

on the following page.

It's a variation of the other devices I was considering. It has the cell phone built in, hence the antenna. It has a power cube that also charges a battery and two telephone jacks. One of these goes to the Panasonic base station – the same one I've had for many years and like very much. I tried to order this on the Verizon website and gave up, then talked to a couple of Verizon people. It took about an hour-and-a-half on the phone. And that was without talking to the non-wireless people. They FedEx'd the device to me, and since Christmas Day and the day after intervened, it took two FedEx days to get it to me.

January's Interesting World Wide Web Locations

Tampa PC Users Group (that's us)	http://www.tpcug.org/
Diseases & Conditions - Medscape Reference	http://emedicine.medscape.com/
Sarasota Chalk Festival	http://www.chalkfestival.com/
The Commodore 64 is 30	http://www.reghardware.com/2012/01/02/commodore_64_30_birthday/

We have been using 1/10 of our 700 minutes on three family phones every month. We're not chatty Cathys. But the land line is going to be a different story. I can look at my daily usage online, and also from my smart phone, and I'll be keeping a close eye on it. I can change the plan any time I want by breaking out this phone from my family plan and go to an unlimited local and long distance plan for $20/month vs. the $10/month I'm paying now. We'll see. ◆

I plugged it in, attached an old spare wired phone to it and immediately called the number indicated to activate it. The instructions were clear. I could phone out on this, but incoming calls would continue on my land line until Verizon/wired released the land line number. That took three non-holiday/non-weekend days, actually shorter than they warned. Wednesday morning, the regular phone was dead – no dial tone, so I transferred the base station to the Home Connect. It's been working(almost) perfectly since. The cost? The $129.95 cost was $49.95 with a two year contract, and a $35 one-time connect fee. And $10/month.

One problem – the day after – we determined the Call Waiting wasn't working, and that is important to us. I called *611, got transferred to the Home Connect technician. He reprogrammed it remotely. I assisted by pulling the battery to get it to reboot, and I reactivated it. Then he tested it by calling that number on two phones. Excellent and efficient.

Watching the minutes:

As for my phone apps, I now have eight in the Windows Phone Marketplace. They are making me very little money, but I am enjoying doing them. The main reason for the small return is that I chose to have them display small ads for the ad income and make them free instead of making them paid apps. Now I realize that for ad supported apps, the apps need to be things like games where people stick with them for an extended time. My apps are not "sticky." You use them for a few minutes and then move to something else.

I entered one of the apps in a contest run by New York City, http://2011.nycbigapps.com/. New York City has made much of their data available online and has asked developers to write apps that use it. I chose to use nine of their datasets, such as WiFi locations, parking garage locations and museum locations in my app that places the items on maps with the associated information. The link to my submission is

Special Interest Groups

Visual Basic .Net SIG (and sometimes Access SIG)

This SIG meets the third Wednesday of the month at 6:30 PM. For information, contact Editor William LaMartin at william@lamartin.com.

Windows SIG

This SIG occupies the first 30 minutes of our monthly, regular meeting and is devoted to a general Windows and computing discussion. Member Bob LaFave moderates the discussion.

Wireless Fun & Games

By Robert Davis, Tampa PC Users Group
robd234@gmail.com

Back in November, I got cross-threaded with Verizon and changed to bright house for the Internet. I pretty well got everyone changed over to my Gmail address from the Verizon one. However, bright house didn't offer a free wireless router. Someone said if I had asked they would have provided one. But this seemed OK since I wanted to have my own wireless router. That way I wouldn't have to change things if I switched ISPs again. I have a wireless laser printer, which worked fine on a USB cable, but I wanted it to go wireless as before so my other computers could use it. So I bought a D-Link wireless router model DIR 615. That's when the chaos started.

The router comes with very little documentation, but has a CD with a Wizard program to install it. The Wizard is maybe for more advanced users than I because I could never get the router properly installed using it. Finally, after contacting their technical support, we resolved the problem. I was letting the computer generate a security key. I would copy it to a thumb drive, paste it in the net card on the other computer and it would not work. Finally, the tech guy said to put in a manual key, and that worked. Now I could talk to the Internet from every computer – great!

The next project was to make the laser printer wireless and accessible from all computers. I went through the wireless set-up Wizard with no luck. I called for Samsung tech support and was walked through the set-up by addressing the printer via its network address. The Samsung tech support is great! All went well. I was able to access the printer from all computers that

day. However, the next day the printer was no longer available! After much fiddling I discovered it had changed its network address all by itself! So I reinstalled it again with the new address. After that didn't work, I called tech support again. The change that fixed the problem was changing the TCP/IP type from DHCP to STATIC. If I understood him correctly, he said every time the printer is turned off and on again, it would use a different network address. Why would anyone do that? Anyhow, after much de-installing and reinstalling, we got it working from all computers again. So far I have powered off and on the printer and computers several times and everything still works. So I told myself welcome to the wireless world. Another way to spend hours fixing things to save time using computers. ◆

Comments........Continued from page 6

http://2011.nycbigapps.com/submissions/5695-nyc-data.

In doing the submission, I had to make my first YouTube video since the submission required a Video hosted at YouTube demonstrating the use of the app. The link to the YouTube video is http://youtu.be/OYkj7CHK7CI. Now that I have done one, I might make such a video for my other apps.

Happy New Year to all! ◆

Tampa PC Users Group, Inc.
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Tampa, FL 33601-3492

☐ *Member: Your membership is up for renewal*

2012........Continued from page 3

At a time when many PC user groups are losing membership to the point of fading away, we have managed to maintain a reasonable base of members who attend the meetings and support the Club. Our Club's existence also requires that we have people who are willing to assume the duties and responsibilities needed to keep the Club going, and make it worth your time and effort to attend the meetings. All of the persons elected and appointed above have demonstrated a desire to make this Club worthwhile, and your continued support of their efforts is greatly appreciated. ◆

to I-275

Hillsborough Ave

56th Street

TPCUG Meeting Site
Pepin Distributing Co.
4121 N 50th Street

Harney Road

I-4

Martin Luther King Blvd

50th Street

N

to Tampa

Columbus Ave