Bits of Blue

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Meeting

Various Windows Programs & Utilities

by
Bob LaFave

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Meeting Preview: This month's meeting topic is Various Windows Programs and Utilities. Bob LaFave will be the presenter. Bob also will conduct the usual Windows SIG for the first 30 minutes of the meeting.

Editor's Comments

By William LaMartin, Editor, Tampa PC Users Group
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In this month's newsletter, Merle Nicholson educates us about a new plan from Verizon Wireless that can possibly provide you with a better package than you now have. I know that I am going to look into it. Then Merrill Friend tells us how to monitor our heart with a personal EKG device. However, you will need to have an iPhone to use it.

Dell All-in-One
I was in Microsoft's local office this past week for a programmer's meeting and saw a very interesting new Windows 8.1 portable computer brought in by one of the attendees. It was an XPS 18 Touch All-in-One made by Dell. It was an 18.5 inch tablet with separate keyboard and mouse. It had an Intel i5 processor, 500 GB hard drive, 8 GB of memory and Windows 8.1. According to the Dell site, the cost for this configuration is $1,300. Different options are available. With an i3 processor and 4 GB of memory, 500 GB hard drive, and Windows 8 (freely upgradable to 8.1), the cost is $1,000. With an i7 processor,

April Meeting: "Doc" Dockerty on the future of user groups

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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Minutes of the February Meeting

By Merle Nicholson, Secretary,
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The Windows Special Interest Group (SIG) opens our monthly meeting. The SIG moderator, Bob LaFave, normally 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, Secretary TPCUG, was moderator in Bob's absence.

Merle introduced the newer line of Logitech keyboard and mouse using the "unified transmitter" used across a wide variety of Logitech input devices. The features are much longer battery life and the ability to wake from sleep so fast that you're not aware of the sleep state.

Merle then went on to describe the method to get a toolbar menu added to Windows 7, 8 and 8.1 by utilizing the existing Start Menu folders. This is especially helpful in Windows 8, where there is no menu at all, and is highly recommended for those who value a cascading menu system that even Windows 7 does not have.

The meeting presentation was also given by Merle Nicholson on the subjects of the Ubuntu and Kubuntu, two of the many Linux operating systems. He brought a desktop computer with a single hard drive set up to dual boot to either OS. The two OS have very different appearances, despite both being based on Ubuntu 13.10. This OS is an interim release between the fully supported 12.04 LTS and the next fully supported LTS of 14.04 Trusty Tahr. The LTS designations are milestone releases that have five-year support by Ubuntu.

The Ubuntu release is similar in appearance to the MAC OS X, with an animated app dock on the left side that is included in a desktop product called Unity. It is easy to install from a bootable flash drive. When running from the flashdrive the user has a choice to

Verizon Wireless Revisited

By Merle Nicholson, Secretary,
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Switching over to the Verizon "More Everything" plan has been interesting. It's not necessarily the best thing to do, depending on the equipment you have and how much you value some features. I sprung for it, and I think I will benefit from it.

I have my wireless account with Verizon. Verizon has the best national coverage and the best reputation of all carriers. Their recent 4G outbuild into the US has been outstanding. Basically if you can't get at least 3G cell phone coverage with them wherever you are in the US, you probably shouldn't be there. Of all US carriers, Verizon is the most expensive.

That they have the best reputation isn't saying too much, because it's compared to the other carriers. As a group, Cable TV operators are the most reviled businesses in the country, and a very large part of Verizon is FIOS. I'm not even remotely fond of phoning them. In making my recent changes, their website failed three times over two days, completely, saying that the service I was using was not available. I had to phone to make the changes only to discover that the changes had been applied on one of my three previous website attempts. I think the Verizon Wireless website has improved over time.

A large part of my own dissatisfaction is the virtually unreadable bills, and the dearth of vital information. I am finally getting used to the bill to the point where if nothing has changed – no adjustments, credits or new equipment – I can compare it to previous months and decide if it's a valid bill.

I wanted to determine how much data my family's phones use before I was ready to make my most recent changes. The new plan has shared buckets of data, and it's important that I pick the best one. 2GB is $50, 3GB is $60. We have three Smartphones. My own is on a "grandfathered" unlimited data plan.

The bill summarizes the amount of data used in KB. Last month mine was 13,000KB. That's 13MB, and .013GB. Considering the use I make of my phone as a GPS (and Google Navigation) while in the car and using the browser while I'm away from my home WiFi, it's surprisingly low. Just about nothing.

The other two phones are each on $30/mo 2G data plans. How much does Verizon report? 1G for each. Not some fraction of a gigabyte, no … just round it up to the nearest gigabyte. I'm certain that my spouse uses no more than I, so if it were the same amount as mine, how do you round up from .013GB to 1GB?

On Verizon's website they have a calculator that takes your devices in account and recommended … wait for it … 6GB for $80! By the way, 10GB is $100. 250MB is $15. So it's priced on a slope. At $15 for 250MB, 2G would be $120, not $50.

There is a very good Verizon Android app to monitor your usage. Now that my plan has been changed, it is reporting my plan data usage in KB. Excellent. Also I set alerts to message me when my usage hits 50%, 75%, and 90%, so I'll get plenty of warning if I need to increase it.

Copied from their website: "Data overage for plans with 1 GB or more is $15 per 1 GB. Need more than 10 GB of data. Add 2 GB for $10 by logging into My Verizon". So if I'm in danger of exceeding my shared data limit, I can jump in there with the mobile app and increase it for $15, or wait for them to charge me that $15 overage.

To change everything over to the new plan, you are charged a monthly "access" fee for each device: Smartphone $40/mo; Basic phones $30, Jetpack, USB devices and Home Connect $20; Tablets $10 and Connected Devices $5. For my three smartphones ($40ea) and Home Connect ($20 for one) plus one $50 2GB data plan for a total of $190. Plus fees and taxes. The fees have been running just over $2 each, and taxes are taxes.

This is just shy of a $9 increase over my base charges

significantly. I now have unlimited phone minutes and unlimited messaging. Messaging for me has ranged from $6 to $22/mo. That sneaked up on me, and it was when I was doing 2013 taxes that I realized the reason for this: I was enjoying the message alerts from Amazon, UPS and FedEx on purchases and shipments. I like those, but I was paying for each one. Duh. December was $22! To be fair, I could have added coverage for messaging, but I mistakenly never thought it was worth it.

The final improvement is that the smartphones are now unlocked for mobile hotspot. Hotspot uses cellular Internet data and transmits it – makes it available to connect to like any other WiFi.

My Verizon hotspot app now works, where before it asked if I were ready to pay the $20/mo hotspot fee. For me, this is an optional activity to get Internet access for my notebook or tablet when a WiFi is not available. I have tested it; you just set up the SSID name and the security password and it's ready to go. The notebook and tablet detect the SSID and remember the security code. William LaMartin reports that the Windows Phone hotspot is in settings > Internet Sharing. iPhone is settings > general > cellular. Android has one of those Verizon apps that you can't delete, along with CityID and Madden football crapware.

A word of warning about hotspot. You can't take it for granted that your smartphone is hotspot capable. Almost all are, but there are exceptions. Second, when it's on, it's a significant power drain, so turn it off when not needed; watch your battery usage.

Here's why I think "More Everything" will work for me. I have multiple devices that are already in the system, paid for or under contract. At worst, it's a wash, moneywise. But let's say I want a new Nexus 7 tablet with LTE (that's 4G) cellular capability. It's $10 a month. A bargain. Add to that the occasional use of hotspot, eliminating my variable messaging fees, and eliminating the worry that our shared 700 minutes would get crunched, it looks good for me, and I really want a new Nexus 7. ◆

a full installation (very fast, especially from an SSD). After installation, the OS boots from scratch in 10 seconds and shuts down in less than two. There are thousands of good quality applications available, almost all are at no cost. For those who have a Windows application that can't be duplicated there is a Windows emulator called WINE that does an excellent job of running many Windows binaries. It does some Windows applications very well and very many not at all. For ultimate Windows support, the Oracle Virtualbox is the answer. There, it runs an entire Windows OS and then the applications you want can run in the VM. This option is pretty much flawless, although somewhat more resource intensive.

Ubuntu desktop is available from http://www.ubuntu. com/desktop. It comes in LTS or the current release in either 32bit or 64bit. If your computer will run 64 bit, and most do, be sure to get that one.

The second OS Merle demonstrated is Kubuntu, which is a Ubuntu OS, but with a desktop called KDE. KDE replaces the Unity desktop that Ubuntu uses. Otherwise, the capability and availability of applications is the same as Ubuntu. There's a KDE organization that administers the product and one that has some corporate support to help sustain their efforts. The key feature of KDE is the Windows-like appearance, but it is very highly configurable. The look and feel appearance can be radically changed depending on how much time you want to devote to it. It's the version that Merle has adopted and uses often. http://www. kubuntu.org. ◆

8 GB of memory, a 500 GB hard drive, and Windows 8.1, the price is $1,400. All have an additional 32 GB solid state drive for quick startups, two USB 3.0 ports and a camera.

This is a real computer and tablet with a full-size screen that has all the power you will need with a size of 11.17"x18.25"x.7" (HxWxD). It weighs about five

Internet Picture of the Month

North Korea at Night

From NASA, http://earthobservatory.nasa.gov/IOTD/view.php?id=83182. To quote: "Flying over East Asia, astronauts on the International Space Station (ISS) took this night image of the Korean Peninsula. ..... North Korea is almost completely dark compared to neighboring South Korea and China. The darkened land appears as if it were a patch of water joining the Yellow Sea to the Sea of Japan."

We can't accuse those North Koreans of wasting electricity. Original large photo relabeled by WFL.

February's Links

Tampa PC Users Group	http://www.tpcug.org
Pando Daily	http://pando.com/
ComputerWorld	http://www.computerworld.com/
Exploring Florida Maps	http://fcit.usf.edu/florida/maps/

A Heart Monitor For Your iPhone

By Merrill Friend, Tampa PC Users Group
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My wife's doctor recently recommended that she obtain a medical app for her iPhone-4. The app operates a Heart Monitor which sells for $199. I was surprised to see such a device available through an iPhone app, but I suppose it is just a sign of our highly technological times. I thought others might find the concept as fascinating as I did, so here is what I have learned about it so far.

The monitor is sold by AliveCor and is a mobile, clinical-quality electrocardiogram (ECG) recorder for use by both physicians and patients. The duration of the recording is customizable from 30 seconds to continuous. The software can store thousands of recordings on your iPhone 4,4s or 5, and these recordings are accessible to you on the AliveCor, Inc. (AliveCor) server.

- The Heart Monitor, which snaps onto the iPhone, contains sensors and electronics used to collect ECG rhythms and transmit them to the iPhone.
- The AliveECG mobile application (AliveECG App) is used to collect, view, save and wirelessly transmit ECG recordings to the AliveCor Server. A user supplied Apple iPhone 4, 4S or 5 operating with iOS 5.1 or greater is required. Note: The iPhone must be purchased separately.

This Heart Monitor enables the physician or patient to:

- Collect and view single-channel ECG rhythms using the iPhone. (As I understand it, a full ECG in a physicians office involves 12 leads – the iPhone is a single lead recording only.)
- Store ECG recordings on the iPhone.
- Wirelessly transmit ECG recordings to the Alive-Cor server.
- Access ECG recordings stored on the AliveCor server from anywhere in the world, and print the recording or save it to a hard drive.

INDICATIONS FOR USE

The Heart Monitor is intended for use by licensed

medical professionals or patients to record, display, store and transfer single-channel electrocardiogram (ECG) rhythms.

The literature furnished by AliveCor indicates there are no known contraindications for the Heart Monitor.

Until mid-February 2014, Federal law (USA) restricted the sale of this device to or on the order of a physician. Over the counter clearance has now been given for the AliveCor Heart Monitor.

WHAT DOES THIS MEAN FOR THE USER?

The device is intended to be used by licensed medical professionals or by a patient under the care and supervision of a physician. Previously, AliveCor would sell the product only to patients who provided them a prescription for the device signed by a licensed physician who is also a user of this product.

Recently that changed when over-the-counter clearance was granted under Federal law. Now the device can be ordered without a prescription. Expert analysis of ECG recordings can still be shared with a user's physician, or sent to a board-certified cardiologist or a U.S. based cardiac technician through AliveInsights.

Users without prescriptions can pre-order the device with shipments beginning in March 2014.

The device measures heart rate and heart rhythm only. This device is not designed or intended for complete diagnosis of cardiac conditions.

Monitor........Continued from page 6

The Monitor does contain its own separate 3-volt replaceable battery power source.

Below are two photos. One shows the face of the Heart Monitor held in the patients hands with the screen facing the patient. His fingers make contact with two finger contact points in each end of the Monitor. Once the patient has signed in with name and password to the AliveCor website, simply making contact with these contact points starts the recording.

The second photo shows the iPhone 4 Heart Monitor itself and its storage container, which has rubberized

edges enabling the patient to slip it over the rear of the iPhone for operating the Monitor.

The Patient can email a copy of the ECG to her physician for discussion and may also send it as a PDF file.

The list of smartphones usable with this device is expanding. For more information, http://www.alivecor.com/. Follow them on Twitter @ AliveCor, Facebook at Facebook.com/aliveCor, and see the videos at YouTube.com/aliveCor

One of the best of these videos in my view is the interview on NBC News with Dr. Nancy Sniderman, along with a former physician from the Cleveland Heart Clinic. This video includes a demo of the product.

AliveCor, Inc is a privately-held company headquartered in San Francisco. Company literature indicates the company is dedicated to enabling individuals to participate in their heart health through the use of the AliveCor Heart Monitor, an innovative mobile healthcare solution. ◆

Comments.......Continued from page 4

pounds, and the battery should last around five hours before you need to use the A/C adapter.

I was impressed. I personally never had a good opinion of Dell computers, but this looks like a game changer. HP has a competitor named the HP Envy Rove, but I think it falls short.

Although this is a large tablet which is portable, it is not as portable as a laptop since you have to worry about protecting the screen. And it is certainly not as portable as my Microsoft Surface Pro 2, which has similar specs (i5 processor, 8 GB of memory and a 500 GB solid state drive) but which is much smaller at 6.81"x10.81x.5"(HxWxD), weighs only two pounds and has a battery life during use of around seven hours. But for that solid state drive, small size and weight you pay an extra $500 over the Dell. Even though the Dell screen is much larger, it has the same resolution as the Surface.

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☐ *Member: Your membership is up for renewal*

Comments........Continued from page 7

I would include a link to the Dell device, but it is way too long. Just go to the Dell site and look in All-in-Ones for the XPS 18 Touch with stand.

Looking Back
I just consulted my Win 8 app, Computer Group Newsletters and note that in March of 1994 the TP-CUG was meeting on the Ybor campus of HCC and the presentation was going to be a demo of Corel Draw. For April, the presentation was going to be Photoshop presented by Adobe, and for May, Micro-soft was going to demo Office, which, according to the May newsletter, turned out to be a demo of Access 2.0. Those were the days: Big name vendors doing our presentations.

For March of 2004, the presentation was about Pow-erQuest products like Partition Magic, and the presen-tation was given by our friend Gene Barlow. I think by 2004 we were mostly doing our own presentations with an occasional visit by someone like Gene Barlow. No more Adobe, Corel, Symantec, etc. Times had changed – as they always will. ◆

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