THE WYSIWYG

TUESDAY Feb 4
Main Meeting
7:30 PM

Topic Not Final At The Time Of Publication

If your e-mail or mail address changes, please e-mail: secretary@ SterlingHeightsComputerClub.org

A Special Election for Secretary will be held at the February meeting. Thus far, Paul Baecker is the only nominee so far. If interested in running, contact Don VanSyckel. Additional nominations will be taken at the February meeting.

A person to fill the position of Program Coordinator is being sought. If interested in this very important function, contact Don VanSyckel.

The President's Pen
by Don VanSyckel

Well, where to start? I could tell you how Comcast email has been broken since October. A four month old story! You might think it's old news. I could tell you how easy it is to install Windows 2000 or I could tell you about the snafu with the Compaq upgrade utilities. Or possibly you don't care at all, but I believe some of this stuff is entertaining if not informative.

First, by the time you read this I'll be a happy contented WOW (Wide Open West) customer for internet services. Actually several years ago I threw Comcast out of my house for cable TV because their service personnel's methods and attitudes were totally unacceptable to me. They called and wanted a second chance but their person who was to follow up never called. I doubt if I would have been persuaded to take them back anyway. Several months later WOW installed cable in my neighborhood. Then a couple of months later WOW called and offered cable TV for $9.95 a month and I took it. I've been content with their service. No magic, just cable TV service 100% of the time.

When I cancelled my internet DSL service with Bignet and then found out Voyage won't sign me up even though they used the same third party, Covad, I was stuck. At this point my choices were to go back to dial up or go with @Home. I thought @Home had to be better than dial up. I was right they were better and I had no complaints about their service. @Home went out of business and Comcast snatched all of the @Home customers. There were a number of start up problems but considering the length of time Comcast got things going in, I thought these problems were acceptable. However, as time went on things should have gotten Better, but starting in at least the

Guests and visitors are welcome. People can attend any SHCC meetings during two consecutive months before deciding to become a member or not. Meetings include the main meeting and SIGs. July and August don't count since there is no main meeting. Membership includes admission to all SHCC functions and the newsletter. Membership is open to anyone. It is not limited to the residents of Sterling Heights.

DUES: $25/YEAR

CLUB ADDRESS: PO Box 385, Sterling Heights, MI 48311-0385
CLUB E-MAIL ADDRESS: Info@SterlingHeightsComputerClub.org
CLUB WEB PAGE: http://www.SterlingHeightsComputerClub.org

Resource People:

E-Mail Clients	-
Excel	Mike Greenen
Family Tree	Rick Schummer
FoxPro	Rick Schummer
Internet Explorer	-
MS Publisher	Rick Kucejko
Netscape	Don VanSyckel
Professional Write	Mike Greenen
Spreadsheets	Rick Schummer
Word	Rick Schummer

SHCC Coordinators:

Associate Editor	Rick Schummer
Net/Comm. SIG	Betty MacKenzie
Door prize	Margarete Nada
Greeting table	Lindell Beck
Linux SIG	Ken Belbot
Local Web Sites	Jim Golec
Newsletter publisher	Rick Kucejko
Novice SIG	Don VanSyckel
PC SIG	Jack Vander-Schrier
Publicity	Patrick Little
Resource People	Mike Greenen
Vendor Press Rel.	Jim Waldrop
Web Page	Rick Kucejko

2003 SHCC Officers

President: Don VanSyckel
Secretary: Paul Baecker

V. President: Phil Reynaud
Treasurer: Dick Morawski

Four Month Meeting Schedule:

FEBRUARY 2003
4 - SHCC - Main Meeting
5 - COMP meeting
9 - SEMCO meeting
10 - Net/Comm SIG
17 - Novice SIG
19 - PC SIG
20 - Linux SIG

APRIL 2003
1 - SHCC - Main Meeting
2 - COMP meeting
7 - Net/Comm SIG
13 - SEMCO meeting
14 - Novice SIG
17 - Linux SIG
30 - PC SIG

MARCH 2003
4 - SHCC - Main Meeting
5 - COMP meeting
9 - SEMCO meeting
10 - Net/Comm SIG
17 - Novice SIG
20 - Linux SIG
26 - PC SIG

MAY 2003
6 - SHCC - Main Meeting
7 - COMP meeting
11 - SEMCO meeting
12 - Net/Comm SIG
15 - Linux SIG
20 - Novice SIG
28 - PC SIG

Special Interest Groups:

MS-DOS (Main)	IBM compatibles
Net/Com	Computers communicating with other computers
PC	Intermediate users discuss various topics
Novice	Those starting out
Linux	Learning a new operating system

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Jack Vander-Schrier	586-739-7720	jvanders@myself.com
Jim Waldrop	586-731-6481	jwaldrop@tir.com

Other Computer Clubs:

As a member of SHCC, you can attend meetings of other clubs where we have reciprocating membership agreements, at no charge.

Computer Club of Marysville and Port Huron (COMP)
Time: 1st Wednesday, 7:00PM
Place: Mackenzie Bldg, Room 201, St Clair Community College, Clara E McKenzie Library-Science Building, 323 Erie St.
Port Huron, (810) 982-1187
Web Page: http://www.bwcomp.org
Reciprocating: Yes

South Eastern Michigan Computer Organization (SEMCO)
Time: 2nd Sunday at 1:30PM
Place: Science & Engineering Building; Oakland University; 248-398-7560
Web page: http://www.semco.org
Reciprocating: Yes

The OPC (Older Persons Commission) Computer Club
Time: Every Tuesday at 10:00
Place: OPC in Rochester
  248-656-1403.
Web page: http://www.geocities.com/Heartland/Village/1904/

Newsletter submissions are due 10 days before the club meeting, but the earlier the better. They should be sent to :
    WYSIWYG Publisher
    5069 Fedora, Troy, MI 48098
OR at the e-mail addresses: newsletter@SterlingHeightsComputerClub.org

The WYSIWYG was printed by STERLING PRINTING AND GRAPHICS, located at 37880 Van Dyke, Sterling Heights, MI

SIG Meetings

Net/Com SIG
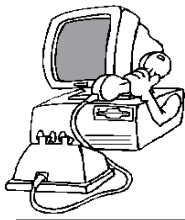
T he next meeting of the Internet/Communications (Net/Comm.) SIG will be Monday, February 10, 2003, starting at 7:00PM, at the Macomb County Library. The SIG meeting days are generally the second Monday of the month.

Each month the members of the Net/Comm SIG discuss the Internet to help members of the SHCC learn more about this communications media.

For more information about the SIG, call or e-mail Betty MacKenzie (numbers are on page 2), or check the club web site.

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Novice SIG

T he next meeting of the Novice SIG will be Monday, February 17, 2003, starting at 7:00PM, at the Macomb County Library. The SIG meeting days are generally the third Monday of the month.

We have recently started at the beginning (again) so if you ever thought you should attend the Novice SIG, now is the time. A little more than half of the people attending the SIG use Windows 98 so the actual presentations will be done on Win98. The beginning concepts are applicable to WinME and WinXP directly. As we progress through the year and get to more advanced Novice topics a few items will vary between the different

Windows versions, but we'll cover those differences at that time.

There is always a question and answer period at these meetings. The computer training sessions are free to club members, but members will be advised to purchase the book in use by the class.

For more information about the SIG, call or e-mail Don VanSyckel (numbers are on page 2), or check the club web site.

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PC SIG
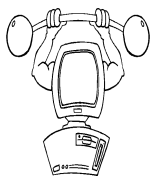
T he next meeting of the PC SIG is Wednesday, February 19, 2003. The SIG meeting is generally the last Wednesday of the month, but this month the meeting is on a different day.

The topic for the February meeting will be a demonstration of various computer simulation games, including Age of Empires, Tropico and Civilization III.

Intermediate level topics are discussed, aimed at users with some knowledge of computers. As always, questions and answers about computers will be discussed, along with a few surprises.

For more information about the SIG, call or e-mail Jack Vander-Shrier (numbers are on page 2), or check the club web site.

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If your e-mail or mail address changes, please e-mail: secretary@SterlingHeights ComputerClub.org

Linux SIG
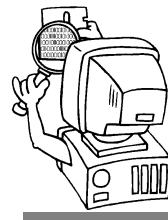
T he next meeting of the Linux SIG will be Thursday evening, February 20, 2003.

The purpose of the SIG is to learn the Linux operating system. Meetings will discuss topics that are related to this.

The SIG will meet at Ken Belbot's house for now. The SIG meeting days are generally the third Thursday of the month. Ken Belbot is the SIG coordinator. Call or e-mail Ken for directions or the latest information about the SIG (numbers are on page 2)

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Directions To The Macomb Library

T he Macomb County Library is located at 16480 Hall Road, in Clinton Township, between Hayes and Garfield, close to the light at Garfield, on the south side of Hall Road. A large red sign says "Macomb County Library". The phone number is (586) 286-6660.

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SHCC Emergency Shutdown

T he Sterling Heights Computer Club will utilize radio station WWJ - 950 on the AM dial to notify members that a meeting is canceled because of bad weather or for other reasons. The announcement will happen along with the school closings and other events. Please remember to listen to the radio when there is bad weather.

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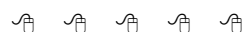
SHCC Business

"Ask The Experts"
by Jerry Carson

Please send questions to "Ask the Experts" at the club's PO address, or e-mail your question directly to Jerry Carson at his e-mail address: jerrycarson@email.com

None This Month

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Door Prizes

The SHCC offers door prizes at most regularly scheduled club meetings. The door prizes for the February meeting were not known at the time of publication.

The sought after winner's circle for January included:

MS Money 2003 was won by **Jan Cook**

MS Works was won by **Robert Laurence**

A book: Windows/Word/Excel Office Companion was won by **Roger Semrau**

A Book: Word for Windows 6 for Dummies was won by **Bob Sutton**

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More Door Prizes

Have software you no longer use? It could make a good door prize for a fellow member. It would also give that member   another good reason for being glad to have been at the club meeting. Contact Margarete Nada, the door prize coordinator, (Information is on page 2), or one of the officers. or just bring it.

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Program Coordinator

A meeting coordinator is needed for the club. The duties of this program coordinator position will be to get   presenters for the main meeting, and follow up with them prior to the meeting. This position will bring you in contact with a lot of interesting and influential people.

You can either volunteer to be a part of a group to do this, the group leader, or to be "the group."

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Electronic WYSIWYG

You have the choice of receiving either the paper or the electronic version of the WYSIWYG. Contact the SHCC secretary to request the electronic version, since it will only be sent to those requesting it.

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Selling Your Used Computer Equipment or Software

If you have some computer equipment or software to sell, you can either place a free add in the WYSIWYG, or bring the article to the club meeting. You can set up at the back of the room before the meeting, and sell your items to people at the meeting interested in buying them. Members are responsible for any damage to the table tops, so bring a pad to prevent damage.

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The President's Pen

(Continued from page 1)
October time frame, the Comcast email server that my account is on, I assume they have more than one email server, began exhibiting erratic behavior. The server began intermittently rejecting emails addressed to me. I did various tests from my computer at work and found that 40% of the emails to my Comcast account were being rejected.

When I finally got through to Comcast tech support, they wanted to tell me it was because of my computer at home. Well anyone who thinks about it for about a microsecond can see how silly this is because your computer at home isn't even connected to the email server when it's receiving emails for me. My computer doesn't even have to be turned on. Well, this problem was so annoying that dealing with tech support who knew less than the average department store computer sales person wasn't going to deter me. I called and I called and I called and I called. Finally tech support took me seriously and elevated the call. I then got someone who could understand what I was talking about. Despite the promises tech support never fixed the problem with my email.   The email server crashed one Monday and after the crash the problem never appeared again!! For a month at least.

In November the intermittent email bouncing started again. This time I spent a lot of time again trying to convince Comcast tech support that my email had a problem. They would send one email.   It would go through. They'd close the call because my email was OK. After considerable effort I finally convinced someone I actually had a problem. I believe he actually tried to find a solution to the problem. I was never told that anything was

fixed, and contact with this person simply faded like a memory.

So for over two months now I have been having email bounce intermittently. How do I know? People have been calling me, yes, calling, you know with the telephone. People have been forwarding the rejected emails for me to see. In December I said enough is enough, actually, it was too much! In December, I signed up for the middle of three WOW internet / cable TV combo deals. Their installs were backed up enough that with my schedule I couldn't have the install done

until January 24th. That's tomorrow, but I can't wait.

My combo bill will be $15 / month less than I was paying before for the two services. Before you start about 'signing up for WOW's middle internet speed', let me point out a couple of things. First, I use the net mostly in the evening when everyone else is using it, not the middle of the night. It's likely that my speed will be limited by the fact that I'm sharing the cable with other users so the 'speed cap' might not ever come into play. Don't worry if you don't fully understand the last couple

of statements, the point is I might never notice that I have a 'speed cap'. Possibly, I'll write about the trials and tribulations of life with a notebook computer next month.

At this time we haven't finalized the program. We're waiting on the program coordinator to call with the topic. OH! That's a point, we don't have a program coordinator!! Why don't you volunteer.

See you Tuesday the 4th.

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New Purchase Experience
By Rick Schummer

First published on http://RickSchummer.com (reprinted with permission)

I have made it a tradition with the Sterling Heights Computer Club over the years to share my story when I buy a new computer, so here it is.

I recently purchased a new notebook computer from Gateway. I have been wanted a new machine for almost a year and decided now was the time to make the jump. So after much research I settled on the new Gateway 600X notebook. I looked at Dell and IBM machines as well this time around.

This is my third Gateway notebook. My first notebook was a 166mhz machine with a 12 inch screen, a 2GB hard drive, 40MB RAM, and a CD-ROM. It priced out at $5000 complete with the docking station and 17 inch monitor. I used this machine for 2 years and I still use it for a test machine and the kids use it almost daily for homework. It has been solid except for one crashed hard drive and recently the CD drive decided not to shut. It has been used almost daily for the better part of five years.

My second notebook that I have just retired to a test machine and a platform to play with Linux, is a 450mhz machine with 15 inch screen, a 10GB hard drive, 128MB RAM (upgraded to 224MB) and a DVD player. I used this machine almost all day, every day, for 3 years. It cost $4500 with a 19 inch monitor and docking station. It has been a great machine. The only real problems is that I have run out of drive space and the mouse pad has rubbed a spot into the screen (more on that later).

This machine is really loaded. It has a 2ghz processor, 512MB RAM, a 15.7 inch screen, 40GB hard drive, built in wireless (802.11b), and a DVD/CD-RW drive. With a docking station, external speakers and rebate, the entire package was $2600. I love computer economics. I wish cars could find a way into this business model.

So I get the new machine 2 weeks after I order it, which was before Gateway promised it.

It is a beautiful box, completely redesigned titanium silver. What I really like is the way they finally put the various ports and jacks in the correct place.

The Ethernet and modem jacks are in the back, with the usual video, serial port, parallel port, PS2 mouse port, and power. The two USB ports are on the right side, but toward the back so they do not get in the way of the mouse. The PCMCIA slots are on the left side, also toward the back so anything I would plug into it will not get in the way. This is the first time I do not have any of the PCMCIA slots filled. All the normal stuff I used them for in the past (network and modems) are in the base unit. The microphone, external sound, etc. are on the left side toward the front. I rarely use these, but they are in a place that won't get in the way of the mouse, at least for right-handers. The screen is beautiful and runs at 1280x1024 which is my favorite and maximum resolution, even when connected to a 19 inch monitor.

The box is a half inch wider and deeper than my previous notebook. It is a quiet box except when the fan runs occasionally. Plugging into the docking station is weird; you snap it in by pressing on the top. I wonder of this is good for the screen? I hope so since it feels strange pressing on the top to get it docked. Undocking is not problem,

just press the eject buttons on the station.

The machine is fast. It is running a 2ghz Pentium 4M, designed for mobile computers. Even Windows XP Professional boots fast! The CD burner rocks. Having one on a laptop is so cool, especially when working at a client site. In the past I was using a Zip drive for transferring lots of data, or a program that I created for them. These days are over. Watching DVDs is a treat. I was sick over the holidays and watched the *Lord of the Rings: Fellowship of the Ring* in bed one night. The system ships with InterVideo's WinDVD 4 which is the product I was using on my old notebook. I really like this program. The internal speakers are pretty decent (when they work, see problem later).

I took 24 hours to uninstall a bunch of software I will never use (AOL, Money, Picture It!, Works, and Real Player) and then installed 64 packages I need on a regular basis. After I installed 50+ packages I noticed that my sound was not working. Wonderful.

So I called Gateway technical support. They had me reinstall the sound drivers numerous times and said it was probably a package I installed that killed the driver. They wanted me to reformat the drive and start over (losing 24 hours). No way! I knew the sound system was blown. I could hear a popping sound when I muted and unmuted the sound. So after explaining to the support guy my time problem they volunteered to send me a new drive to swap in and test. That drive arrived five days later. No operating system (which was promised to be loaded), so it took six hours to load the OS and base software to find out that I still had no sound. Support finally came to the same conclusion that I did almost 2 weeks before, the sound system was blown.

So they said they would replace the chassis with a refurbished unit. No

way! I just paid for a brand new computer. I told the support guy that I would send the machine back, order a different one (or possibly order a machine from a different manufacturer). I told him to reconsider his offer because I was not in the mood to talk to the guys who wanted me to get a Dell. If I did that I would be out a machine for another couple of weeks and that would not please the customer. He did the right thing and I now have a new chassis from Gateway. I swapped the hard drive from one machine to another and whamo I have sound (with the exact same applications installed). It is a newer design as well, version 2 of the same machine.

One interesting difference between the last time I ordered a new machine and this time was the ability to track it on the web via the UPS website. I could see that it shipped from Taiwan to Alaska to the continental US, through Louisville, KY, and into the metro Detroit area. It was cool seeing all the stops it was making. Once delivered, I was able to see almost immediately online that I accepted the package. This is a cool use of the web.

So now that I have my new machine all up and running I took my previous notebook for service. The mouse touchpad started rubbing a rectangle on the screen within months of the purchase. I took it in several times to the Gateway Country store to be looked at. Each time they wanted a week to get it fixed. So I decided to wait until I had

my new machine. I took it in with 1 day left on the warranty. They took the machine and I went to work. Thirty minutes later I get a call from the service department saying that it was considered normal wear and tear. No way!

So I made some calls and sent an important email to an important person at Gateway. This individual was kind enough to remember that this was a problem on my model and put me in touch with someone to get it fixed. Gateway sent out a delivery person from Airborne to pick up the laptop, overnight it to Texas to get the screen swapped out. They also replaced the offending touchpad with a version that is not "bumped-up". It is flat to the surface of the keyboard. This took one day and it was sent overnight back to me. While it took me a lot to get it fixed, it is fixed and working. The screen looks nice once again.

So what was the lesson learned this time around? Be persistent with the technical support people. If you are not satisfied with one, try another. If the second person does not help, ask for the second tier support. Persistency pays off most of the time. I am a very satisfied Gateway customer because a couple of service people went the extra mile to make sure I was happy. I also feel that using a larger computer manufacturer gives me the type of integration and support I have come to expect in the computer industry.

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Ants In My Hub
By Paul Lujan

So, last night, I come home after a 4-1/2 hour drive back from LA (note to law enforcement officials: that's a "6" there, really), and sit down in front of the computer to check my mail. My connection is, for lack of a better word, slow. I go to look

at the hub to see if everyone else is having this problem.

Nope, Mike and David's activity lights are busily flickering; it's only me who is slow. I reach down to fiddle with the connection, and notice that the hub is

covered with ants (as well as my hand, after the fiddling). "That's odd," I think to myself, "what would ants want with our hub?" But I'm way too tired to deal with it at the time, so instead I go to sleep.

I wake up this morning, and decide to investigate further. Yep, the hub is definitely swarming with ants. And it doesn't look like the ants are just going over it to somewhere else, especially since there aren't any tasty ant treats anywhere nearby. They're clearly going into and out of the hub. Some of the ants going in are even carrying little white pellets. "Is that food?" I wonder. "Where is it coming from?"

I unplug the hub and pick it up, and then kill all of the ants that come out of it. And kill some more ants. And kill some more ants. This goes on for a while. I begin to think that the little white pellets look an awful lot like eggs. I shake the hub, and it sounds like someone has poured a handful of coarse sand into it. "That's odd," I think to myself, "I could have sworn this hub didn't come with the sand option." I initially thought that there were just some ants here, but it's pretty clear I've got more on my hands now.

So, I decide to take a closer look at the hub. Unfortunately, the hub boasts a screwless construction, but I know that my screwdrivers can be used for more than merely removing screws, so I start prying. As I do so, a bunch of ants and eggs, as well as what look like larvae (basically, they look like slightly-smaller-than-normal ants, but a very pale brown instead of black) continue to fall out (into the sink, since I've become clever enough to do this over the sink).

I finally get the thing open, and see a bunch of eggs lying on the circuit board, but less than I would have expected if there's really a colony set up here. So, I figure that they're probably under the circuit board, and set to

work unscrewing the circuit board to take it out of the box.

Jackpot! (That is, if my goal were to win an ant colony, which it really *wasn't.) The entire bottom of the box is coated with eggs, and I see a large ant which I can only assume is the queen. I terminate the queen with extreme prejudice, and then wash out the box (it's made of metal, so I figure it'll be okay.)

The circuit board, on the other hand, I can't just wash off (since I hold hopes of saving the hub, not really wanting to have to drop $30 on a new one), and there are lots of eggs wedged in small places, like between the link lights or between the chips connected to the ports, where they'll be really hard to get out of. So, I set the circuit board aside for the moment to take a shower.

When I come back, I notice that the ants have actually done me a favor! (Suckers!) In their futile attempts to save the colony, they've picked up the eggs themselves to scurry around like maniacs, solving my problem. I pick off the ants, and then vigorously shake the board to try to dislodge anything still stuck in the ports, and much to my surprise another queen falls out. (I've read that Argentine ants can have more than one queen per colony, but this is still a surprise, especially since I thought I had already gotten almost

everything.) I dispose of her, too, clean up the remaining ants, and figure I might as well try putting the hub back together. Not that I can completely undo my prying, but hey, that's cosmetic anyway.

Much to my surprise, it actually works! And my performance is back from miserable to normal. Ants 0, Me 1.

Man, I hate ants. If I could choose one genus to completely wipe off the Earth, assuming that it wouldn't, like, destroy the ecosystem (but really, what depends on ants? Anteaters? Well, they're not doing a very good job, are they?!), it would be them. Well, okay, I suppose I should probably choose something like mosquitoes, since even though they're less personally annoying to me, they still have the whole large-scale disease-spreading thing. But I'd expect some serious compensation from the WHO for not choosing ants!

--*Paul Lujan. Article reproduction coordinated by Steve Bass, Pasadena IBM Users Group. This article is brought to you by the Editorial Committee of the Association of Personal Computer User Groups (APCUG), an International organization to which this user group belongs.*

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Using Your CD Drive More Productively
By Ira Wilsker

Almost all newer computers come with a CD-RW drive, a CD drive that can write and rewrite compatible CD discs. For older computers, with a standard CD reader (play only, not write), the addition of a CD "burner" is a very popular and fairly inexpensive upgrade. A simple review of the Sunday sale books for the major electronics and office supply stores shows an abundance of CD-RW

drives for between $30 and $100, often after rebate. These drives are typically easy to install, and may possibly be installed in addition to the existing CD reader (good for copying CDs), or as a simple replacement. If internal installation is not desired, there are several external CD-RW drives, advertised weekly, that connect to an available USB or firewire port. The external drives, typically the USB models, are

also often a good choice for older notebook computers where internal installation is difficult or impossible. The Sunday ads often show the external USB drives for under $100, after rebates.

Almost all CD-RW drives, whether factory installed, or after-market add-on, come with some CD burning software. The most widely distributed CD software provided with the drives is from Adaptec, or Adaptec's successor (Adaptec sold their CD writing software division), Roxio. Another common software package included with some drives is from Nero, while other drives come with a variety of lesser-known software titles. As the price of blank CD discs plunges, often "free after rebate", burning (writing to) CDs has become very popular. Still, many PC (and Mac) users are not using their equipment to its potential; large number of users still only use their CD-RW drives in read mode to install other software, and not to burn discs.

As had been stated many times here in previous columns, the three most important words in computing are "Backup, Backup, and Backup". Remember that "Murphy's First law of Computing" states that "A properly backed-up hard drive will never fail; a hard drive that has not been recently backed up will always fail at the most inopportune time." All too many users who have ready access to CD-RW drives have lost all of their important files to viruses or hard drive failures, despite the ease and low expense of copying important files to CD discs. The common blank discs hold from 660 to 700 megabytes of data, and are very inexpensive. Other than some time, there is no great investment to back up critical files at a minimum, or even better, entire hard drives.

There are a variety of excellent utilities available to backup hard drives. Some CD-RW drives come with a "lite" or "limited" version of popular backup

programs. While minimally functional, these "lite" versions often lack useful functions such as compression (getting more data on a CD disc than its native capacity), or incremental backup (only backing up new files or files modified since the previous backup). I have been using "BackUp MyPC" from Stomp Software (www.stompinc.com), which was formerly known as Backup Exec, by Veritas (Seagate). This program is probably one of the most full featured backup programs, and easy to use. BackUp MyPC can backup to almost any type of device from CD-RW drives, tape drives, Jazz and Zip drives, and other devices. Some competing products are Roxio's Go Back, Norton's Ghost, and NTI's BackUp Now (which I have also used). Since almost all computers can utilize some form of CD writer, and blank discs are cheap, there is absolutely no reason NOT to have at least critical data files backed up. The cliché "ounce of prevention..." is most apropos here. With over one in five PCs currently infected with at least one variety of the Klez worm, several versions of which are capable of destroying critical files on a hard drive, backups are imperative. The appearance and rapid spread of other destructive worms and viruses, such as the new "Hunch" worm which explicitly destroys the files in the Windows, My Programs, and My Documents directories, emphasizes the need for backing up hard drives. Still, probably the most damage is done by the old-fashioned hard drive crash. Remember Murphy's law, and always have a reasonably current backup of critical files. For long-term archival purposes, better quality CD discs are advertised as having a 100-year archival life.

There are other popular uses of CD burners. One of the most popular and most controversial uses is burning music to blank CD discs. Often in the popular MP3 format, or in native commercial music CD format, studies show that this is the most popular use of CD

burners. Provided that copyright laws are rigidly obeyed, and we all know that they always are (snicker), homemade music CDs are very widely created and used. Online music or swap services, ranging from the now defunct Napster, to the very much alive and controversial KazAa and Morpheus, as well as the legitimate commercial music sites such as Sony, are popular sources of such music.

Another popular use is copying entire CD discs. Generally, it is considered "ok" to make a single archival backup of commercial CDs, provided that the copy is only used as a backup, and properly disposed of (destroyed) when the original software is no longer needed. With some software CDs, and an increasing number of commercial music CDs, this archival backup is becoming more difficult to create as sophisticated copy protection is being utilized more commonly.

Many use their CD drive, often with rewriteable CD-RW discs, as an additional, but removable adjunct to their hard drive. This allows archival and portable storage of massive amounts of data, at minimal expense. CDs are often ideal for moving large files between computers.

There are several other uses for the CD-RW drives now so common in our machines. Many other CD drive utilities are readily available for download, such as from tucows.exp.net/system/cdrutil95.html or tucows.exp.net/mmedia.html. Use the drives as they can be used, but make absolutely sure that critical data is frequently backed up.

This article is brought to you by the Editorial Committee of the Association of Personal Computer User Groups (APCUG), an International organization to which this user group belongs.

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WYSIWYG WEB WATCH (www)
by Paul Baecker

This column attempts to locate sites containing valuable, amusing and free content, with no overbearing pressure to purchase anything. If you have a particularly enjoyable or helpful (or just plain useless) site which you would like to share with the membership, e-mail the site address, with a brief site description, for a future WYSIWYG issue, to excuser@excite.com. Additionally, send in a website category in which you are particularly interested, and all eyes will watch out for related sites. Check the SHCC web site (Web Page Reviews) for past previous gems.

Get a free utility that checks your email with effective spam and virus elimination.
http://www.mailwasher.net/

Pop-Up Stopper is a free utility with ad-blocking features, plus cookie management, file cleaning and easy bookmarking. It allows you to remove web bugs, tracking cookies and similar files from your PC.
http://www.panicware.com/popupstopper.html

This site will calculate values for a wide variety of items based on prices from over 5 million online auctions each week. If you need to know what something is worth, check here first.
http://www.strongnumbers.com/

The Bristol Exploratory Science Centre offers several illusions to test your mind and vision.
http://www.exploratory.org.uk/illusions/flash/index.htm

A.M. Best's Ratings are recognized worldwide as the benchmark for assessing the financial strength of insurance companies. How healthy is your insurer? Requires free registration to access data.
http://www.ambest.com

Info on assisted living facilities in Michigan can be found at Michigan Consumer & Industry Services (CIS). Click on "Family & Health Services".
http://www.michigan.gov/cis

In your mature years, but concerned with what the future holds with retirement only one of your options? This site is designed to help you navigate through the adventures and challenges ahead.
http://www.2young2retire.com

View various public health statistics for Macomb County, including restaurant inspection results for over 2100 licensed food service establishments. Are you heading for a healthy eating environment?
http://www.co.macomb.mi.us/publichealth/

The American Assn for Retired Persons offers info on health, learning, legislation, money, life, travel and leisure applicable to those over 50 years of age, as well as discounts to various shopping and travel purchases.
http://www.aarp.org

This site defines an annuity and helps you determine whether one is right for you. It lists some companies offering annuities, and offers investment calculators and related news articles.
http://www.annuiweb.com/

View weather-related photos from around the world. Submit your own for public viewing.
http://www.wunderground.com/wximage/about.asp

Bartender jokes. Also click on 'Joke Archives'. Search through their drink recipes by drink name or type or by ingredient.
http://www.thebartend.com/JOTD/default.asp

This site will help you to make your own VideoCDs, SVCDs or DVDs that can be played on your standalone DVD Player from video sources like DVD, Video, TV, Cam or downloaded movie clip formats. The site offers many tutorials and how-to articles, as well as hardware reviews and comparisons, and suggested freeware.
http://www.vcdhelp.com/

Flags of the world. 31,000 of them! Country, war, ethnical, sporting, political, historical banners and flags. View illustrations, descriptions, history, and symbolism of flags.
http://www.crwflags.com/fotw/flags/

Just hope that you don't end up with these folks as your neighbors!
http://www.knology.net/~carlos/redneck.htm

Someone's collection of amusing photos.
http://home.pacbell.net/rds33/best_photos/

The Federal Medicare site has info on health plans, nursing homes, Medicare coverage and suppliers, assisted living and assistance programs, publications, and physician and supplier directories.
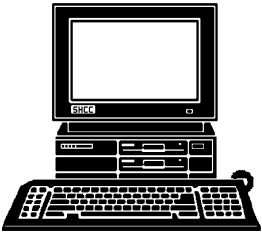http://www.medicare.gov

The American Council on Gift Annuities (ACGA) is a qualified nonprofit organization for the purpose of providing educational and other services to American charities regarding gift annuities and other forms of planned gifts. Definitions at the site.
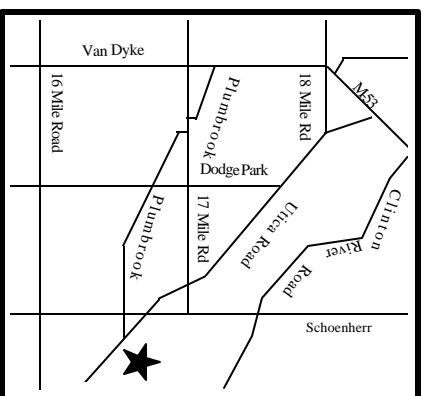http://www.acga-web.org/
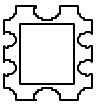
FEBRUARY AT SHCC:

TUESDAY FEB 4
Main Meeting.
7:30PM at
Carpathia Club.
38000 Utica Road
Sterling Heights

Topic Not Final At The Time Of Publication

SIGs

MONDAY
Net/Com SIG

February 10
7:00PM at the Macomb County Library.

MONDAY
NOVICE SIG

February 17
7:00PM at the Macomb County Library.

WEDNESDAY
PC SIG

February 19
7:00PM at the Macomb County Library.

THURSDAY
LINUX SIG

February 20
7:00PM at Ken Belbot's home, or various other places.

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