WAUCtalk

General Meeting, 7 p.m. Thursday, April 7 , 2011

WAUC lunch on Tuesday this month.
We will be lunching at 1:00 p.m. on Tuesday, April 12, 2011, just for this time.

Learn about the benefits and unique features of Verizon at our General Meeting on Thursday, April 7.

April at a Glance

7 WAUC General Meeting, 7:00 PM
Jackson Park Lutheran Church
4535 W. Oklahoma Ave.
Topic—Verizon

12 WAUC Lunch, 1 PM, Country Buffet, 4902 S. 74th
RSVP: terryharvey@wi.rr.com

13 Mac SIG, 6:30 PM
Wauwatosa Library
76th & North Ave.

14 MS Excel SIG, 7:00 PM
Speedway Station, 60th & Layton

15 Deadline for submitting articles for WAUCtalk, please send to:

ricejulia@hotmail.com
Subject: WAUCtalk

21 Internet SIG, 7:00 PM
Speedway Station, 60th & Layton

27 Investment Tracking SIG, 7:00 PM
Speedway Station, 60th & Layton

28 Exec. Bd. Meeting, 7:00 PM
Doris Regner's Home

Future Presentations:
* April1-2 MilwPC Trade Show
* May—Joe Schoen on Facebook,2
* June—Al Sherkow, Computer and the Law

President's Message—Trade Show
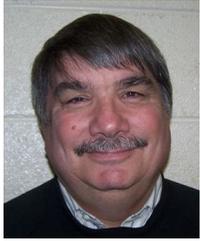
It was a brutal winter, but now it is just a memory. We canceled a general meeting and a couple of SIGs, but now it seems the worst is over.

We have some good presentations coming up this year. If you were at the last general meeting you were given the opportunity to discover what everybody has been talking about – Facebook. Part 2 of the Facebook presentation will be in May.

If you would like to know a little more about the origin of Facebook, see the movie "The Social Network".

We have a chance once again to put WAUC out to the public. Milwaukee PC is once again giving us a table at their computer expo on April 1 & 2 at the Tommy Thompson Youth Center by State Fair Park.

Come on out and let's have some fun. If you can, help man our table and promote WAUC. Contact Leo Hoffer if you can help. We had a good time last year.

Enjoy the spring weather and happy computing.

Bruce Kosbab
President
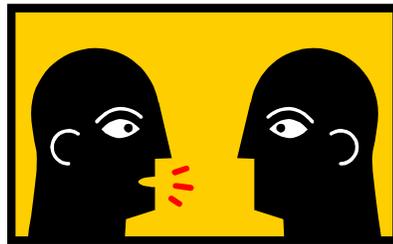
A Little Tech Support

Customer: **My keyboard is not working anymore.**

Tech Support: **Are you sure your keyboard is plugged into the computer?**

Customer: **No. I can't get behind the computer.**

Tech Support: **Pick up your keyboard and take ten steps backwards.**

Customer: **Okay.**

Tech Support: **Did the keyboard come with you?**

Customer: **Yes.**

Tech Support: **That means the keyboard is not plugged in. Is there another keyboard?**

Customer: **Yes, there's another one here. Wait a moment please. . .. . Ah, that one does work. Thanks.**

WAUCtalk

Board Minutes—Bulbs for Sale

Bruce Kosbab, Doris Regner, Terry Harvey, Tom Hermann, Len Levine, and Bill Gierich gathered at Doris' home on February 24th, 2011.

Leo Hoffer has been in contact with Troy at Milwaukee PC regarding a table at the MPC Trade Show in April. Troy has responded that he will give the club a table at no cost. We can have a few laptops there and have our Membership CD playing.

Bill is going to take some CD's that will be given to prospective and new members. Because we didn't have a February General Meeting, we did not get to collect some of the dues we would normally have collected. If you haven't paid your dues yet, please do so ASAP.

Bill is selling First Green e-watt saver light bulbs for $15. These are for a fund raiser for his son's robotics club. These bulbs give off a very nice color and are guaranteed for 9.1 years. They use very little electricity so if used in a frequently lit lamp or out door lamp one could really save quite a bit of money by using them. They are LED which means long lasting and inexpensive to use. If you would like to purchase some bulbs from Bill, please email him so he is sure to bring the bulbs with him.

General Meeting—Ten Actions to Avoid on Facebook

Bruce Kosbab called the meeting to order at 7:02 PM. Bruce commented that the crowd was small, but it did seem to increase later in the evening. Joe Schoen, our speaker, was there. Guests were Jim Hemple (who had been to Peter's SIG), Gloria, & Jerry. Some of last month's meetings, including the general meeting and EXCEL SIG, were cancelled due to blizzard & cold.

Members were reminded to pay their dues to insure that they continue to receive WAUCtalk, WAUC bulletins, and be able to come to SIGs. An Audit Committee of two people was required to audit last year's books. Ray Jamroze and Julia Rice volunteered.

Bruce asked Leo Hoffer about the Milwaukee PC Expo, April 1st and 2nd at the Tommy Thompson Youth Center at State Fair Park. There would be a WAUC DVD playing on the laptop. More people would mean alternating working the booth and visiting other booths to see what the vendors are showing. Members let Leo or Bruce know if they are interested.

Terry Harvey announced that the WAUC is at 1:00 PM at Old Country Buffet; they will always be at 1:00, no longer at noon. Two months of Treasurer's Reports were given.

The next question was did we renew APCUG? Bruce said we did in November. Terry was concerned about next year and said they start asking for dues in August. Bruce said we should wait to see what the new administration is like before deciding. Julia uses some of their articles for the newsletter.

Bruce wanted to know whether people were getting the WAUC bulletin and asked for feedback on the WAUC bulletins. He received applause. He does research on the subjects for the bulletins. The hardest part for him is coming up with Internet sites.

Bill Gierach had WAUC CD's of the month for February, October, and November. Leo Hoffer announced the raffle prizes: winner's choice of a smart webcam, WAUC sweatshirt, 16 gigabyte flash drive, battery charger and batteries.

Presentation by Joe Schoen

Ginny Splinter introduced Joe Schoen as the owner of "The Computer Guy," a complete in-home computer service company for hardware and software as well as one-

on-one tutoring. He started "The Computer Guy" part-time in 2006, and has been full-time since June, 2010. Joe has also been teaching computer classes to the public at Franklin Public Library since 2006. Joe has a background in general computing covering hardware and software, basic web design, and graphic design. Joe's presentation today is Facebook, Part I (What Facebook Is: how it works; is it safe? the sign- up process; and some big no-no's). Part II (How to Use Facebook daily) will be at the May General meeting.

About half of the members at the meeting were on Facebook. Joe asked, "Did you know that every post, every photo is actually available to every Face book member by default?" He would talk about what Facebook is, the sign-up process, and privacy (how to make it safe for you). Joe provided us all with handouts.

What is Facebook? According to Wikipedia.com, Facebook is a social networking site. In layman's terms, it is "a website for people to connect to each other." Family, friends, and long lost friends can easily meet in one area and share their thoughts instantly anywhere in the world. The original intention was just to connect college students together. One site was created to do this, and they did not expect it to get as big as it is. Now people use it to chat with current friends, meet new friends, date people, share pictures, share videos, and share thoughts.

Is Facebook safe? Facebook, like any other website is as safe as you make it. The problem is that we lack common sense. That's usually what people target. If you put it on the Internet, anyone can see it.

The signup process is simple. Anyone can actually join. There are four steps. First, you need a valid E-mail address; this is how Facebook will contact you. They send messages to Facebook, and Facebook sends it to you, to try and control privacy. Your E-mail is your user name, and you need a password.

The first thing you do after signing up is to add friends. Facebook looks at your last name and lets you know who it thinks you might know. They will say, "_____ is someone you may know," and you can choose to add them as a friend or ignore the message. You can also choose to skip the process or just continue.

Step 2, which Joe does not encourage, is typing in your E-mail address for them to open up your contact list. You can skip this, if you wish.

Step 3 is your profile information. This is how people can find you. If you don't put it in, can they find you? No.

Step 4 is to upload your photo, but depending on the scenario, you might not want to. Joe uses a cartoon character as his picture.

The last step is that they will send you an E-mail to your E-mail address to verify that you are who you say

(Continued from page 3)

you are. Once you're in, "Welcome to Facebook."

Top 10 No-no's

10. Personal Conversations: Facebook has something called "the wall," where anyone can come up to the wall, which is yours, and post a message. This is public, and anyone can see it. Be careful of personal conversations. For personal conversations, it is better to Instant Message someone or E-mail them through Facebook.

9. Social Plans: Don't advertise if you are on vacation.

8. Linking sites: Don't mix business with pleasure.

7. Company Information: Be careful what you post about, your friends, fellow workers or your boss.

6. Photos of Family and Friends: Putting up photos may be a quick, easy

way for family who don't all live nearby to see all the pictures recently taken, rather than E-mail a few pictures at a time to 20 different people. However, if you don't restrict access to your profile, by default, the pictures are there for everyone who has a Facebook account to see.

Q: Can you test out whether your friends are not protecting their sites by just going and looking at all their pictures?

A: Yes.

5. Your Address and Phone Number: This is a security risk on Facebook, just as it is with wireless routers (identity theft, burglaries). Joe checks people with wireless routers (using his laptop) when making a house call, then shows them how easy it is to lock them out of their own Internet, if they are not secured. He also shows how easy it is to fix. Wireless routers require two passwords: wireless password and

router password. Most people don't change the router password, which is how viruses get in and change DNF settings. This can cause Internet problems (like why you can't find anything on Google).

4. Personal Finance Information.

3. Password: This is self explanatory.

2. Password hints: Same

1. Anything you don't want shared.

Facebook sometimes buries things. From the screen on page 14, choose "Customize settings" to get to this screen on Page 16: Choose Your Privacy Settings in the Basic Directory Information.

"Send me friend requests," if you developed a Facebook account just to communicate with your kids and grandkids, change "Search for me on Facebook" and "Send me friend requests" to "None." No one will ever find you and no one will ever request you. Basically, you're invisible; you can still search to find people and request friends. If you want total obscurity, that's the way to go.

Then choose your privacy settings: apps, games and websites. Games are so addicting, it's beyond belief. They do have a lot of games. There's an application list that you can sign up on to play the game, but you don't have to sign up.

About advertisements, along the right hand side: do no clicking, no matter how wonderful it looks, because, it is an advertisement. You have to be careful because advertisements usually are links that will take you to other pages. Some of those pages will not be Facebook pages, and the next thing you know you are getting every E-mail under the sun with every male enhancing product; whether you are female or not, it does not matter. You can get a virus from the advertisements on the side. This is the disadvantage of kids and the advantage of being older adults; we may be slower learning computers, but that is because we have common sense. We

are more cautious, because, if we go too far, we need help, and sometimes that help costs us money.

Q: How do you get rid of someone?

A: You can "defriend" them.

Q: Do they get a message that you defriended them?

A: No, but they will be unable to contact you.

Always use common sense when you post any thoughts, "If someone sees this, how are they going to take it, and can it be used against me?" Be careful with kids and grandkids. Use the handout sheets, check out your account and those of your family and friends to be sure you are as secure as you want to be.

It's so easy to do searches, that if you're not secure a potential employer can use Facebook to find out about you (whether they admit to it or not). Don't link sites such as LinkedIn and Facebook. Be careful not to mix business with pleasure.

If you clean your cookies, your username and password will be gone. Not all cookies are bad, some are good, and so it's up to you.

Joe will be back for Facebook part II in May. He offers a free monthly newsletter, with a self help article, a website of the month, a full-featured article (this month is "How Viruses actually work"), a free software spotlight of the month, and list of classes Joe teaches at Franklin Public library. All classes come with handouts like you see here. You sit in front of a computer. Class cost $5.00, no residency required.

Don & Chris Gardner

Smartphone = PDA + Phone: Why Have One

Smartphones can be seen all around. Notice the phone being used on your favorite TV show; next time, odds are that it'll be a smartphone. A year or two ago it was a flip phone (do you remember Jack Bauer on 24 using his?), but no more. Now the phone of choice seems to be the smartphone. Apple, and more recently, Google, have really changed the mobile phone landscape. The iPhone, with its iOS Operating System available only on the iPhone, released in 2009, really started the whole movement. Google, with its Android Operating System (provided for free to hardware phone manufacturers), has come on very strong in the past few months so that iPhones and Android phones now have about the same market share - about 35% each, which only leaves 30% to be shared by Blackberry, Nokia, and Microsoft.

The Smartphone equality, as stated in the title, suggests that the smartphone is equal, in functionality anyway, to a Personal Digital Assistant (PDA) and a standard mobile phone. PDAs have been a popular way of allowing one to have many of the computer files, pictures, videos and music, available on the go - remember the Palm Pilot. A phone was another necessity for someone who was always on the go. So for someone who had to be mobile and needed access their computer files, a phone and a PDA became a good combination. I carried a PDA for many years and more recently, a PDA and a flip phone. Now I can carry only one device, a smartphone. And, as a welcome side effect, now I only have to make sure one device is charged nightly.

The smartphone is made possible by a number of technologies. Among them are: Capacitive touch-screens; 3G (soon to be 4G) wireless telephone networks; Wi-Fi; GPS; Microminiature processors, memory and components; Digital Cameras; and Phone oriented Operating Systems. Some of these technologies are used in phones - like touch screens, net-works, small components, Digital cameras, and operating systems. And some are used in PDAs - like touch screens, Wi-FI, small components, and operating systems. As you can see there is a good bit of overlap, so putting it all together was just a natural. But it took the genius of Apple to put it all together and make it work and make it practical and make it cool. And now with the help of Google it has become more practical and popular.

All of the technology for replacing the mobile phone and the PDA is included in the smartphone, and then some. (I didn't have a good camera in my mobile phone, before.) But, it does take some planning and forethought to make the smartphone do everything. Some of the things to be concerned with are: Contacts, (which are phone numbers, addresses, e-mail addresses, and related notes); Calendar events; E-mail; Memos, (which are lists of important things);

Documents; Spreadsheets; Pictures, Videos, Music; and Browsers. Before you can consider using any of these things there has to be an "App" (Application) installed on your smartphone. (I am using a Motorola Droid2 as an example, but most of what I am referring to will be very similar on another Android smartphone, and even similar for an Apple iPhone.) There are Apps for all of these tasks. In fact there are over 100,000 Apps for Android phones and over 240,000 Apps for iPhones.

So, the first thing to do is to identify an App to handle each task you want accomplished. Your smartphone probably came with a basic collection of Apps. Basic things like Contacts, Pictures, Videos, Music, and Camera will probably be covered by these Apps that were installed at the fac-tory. If not, you can go to the "Market" for Android Apps, or the Apple Store for iPhone Apps, and find one that fits your needs. Many of the Apps at these stores (websites) are free or have a nominal cost, most under $10. Things like Word or PDF Documents, or Excel spreadsheets may have to be handled by an App from one of these stores. Once you get to the App store, you will find a myriad of App titles. You can typically search for "All Apps", or limit your search to only free ones. You can even search for Games that will run on your smartphone. When you find an App that you want, you will pay for it (via a credit card account that was previously set up) if it is not free, and then it will be downloaded right onto your smartphone. The download is completely controlled from the Market and there is no further action on your part needed. After the App is downloaded and installed, you will receive a message that it is complete. It couldn't be any easier.

Once an App has been downloaded, it can be placed on the home screen. Actually, one of the home screens. The Droid2 has 7 home screens. Multiple home screens make it easy for you to organize your Apps. Apps that you think work together can be collected on a particular home screen. You could have a home screen for entertainment, one for work, one for family, another for sports. Any organization of Apps that makes sense to you would be appropriate.

Once you've organized your home screens and downloaded the Apps needed, I'm sure you'll see that the smartphone is a very useful device for someone on the go. Future articles will concentrate on some of the new ways of interacting with the touch sensitive screen and some of the smartphone's more interesting features, but I think you will now agree that: Smartphone = PDA + (not so smart) phone.

Phil Sorrentino

Mac SIG—Unique Features in Systems Preferences Viewed

The three of us at the MacSIG on March 9, Peter, Ray and I, started out by reviewing the functions of System Preferences on the Mac. Since each of us probably has a favorite way to access the locale, we spent no time on those.

System Preferences is divided into five areas. In the Personal area, we saw that asking a question in the Spotlight caused the areas that had some relevance lighted up on the page. Text colors can also be changed there. In the Desktop area, one can choose the desktop background or a screen saver. In addition, the menu bar can be made translucent there.

In our discussion Peter told us of the existence of Berkeley Open Infrastructure for Network Computing, a screensaver that provides a group of projects that can be downloaded and installed. Working on a project can fill the waiting periods that one has while working.

In Expose and Spaces we reviewed again the ways the Mac has of displaying several programs and allowing working with several windows open. Spaces provides multiple desktops. CTRL-arrow is the way to navigate between the squares that hold the desktops.

Language and Text includes various ways to display dates and currency.

In Security, we found that we could turn on an internal firewall. Although the Mac is more secure than the PC,

as it becomes more popular there will be greater need for security programs. Our members use Sophos (free) and Norton(cost). We moved around in the security devices on our computers.

In Spotlight we became aware of the way that the path to a selected program or file appears at the bottom of the box.

Ray has been struggling with the question: Why does the Mac not have Blu-ray player software. He has been following the development of this issue. At this point he has to use an external Blu-ray player. This question arose as we moved into the Hardware section of System Preferences. Here we found ways to calibrate colors and refine resolutions. We changed brightness and played with the alert sounds available.

Next month we will deal with MobileMe. At this point Peter and Ray connected with each other on Skype. Julia was not on Skype yet. We also viewed the new MacBook Pro, which has a superfast connection called a Thunderbolt Port. It would be released next week.

The endless capabilities of the Mac keeps us busy learning in every session.

Julia Rice

# Excel Tip on Copying Values from Cells

There are many ways that you can use Excel's tools to fill out various cells in a worksheet. One of the most common tools is to copy a cell (or cells) and then paste them into other cells.

The only problem with this approach is that when you copy cells, you also copy the format of the original cells into the target cells. What if you just want to copy the values from the original cells, but retain the formatting already applied in the target cells?

You probably already know that you can use the Paste Special option from the Home tab of the ribbon (Excel 2007 and 2010) or the Edit

menu (older versions of Excel), and then choose the Values option to paste just the values. If the target cells are right next to the original cells, there is an even easier way to accomplish the same task. Simply follow these steps:

1. Select the original cells whose values you want to copy.

2. Right-click on the fill handle (at the bottom right-corner of the selection) and drag the selection to encompass the target cells. When you release the mouse button, a Context menu appears.

3. Choose the Fill Values option. Excel fills the target cells with the
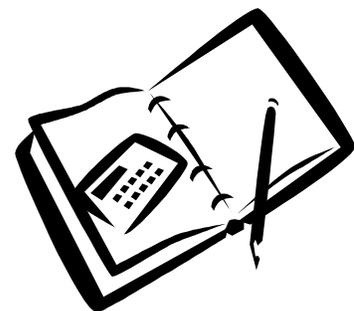
values from the original cells; the formatting remains unchanged.

Internet SIG—Robotic Competition Introduced by Bill

The WAUC Internet SIG met on February 17, 2011, with eight members attending and two more came later. The yellowish tint from the projector which we experienced at the January SIG was gone. Bill Gierach explained that the connecting cable had to be replaced.

Bill also had a new WAUC CD-ROM of the month available with web tools, image tools, security programs, and utilities. After connecting to the internet, he opened the SIG with an announcement that his robot team, "More Robotics," is raising funds by offering the "green e-watt saver light bulb," for only $15.00. These are bulbs using LED light which are not dimmable but are equivalent to a normal 60 watt warm white light bulb and if used for three hours per day are estimated to last fifteen years. For more information on this exciting product, go to the website, www.usfirst.org/e-wattinfo.

Bill also showed us an animation video demonstrating the robot competition for 2011. To see it, go to Youtube and in the search box enter in, "gameanimationko2011." As is usual, playing this video was interrupted by frequent buffering but it flowed much more smoothly when replayed and it was a very well composed video. Teams of high school students design, build, and program a robot, within competition parameters, to carry out a task and then direct them by wireless remote control during competition to score points. The game this year is called "logomotion," and has robots picking up objects and hanging them on pegs to spell out a logo. Local competition will again be downtown at the U.S. Cellular Arena on March 10th, 11th, and 12th, with free admission.

Several computer issues of the members present were dealt with. Bob and Terry Harvey brought their Acer laptop with a taskbar on the side of the screen which can be dragged to the bottom but then won't stay there. The operating system is Microsoft Vista. Bill connected their laptop to the projector so we could all see. Click, hold, and drag the taskbar to the bottom and then right-click and select "lock taskbar."

Bill also took care of a few other things on this laptop, removing some desktop search boxes and icons. In Vista, the old Windows "Add and Remove Programs" function in Control Panel is known as "Programs and Features." and Bill opened it up to remove some things. Bill also demonstrated the Vista "switcher" function which creates an additional virtual desktop, viewed from an angle, on top of the regular desktop. This allows the creation of multiple desktops simultaneously, each running several applications.

Richard Durand asked about what to do when an application stops responding and will not end even when the "end task" command is selected multiple times. Bill said to add more RAM to the computer or to try increasing the amount of virtual memory on the hard drive. In Windows XP, click Start and trace this sequence: Settings/Control Panel/System/Advanced/ Performance Settings/Advanced/ and click the change button under Virtual Memory. The dialog box will show the recommended amount of memory and the desired amount can be manually entered.

Phil Walker asked about how to get his Facebook friends' pictures to show up on the left of the screen on Facebook. Bill is not familiar with Facebook so he went to Yahoo Mail and looked in the Options, the Settings of Profile or My Account, and it might be the same on Facebook. Or one can try using the Facebook Help function.

Also, be sure to be at the next WAUC General Meeting because there will be a presentation about Facebook. And with that, our time was up for the WAUC Internet SIG for February 2011. See you next time.

Richard Durand

MS Excel SIG—Solution to Loss of Format Bar in iPad Found

Eight members attended the Microsoft (MS) Excel 2007 SIG on Thursday March 10, 2011

Because Bill was judging robotics competition which ran behind schedule, we started our Excel SIG at 8PM. First, we addressed Ted's question on disappearance of the Format bar in Windows XP WordPad. In Word-Pad, select View, Options, and then either Text, Rich Text, Word, Write, or Embedded. Finally, check Format bar.

Next, we covered our tutorial for Chapter 4 Creating Formulas and Chapter 5 Copying & Pasting Formulas. We took some breaks to practice some of the info with Excel example files. The complete detailed write-up will be emailed separately to members.

Bruce created an exercise for us to work on this month. Printed copies of it were given to all attendees. Next month, he will cover the answers and the tutorial for Chapter 6 - Columns & Rows and Chapter 7 - Formatting Worksheets. Bruce also handed out Chapter 6 Exercises for Columns & Rows.

Come join us to learn the fascinating features of Excel.

Ginny Splinter

Investment Tracking SIG—Glen Ehnert Shares Skills

Here are the minutes for the WAUC Investment SIG for February 2011:

The WAUC Investment SIG met again on February 23rd 2011, and was attended by WAUC members Richard Durand, Don Gardner, Rex Nielson, Dale Voit, and most especially, Mr. Glen Ehnert.

Some time ago Glen offered to give a presentation to this SIG and this was the month when everything came together. Glen was able to acquire his own overhead projector from a school and then finally found an office equipment store that could provide a replacement bulb for it. Next, he spent a lot of time and effort creating transparencies to use with the projector.

Glen is a very active trader, buying and then selling during the same day, though he said he will hold a position overnight sometimes. He usually trades the Standards and Poor 500 Index, SPX, though he also will trade other large companies such as Potash, POT, Goldman Sachs, GS, Bank of America, BAC, and MasterCard, MA. However he doesn't trade these actual securities, which are very expensive, but instead trades their "at-the-money" calls and puts, options for the current month of up to one week before expiration.

The charts Glen showed on the overhead projector are known as "Candlesticks" because, instead of the usual simple lines or bars, each time interval uses a rectangle between the open and close with lines above and below to show the highs and lows. When trading Glen looks at three different candlestick charts of the security: a one-minute chart, a three-minute chart, and a ten-minute chart. With computers, charts can be set to any time period, from one minute to months or years. When the security price reaches a low on all three charts, Glen buys a call option. Three indicators of technical analysis, Stochastics, the Relative Strength Index or RSI, and the Moving Average Convergence Divergence or MACD, are used to confirm the buy signal. Usually the security reverses from this signaled low and goes back up and when it hits a high price with all three charts and this is confirmed with these three technical indicators, Glen sells the call option for a profit and purchases a put option.

Wash, rinse, repeat. The process continues all during trading hours. Glen explained everything in much more detail, of course. He also showed us some other technical chart patterns such as how to spot areas of support and resistance and converging trend lines which could lead to breakouts. It's not often we enjoy such a well-prepared presentation at the Investment SIG, so we really appreciate Glen's contribution.

After Glen finished his presentation, there was still some time left. Dale wanted to show us a new investing website he found out about so we set up the laptop and projector and connected to the Internet. The website Dale wanted to show us was www.americanbulls.com. Some past recommended stocks are listed. Clicking on them brings up details of gains and losses trading them in the past two years. Mousing around the site further we found that subscriptions to this service start at $35.00 per month, a price well worth it if one has a large enough trading account.

And that was it for the February 2011 WAUC Investment SIG. Until next time, consider the financial events of the last three years in the light of these words from our founding father, Thomas Jefferson: "I sincerely believe that banking institutions are more dangerous than standing armies, and that the principle of spending money to be paid by posterity is but swindling futurity on a large scale."

Richard Durand

Staying Safe on Social Networking Sites

The popularity of social networking sites continues to increase, especially among teenagers and young adults. The nature of these sites introduces security risks, so you should take certain precautions.

What are social networking sites?

Social networking sites, sometimes referred to as "friend-of-a-friend" sites, build upon the concept of traditional social networks where you are connected to new people through people you already know. The purpose of some networking sites may be purely social, allowing users to establish friendships or romantic relationships, while others may focus on establishing business connections.

Although the features of social networking sites differ, they all allow you to provide information about yourself and offer some type of communication mechanism (forums, chat rooms, email, instant messenger) that enables you to connect with other users. On some sites, you can browse for people based on certain criteria, while other sites require that you be "introduced" to new people through a connection you share. Many of the sites have communities or subgroups that may be based on a particular interest.

What security implications do these sites present?

Social networking sites rely on connections and communication, so they encourage you to provide a certain amount of personal information. When deciding how much information to reveal, people may not exer-

(Continued from page 8)

cise the same amount of caution as they would when meeting someone in person because the internet provides a sense of anonymity
* the lack of physical interaction provides a false sense of security
* they tailor the information for their friends to read, forgetting that others may see it
* they want to offer insights to impress potential friends or associates

While the majority of people using these sites do not pose a threat, malicious people may be drawn to them because of the accessibility and amount of personal information that's available. The more information malicious people have about you, the easier it is for them to take advantage of you. Predators may form relationships online and then convince unsuspecting individuals to meet them in person. That could lead to a dangerous situation. The personal information can also be used to conduct a social engineering attack (see Avoiding Social Engineering and Phishing Attacks for more information). Using information that you provide about your location, hobbies, interests, and friends, a malicious person could impersonate a trusted friend or convince you that they have the authority to access other personal or financial data.

Additionally, because of the popularity of these sites, attackers may use them to distribute malicious code. Sites that offer applications developed by third parties are particularly susceptible. Attackers may be able to create customized applications that appear to be innocent while infecting your computer or sharing your information without your knowledge.

 How can you protect yourself?

 * Limit the amount of personal information you post - Do not post information that would make you vulnerable, such as your address or information about your schedule or routine. If your connections post information about you, make sure the combined information is not more than you would be comfortable with

strangers knowing. Also be considerate when posting information, including photos, about your connections.
Remember that the internet is a public resource - Only post information you are comfortable with anyone seeing. This includes information and photos in your profile and in blogs and other forums. Also, once you post information online, you can't retract it. Even if you remove the information from a site, saved or cached versions may still exist on other people's machines (see Guidelines for Publishing Information Online for more information).
Be wary of strangers - The internet makes it easy for people to misrepresent their identities and motives (see Using Instant Messaging and Chat Rooms Safely for more information). Consider limiting the people who are allowed to contact you on these sites. If you interact with people you do not know, be cautious about the amount of information you reveal or agreeing to meet them in person.
Be skeptical - Don't believe everything you read online. People may post false or misleading information about various topics, including their own identities. This is not necessarily done with malicious intent; it could be unintentional, an exaggeration, or a joke. Take appropriate precautions, though, and try to verify the authenticity of any information before taking any action.
Evaluate your settings - Take advantage of a site's privacy settings. The default settings for some sites may allow anyone to see your profile, but you can customize your settings to restrict access to only certain people. There is still a risk that private information could be exposed despite these restrictions, so don't post anything that you wouldn't want the public to see. Sites may change their options periodically, so review your security and privacy settings regularly to make sure that your choices are still appropriate.
Be wary of third-party applications - Third-party applications may provide entertainment or functionality, but use caution when deciding which applications to enable. Avoid applications that seem suspicious, and modify your settings to limit the

amount of information the applications can access.
Use strong passwords - Protect your account with passwords that cannot easily be guessed (see Choosing and Protecting Passwords for more information). If your password is ompromised, someone else may be able to access your account and pretend to be you.
Check privacy policies - Some sites may share information such as email addresses or user preferences with other companies. This may lead to an increase in spam (see Reducing Spam for more information). Also, try to locate the policy for handling referrals to make sure that you do not unintentionally sign your friends up for spam. Some sites will continue to send email messages to anyone you refer until they join.
Keep software, particularly your web browser, up to date - Install software updates so that attackers cannot take advantage of known problems or vulnerabilities (see Understanding Patches for more information). Many operating systems offer automatic updates. If this option is available, you should enable it.
Use and maintain anti-virus software - Anti-virus software helps protect your computer against known viruses, so you may be able to detect and remove the virus before it can do any damage (see Understanding Anti-Virus Software for more information). Because attackers are continually writing new viruses, it is important to keep your definitions up to date.

Children are especially susceptible to the threats that social networking sites present. Although many of these sites have age restrictions, children may misrepresent their ages so that they can join. By teaching children about internet safety, being aware of their online habits, and guiding them to appropriate sites, parents can make sure that the children become safe and responsible users.

Author: Mindi McDowell

MILWAUKEE PC

COMPUTERS

WAUC's Official Internet Provider

WAUC
Wisconsin All-computers User's Club
P.O. Box 340241
Milwaukee, WI 53234-0241

First Class