



# *The Cursor*

*Monthly Newsletter of the  
Washington Area Computer User Group*



**Meeting Location**  
OLLI , 4210 Roberts Road,  
Fairfax, VA



**Next Meeting:**  
July 18, 2009



## **Presidential Bits**

by Paul Howard, President WACUG,  
[president@wacug.org](mailto:president@wacug.org)

A small but enthusiastic group braved area-wide thunderstorms at our June meeting in the Fairfax County Government Center. We were treated to impressive demonstrations of two gaming systems that aren't just for kids, but can offer those of us with a modicum of maturity hours of enjoyment. Geof Goodrum showed us a wide array of features of the Playstation 3, including Playstation Home multiplayer virtual world, and Chuck Roberts showed us baseball, bowling, and auto racing with a Nintendo Wii system. Go ahead - get one! Pretend it's for the grand kids' visits <grin>!

### **Special Notice - Meetings Return to OLLI, Roberts Road, Fairfax**

We received communications from the Fairfax County Government Center facilities office, that future use of their meeting facilities would require non-profit organizations like WACUG to pay a \$60 per hour fee. Were we to hold all our meetings there, we'd have to triple our dues or membership - neither a likely scenario.

Our July 18<sup>th</sup> meeting will be held at OLLI, 4210 Roberts Road in Fairfax, in conjunction with our partners in OPCUG. After opening remarks, announcements, and our Q&A session, OPCUG member Tom Hady will present a "Learn 30" session on "Digitizing Your Slides." Tom says when people find out he is a serious amateur photographer, a common question is 'I have a shelf full of old slides of my family. How can I convert them to digital?' Tom did that with his own slides this spring, and he'll share his experiences.

### **Don't Lose Your Data - Webinar by Gene Barlow**

Gene's topic is "Backing Up Your Hard Drive" using Acronis True Image Home 2009. Make sure you are adequately protected and can recover from any unforeseen events such as viruses, unstable software downloads, and hard drive failures by having a well thought-out backup plan. Having a good backup system is essential in order to put your system back together again in a few minutes, not days or weeks. This is an important topic that every PC User should implement on their computer. Don't miss this meeting.

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**Plus Bonus Articles in  
the Download Edition**

# Lloyd's Web Sites for July, 2009

by Lloyd Johnson, WACUG Member

<http://www.wacug.org/> is the URL for the Washington Area Computer User Group. Visit it for past issues of Web Sites with hyperlinks

## July Sites:

1. Repair Pal – [www.repairpal.com](http://www.repairpal.com). Type in your car info, necessary repair and Zip Code and Repair Pal will tell you how much to expect to pay and where you can get it done
2. American Memory from the Library of Congress – <http://memory.loc.gov/ammem/index.html>. American Memory provides free access to historical images, maps, sound recordings, and motion pictures that document the American experience.
3. Mix-and-match shoes. – [www.mixmatchshoes.com](http://www.mixmatchshoes.com) Buy a pair of shoes with different sizes or even a single shoe.
4. Daily E-mail jokes – <http://myhumor.org> Also see – [www.ajokeaday.com](http://www.ajokeaday.com)
5. Specific products for Left Hand people. Internet orders only– [www.thelefthand.com](http://www.thelefthand.com)
6. Google LIFE Photo Archive – <http://images.google.com/hosted/life>. Search millions of photographs from the LIFE photo archive, stretching from the 1750s to today.
7. Remember The Milk – [www.rememberthemilk.com](http://www.rememberthemilk.com) Remember The Milk makes managing tasks easier. You no longer have to write your to-do lists on sticky notes, whiteboards, random scraps of paper, or the back of your hand.
8. Science Daily — [www.sciencedaily.com](http://www.sciencedaily.com) .– ScienceDaily is one of the Internet's leading online magazines and Web portals devoted to science, technology, and medicine. The free, advertising-supported service brings you breaking news about the latest discoveries and hottest research projects in everything from astrophysics to zoology.
9. NASA Home Page – [www.nasa.gov](http://www.nasa.gov). – NASA's mission is to pioneer the future in space exploration, scientific discovery and aeronautics research. To do that, thousands of people have been working around the world -- and off of it -- for almost 50 years, trying to answer some basic questions. What's out there in space? How do we get there? What will we find? What can we learn there, or learn just by trying to get there, that will make life better here on Earth?
10. FactCheck.org — [www.factcheck.org](http://www.factcheck.org). –This site monitors the factual accuracy of what is said by major U.S. political players in the form of TV ads, debates, speeches, interviews and news releases.
11. MSN: On This Day In History — <http://encarta.msn.com/encnet/features/onthisday.aspx>. Daily listing of political, sports, musical, and other historical events and milestones.



## NCTCUG

Visit our “sister” user group. The National Capital Technology and Computer User's Group meets the first and fourth Wednesday of the month. They meet in Carlin Hall in Arlington at 5711 South 4<sup>th</sup> Street. Visit their web site for more information, a map and directions:

<http://www.nctcug.org/>

Meetings start at 7:00 PM

**Washington Area User  
Group Partners  
Working Together For  
Our Members**

**NCTCUG**

**WACUG**

**OPCUG**



## GNU/Linux SIG

By Geof Goodrum, WAC

### CentOS 5.3 – For the Less Adventurous

Last month, I provided a quick review of Kubuntu 9.04, a GNU/Linux distribution released in April that features the new KDE 4.2 desktop interface. I noted some issues with its support for wireless networks that did not exist in the previous release. Kubuntu and other Ubuntu-based distributions have new releases every six months. It is not unusual for some of the leading edge distributions to have some “rough edges.”

However, this is not acceptable for users who just want to get work done and don't need the latest features or eye candy. Typically, these are business users who need a stable, reliable system for desktop or server applications. These users also don't want to spend a lot of time upgrading systems every year or two, particularly if the affected systems number in the hundreds or thousands. For these users, there are “enterprise” class GNU/Linux distributions.

Ubuntu actually caters to these users with their LTS, or Long Term Support releases. For example, Ubuntu 8.04 LTS was released in April 2008, but will receive maintenance updates until 2011. In contrast, Ubuntu 9.04 was released in April 2009, but will only be supported until April 2010.

One of the leading “enterprise” distributions is Red Hat® Enterprise Linux® (RHEL), which is a distribution provided with commercial support services from Red Hat, Inc. (<http://www.redhat.com/rhel/desktop/>). Red Hat typically supports RHEL releases for five years, with security and bug fix updates, as well as tiers of technical support services. In fact, the commercial RHEL releases are based upon the non-commercial Fedora distribution (<http://www.fedoraproject.org/>), another leading edge distribution developed and driven by a community of volunteers supported by Red Hat that serves as a test bed for new ideas.

What if you want the characteristics of an enterprise-class operating system, but don't need the technical support services? When Red Hat releases a new version of RHEL, it also releases the source code as required by the GNU General Public License that covers most of the software. Although Red Hat controls its trademarks and copyrighted graphics, the Open Source community is free to repackage the software from RHEL into community-supported versions. Although there are several, the Community Enterprise Operating System (CentOS, <http://www.centos.org/>) is one of the most popular distributions based upon RHEL.

RHEL 5.3 was released on 20 January 2009. CentOS 5.3 followed on 31 March 2009, replacing branding with their own, but also merged the server and desktop software repositories from RHEL. Additional software repositories (centosplus, contrib) are configurable at the user's option to provide access to software not in RHEL, but risks compatibility. As stated in the CentOS 5.3 release notes,

*CentOS conforms fully with the upstream vendors redistribution policy and aims to be 100% binary compatible. (CentOS mainly changes packages to remove upstream*

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vendor branding and artwork.) CentOS is a Free Operating System. The CentOS Project is now accepting donations using PayPal, please see our website at <http://www.centos.org> for more details. All donations to this project are used to cover bandwidth and development costs.

CentOS 5.3 is the third update to the CentOS 5 distribution series. It contains a lot of bugfixes, updates and new functionality.

As stated in the CentOS 5 FAQ (#7),

*We intend to support CentOS 5 until Mar 31st, 2014 The current plan is this:*

- *Full Updates (including hardware updates): Currently to Mar 31st, 2011*
  - *Maintenance Updates Apr 1st, 2011 - Mar 31st, 2014*
- Full Updates*

*During the Full Updates phase, new hardware support will be provided at the discretion of CentOS via Update Sets. Additionally, all available and qualified errata will be provided via Update Sets (or individually {and immediately} for Security level errata.) Update Sets normally will be released 2-4 times per year, with new ISOs released as part of each Update Set. In the 5.x numbering scheme, the .x is the number of the Update Set.*

#### *Maintenance Updates*

*During the Maintenance updates phase, only Security errata and select mission critical bugfixes will be released. There will be few, if any, Update Sets released.*

Keep in mind that this is a project run by volunteers, so update support is not guaranteed.

I downloaded a DVD iso image of CentOS 5.3 through a mirror from the project web site, burned it to a disc, and installed it at work to replace Fedora 9, which was at the end of its support cycle. There is also a Live CD version (which does not support installation to hard disk), installation by six CD iso images, and installation over the network (e.g. Internet) by booting with a single netinstall CD iso image.

CentOS 5.3 defaults to the Gnome desktop interface (v2.16), though KDE desktop is also available (v3.5). The application environment is roughly equivalent to Fedora 7 or 8. In general, the changes from Fedora 9 were not significant, though the included version of OpenOffice.org (OOo) is 2.3. The OOo current version is 3.1, and has significant improvements over 2.3. I downloaded and installed OOo 3.1 from the OpenOf-

fice.org web site, but it was not integrated with the Security-Enhanced Linux (SELinux, [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Security-Enhanced\\_Linux](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Security-Enhanced_Linux)) policies in CentOS, so I received warning messages from the system and OOo restarted on the initial attempt to close it after working on a document. Changing the system SELinux policy from “enabled” to “permissive” prevented this behavior, but reduces the overall security of the system.

I also noticed that automatic online software updates were fewer and farther between, which is to be expected when the intent is to have a stable, predictable working environment. Security updates (e.g. Firefox 3.0 web browser and Thunderbird 2.0 e-mail client) usually lagged general availability by a week or more, presumably to allow time for complete testing and integration by the upstream vendor and then the CentOS team (24 to 72 hours after the vendor). However, fixes to serious security flaws are usually issued within a few days.

Using Samba v3.0 (<http://www.samba.org/>), the CentOS system integrates well with Microsoft Windows file and print servers at work, though I prefer to configure network printers directly (I can print from CentOS while others in the office wait for Windows server problems to be fixed).

All in all, CentOS 5.3 is a great all-around GNU/Linux distribution, though, as noted earlier, it does not have leading edge features. While compatible with a large range of common x86 (32 and 64 bit) hardware, it may not support the latest hardware add-ons. The basic system requirements are listed at <http://www.centos.org/product.html>, but include 512 MB RAM (for GUI) and 1.2 GB disk space.

### **GNU/Linux Distribution Releases**

GNU/Linux distributions are complete GNU/Linux operating system and application software collections. Many are freely downloadable or can be ordered on CDs or DVD at low cost. DistroWatch.com lists the following distribution release announcements for the period June 3 – June 30, 2009.

Distribution
<a href="#">Absolute Linux 12.2.5</a>
<a href="#">blackPanther OS 9.1</a>
<a href="#">BlankOn 5.0</a>
<a href="#">Calculate Linux 9.6</a>
<a href="#">Calculate Linux 9.7 “Directory Server”</a>

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<a href="#">Fedora 11</a>
<a href="#">GeeXboX 1.2.2</a>
<a href="#">GoblinX 3.0 “g:Mini”</a>
<a href="#">Greenie Linux 5j</a>
<a href="#">Guadalinex 6</a>
<a href="#">Hymera Open 20090601</a>
<a href="#">iMagic OS 2009.6</a>
<a href="#">Linux Mint 7 “x86_64”</a>
<a href="#">Linux-EduCD 1.0</a>
<a href="#">linuX-gamers Live 0.9.5</a>
<a href="#">Macpup Opera</a>
<a href="#">MilaX 0.4</a>
<a href="#">MoLinux 5.0</a>
<a href="#">Parted Magic 4.2</a>
<a href="#">PCLinuxOS 2009.2</a>
<a href="#">Rocks Cluster Distribution 5.2</a>
<a href="#">Sabayon Linux 4.2 “GNOME”</a>
<a href="#">Source Mage GNU/Linux 0.10.0</a>
<a href="#">SystemRescueCd 1.2.1</a>
<a href="#">TEENpup Linux 2009</a>
<a href="#">Tiny Core Linux 2.1</a>
<a href="#">Toorox 06.2009</a>
<a href="#">Ultimate Edition 2.2</a>
<a href="#">Untangle Gateway 6.2.0</a>
<a href="#">Webconverger 4.9</a>
<a href="#">xPUD 0.9</a>
<a href="#">Yellow Dog Linux 6.2</a>

### Linux Software of the Month

The software described below is downloadable at the links provided or may be requested on CD, or copied onto a USB flash drive at the WAC meeting. In addition, WAC can provide CD-R and DVD±R media for any downloadable GNU/Linux operating system distribution (e.g. Fedora, Mandriva, Ubuntu, Debian, Knoppix). Please note that download versions of commercial distributions do not include official technical support nor printed documentation.

Discs are available only by pre-order. Contact Geof Goodrum by e-mail ([linux@wacug.org](mailto:linux@wacug.org)) at least 48 hours before meeting day to order or for more information. Single CD-R discs are available with a \$3 donation; GNU/Linux distributions on multiple CD-Rs or single DVD±R are available with a \$6 donation.

### July 2009

BleachBit – v0.5.3. <http://bleachbit-project.appspot.com/>. Free GNU General Public License Python script by Andrew Ziem. BleachBit deletes unnecessary files to free valuable disk space and maintain privacy. It

rids your system of old junk including cache, Internet history, temporary files, unused locale files, and cookies. Designed for Linux systems, it wipes clean Adobe Reader, Bash, Beagle, Chromium, Epiphany, Firefox, Flash, Internet Explorer, Google Chrome, Java, KDE, OpenOffice.org, Opera, Real Player, Recoll, Safari, Skype, XChat, and more.

**Mozilla Firefox – v3.5.** <http://www.mozilla.com/en-US/firefox/firefox.html>. Free Mozilla Public License executable and source code by the Mozilla Foundation and community developers. This new, stable release of the Firefox web browser features support for the new HTML 5 standard with built-in support for open video (Theora) and audio (Vorbis) standards, better web application performance, faster web page rendering, Location Aware browsing (if the user allows, web sites can provide information specific to the user’s geographic location), and Private Browsing Mode to prevent retention of information about web site visits.

**PostgreSQL – v8.4.0.** <http://www.postgresql.org/>. Free BSD Revised license source code and executable installer by the PostgreSQL Global Development Group. PostgreSQL is a robust relational database system with more than 20 years of active development that runs on all major operating systems. It is fully ACID compliant, and has full support for foreign keys, joins, views, triggers, and stored procedures (in multiple languages). It includes most SQL92 and SQL99 data types, including INTEGER, NUMERIC, BOOLEAN, CHAR, VARCHAR, DATE, INTERVAL, and TIMESTAMP. It also supports storage of binary large objects, including pictures, sounds, or video. It has native programming interfaces for C/C++, Java, .Net, Perl, Python, Ruby, Tcl, and ODBC, among others, and exceptional documentation.

**Python Solitaire Fan Club (PySolFC) – v1.1.** <http://pysolfc.sourceforge.net/>. Free GNU General Public License Python script by Skomoroh. PySolFC is a collection of 1,048 solitaire card games. It is a fork of the original PySol Solitaire, now discontinued. There are games that use the 52 card International Pattern deck, games for the 78 card Tarock deck, eight and ten suit Ganjifa games, Hanafuda games, Matrix games, Mahjongg games, and games for an original hexadecimal-based deck. And, yes, that includes 40 different games of Freecell. Its features include modern look and feel (uses Tile widget set), multiple cardsets

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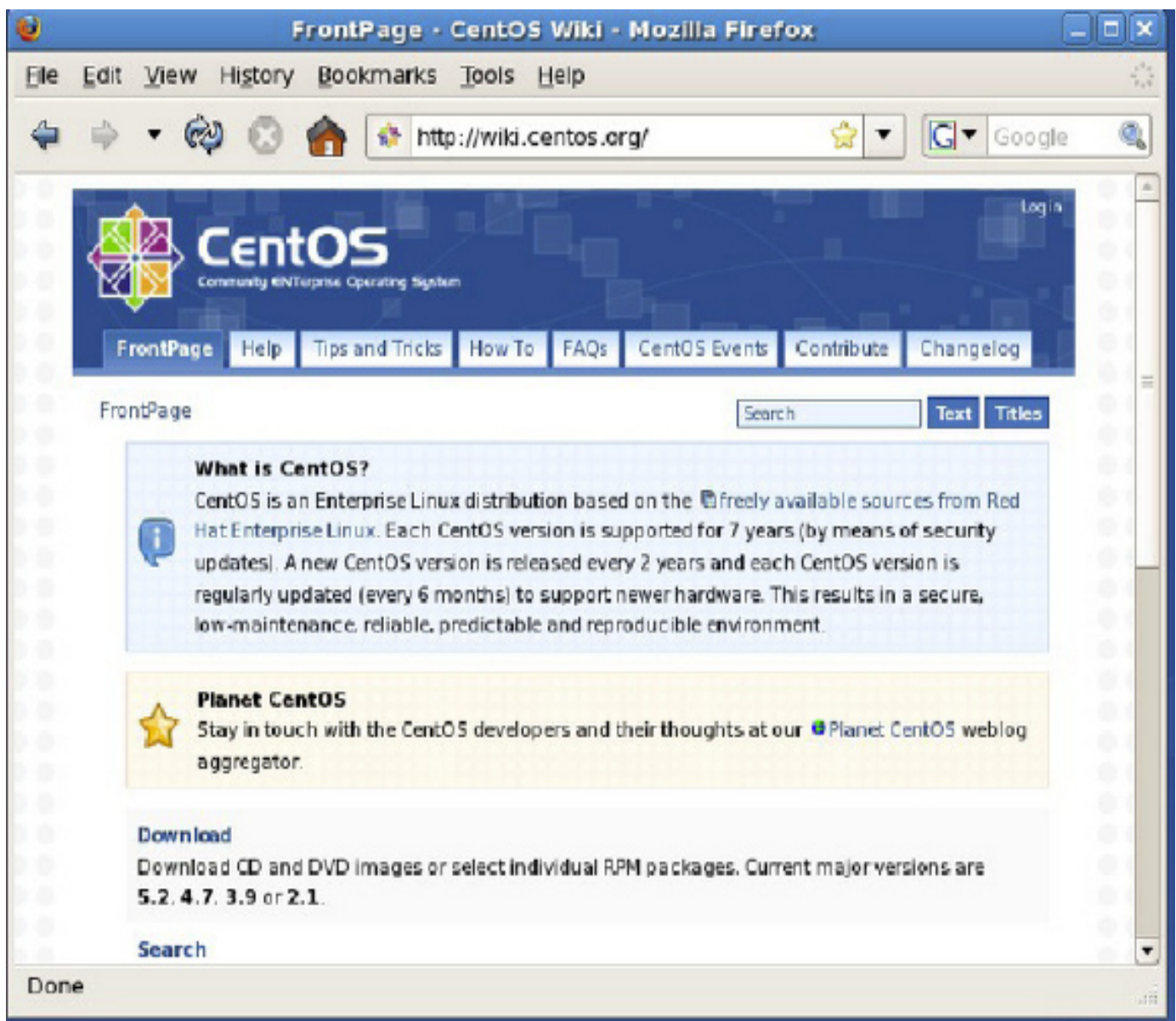
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and tableau backgrounds, sound, unlimited undo, player statistics, a hint system, demo games, a solitaire wizard, support for user written plug-ins, an integrated HTML help browser, and lots of documentation.

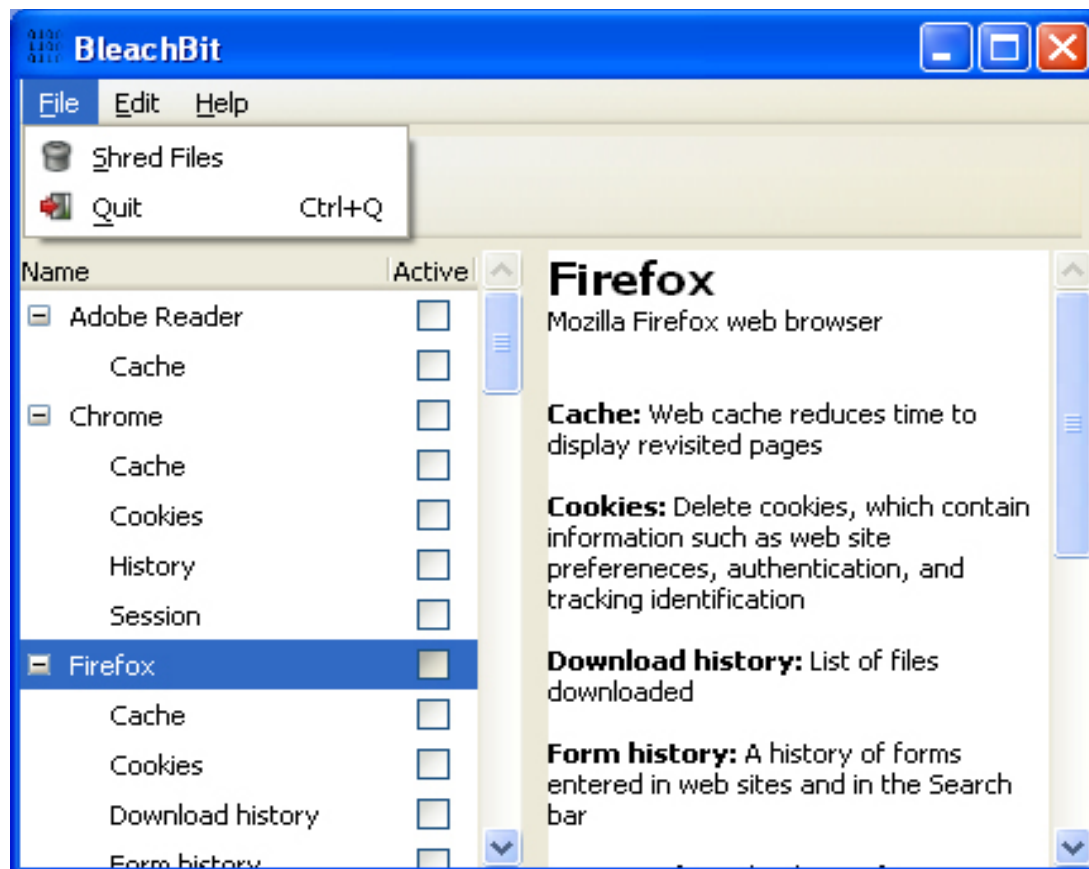
Kernel Source – <http://www.kernel.org/>. 2.6 kernel source code for all platforms (stable 2.6.30).



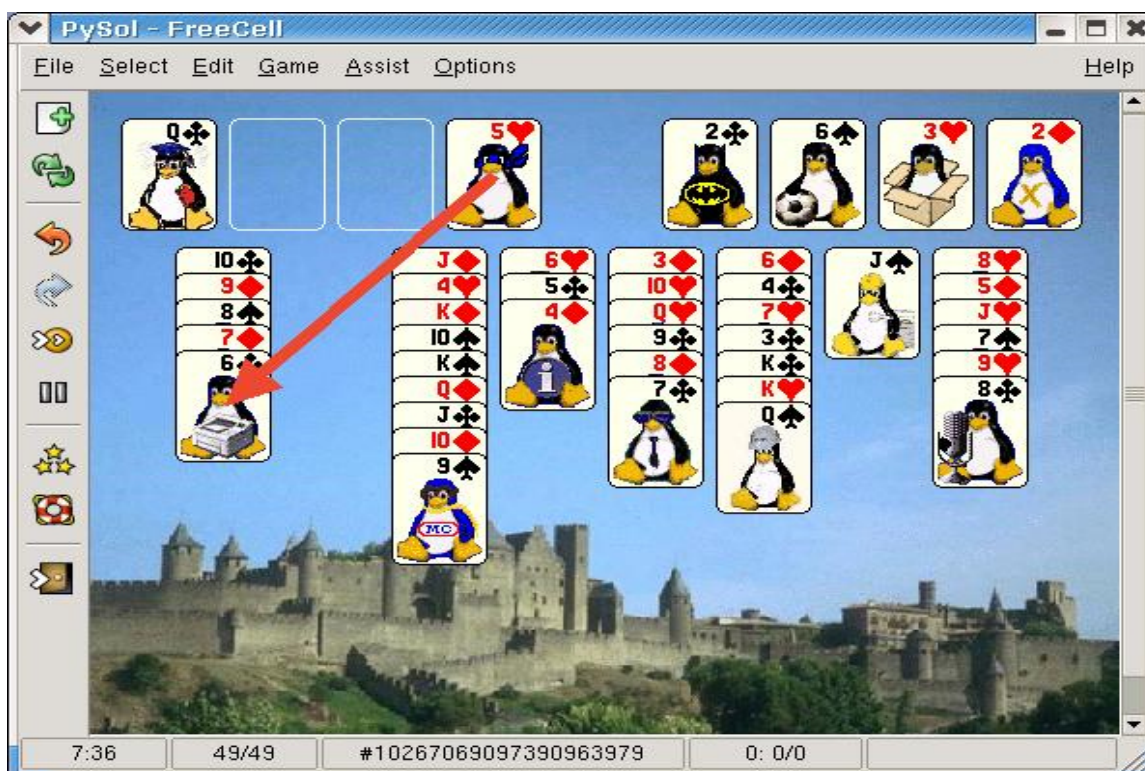
## Screen shots Continue through page 8



## CentOS



BleachBit



Python Solitaire Fan Club (PySolFC) — FreeCell



## Python Solitaire Fan Club (PySolFC) Mahjongg Games



## Python Solitaire Fan Club (PySolFC) — French Rainbow



Gene Barlow has been a presenter in the user group community for 25 years. Now, thanks to online innovative communications, Gene will be presenting a live Webinar at our July meeting. The Webinar will provide us with an active view of his presentation, allowing attendees to see and hear his slide presentation, see software products demonstrated live and ask questions and receive live answers at the meeting.



## Keeping Up

By Paul Howard – WACUG

It's hard to believe, but the agreement between the WACUG and NCTCUG user groups sharing a computer projector is now in its sixth year. The groups split the cost of the projector, initial maintenance agreement, and a spare lamp, and continue to share the cost of insurance coverage. Having a projector that allows "big screen" presentations has made a major difference to dozens of user group meetings since we obtained the projector in 2004. The only hitch has come when some guy named Howard gets custody of the projector, and forgets to bring it to the meetings ...

That spirit of inter-group cooperation has continued, most recently when Roger Fujii and Nick Wenri of

NCTCUG came to May's PC Clinic held by WACUG and the new (formed in January) computer club of the Osher Lifelong Learning Institute (OLLI) at George Mason University, known as OPCUG. Roger and Nick joined WAC's Bill Walsh and Scott Hannak in cleaning out the software gunk in three computers for OLLI members. At the same time, Gabe Goldberg, Region 2 representative of the Association of Personal Computer User Groups (APCUG), presented "A Little PC Cleaning Pays Off" to help the assembled members of WACUG and OPCUG avoid those kinds of problems in the future.

### More TV Follies

NCTCUG member Mark Gladstone took me to task for not using my computer to record TV shows. 'Touche' - but there's always a reason, or three. The Haupauge card in my PC doesn't recognize any DTV stations, despite supposedly having ATSC as well as NTSC capability (not that the NTSC - read old analog, no longer broadcast - will do me much good now!) Then there's the PC itself, which has been complaining for months that it's got a RAID 0 drive catastrophe about to happen - and I've been too busy to get a new drive in place and start from scratch with operating system and software installation. Then there's my lack of networking sophistication and appropriate toys to get anything recorded on the PC to play on the TV. While I've watched TV shows on my computer monitor, it's just not as much fun as sitting on the couch and watching the regular old TV.

Mark's solution for the DTV conversion was to invest about \$750 in a new TV antenna, mast and rotor, professionally installed. He noted that the cost was probably less than a year's hit for monthly service from a "cable TV" provider. He's now enjoying great DTV reception from stations located both in the Washington and Baltimore areas, as well as more remotely in Maryland and Virginia. Right On, Mark - Free TV Lives!

### FiOS to TiVo

Since subscribing to Verizon's FiOS service in March of 2008, I'd left my TiVo digital video recorder hooked up to my "over the air" antenna system. This allowed me to record shows 'off the air' while we were watching or recording something from the hundreds of

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available channels on FiOS, using the combination set top box and DVR provided with the FiOS service. As the DTV conversion loomed in June, I decided it was time to hook the TiVo to FiOS, and enjoy the selection of channels available, as well as the superb picture quality from the FiOS fiber system.

In the December/January '09 'Keeping Up' column, I discussed the FiOS digital adapters, a low end set top box for the FiOS service, offering all the channels except VOD (video on demand) and the fancy, interactive program guide available on the higher end (and more costly) boxes. I ran another FiOS connected coax behind my TV, hooked up the digital adapter, and the IR (Infrared) control cable to the TV. The IR control cable terminates in two IR LED emitters on the end of plastic stalks. These are positioned in front of the IR receiver window on the digital adapter. The TiVo sends appropriate signals to the IR emitters to change the channel on the adapter for the program the TiVo wants to record - ugly, but it works!

Setting up the TiVo to find the correct codes for the FiOS digital adapter, and downloading all the new program guide information for the multitude of newly available channels was a lengthy, almost two hour session, but easy thanks to TiVo's reasonably clear, menu driven process. Much of the time is just waiting for the scanning and updating to be completed - catch up on user group newsletter articles while process continues! One last thing awaits - My model TiVo only connects to the Internet thru a USB port, and is very fussy about the USB to RJ45 networking cable adapter that it will work with. I bought one that didn't work - rejected out of hand by my TiVo. Our tech guru, Roger F. thinks he has a source for one that will - fingers crossed! This will allow me to share TV programs across my home network, and allow the TiVo to download program guide information from the net, rather than tying up the telephone line for its "phone home" sessions.



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## Act Quickly to Get A Deal on Windows 7

Written by Ira Wilsker, APCUG Director;  
Columnist, The Examiner, Beaumont, TX; Radio  
Show Host  
Iwilsker (at) apcug.net

This article has been obtained from APCUG with the author's permission for publication by APCUG member groups; all other uses require the permission of the author (see e-mail address above).

### WEBSITES:

Microsoft Windows 7 Upgrade Advisor:  
<http://www.microsoft.com/windows/windows-7/upgrade-advisor.aspx>

Windows 7 Pre-order Sources:  
<http://www.microsoft.com/windows/buy/offers/pre-order.aspx>

In case you have not heard, Microsoft is about to release a new operating system intended to replace Vista, and the almost phased out XP. This new operating system is known as Windows 7, and preliminary reviews indicate that it is far superior in most aspects to Vista, and

as stable as XP. While the new Windows 7 will not be in full release or installed on new computers until this fall, Microsoft is offering a short term deal for those who would like to pre-order Windows 7. Anyone interested in partaking of this deal where Microsoft will sell Windows 7 with deep discounts must act quickly, as the promotion will end on July 11. Microsoft and select retailers are offering the pre-order of Windows 7 Professional for \$99.99, which will have a retail price of \$319.99 when officially released. Windows 7 Home Premium is available on pre-order for \$49.99, and will sell for retail price of \$199.99 when officially released. Locally, the offer should be available at Best Buy, Sam's Club, Walmart, and Office Depot, and online from Amazon and other stores, and directly from Microsoft Stores. The projected delivery date for the pre-ordered copies of Windows 7 is October 22.

Windows 7 looks like a much improved operating system over Vista, and may be a worthwhile purchase and installation.



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*The Cursor* provides news, commentary and product information to members of the Washington Area Computer User Group.

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**Send membership inquiries and address changes to: [membership@wacug.org](mailto:membership@wacug.org)**

**Send article submission and reprint requests to the Editor: [cursor@wacug.org](mailto:cursor@wacug.org)**

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**WAC Membership/Renewal Application**

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Dues are collected on an Annual basis and includes: downloadable links for WACUG Selected Software (formerly DOM), and WAC's monthly newsletter, *The Cursor*, in PDF format

Individual/Corporate/Family Dues: \$25.00  
\$5 annual surcharge for delivery of the Cursor by 1st Class mail

Remit payment in person at the WAC Membership table on meeting day, or by mail to:

**Washington Area Computer User Group**  
**30 Fendall Ave.**

**Alexandria, VA 22304-6300**

Make checks payable to WAC. Please do not send cash by mail. *Thank you for joining WAC!*

Complete if you name and address do not appear on the reverse side. Include E-mail Address

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Street: \_\_\_\_\_

City: \_\_\_\_\_

State: \_\_\_\_\_ Zip: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone: (     )     —     \_\_\_\_\_

E-mail: \_\_\_\_\_

*Membership Survey:* Help us to help you by completing this survey.

List the computer systems you own / use (in order of preference)

Operating System(s): \_\_\_\_\_

Modem(s): \_\_\_\_\_

Printer(s): \_\_\_\_\_

Other Hardware: \_\_\_\_\_

Favorite Software: \_\_\_\_\_

Connection: (circle one)   Dial-up   or   Broadband

**Circle Your Interests:**   Photo Printing   Investing   Games

Digital Photography   Internet Access   Education   Music

Graphics/Animation   Genealogy   Video   Finance

Programming Language(s) \_\_\_\_\_

Hardware Upgrades/Repair   List others below



Next WAC Meetings: • July 18 • Aug 15 • Sept 19 • Oct 17 • Nov 21

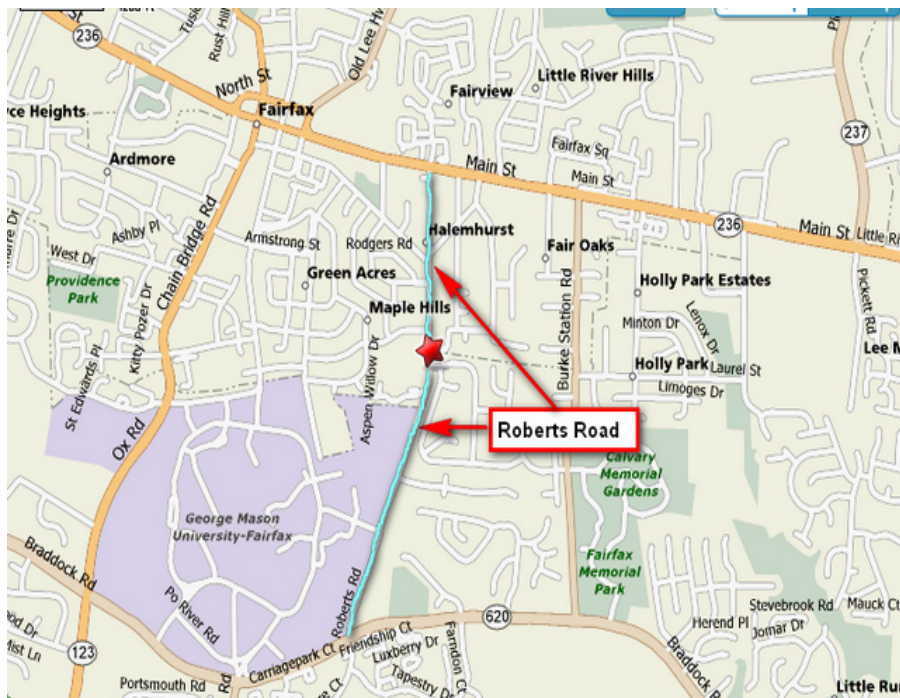
Call (703) 370-7649 for the latest meeting information or Visit our Web Site at:  
<http://www.wacug.org>

July Meeting will be held at the Osher Lifelong Learning Institute Fairfax, VA. Detailed directions were provided in the January Cursor on page 5. ***Please note, July, and August meetings will have a parking challenge since the swimming season is in full swing and the pool is open. Please do not park in the pool parking lot during the summer!***

FREE ADMISSION  
BRING A FRIEND!

Service Desks Open at  
12:30 Meeting Starts at  
1:00 PM

FREE ADMISSION  
BRING A FRIEND!



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30 Fendall Avenue  
Alexandria, VA 22304-6300  
ADDRESS CORRECTION REQUESTED

FIRST-CLASS MAIL

Stamp

Label

TIME-SENSITIVE MATERIAL  
Please Deliver By  
July 10, 2009

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## Fun & Games with Ubuntu

Written by Brian K. Lewis, Ph.D., Regular Columnist  
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As I said in my last article in the Monitor, this one would be about my experience getting Ubuntu up and running on my new Asus laptop. I had been running version 8.04 (Hardy Heron) on my old laptop. Since it seemed to be quite successful I decided to use it for the initial install on my new computer. Perhaps I should point out that Canonical, producers of Ubuntu, turn out a new version of their OS every six months! Compare that with Microsoft and its multi-year production cycle. Hardy Heron is a long-term support version with guaranteed support until April 2011. That's three years from its original release date. In the meantime, version 8.10 (Intrepid Ibex) was released in October 2008 and will be supported for two years. However, the latest version is 9.04 (Jaunty Jackalope) which was released on April 23, 2009. Since I was starting my installation the end of March, I decided that installing Hardy Heron should be fine. A bad guess, as it turned out.

The process of installing any Ubuntu version is very similar to installing Windows. The exception being when you want it to share the hard drive as a dual boot system with Windows. Then a few extra steps are needed. The first step is to download Ubuntu. This will be an ISO image file. That is a compressed file in the format specified by the International Organization of Standardization. It is almost 700 megabytes in size, so it's best to have a broadband connection for your download. (If you don't have a broadband connection, you can request a free CD from Canonical and have it mailed to you.) Once the file is on your hard drive it has to be decompressed and the image burned to a CD. Most commercial software can burn the ISO file image to a CD. I used CDBurnerXP, a free Windows program, to burn the image to the CD. That gave me a bootable CD that either runs Ubuntu from the CD or it can install the OS to a hard drive as a dual boot with Windows/Vista or it can take over an entire drive. If you have two hard drives in your computer you could have Ubuntu take over the second drive and dual boot with Windows. There is also an option to install it as Windows software allowing you to run it within Windows or Vista. I haven't tried this option. It just seems to me that running Ubuntu under Windows

you would lose many of the benefits of Ubuntu, especially its stability.

The hard drive on my laptop was already partitioned into C and D drives and formatted with NTFS. (That's the file system XP and Vista use.) My intention was to install Ubuntu on the second partition as a dual boot system. As I found out, if your hard drive is not already partitioned, don't change it. Let the Ubuntu installation do it for you. That is much easier. I ended up doing a more manual preparation of the hard drive which requires a better understanding of how Linux systems need to be set up. You can find the info on the Ubuntu site, but why make things any harder than you have to! Once the drive was set, Ubuntu spent some time installing all the files needed for my hardware and the additional software. If you are interested in the details of installing Ubuntu, check out this web site: <https://help.ubuntu.com/community/GraphicalInstall/>. They have a detailed graphical presentation (screen shots) of the steps involved.

During the installation Ubuntu asks for a user name and a password. I used my initials and a fairly secure password. I recommend that you do not shirk this password setup. It will help to protect your computer from problems caused by outside entry of worms or trojans through the Internet connection. The password has to be entered for software installation or any other administrative function. So using a strong password is advisable.

Now I was ready to do my part of the setup. I had to program my new USB modem so I could connect to the Internet. That requires some knowledge of the command line functions in Terminal. I had done this on my previous computer but some of the information for the new modem was different, so I had to find that first. It took a little hunting, but everything worked once I had the commands right. The other thing I had noticed was that the sound didn't seem to be working and the video resolution was not right. So I investigated both of these through the Ubuntu forums. That turned out to be far more difficult than I imagined it would be. My laptop has an NVidia graphics card. It turned out Hardy Heron did not have the drivers for my card, it was too new. The drivers available on the NVidia web site also didn't seem to help. My sound card was part of the Intel chip and the drivers just didn't seem to want to work with it no matter what I did. Then I also found that Hardy Heron didn't recognize my eSATA

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port. After doing more research in the Ubuntu Community forum, it seemed like I needed to try the Intrepid Ibex upgrade or maybe I would have to wait for Jaunty Jackalope to solve my problems.

So, next I downloaded the ISO file for Intrepid Ibex and burned it to a CD. That gave me a bootable CD that I could use to test how well this version would work with my laptop. When I booted from the CD, although it took some time to load, the video setup was perfect. It recognized my NVidia card and gave me the 1200x800 resolution that I had with Vista. It also had the expected 3D effects and other graphics features that my card supports. Next I tried the sound and had no problem playing some WAV files I had stored in the Linux partition. Better and better. With previous live CDs I had never been able to connect to the Internet with my old wireless modem. But I clicked on the wireless icon on the top bar of the window and it gave me a list of several local wireless networks and it also had a choice of a wireless broadband connection. So I tried the broadband connection and within seconds I was connected through my Verizon wireless modem to the Internet. This live CD also recognized my printer, but didn't have the drivers to print to it. However, everything was working much better with Intrepid Ibex than it had with Hardy Heron. So, I decided my next step was to upgrade to Intrepid Ibex.

If I had done an install from the live CD, it would have wiped out many of my files that had been created using Hardy Heron. It wouldn't affect my documents as they were backed up to my external drive. However, there were other files that I had created to help with hardware compatibility and additional software I had downloaded that would have disappeared. So I went back to the Ubuntu site to find out how to upgrade, rather than install Intrepid Ibex from the CD. It turned out to be much easier than I had anticipated. In the System-Administration menu there is a selection for "Software Sources". This contains the information on locations where the Synaptic Package Manager will find additional software. On the Update tab you will find the options for operating system updates. Mine had been set for "long term support" updates only. I changed that to "standard updates", clicked OK and exited the window. The package manager told me that there was an update available, version 8.10, and it could be downloaded. It also gave me an estimate of the amount of time it would take with my connection.

The estimate was two hours, but it ended up taking 30 minutes less. Once the download was complete, the upgrade installation started. About an hour later, the screen announced that the system needed to be rebooted. Since I still have the live CD for Intrepid Ibex, I automatically have a backup CD, should problems occur down the road.

After the upgrade, the first thing I noticed was that the dual-boot menu reflected the new version of Ubuntu. Next, it took far less time for the user name/password request to show up. Then, very quickly, on the desktop there was the Intrepid Ibex. I will be replacing the Ibex graphic with my own wallpaper, another very easy task. But, I had noted there was no sound. So I clicked on the sound icon and found that the sound had been muted! Once I corrected that, it worked perfectly. First problem solved! Then I clicked on the wireless icon and there was the broadband choice. I selected it and within seconds I was on the Internet. Second problem solved. However, the screen resolution didn't seem right. With some hunting I found an NVIDIA X Server settings on the System – Administration menu. That allowed me to change the resolution to 1200x800. Third problem solved.

Next, I realized I hadn't tried to use the eSATA port when I was running the live CD, so now was the time to try that out. I plugged in my external drive and all three partitions appeared in the Places menu. I clicked on the main partition and all the files come up in the file manager (nautilus) window. So, everything that I had problems with under Hardy Heron seemed to be working with Intrepid Ibex. And, the improvement came without having to do anything with the Ubuntu command line. In my mind, that makes Ubuntu much more ready for the average user. With an easy install, either single or dual boot, a great selection of software that is easily available through a graphics interface, it is becoming something that anyone can try and, probably, enjoy using. As for crashes, in more than 10 years of using various flavors of Linux, I have yet to have one crash. I certainly can't say that for Windows over the same period of time.

My next step will be to download a live CD of the latest version, Jaunty Jackalope, after the initial surge of business slows down. I really don't want to be trying to download almost 700 MB of data at a time when

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thousands of other Ubuntu enthusiasts are trying to do the same thing. By trying out the live CD version I can be sure that it will work with my hardware before doing an upgrade. I have already seen the problems that occur when you have to remove a newer version and revert back to a previous version. That is something I really don't want to do again. Windows has similar problems as those who replaced Vista with XP found out. I am also considering downloading the 64 bit version of Ubuntu. I am very curious as to how it would work with my hardware. You may be sure I will share the results with you.

So for all of you Windows/Vista users who are curious about Ubuntu, the easiest way to test it on your hardware is to download a live CD. From the home page, [www.ubuntu.com](http://www.ubuntu.com), you can download either the latest version, or an earlier version. I would recommend that you not go back any further than version 8.10, Intrepid Ibex. You really should give it a try and download the CD, especially if you have a broadband connection. You'll also find the Ubuntu has a large selection of games that come with the installation. So, have some fun and games with Ubuntu!

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## THE EMERGENCY TOOL IN THE PALM OF YOUR HAND: Your Mobile Phone

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**Y**our mobile phone can actually be a life saver or an emergency tool for survival. Check out what you can do with it:

### UNLOCK YOUR CAR FROM MILES AWAY

You've locked your keys in your car and you are at least an hour from your house. Does your car have remote keyless entry? Your cell phone will open your car for you.

You will still need someone at home to find your spare keys. The deal is they don't have to drive out to you if you have your cell phone handy. Call someone at home on their cell phone from your cell phone. Hold your cell phone about a foot from your car door and have the person at your home press the unlock button, holding it near the mobile phone on their end. Your car will unlock.

Distance is no object. You could be hundreds of miles away, and if you can reach someone who has the other 'remote' for your car, you can unlock the doors (or the trunk).

### EMERGENCY 112

The Emergency Number worldwide (outside the US) for Mobile is 112. It will work even when you find yourself out of your mobile network's coverage area. Dial 112 in an emergency and the mobile will search any existing network in your area to establish the emergency number for you. This number, 112, can be dialed even if the keypad is locked! I'd tell you to try it but give the emergency operator a break and wait until you really need it to try the number.

### HIDDEN BATTERY POWER

Your cell phone holds a secret. You will only discover it when your cell battery is very low. Press the keys \*3370# to activate your cell's reserve battery power. Your cell phone will restart with the reserve and will show a 50% increase in battery. This reserve will get charged when you charge your cell phone next time.

### DISABLE A STOLEN MOBILE PHONE

Once again you left your cell phone behind. This time you don't have to worry that someone else is stealing all your data. That is if you move quick enough before they act.

You will need your cell phone's serial number to do this. To get your cell phone's serial number key in the following digits on your phone: \*#06#. A 15-digit code will appear on the screen. This number is unique to your handset. Write it down and keep it somewhere safe.

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If your phone gets stolen, you can phone your service provider and give them this code. They will then be able to block your handset so even if the thief changes the SIM card, your phone will be totally useless. You probably won't get your phone back, but at least you know that whoever stole it can't use/sell it either. If everybody does this, there would be no point in people stealing mobile phones.

### FREE DIRECTORY SERVICE FOR CELLS

Have you used your cell phone to call 411 information for a telephone number? Like your local telephone company, cell phone companies charge us \$1.00 to \$1.75 or more for 411 information.

The trick is to not use your cell phone company's 411 service. When you need to use the 411 information option, simply dial one of the free 411 services instead. Try any of these numbers and you won't be charged any fee:

(800) FREE411 or (800) 373-3411 Sponsored by McDonald's

(800) GOOG411 or (800) 466-4411 Sponsored by Google

You will have to listen to a quick ad and be prompted to dial for some service but the call is FREE. That is as long as you don't dial out to the advertised company after the short sales pitch. If you have free text messaging you can even get the number texted to you free. Otherwise text messaging fees from your provider will apply.

Don't leave all these numbers to memory. Save them to your cell phone and you'll have them handy when you need them.

### SO MANY TIPS SO LITTLE VALUE

If you have been trying these tips as you read them you would know that, for the most part, they are not true. That is because they are from an email I have repeatedly received from friends and family. The email is a bunch of junk (mostly) and possibly contained a virus or spyware at some time (my IT person/ geek -- otherwise known as my husband) has my computer with all sorts of virus protection and anti-spyware to protect my computer so the information may have been pulled and forwarded in a clean email but it is still mostly junk.

A good parameter to follow with deciding whether to

forward email you receive is if it sounds too good to be true it probably is not true. In which case, the best way of stopping the email is not forwarding it on again.

If you are not sure about something you received you can always check at [www.snopes.com](http://www.snopes.com). You can also Google the topic and will probably come up with a bunch of sites that will help. This email I found at an urban legends [website](#). I don't normally read these web sites (who has the time) but I do check out the things I receive before I become part of the junk and spam mail problem.

### FOR THOSE WHO HAVE NOT CHECKED YET

1. Unlocking your car: *FALSE* Cell phones and car key remote locks work on different frequencies..
2. Emergency 112: *MOSTLY FALSE* It works pretty much only in Europe. Stay with 911 here.
3. Hidden Battery Power: *FALSE* For some Nokia phones this code will enhance voice quality but at the cost of battery power loss.
4. Disable stolen cell: *NOT ALWAYS AND WHY BOTHER* On some phones this will cause your account information to be displayed but your provider already has this information. Just call them tell them the phone was stolen.
5. FREE411 *TRUE BUT* The only part that may not be true is that McDonald's may not be the sponsor when you call. The sponsor varies regularly and so far I do not recall having McDonald's as a sponsor when I have used it.

So the next time you feel the need to send on your words of wisdom, be sure they ring true.

Happy emailing.

\* If you have not figured it out yet, the real title for this article is: EMAIL AWARENESS

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