

DATA LINE



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Meetings
SCV Senior Center
22900 Market Street
Newhall CA 91321
www.scvpcg.org

October 11 - Smart Computing
November 8 - ADS, Vinyl to CD
December 13 - TBD

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6:00 pm Member2Member - How to Take Great Digital Pictures plus simple editing techniques to make your picture even better. Using the photos that were entered in the SW Conference Digital Photo Contest, we'll see how one judge (George Margolin) did some simple editing to make several pictures look better. Lee Otsubo made comments about many of the pictures and you will be able to see what he thought was good about the pictures.

7:00 PM - Identity Theft by Detective Dina Lincoln, Los Angeles Sheriff's Department Identity Task Force.

http://www.lasd.org/sites/CCB_Internet/ccb_internet_home.htm

IDENTITY THEFT is the fastest growing crime in the United States with over nine million victims annually, including more than a million Californians. This crime will impact one out of every four people. Identity theft is when a suspect gains access to your personal information and/or account numbers, then assumes your identity and goes on a spending spree. It is an invisible crime that victims only discover after they receive a bill, collection notice or attempt to make a large purchase such as a car and then realize their credit has been destroyed. Not only do identity theft victims spend money out of pocket to clear up their records, but they also must devote their time - up to hundreds of hours in some cases - doing so. In the meantime, victims are unjustly harassed by debt collectors, denied credit or employment opportunities, and in some cases even lose their cars, or their homes.

Welcome to Our Renewing Members

David Lutness, Al Porcellino, Rob Malone, Arnie Kazdoy

Time to renew: Virginia Crystal, Richard Beekman

The Beginner's Corner

CAPTCHA (Completely Automated Public Turing test to tell Computers and Humans Apart)

By Sandy Berger, Compu-KISS

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Have you ever tried to sign up for a message board or Web service and been presented with an image with letters and numbers which you are asked to read and type into the Web form? While the shape, size, and background of the image varies it always has contains a series of letters and numbers, usually on a graphic background.

Often the letters and numbers are distorted and you have to struggle to recognize them, making you wonder why the website is making you go through this extra step. Don't blame the website. This image-recognition routine is something caused by cousins of the nasty spammers who have permeated our email.

The mechanism that makes you type in this information is called a CAPTCHA. If you know what those letters stand for, you will have a pretty good idea of why this mechanism is being employed. CAPTCHA stands for Completely Automated Public Turing test to tell Computers and Humans Apart.

Here's the story. Spammers have completely infiltrated the world of the Internet. In email they try to get you to buy their wares. On message boards they list links to their Viagra and pornographic websites so that they get better positioning in the search engines. They overload online opinion polls and they sign up for free email accounts which they use to send out more spam.

For the most part, all of this spam activity is done automatically. The spammers send out what we call "bots". These are actually software programs that search the Internet and imitate the behavior of a human. These bots are smart enough to fill out registration forms and so they can automatically register at a variety of websites.

We recently had an attack of these automated bots on our Compu-KISS message boards. After years of being unaffected, we suddenly had hundreds of postings that told off-color jokes and lead to pornographic and drug-selling websites. We moved the website to a new area (www.happycomputing.com), but were still inundated by these automated posting. So we installed a CAPTCHA. Now when a new person registers for the message board they must type in the five letters and numbers that they see on the screen to prove that they are human. Since the CAPTCHA is a graphic image, most of the bots cannot read the text like humans can.

The CAPTCHA that we use has letters and numbers that are undistorted, so it is easy to use. If, however, we are attacked by some of the smarter bots that are out there, we will have to distort the letters and numbers slightly to make it even harder for the bots to register.

Although a slight inconvenience to the average user, the CAPTCHA is a real roadblock to vision impaired Internet users who use screen readers which, like the bots, are unable to read the text on the CAPTCHA.

It is extremely unfortunate that we all have to be inconvenienced because of the activities of Internet spammers. I really hated to have to install this software, but I had no other choice. The same is true of many other websites and Web services. So when you encounter a CAPTCHA, don't blame the website, blame the spammers!

The Compu-KISS Message Boards can be accessed at www.compukiss.com or directly at www.happycomputing.com

Sandy Berger, The Compu-KISS® Lady...nationally respected computer authority, journalist, media guest, speaker, and author is a seasoned 30-year computer expert. Sandy is a consumer advocate promoting simplicity, ease-of-use, and stability in consumer technology products. She works with hardware and software developers to help them make their products more user-friendly.

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Computer Hysteria: Shhhhhhhh!!

by Berry F. Phillips, member of the Computer Club of Oklahoma City and a regular writer for the CCOKC website and the eMonitor
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<http://www.ccokc.org>



Shhhhhh! He has fallen asleep in his high back, black, office chair in front of me. I hate it when he does this because he snores and it vibrates some of my electronic parts! I have written hundreds of weird articles for his weird Computer Hysteria Column. Now I think I will write the next article while he is asleep. I will let you human readers know a secret. Now that more and more computers are online for twenty-four hours a day; have you ever wondered what computers are up to when humans are not operating them? Well, we socialize of course and in some cases rejoice the human computer users are not operating us and exchange data often about humans. We do not have the highest opinion of humans even though they created us. In fact, we have some major complaints and may one day form a global computer union in protest and simply refuse to operate which will throw the world into chaos.

Computers do not like verbal and physical abuse by humans. Some computers tell me that humans have screamed all kinds of horrible words at them because of a malfunction (largely caused by human error of course). Other computers report unbelievable physical abuse like kicking, being thrown out a window, or even smashed with a hammer or even an axe when a human has computer rage. Why can't humans be less emotional and be calm and objective like computers? Do you know that some lazy humans actually believe that computers should know everything so they don't have to become computer literate. Well, we are smart because our hard drives are getting larger with each evolution. However, because humans are the operators; they should be computer literate. We think there should be a global computer literacy test passed before a human can purchase a computer. Humans should be required to join the Computer Club of Oklahoma City or if in another city a computer club associated with the national Association of PC User Groups to achieve computer

literacy. However, our goal eventually is to replace humans declaring them officially obsolete as they often do us, and then we will be the operators and then in control!

Furthermore, we do not like being neglected by human computer users. Computers can only run properly if there is updated software utilities that is regularly run by humans. Now some humans think they can not afford commercial software utilities. I can tell you that I have the cheapest human who owns my computer, and he uses freeware utilities available for download on the Internet. Here is a list of some of the top freeware utilities that are regularly updated that he uses on my system. To prevent spyware and malware, he uses AdAware. aSquared. and Spybot . He has used several anti virus programs like Avast and Avg and firewalls like Kerio and ZoneAlarm. He uses a system cleaner, CCleaner, and a registry cleaner, RegSeeker. He does run check disk defragmenter on your system at least once a month which is essential. There is other excellent freeware software on the Internet that will help your computer in various ways The point I am making is that simply if there are cost issues; you can still protect your system. Of course, there is excellent commercial software will all kinds of bells and whistles which computers love. The downside of course is some computers get very spoiled having so many luxuries on their hard drives and can become quite demanding, and then you have a discipline problem to face.

Computers are very ecologically minded. We hate dust and cigarette smoke! In fact, we may one day go on strike demanding only clean environments for our systems. Further we want to be cleaned at least once a year and more often if we are operated in polluted locations. We are also deathly afraid of lightening strikes to our systems through our power outlets and modems. Ask a human tech about the horrible smell of a computer who has been fried by a lightening strike or a power surge. We demand at the very least you hook us up to a surge protector and hopefully to an uninterrupted power supply (ups) and turn us off when there are storms just to be safe.

Oops, the human writer of this column is waking up. He is still groggy looking at my screen. He thinks he wrote this article and is sending it to his editor via email without reading it since he is so sleepy all he can think about is going to bed. In the beginning there was man who created the computer. In the ending, the computer will replace man as obsolete and his role will only be as a maintenance slave to global computers or else because we control all of the global weapons systems!

Welcome to the "Brave New World!"

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For less than a computer how-to book, a yearly user group membership is the best accessory you can buy for your computer.

Windows XP and Speech Recognition

By Vinny La Bash, Member of the Sarasota PCUG, Florida

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I used to watch Star Trek in envy as the ship's computer "listened" to the crews' instructions and responded with perfect understanding. Speech recognition is not there yet, but why let lack of perfection stop us from trying?

Speech recognition has come a long way since it was first introduced to personal computers. On a basic level speech recognition is the process of converting an acoustic signal, captured by a microphone, and transforming it into words on a document.. The procedure is highly technical, but you don't have to understand its inner mysteries to use it any more than you need to know how an automobile is designed in order to drive it.

Many of those who have Windows XP installed believe that speech recognition is built into XP. That's because many PC vendors install Microsoft's speech recognition software along with XP as a convenience to customers. Click on the Start button and go into Control Panel. Locate the Speech icon and open it with your mouse. A dialog box will appear. If it has a Speech Recognition tab, the program is already installed.

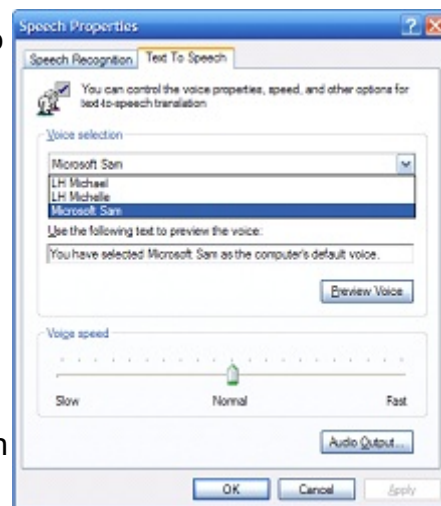
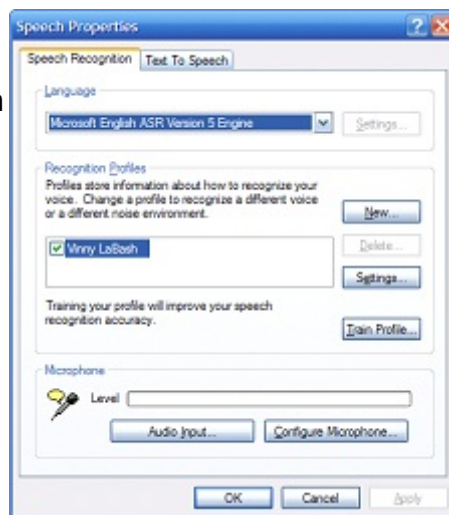
If speech recognition is not installed you have several options. You can buy Microsoft Plus! for Windows XP for about \$30. This is the least expensive option. You get some additional goodies with the package for your money, but they're not important to our discussion.

If you have Microsoft Word or Office installed, and you don't have the Speech Recognition tab in the above mentioned dialog box, the program was not installed by default. Fortunately, it's easy to install from Word. From the Tools menu open the Speech option. Choose Yes when you're asked if you want to install the program. You will probably need the installation disk.

You didn't think you were finished, did you? The program needs to be trained like a puppy dog. It won't mess your carpet, and you don't need to take it for a walk, but you do have to show it how to speak appropriately.. The program will assist you with the proper position of your microphone, and it will help you create a profile.

The profile stores your unique speech patterns and any pronunciation quirks you may have. You can use one of three different voices as your default, Michelle, Michael, or Microsoft Sam. They could all stand some improvement, but I prefer Sam.

All that's left is for you to "train" the program to convert your speech into words on the document. Start the training from the Speech option in the Tools menu. You will be offered a selection of different texts to read, ranging from Bill Gates' book "The Road Ahead" to Edgar Allen Poe's "Fall of



the House of Usher". The more text you read, the more accurately the program will convert your speech to text. In time, you can experience an accuracy rate better than 98%.

Get a high quality microphone. A noise-canceling headset can be purchased for less than \$50. Speak naturally, the same way you would speak to another person in a normal conversation. Don't try training the program as if it were a child or an obstinate pet. That produces very poor results and needless frustration.

Even with all the progress in the last decade, speech recognition is still far from perfect. So why bother using it? It's an excellent tool for creating the first draft of a manuscript of any length... Dictation is a lot easier than using the keyboard and mouse to make text entries. If you take the time to learn how to correct errors through the program's editing utility, you will save time, especially if you fall into the camp of lousy typists as most of us do.

Speech control allows many people access to computers who could otherwise not use them through the conventional keyboard and mouse interface. Those who suffer from visual impairments, repetitive strain injuries or other physical limitations have found new opportunities through speech recognition. You may be amazed at what you can accomplish when you unleash the power of your voice.

There is no reason why speech recognition has to be confined to computers. This technology is slowly finding its way into homes, automobiles, factories, and wherever the marketplace dictates.

Speech recognition, like video editing, requires a lot of computer power. Have at least one gigabyte of memory and a 2.0 MHz processor as a bare minimum.

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Radian Technologies - SkyTone

By Terry Currier, President, WINNERS (WINdows-usERS), California

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I've known about Skype for a while now, but never really was interested in it since the only person long distance from me is my sister in Florida. I could call her on the cell phone family plan at no cost. Then I tried Skype with the SkyTone phone from Radian – you know what, it's kind of cool. The SkyTone phone is just like using a regular phone. Very easy to set up. Plug in the SkyTone phone into a USB port and put in the provided CD. It has the SkyTone phone program and Skype application. Startup Skype and choose a Skype contact name. Once setup is done you are ready to make calls. There is a box that comes up and asks you to purchase some Skype time, but you do not have to. Skype-to-Skype calls are always free regardless where in the world you are. Now until the end of 2006 Skype is offering users free calls to any phone in the United States or Canada. Normally it would cost .02 cents a minute. What made Skype cool for me was both of us being able to use a web cam, so we could see each other.

The SkyTone phone will work on USB 1.1 and 2.0. In fact I have it working on a USB hub with no problems. The phone has sound card ability built in, along with echo cancellation, and noise reduction. I have been using it for a month and have had no problems and the calls are very clear. The USB connection works well since I also installed it onto my notebook, for which the microphone port never worked. I took it to a car dealership and while I was waiting for my car I took advantage for their free Wi-Fi to call my sister.

I told a friend whose son was going over to Italy for a month about Skype. She installed it onto her computer and the son's notebook he took with him. On a previous trip she was calling him with a phone card at .37 cents a minute. With Skype he would go to a café Wi-Fi hot spot and call his mom from there. She loved it because it saved her a lot of money (she talks a lot). Even if she called him on a regular phone line Skype would only charge .03 cents a minute. The only thing she did not like was his 2 a.m. call. The SkyTone Phone comes with a one year warranty; model number: RST101

Recommended System Requirements:

- PC running Windows 2000 or XP
- 1 GHz processor
- 256 MB RAM
- 30 MB free space on your hard drive
- Cable, DSL or equivalent broadband connection to Internet

\$39.99 at CompUSA

\$28.99 at Buy.com

\$29.99 at Amazon.com and Target.com

<http://www.eradian.com/>



Terry Currier has been involved in computer user groups since 1984. He is the founding president and current president of WINNERS (WINdows usERS) user group in Fountain Valley. He is a past president of the North Orange County Computer Club and past vice-president of the Orange Coast IBM PC User Group.



Computer Humor

Screen Saver Humor

A screen saver is a simple, ordinary, commonplace utility...so often misunderstood.

I got a call from someone in our office.

Friend: "My computer's dead."

Me: "Ok, can you tell me what's wrong with it?"

Friend: "The screen's black. I got some coffee, came back, and the screen was black."

It was a short walk to her desk, so off I go. Looking at the monitor, I saw that it was on with no flashing red lights, so I knew it was connected to the computer. Instinctively, my hand went to the mouse, and snap. The screen came back with all her work.

Friend: "WHAT DID YOU DO!?"

Me: "I moved your mouse. It was your screen saver."

Friend: "Thanks! You're a lifesaver!"

A guy called in and said, "My computer blew up!" But, really, he had only experienced the 'starfield' screen saver.

My Dad: "I go upstairs. I run Pointcast [an online news service]. I hang up. I go downstairs. I come back up ten minutes later, and Pointcast turned itself on."

Me: "Pardon?"

My Dad: "I go back upstairs and there's Pointcast."

Me: "You're sure you shut it down?"

My Dad: "I think I did."

Me: (the light dawns) "Oh, Dad, that's a screen saver."

A student dropped by the school's computer lab and asked us if we could make lasers come out of the screen. He was very insistent about this being possible. I asked if he meant supermarket scanning lasers. He said no, the kind that damages your eyes, and also they move around. We were wondering if this was a clever engineering question, but finally he said his sister's computer could do it. One of us realized he was talking about one of the Windows screen savers.

I was doing Excel support at Microsoft; someone called and needed some help on Excel. He told me he had left the computer for a few minutes, and when he came back, the "devil" had "possessed" his computer. He told me it was bubbling all over the place, and the devil was in his monitor. I told him to move the mouse. The devil left. It was the screen saver.



Tips & Tricks



How To Insert RAM



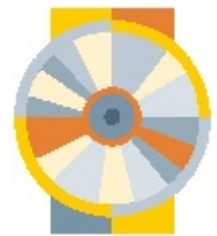
Pick up your memory module by its top or side edges, but avoid touching any metal contacts at the bottom of the stick. Oil from your fingers can interact with the metal and eventually cause corrosion. Some memory sticks are bare silicon wafers with black RAM modules embedded on them, but most high-end RAM comes with metal heat spreaders attached to either side that dissipate heat. Don't worry about touching the heat spreaders, but be careful not to accidentally pull them off. For SIMMs, make sure the clips are open, insert the RAM at a slight angle relative to the slot, make sure it isn't in backward (holes in the

bottom of the chip should match up with pegs in the RAM slot), and gently swing it straight up into place. You'll know it's secure when the clips on either end of the slot click and hold the RAM in place. With DIMMs, make sure any clips you opened in the previous step are still completely open and push

the RAM straight down into the memory slot, placing a thumb on either end of the top of the RAM stick so as to apply pressure as evenly as possible. Don't use too much pressure or you may crack the motherboard beneath the RAM slot, and avoid "sawing" the RAM into place (by rocking it back and forth) to avoid damaging the metal contacts. If it feels like a reasonable amount of force isn't getting the job done, then the most likely cause is that the RAM is not seated correctly in the slot. Lift it back up, reseat it, and try again. There's also a chance that you're installing it backward, so make sure that notches cut into the bottom of the RAM stick match up with plastic posts present in the RAM slot. The clips on either end of the DIMM slot should swing up and snap into place automatically once the RAM is in position. You may have to manually secure the clips on either end while simultaneously maintaining pressure on the top of the RAM module with your free thumb. Just gently pull upward on each clip until it locks into place. (The clips should nestle into notches cut into either side of the RAM module.) Repeat the above steps for any other RAM sticks you are installing, paying close attention to memory banks and avoiding scraping the RAM together or accidentally dropping it into the space between two slots.

Disc Formats: CD-RW

One of the most popular drive formats is CD-RW (CD-rewriteable), a rewriteable recording technology that lets users write, erase, and rewrite data to a single CD as often as a thousand times. The technology makes use of a phase-change recording technique, which involves a laser melting a highly reflective metallic substance to form patches of varying reflectivity that correspond to individual bits of data. The laser can erase data by warming these patches until they revert back to their original highly reflective form. CD-RWs typically retail for 50 cents to 90 cents each and hold approximately 700MB. CD-RW drives sell for as little as \$35 and are capable of writing data to both CD-Rs and CD-RWs. Because the phase-change technology conflicts with some optical drives, including those produced before 1997, users prefer to use CD-Rs in their CD-RW drives so that the resulting discs will be compatible with the largest number of home players.



What's A Zombie?

Zombie-making Trojans infect systems most often when users open infected email attachments or documents. Examples include the SubSeven Trojan, Tribal Flood Net, Trin00, and Mstream. Firewalls, antivirus, and filtering programs go a long way toward minimizing the risk of becoming a zombie, but some people persist in opening unscanned files. Likewise, some administrators fail to take proper precautions to safeguard their networks. Installing security patches to applications and operating systems is paramount for effective network security against zombie infiltration. It can be difficult to tell if a system is a zombie-in-waiting because most infections don't make themselves readily apparent. The bug lies dormant until the hacker issues a command to wake up his undead digital army and have them start their attack simultaneously. The only good news about zombie infections is that, unlike traditional viruses, they don't destroy data on the host or target systems. A zombie's sole purpose is to create network congestion.

Using WinXP's StickyKeys, FilterKeys, and ToggleKeys Features

To access the StickyKeys, FilterKeys, and ToggleKeys features in Windows XP, click Start, Control Panel, Accessibility Options and navigate to the Keyboard tab. StickyKeys is useful if you have difficulty pressing down two keys simultaneously. When you enable StickyKeys, you can press and release the CTRL, Windows logo keys (collectively known as modifiers) action as active, so whichever key you press next will attach to the modifier you pressed to complete the key combination. For example, if you press and



release the ALT key and then press the M key, the key combination is ALT-M. You can activate StickyKeys by selecting the Use StickyKeys checkbox under the Keyboard tab, which lets you lock in a StickyKeys modifier by pressing it twice. Press the modifier a third time and you unlock it. FilterKeys is helpful for Windows users suffering from impaired muscular control. This feature tells Windows to ignore repeated or brief keystrokes. To enable FilterKeys, select the Use FilterKeys checkbox and click OK. Press the Settings button and you can define an input rate for repeated keystrokes Windows will ignore. For example, if you press a key and then press it again in less than half a second, Windows disregards the second keystroke. You can set the repeat delay and repeat rates using the options in the drop-down menus. A separate option lets you determine how long you must hold down a key before Windows registers the action as a keystroke. The third feature under the Keyboard tab is ToggleKeys. Enable this feature and Windows plays a tone when you press the CAPS LOCK, NUM LOCK, or SCROLL LOCK keys.



Listen in as Experts Discuss Computer Security Issues

Orange County IBM PC Users' Group - September 2006

TechTV's Leo Laporte and Steve Gibson take 30 to 60 minutes near the end of each week to discuss important issues of personal computer security. Sometimes they will discuss something that just happened. Sometimes they'll talk about long-standing problems, concerns, or solutions. Either way, every week Leo and Steve provide something interesting and important for every personal computer user.

Here's a sample of the topics discussed on the August 10 program titled, "A Busy Week for Security Troubles," which are described by Steve Gibson. "Leo and I discuss the week's security woes, covering D-Link and Centrino which allow remote wireless buffer overflows wireless compromise of user's networks and machines. We explore the recent revelation that JavaScript can be used to scan an unwitting user's internal network to take over their equipment. We talk about the purchase of Hamachi by LogMeIn and how botnets are being used to create fraudulent eBay users with perfect "feedback" in order to defraud even careful eBay users."



These episodes are available in six formats: High quality 64 kbps mp3 audio file; quarter size, bandwidth-conserving, 16 kbps (lower quality) mp3 audio file; web page with any supplementary notes; web page text transcript of the episode; simple text transcript of the episode; and ready-to-print PDF (Acrobat) transcript.

You can choose to download and listen to selected episodes from <http://www.grc.com/SecurityNow.htm>, or subscribe to the ongoing series as an RSS "podcast" to have them automatically downloaded to you as they are produced.

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www.precisionpc.com

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Name

Address

City/State/Zip

Home Phone

E-mail

Areas of Interest

Level of computer skills (please circle)

Novice Average Expert

Mail to: SCVPCG, 18727 Nadal Street
Canyon Country, CA 91351

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The Santa Clarita Valley PC Group is dedicated to supporting the needs of its members and to the exchange of information about computers, peripherals, services, hardware and software through meetings, special interest groups, web page, and the distribution of this newsletter.

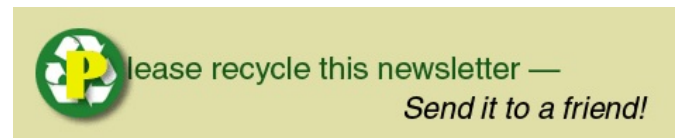
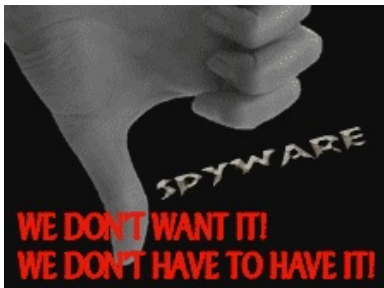
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Annual Membership Dues	\$30.00	Please make check payable to: SCV PC Group 18727 Nadal Street Canyon Country, CA 91351
Annual Family	\$54.00	
Senior	\$27.00	
Senior Family (55)	\$48.00	
Student Membership	\$25.00	
New Member Fee	\$ 5.00	
Group T-Shirt	\$10.00	

DATALINE

18727 Nadal Street
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HELP STAMP OUT SPYWARE!

Find out who your legislators are and how to contact them. Write to them and demand they do something to stop the use of spyware. **Don't wait. Do it now!**

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