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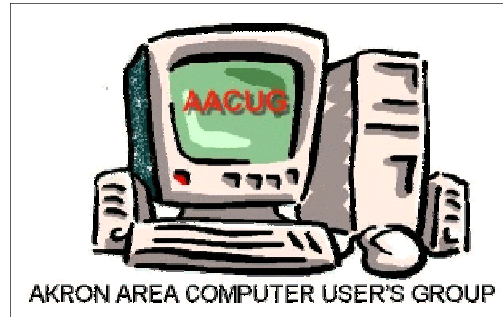
A.A.C.U.G.

Akron Area Computer Users Group

MAY 2010



Association of PC
User Groups
www.apcug.net



We're on the Web:
www.acorn.net/aacug

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MEETING:

**SAT., MAY 15, 2010, 1 p.m.
STEERING COMMITTEE—12 NOON**

***MAIN LIBRARY COMPUTER LAB
60 S HIGH STREET
DOWNTOWN AKRON
Free Parking***

PROGRAM: GOOGLE APPS

PRESENTER: CHRIS CISAR

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

All AACUG members, remember the meeting this month is at the main Library downtown Akron. One of our favorite presenters, **Chris Cisar**, will honor us with a “hands-on” demonstration in the Computer Lab enlightening us on Google Applications . You won't want to miss this. I guarantee that you will come away with new insight into what Google has to offer each one of us.

Last month we enjoyed a great presentation by James Wright from ACS, on cameras, photo taking and the latest gadgets in the computer accessories business.

So, come downtown and enjoy the Akron Public Library (free parking in the deck). Invite a guest to show off our club and meeting.

Eugene DiDonato


UPCOMING EVENT

Sunday, August 8th, 2010

Annual AACUG Picnic

Lions Park, Tallmadge

Details to follow later

AACUG Steering Committee Meeting Minutes

April 17, 2010

Attendance:

Present: Eugene DiDonato, Nancy Straw, Angie Mudd, Jim Albright, Liz Milford, Dobby Dobson, Dick Donze, Janet Donze

Call to order:

President Eugene DiDonato called the meeting to order about noon at the Ellet branch of the Akron-Summit County Library.

Previous Minutes:

The March 2010 minutes (published in the April 2010 newsletter) were approved as published with the spelling correction of Mark Welfley's last name. Thanks to Mary Turbak who did an excellent job on the minutes of both steering committee and main meeting and even summarized the program..

Treasurer's Report:

Treasurer Angie Mudd presented the Treasurer's Report. The information is not published in the newsletter or online. Requests for copies of the report and/or questions should be directed to her.

Program Suggestions:

The May meeting will be held at the main library. Rose Conley (who had a previous commitment and was not present) has reserved a computer lab there. As no one from the library is available that day, we will ask Mark Welfley to speak. A program on OpenOffice was suggested, but the library computers probably do not have that free program on them and so that topic will probably be postponed to a later meeting. After further discussion, it was decided to ask Mark to choose a topic.

Other Business:

Angie Mudd moved and Nancy Straw seconded a motion to give program speakers from outside the club a \$50 gift gas card. The present amount is a \$25 gas card. After discussion, the motion was passed.

Eugene discussed ways to make money for the club including selling items for the club at a flea market.

Dobby Dobson has reserved Shelter #1 at Tallmadge Lions Park for our club picnic on August 8, 2010. He reserved the shelter with his own check and the club reimbursed him. The club will need a committee for this and Eugene will ask at the main meeting.

Club laptop: Rose sent a memo to steering committee members suggesting that club members could borrow the laptop from the club to use for a month. Anyone from the club who will be giving a club program also could borrow the laptop to prepare the program. Nancy Straw volunteered to keep a sign-out sheet for this purpose. Jim Albright suggested that anyone who borrows the laptop should be sure to turn it on and connect to the Internet regularly so that updates will be done, especially to anti-virus software. Someone also mentioned that it would be good to have a list of software on the laptop. Eugene will ask Don Smith, who has set up the computer, to make a list of programs and some usage guidelines.

Respectfully submitted by:

Liz Milford

AACUG Main Meeting Minutes
Saturday, April 17, 2010

Call to order:

President Eugene DiDonato called the meeting to order about 1:00 p.m. at the Ellet branch of the Akron-Summit County Library.

Guests:

Two guests attended the meeting: Ron Paskey who learned about the club from Rose Conley and Gay Wands who is a friend of Liz Milford.

Announcements:

The meeting next month will be held at the main library because the Ellet Library will hold their book sale. A computer lab has been reserved and Mark Welfley will be asked to talk. Parking is free.

The club picnic is scheduled for August 8 at the Tallmadge Lions Park at the first shelter. Eugene asked for volunteers for a committee to plan the picnic. Nancy Straw and Liz Milford volunteered. More people are needed. See Eugene if you can help.

The club laptop is available for members to borrow, either to prepare for a club presentation or just to use it. Nancy Straw will have the sign-out sheet.

Vice-President Don Smith has had open heart surgery with complications since the last meeting. He is doing well and recuperating nicely now.

Swap and Shop:

Eugene DiDonato has two 3.5 inch floppy containers for free. Angie Mudd has a labeler for free.

50/50 Drawing:

Rose Conley won \$8.50. (Nancy Straw had purchased a ticket for her sister since Rose had another commitment and was not present.)

Door Prizes:

Door prizes were awarded to:

Dick Donze	4 GB Flash Drive
Angie Mudd	50 CD-R
Liz Milford	500 pack of paper
Jerry Wenger	Swiss Tech Screw Driver
Eugene DiDonato	Cord-cable clips
Angie Mudd	Cleaning cloth

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Program

James Wright from ACS, a computer supply company located in old Summerville's building, presented a very interesting program about digital photography.

Most club members use point-and-shoot digital cameras but James shoots with a digital SLR. The SLR is heavy compared to point and shoot but is more versatile. Using an SLR digital camera can be very involved or automatic. An SLR has removable lenses. The cost is coming down and now a new SLR is around \$499 with one lens. A lens can be costly determined by how light it is and the quality of the lens. Some lenses have zoom and some don't. His longest lens is a 300mm lens, equivalent to about 15x; it has image stabilization which makes for less blurry photos. This lens costs about \$900 but James picked it up on Ebay for about \$500. James also showed a macro lens which allows very close up photos. With an SLR camera, you can add extra adjustable flashes. Also filters are available which can cut down glare (for instance, on a lake).

James showed his multi-pocketed camera bag and showed accessories that can be used that no matter what kind of camera you have: a lens cleaner and a soft cloth, a remote control (like a timer but with it you can decide when to take photo), and an air brush to dust off camera before cleaning it with cleaner. Another useful accessory is an inexpensive flash (starting at \$75-\$100) plus a \$30 photosensor that will trigger when camera flash goes off. This will work with any flash camera and can be used to remove shadows from photos.

James gets ideas from photo magazines from Borders, etc. Titles include Shutterbug, Digital Camera, Practical Photography (\$10 one of easiest to understand). He passed some magazines around. Some of the magazines come with a CD that includes tutorials and photos.

James explained panning. You follow the moving subject with the camera so the subject will be clear and background will be blurred. You can even use a tripod for the camera to do this. Most point and shoot cameras can be used to do this.

Types of images: Raw images create a picture of how the camera sees it before any processing by the camera. Raw files are very big but don't lose quality. Most point and shoot cameras don't take raw files. JPG images (taken by point and shoot cameras) have software applied to photos and also condense the images. Every time you open a jpg and save it, the quality goes down.

When getting a new camera, get the best quality and best resolution you can. The higher the resolution, the bigger you can blow a photo up and/or zoom into the picture to crop it and use just a portion of the picture. About 12 megapixels is standard now. Smaller cameras but may not really have a 12 megapixels even if they say they do because the sensor is so small in the smaller camera.

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Zoom: With optical zoom the lens will actually zoom, but with digital zoom, the zooming is done through software inside the camera and causes pixelization. Ignore digital zoom as it's worthless. Software called Genuine Fractal will help with this but it costs \$200.

Digital editing on the computer: Everything James can do with his SLR, you can simulate on the computer with software if you are using a point and shoot camera.

GIMP is a free photo editing program. It is not as user friendly as ones you purchase like Adobe Photoshop Elements (\$99). Photoshop Elements does excellent and easy job of getting rid of red eye. It is one of the easier programs that does a good job of editing photos. Photoshop is the pro version and about \$400. James suggests downloading Gimp and learning it. Gimp will do almost everything needed for photo editing. If you send email to James , jamesftwright@gmail.com , saying you are a member of the computer group, he will send a link to a friend of his whose web site has videos on how to use Gimp.

Using Gimp, James recommends adjusting the brightness down and contrast up just a little bit to even out and make a big difference in the photo. Another way to adjust this is with Color Curves, a graphical representation of light and dark. You can move the line to different spots to adjust brightness and contrast. Most times the best way to change is to have a slight curve coming down. This is faster than doing brightness and contrast. Color levels is similar to color curves but you move the "triangles" closer together. Colorize the image will actually adjust the colors.

Gimp has toolbox. James explained some of the tools. Cropping takes part of the picture and is the reason a large megapixel camera is helpful.

Nancy Straw asked how to add a graphic to a photo. James explained adding layers to do that. Each layer can have a different image and can be quite complicated. Each layer has its own settings and properties.

Diyphotography.net is a good website and has good ideas for photography. Lynda.com is \$25 a month. It is a training site that has videos and tutorials. Some can be viewed before purchasing. The site contains all kinds of training for all kinds of software.

James passed around several gadgets sold at ACS:

USB fan

USB light

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USB battery backup that plugs into an outlet and recharges a battery and then while on a trip it will recharge USB devices.

USB card reader

Instant music has outlets for old record player and can be connected to computer

Polaroid Pogo – print digital photos. It makes 2x3 prints using special paper (about 30 photos for \$8)

KVM switch (keyboard video mouse use one and switch between 2 computers.

Z board: replaces standard keyboard but has shortcuts for software such as Office or Photoshop, a separate keyboard for each software. The base unit is about \$40 and each keyboard is about \$30.

Velcro cable tie straps

External hard drive

Web cam in a little dog – good for kids.

USB extension cable

The newest laptop a Thinkpad Edge- very light with a bigger screen and faster processor than a netbook. Cost is about \$599 or 699. (This is definitely more than a gadget!)

Laptop case with pink and red stripes.

Respectfully submitted by:

Liz Milford

The Wide World of Computers

By Don Smith

Last month I started writing an article for subjects for our meeting, along with the thought of maybe we need to try and bring back the SIG's of bygone days.

After I mentioned the things you can do with Google, SmartComputing & Pc World magazines had articles covering it. If you are interested in using the Google programs. That are free, there is lots information out there related to it. It now appears that it and Open Office are in competition with Microsoft Office.

I also mentioned something's about Digital Photography but did get to finish it. I was talking what you can do with your camera and what you can do with the computer and bought up the subject of storing your images in "Raw" format, I wanted to note the this format is available on most or all DSLR camera and may be found on the higher end of the "point & shoot" models. I would also inform you here that you would most likely need a 3rd party application to manipulate your raw image and convert it a "JPG" file if you wanted to. From what I was reading Cannon is the only camera maker that includes the software with it's camera to manipulate the image if you where to save your files as a RAW image, also when using this format and viewing the image on your computer it may not appear to look correct until you edit the image to your liking.

There is also a new format on the horizon called "DNG" or Digital Negative, it Adobe's attempt to create a unified raw format, this is a whole new type of format, some camera's maker support it others support only a version of it that is not a true DNG file, This file format has been suggested by the Library of Congress to be used as an Archive format for digital photos. The most important thing about this new format is that will be supported into perpetuity, guaranteeing that the image you create today can be open and edited any time in the future. DNG is a freely licensed spec that Adobe has opened up to all.

In the June issue of MAXIMUMPC they have a section about Windows 7 tips. I found this one to be of interest in that a member could record his problem and bring it to the meeting and we could try to solve it.

It is called the Problem Step Recorder, to launch this program go to the Start Men and type in "psr.exe" in the search field. Next hit the Record button and it will rack your mouse and keyboard input while taking screen shots of each action, when you stop recording it will be saved as an HTML slide show. This could be used to share & solve problems along with creating tutorials to help those with problems.

At recent meeting we have had discussions about how to back up your computer, Or store you data, documents, music, pictures, ect. The was an article in a recent issue of ht Akron Beacon Journal about On-Line Back, see the link for more information <http://www.ohio.com/business/92742374.html>

We have also heard of other applications to back up computer with. One was Macrium Reflect Free Edition, I have tried this and it was easy to use, and to create the backup. I have not tried to use it to restore yet, since I have not had a problem. In the November meeting the speaker James told us about it. You can visit <http://www.macrium.com/>

For more information or http://download.cnet.com/Macrium-Reflect-Free/3000-2242_4-10845728.html?tag=mncol at Cnet.com for the free download.

I recently found out that there only two type of computer users, and we all thought that there was beginner, novice, ect. The truth is that there are two "Those who have lost data & Those who will". Backup your data now.

Microsoft Offers Free "Fix it" Utilities

by Ira Wilsker

WEBSITES:

<http://support.microsoft.com/fixit>

<http://fixitcenter.support.microsoft.com>

<https://fixit.support.microsoft.com/reporting/gadget/fixit4me.gadget>

We have all heard the moans and groans about Microsoft's frequent lack of response in terms of its technical support, unless we are willing to pay significant support fees. I have had mixed success at using Microsoft's support forums, including no responses to multiple postings about my Windows 7 upgrade problems; countless other posts in that forum and other Microsoft support forums lament the same sentiment, that Microsoft is sometimes (often) non-responsive. The tide may be turning in a positive direction for Microsoft, as it recently released "Microsoft Fix it Solution Center" (support.microsoft.com/fixit), and "Microsoft Fix it Center Online (beta)" (fixitcenter.support.microsoft.com). For those with Vista or Windows 7, Microsoft also released a "gadget", (fixit.support.microsoft.com/reporting/gadget/fixit4me.gadget) which will display a small image on the desktop showing that latest list of "Fix it" utilities. These small utilities will run on Windows XP, Vista, or Windows 7.

What Microsoft has apparently done is to take many of the most common problems reported by Windows users and create a library of small utilities that can automatically repair those problems. Microsoft says that Microsoft Fix it will "Find and fix common problems." According to Microsoft, "We're working hard to automate solutions to common software problems in an easy, intuitive way that is available when and where you need it. So whether you are looking for a solution in help or support content, or an error report, Fix it provides a way to apply automated fixes, workarounds, or configuration changes so you don't have to perform a long list of manual steps yourself."

The Microsoft Fix it Solution Center offers online automated fixes for problems with Windows itself, Internet Explorer, Enterprise Products, Office, Email and Messaging (Outlook and Outlook Express), Windows Media Player, Xbox and Zune, and Games and Consumer Products. In reviewing the dozens of fixes available under these headings, I can recognize many of the problems that I have either experienced myself, or have heard of others with those explicit problems. One of the several issues that I have had with my Windows 7 machine is that sometimes the CD/DVD drive will not run, and it shows up on Device Manager with an exclamation point indicating that the drive has a problem. I reinstalled the manufacturer's latest drivers, and reinstalled my CD and DVD software, and still the drive was not always recognized, and therefore would not work. I found a Fix it solution that said that it might be able to repair my settings such that my drive would be recognized, and within seconds of running the Fix it utility, my drive worked flawlessly, and has continued to run since the appropriate Fix it was run. Other Windows fixes include appearance issues, sound and print problems, system and security problems, and update problems. For those not sure if a fix is appropriate, most of the Fix it utilities check to see if that selected fix is appropriate, and will stop it from executing if it is not necessary.

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Even though I generally do not use it, Internet Explorer (the "big blue e") is still the most widely used browser in the world, with more users than all other browsers combined. Even though it is widely used, users still have a variety of problems with Internet Explorer. Many of those problems may be instantly resolved by applying one of the fixes listed. By simply clicking on the fix, and following the on screen prompts, the repair will be completed automatically.

There are dozens of other useful utilities in the Microsoft Fix It Solution Center, and it is likely that users who are having problems with Windows and its companion components may find a solution here. It is definitely worthy of a try.

For those who want to have an even more automated solution to their Windows problems, they may prefer the Fix it Center Online (beta). Microsoft's slogan for this particular service is "Click, click, fixed." Microsoft claims that this service is easy, relevant, and allows the user to be in control of the process. The diagnosis and repair service begins by downloading a small (437kb) file "FixitCenter_Run.exe". According to Microsoft, " Fix it Center finds and fixes many common PC and device problems automatically. It also helps prevent new problems by proactively checking for known issues and installing updates. Fix it Center helps to consolidate the many steps of diagnosing and repairing a problem into an automated tool that does the work for you." When run, the downloaded executable file will download a machine specific build that is explicitly for your computer, and highly personalized for the software and hardware on your computer.

For my new Windows 7 computer, the Microsoft Fix it Center beta identified 25 distinct functions on my computer that may be candidates for repair or maintenance. Clicking on an item will give a brief description of what will be repaired. Clicking on the "Run" button will obviously run the appropriate utility. Many of the utilities will perform necessary fixes and adjustments themselves, but some require some degree of interaction from the user. I tried several of the listed utilities, and had mixed results; some worked well and made noticeable improvements, while others were not successful. That is just the results on my particular Windows 7 computer; I had a greater rate of success on my older Windows XP computer, as well as other computers (XP and Vista) that I tried it on.

While not perfect, I can see where many of the issues and problems encountered by Windows users could be easily remedied by utilizing these utilities. It should be noted that the Fix it Center Online is still in beta, which means that it is not a finished and refined product, and that there is still some work to be done on it. Still, these free Fix it utilities should be considered as a potential solution for many of the Windows problems that we encounter.

Snail Mail Address:
AACUG
 2465 ARDWELL AVENUE
 AKRON OH 44312



Next Monthly Meeting

SATURDAY, JUNE 19, 2010

1:00 P.M. AT

ELLET BRANCH LIBRARY

2470 E. MARKET ST.

12:00 noon — STEERING COMM.

CLUB OFFICERS		
President	Eugene DiDonato	eugened43@sbcglobal.net
Vice Pres.	Don Smith	aacug@neo.rr.com
Treasurer	Angie Mudd	nanange733@aol.com
Secretary	Liz Milford	eamilford@yahoo.com
Asst. Sec.	Nancy Straw	nanlar5496@aol.com
Newsletter	Rose Conley	rconley44@neo.rr.com
Webmaster	Don Smith	aacug@neo.rr.com
Membership	Lewis Rader	lewis88@att.net
Door Prizes	Angie Mudd	nanange733@aol.com

"And in the end it's not the years in your life that count. It's the life in your years."

- Abraham Lincoln

STEERING COMMITTEE	
Jim Albright	jra823@usa.com
Eugene Cooke	ecooke3@neo.rr.com
Bob Cronauer	N8AHJ@neo.rr.com
Robert Dobson	rldob@neo.rr.com
Dick Donze	dick.donze@ieee.org
Barb Houglan	houglanb@yahoo.com
Gwen Rader	lewis88@att.net
John Turbak	jet12544@yahoo.com
Mary Turbak	m_turbak@yahoo.com