

The

Computer Link

July 2010

The Newsletter of the Northern Neck Computer Users' Group

NNCUG Officers

President

Chris Christensen
804-438-4339

Vice President

Phil Allan
804-776-6699

Secretary

Anne Moss
804-438-5280

Treasurer

George Cadmus
804-435-6328

Member-at-Large

B. J. McMillan
804-580-8666

The Computer Link

Bruce Mc Millan, Editor
804-580-8666

Website

Betty Lehman
<www.nncug.org>

Webteam

admin@nncug.org

E-mail address for all
NNCUG officers/staff:
admin@nncug.org

Send newsletter
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→**DEADLINE**←
for **NEXT ISSUE**,
One week after meeting

Computer Education in the Northern Neck

Justin Hart of the **Northern Neck Technical Center (NNTC)** was our featured guest speaker at the June 19 general meeting. Justin described the computer instruction program at the NNTC, and provided us with general comments on “cloud computing” and his approach to virus control. He is a Microsoft Certified Professional, has many years of experience including six years of teaching, and is certified in National Occupational Career and Technical Instruction and by OSHA. Currently, Justin is working to earn the Microsoft Systems Engineering Certification.

The NNTC, located in Warsaw, VA, serves six jurisdictions in the Northern Neck area. The mission of the Center is to teach a variety of technical disciplines such as Computer Maintenance Technology, Carpentry, Cosmetology, Culinary Arts, and Masonry. The students are generally aged 16 to 18, but it is possible for adults to enroll as well. NNTC students have successfully competed in state and national level Skills USA technical contests in their disciplines.

Justin teaches the full time Computer Technology 1 and 2 courses, which is a two-year program. The focus is on networking hardware, and includes

both lecture and hands-on experience. The target occupation is computer technician. Once a student graduates from the Computer Technology program, he or she is eligible to take the test to be certified. However, he said most find jobs in the field without achieving full certification. His students participate in the Joint Opportunity in Student Training (JOIST) Project in which students from various NNTC disciplines construct a house. (Proceeds from the sale of the house support scholarships for some Tech Center “completers”.) His students install a Local Area Network in the JOIST house that is being constructed. Although many of his students have elected not to finish the regular high school academic program, he finds them intelligent, able and a pleasure to teach.



Justin Hart

Photo by Alan Christensen

In discussing “cloud computing”, (in which data and programs including operating systems, are stored on the Internet and provided on demand), Justin noted that such technology might not be feasible for the Northern Neck given its limited high-speed access to the Internet. He indicated that a fiber optic network would be needed to provide the needed speed to

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“2010: A Live Chat Tech Support Odyssey”

By Gay Jenson*

www.ccokc.org
wright599new (at) sbcglobal.net

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My experience with computers began professionally and personally at the same time: 1984. George Orwell would have been quite proud, particularly if he could have read this article.

I don’t know how many people in this big, web-wide world of ours have ever had the unusual experience of utilizing an “online tech support chat” service, whether it be for help with purchasing an item from a catalog, filing

An online tech support chat service “is exactly like Instant Messaging (IM) in that you and the other person on the other end of the chat are typing back and forth in real time.”

your income taxes, or simply downloading a program necessary for your computer. Until recently, I hadn’t had this unique opportunity of the 21st century version of “letting your fingers do the walking.”

It began simply enough; my husband and I had experienced marked slowness in our operating speed for Windows XP (yes, we’re still in that mode), and Norton products had issued us several friendly reminders that our computer was low on memory (as, I might add, are the two of us). This, they explained, might help our computer open programs easier, download quicker, and in general, simply improve the overall speed and function.

Sounded logical. Sign us up. In the past, when we’ve purchased/updated our security, anti-virus, anti-spyware, etc. type programs, it’s usually been done by ordering and paying online, and then simply downloading from their site. No problem. However, this time, there seemed to be a vicious cycle running against us...we’d try to download the program (for which we had already paid), and yet, because the program wasn’t downloaded yet, the computer’s memory was still too low, thus creating a bottleneck usually reserved for matters of Congress. And so, the decision was made to go ahead and use the online tech support service, in its “friendly chat format.”

If you have not gone through this before, a brief explanation of the “chat”: it is exactly like Instant Messaging (IM), in that you and the other person on the other end of the chat are typing back and forth in real time. The difference would be that in a tech support situation, you have no idea with whom you are chatting, or if it’s even a person, for that matter. In my instance, my tech support representative’s name was “Chithra,” and I don’t know if that’s a male or a female, but I decided it was a woman and left it at that. For some reason I felt more nurtured that way, even as a 47-year-old wife and mother myself.

In a way, it’s a bit like the ultimate blind date: neither of you have a clue as to the other’s actual range of understanding, what you look like, how you like your coffee in the morning, and so on. And so, as what I thought was a bit cheesy, the grand marshal of the technical support site announces (in typed form) that I (Gay Jenson) have now entered the Chat Room. I felt a bit like Elvis. And then it waits.

Now, at this point, I’m wondering if I should do the po-

lite thing and figuratively shake my hand and introduce myself? No need, as it turns out, because now, my “date,” Chithra, has done just that. She introduces herself and asks me what my particular problem is (which I had already done in the previous section, but that’s okay, I’m willing to go over it once more for the sake of problem-solving). Chithra understands immediately and is quite willing to get started on this as soon as possible. Would that okay?

Well, yes, I believe it would, I typed back to Chithra.

Automatically, I’m assigned a case number, so that if our blind date gets cut short by some power surge, I can bring them back up and get started again. Now, at this point, Chithra is rapidly typing me, giving me the appro-

In an online chat, the technical representative also may remotely control your computer, with your permission, to expedite resolution of the problem.

priate links that should get me where I need to go in order to download this additional memory program....and of course, the same problem occurs, it won’t download. Chithra—the ultimate chatty cathy—has now offered (or asked permission) to simply take it into her own tiny hands and handle it herself.

This is the part I have never done before...I’d participated in online chats with tech support before, but never had I simply handed over the keyboard keys to the kingdom! Such trust, such blind faith, such fear of major security breach! I began searching for a paper bag in case I began hyperventilating at some point. I doubt

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Live Chat Tech Support

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Chithra needed one.

While I reluctantly agreed, I sat back and was amazed at how quickly Chithra's fingers flew across my screen....it was quite disconcerting, and I was almost afraid to look at my keyboard for fear that I would see the keys moving as well, like something from an old late-night movie where the invisible ghost is playing the massive organ but no one can see the hands....just the keys moving....

Chithra not only typed at lightning speed, she was also bringing up windows right and left, up and down, resembling a CNN news story during an earthquake report or election night results. I decided to throw in a little levity by sending Chithra a quick note in the chat room: "Thank goodness I don't have ADD, with all these windows popping up, right and left," I wrote, laughing to myself at the cleverness of my remark.

Chithra did not respond. Worse yet, my innocent action of using my mouse to direct it to the chat room box, and then actually type, caused Chithra to quickly regain control of the process. This was a stern reminder that I was no longer in control here. I began looking around my home office for evidence of tiny cameras and/or listening devices. They could have been in the tissue box, or the stapler! You never know!

By now, it had become clear to me, as well as poor Chithra, that this wasn't go-

ing to be as smooth as she thought it would be. And so, she had to go to another chat room (presumably one with more fresh air and/or cubicles), and then once again, introduced herself to me and announced to everyone that Gay Jenson had entered the room. Elvis again. And, what's worse, Chithra and I both seemed to be in 3 rooms at once: she in her office (presumably, again); me in mine; and then our "chat-bodies" in two separate chat rooms. Those are quite a few places for a person to be at once.

So, at this point, Chithra is once again on overdrive, now in the second chat room, opening, closing, pointing, clicking, dragging, deleting, busting through her own firewalls, and in general, just really making a name for herself in the world of online tech support chat rooms. I continued to watch in careful amazement, not wanting to touch anything and risk the wrath of Chithra, should I throw her off her game. I did sneak over to the first chat room to see if she had responded to my ADD joke, but still hadn't.

Okay....now we had gotten to the point where it appeared that it had been successfully downloaded, and she told me that it would be necessary for me to hit "restart" after her final process concluded. So, while there was still a bit of time left on the clock, I switched over to the first chat room to see if she'd ever answered the ADD joke....and she swiftly moved my cursor back to the window where that final process was counting down the sec-

onds to the restart. "Stay focused!" is what it seemed she was telling me. I decided no matter what, I would NOT touch that mouse again unless it was time to restart.

The clock winds down, I'm poised to hit "restart," and wouldn't you know it, but good ole Chithra had beaten me to the punch and did it for me after all. She never did trust me. "Can't trust those humans, after all," is what she was probably saying to her counterparts.

Home Networking July Meeting

Mr. Robert Headley, the "Computer Wizard" of Kilmarnock will be the guest speaker at the July 17th General Meeting of the NNCUG.

Mr. Headley will be discussing home wireless networking for computers as well as other wireless equipment installations in the home.

Ed.

Once "we" restarted, it did seem, at least in the beginning, that things were starting up more quickly at this point—perhaps downloading the extra memory was worth it after all. But then, OH NO!, Chithra hit a brick wall, too. Now from where I was

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Live Chat Tech Support

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sitting, I don't think she was going to take that lying down, and I certainly wasn't going to get in her way. A few well-placed keystrokes later, and she had that thing up and running in no time.

I may have forgotten to mention this earlier, but in the beginning of the "chat," Chithra had asked for my telephone number, so that they could call me if anything else was necessary in human form. I can't imagine what that would be, but I gave in. So, afraid that someone might call at the same time as Chithra, I decided to take preemptive strike and I texted both my mother, my husband and my daughter to let them know I was under home-computer arrest, and needed to keep the land-line open for the time being. In all actuality, I was joking, but figured it was kind of funny....until the phone rang....and it was Chithra! (or at least it said the name of the organization on the Caller ID) I quickly answered, nervous and worried that I had somehow given away the secret recipe for tomato soup, but no sooner had I answered, than she (?) hung up on me! The nerve! And not even an apology in either of our chat rooms.

And still no recognition of my ADD joke, which frankly, wasn't all that funny, but sometimes you just want to be noticed.

Well, fast-forward, and in conclusion Chithra did get the program downloaded, we have a lot more memory now (more than I have in my head, which is kind of sad), and Chithra assured me that she knew I was valuable to their company and that my time should NOT be wasted! I felt this was a very thoughtful thing to chat.

In the distance, my television was on, and the old classic

June Photograph of the Month

Boxed Light
By Joe Moeller



Stanley Kubrick movie, "2001: A Space Odyssey" was playing. I wonder if Chithra knew HAL? What I do know for certain is that I couldn't have outwitted Chithra the way the Kubrick's astronaut did with HAL. Chithra was way onto me from the very beginning.

**Gay Jenson is a published*

author of Mirror Journals- Reflections of a Father-Daughter Journey of Hope, a memoir of a cancer survivor who resides in Phoenix, AZ with her husband Paul, one dog and three cats. Gay is also the daughter Elizabeth Wright, a member of the Computer Club of Oklahoma City.

Computer Education

From Page 1

access the “cloud”. On the other hand, he indicated that a good point was that “cloud” servers, such as those from Microsoft, are well protected from hackers and viruses.

Justin discussed some of his choices for software for computers. In addition, he described a two-stage process for virus and “malware” protection. He uses “AVAST” for virus protection and removal because it is free (for home use), self-updating, and user friendly. AVAST also runs before boot up of the operating system which is very useful for catching bugs that strike during boot up. The second stage is to use “Spybot Search and Destroy” (also free, donations accepted) to deal with other “malware” and for additional protection. Finally, he may also use “Ad-aware” (free for personal home use) to catch “malware” that Spybot does not.

Justin said that when he does locate a virus, he does not delete it, but puts it in quarantine. Many viruses

are triggered by the delete function. Another caveat he offered is to be very careful about downloading software from the Internet. “Google” the company to assure that it meets high standards of virus protection.

For backup of his “tools”, Justin uses the Corsair Flash Survivor flash drive. It is waterproof, virtually indestructible, holds 64 GB and is about the size of a cigar.

Justin, many thanks for telling us about the NNTC and its unique contribution to the education system in the Northern Neck area!

Anne Moss and Ed.

June 19 Meeting Notes

MEMBERS ATTENDING: 21.

TREASURER’S REPORT:
102 active members.

SIG REPORTS:

PHOTO: **Jim Sapione** invited all who are interested to attend. The group **meets the first Tuesday of the month at 09:30 a.m.** at the

Lancaster County Library in Kilmarnock. Attendees are encouraged to bring their own laptops to follow along while the featured presenter is demonstrating techniques. Members are also encouraged to bring in samples of their current work, or photos prepared using the techniques demonstrated at the previous meeting.

GENEALOGY: **Ann Thompson** announced the **next meeting is Thursday July 8 at 01:00 p.m.** in the Game Room at Rappahannock Westminster-Canterbury. She will present information she gleaned at the Genealogical Society conference.

WEB SITE: **Betty Lehman** asked to have an outstanding photo of the month from the PhotoSIG sent to her for placement on the website.

Q AND A TIME: **Jim Sapione** has several unused Canon I9900 printer cartridges to give away. If you can use them, contact Jim at (804) 462-5831 or by e-mail at Bird@kaballero.com.

In response to a query about repair manuals for laptops, several members commented on Computer Recycling of Virginia, Inc. (515 N. Church Lane) across from Lowery’s in Tappahannock. Not only do they recycle, but members indicated that they also do computer repairs and are quite competent.

SPEAKER: **Justin Hart** of the Northern Neck Technical Center discussed the Center and its curriculum. In addition, he described his choices of various types of software and protective techniques to avoid contamination with viruses.

RAFFLE WINNERS: **Anne Moss** - mini flash drive set; **Chris Christensen** - a traveler laptop desk; and **Susan Barrick** - a pack of DVD’s and assorted accessories.

Anne Moss, Secretary

Membership Report - June 2010

Welcome - None

RENEW July 2010 - Norm Farley, John R. Hess, Bev Thompson

RENEW June 2010 - Carolyn Bridgers, Alan Christensen, Chris Christensen, Richard Davis David Herndon, Ann Thompson, Steve Zukor

Membership dues are \$20 annually. Please send to:
George Cadmus, Treasurer, NNCUG, 150 Pine Drive,
White Stone VA 22578

The Computer Link

Northern Neck
Computer
Users' Group
150 Pine Drive
White Stone, VA 22578

NNCUG Meeting Dates

NNCUG GENERAL MEETING
Third Saturday, 10:00 a.m.

Rappahannock Westminster-Canterbury Meeting Room

BEGINNERS SIG

*Meets three times a year. Those interested, contact
B.J. McMillan at 580-8666*

GENEALOGY SIG

*Meets bi-monthly, 2nd Thursday, 1:00 p.m.—RW-C
Contact Ann Thompson at athompson@kaballero.com
to get on the mail list for announcements.*

PHOTOSHOP SIG

*First Tuesday, every month, 9:30 a.m.
Lancaster Community Library, Kilmarnock
For more information, Call Jim Sapione, 804-462-5831
or message Bird@kaballero.com*

For a photo treat visit
www.rapptapp.homestead.com

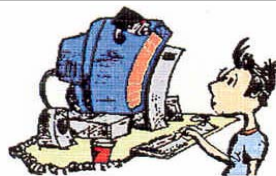


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SUE FOULKES
Managing Partner

74-B South Main St.
Kilmarnock, VA 22482
sfoulkes@ggcweb.com

local: 804-435-6909
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Computer Help available by appointment. Call Betty Lehman 435-2011 or B.J. McMillan 580-8666

Coming Attractions

*Membership - July 17th, 10:00 am - Robert Headley
Genealogy - July 8th, 1:00 pm - Ann Thompson
Photo SIG - July 6th, 09:30 am - Kilmarnock Library*