

Technology Corner

By: George Champine

Greeting to everyone. We plan to publish this column in each issue dealing with technology issues of interest to Active Adults. Some of the topics are ones we feel are of interest. Others will be in answer to questions provided by readers. Modern technology has opened wonderful opportunities of special interest to active adults in the areas of entertainment, communications, finance, and education. The Internet, arguably the greatest advance in dissemination of information since the invention of the printing press, enables access to most of the knowledge of the world with a few keystrokes through the use of search engines such as google (www.google.com) and yahoo (www.yahoo.com). You can find almost anyone such as a long-lost relative or classmate through services such as www.switchboard.com, or if you have a phone number and need the name just put the phone number in google and you will get the name back. For amusement, try typing your name into a search engine.

We address two technology issues in this area in this issue: Internet access, and protection against worms and viruses.

Internet access

To use the Internet, you need to get access through an Internet Service Provider (ISP). There are three technologies available to get Internet access from the Quail Run area:

- Dial-up: the slowest and least expensive
- DSL (Digital Subscriber Link): medium speed and cost (not available here)
- Cable access: highest speed and highest cost.

Dial-up cost ranges from free from an ISP such as Juno, NetZero, and DotNow (but you will get a lot of ads – no free lunch) to about \$10 a month for ten hours of access to \$20-\$25 per month for unlimited access time. There are many good vendors, such as AOL, MSN, Earthlink, etc. An advantage of dial-up is that you can get access from anywhere there is a phone. Thus, when you are traveling you can still get access to your e-mail. However, moving large files can be very slow

Cable access is the highest speed and is available here from Comcast. The cost is \$42 per month for unlimited use if you also subscribe to cable TV from Comcast. To get access you need a cable modem to connect to your computer. You can rent it from Comcast for \$3 per month or you can get it free from Best Buy or Circuit City if you sign up for cable access through them. I prefer cable access because I do a great deal of Internet surfing and often send large files such as pictures through e-mail.

Protection against worms and viruses

Worms and viruses are ways that hackers use to disrupt information on your computer. To protect against worms you need to install firewall software. To protect against viruses

you need to install anti-virus software. You should install both the firewall and anti-virus software on your system BEFORE using Internet access. Otherwise, your computer has a good chance of being hacked the first time you use the Internet. Leading vendors in this area are Symantec/Norton and McAfee. Symantec/Norton Internet Security software includes both a firewall and anti-virus component. Because there are about 300 new viruses introduced each month, both Symantec/Norton and McAfee offer a subscription service that provides periodic updates to your system over the Internet to guard against new viruses as they are identified. Some cable modems come with a firewall included in the package. Black Ice is also a good firewall at a lower price, and ZoneAlarm (www.ZoneAlarm.com) is a free firewall that has received good reviews

A virus comes as an attachment in e-mail. It causes no trouble until it is opened. In most cases the anti-virus software will intercept it. However, it is possible that occasionally one will get through. Be VERY careful about opening an attachment to an e-mail message that looks suspicious: you may be introducing a virus into your system, which can wipe out your system. If a virus infects the system of one of your acquaintances, it can send e-mail containing a virus to all addresses that it finds on the system. Thus, you may get e-mail containing a virus from someone that you know. I make it a practice not to open an attachment unless there is an e-mail message with it that is relevant to me. If I am uncertain, I ask the sender to verify that they sent the message and not a virus infecting their system.

Of course the above has only touched on the surface of these topics. Please feel free to contact me for further questions if interested. I am at 978-567-5982 or e-mail at george.champine@computer.org

Looking for current and former employees of Digital/Compaq/HP

We are putting together a list of current and former employees of Digital/Compaq/HP. At some point we may get together to share experiences, fellow workers we have known, and “war stories” about the company. If you are interested in being added to the list, contact George Champine. Incidentally, there is a new book out about Digital entitled “DEC is Dead: Long Live DEC”. It is by Ed Schein of MIT and describes the lasting contribution that Digital made to the world of computer technology. Another excellent book about Digital is “The Ultimate Entrepreneur” by Rifkin and Harrar.