

Bits and Bytes

Arkansas' Premier Computer Club

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Don Hood, President

Bella Vista Computer Club - John Ruehle Center

Highlands Crossing Center, 1801 Forest Hills Blvd, Suite 120 Bella Vista, AR 72715-3016

Web site: www.bvcompclub.org

E-mail: jrc@bvcc.arcoxml.com

Let's talk about your computer. You say you're not that computer savvy and you don't know much about your computer. Well, you might seriously consider becoming savvy. As has been stated before, "You don't know what you don't know". With respect to your computer, what you don't know can be detrimental to your computer and eventually end up costing you a considerable amount of money. So how do you find out what you don't know? Buy a good computer book. Just remember, you are not a dummie. Find a knowledgeable computer user and ask if they would be willing to answer questions and possibly sit down and work with you from time to time. Take advantage of the services offered by your computer club. There is an Open House Help Clinic from 10 a.m. to 1 p.m. on the first Saturday and third Wednesday of every month. Come to the monthly membership meeting to obtain a copy of the Bits and Bytes and watch the presentation. Take a look at the past presentations that are posted in the Meeting Presentations section of the Club's web site. Review the questions and answers posted in the Frequently Asked Questions section and find someone you can call or e-mail in the Help Sources section of the site. You can always send a question to the Club's e-mail address. Then there are the January and July club meetings where you can submit questions to a panel of experts. Since that will be occurring next month, start writing down your questions. Remember, the more information you provide about your question or problem the better the chances of receiving a detailed answer. Then there are the computer classes that are scheduled each month. So, the information is available but it's up to you to make a commitment to take advantage of it and become an informed computer user. You know if computer users had the same attitude about their automobile as they do about their computer, the streets would be clogged with vacant cars. Some would not run because they're out of gas. Some could not be driven because the owner didn't replace the tires before they failed. Others would have steam coming from under the hood because the engine was out of water. Some would have ruined engines because the proper oil level was not maintained. Then there would probably be some that couldn't be driven at night because the headlights were burned out. If you think that's not a realistic comparison, consider this. A computer user is afraid to do anything because they're afraid they will break something. That's like not putting oil in the engine because you're not sure where the oil goes. Eventually the engine will run out of oil and be ruined. Not doing anything to your computer because you're not sure what to do can have the same result. So can not knowing anything about your computer, the programs on your computer, or what you need to do to maintain your computer. Consider the following examples.

The computer does not have an antivirus program installed. The owner thinks that a spyware detection and removal program and a registry cleaning program will protect the compute from viruses.

The owner has numerous programs on the computer but doesn't know what they are for and doesn't use them. That's not critical unless some of those programs are malicious and can harm the computer. You should know what every program that's installed on your computer is for and if there are some you don't use, uninstall them.

Folks that think an antivirus program will protect against spyware and that spyware detection and removal programs will protect against viruses.

A computer that was virtually unusable because the owner was still using the trial version of the antivirus program that was installed on the computer when purchased and had never downloaded and installed any of the updates from Microsoft.

The computer had a spyware detection and removal program installed but it had not been updated or run in six months.

Windows update was set to automatically download and install updates but the program was not configured properly. There were other updates that should have been installed on the computer. The owner didn't know how to manually check for updates.

The owner ran a spyware detection and removal program but didn't remove what the program found because they weren't sure it was safe to do that.

The computer had several spyware detection and removal programs installed that have an active monitoring feature and the active monitoring feature on all the programs was running.

The owner thought that pressing the power button on their laptop was to proper way to turn off the computer. Actually, pressing the power button put the computer to sleep.

The My Documents and My Computer (XP) icons or the personal file folder and Computer (Vista) icons were not being displayed on the desktop.

The quick launch taskbar was not turned on.

The menu bar was not visible because it had never been turned on.

The computer had an icon on the desktop labeled "Shortcut to the Internet" that was located right next to the icon for Internet Explorer.

The owner's Internet provider was Cox and they were logging on to the Cox web site to read their e-mail because they didn't know they could use Outlook Express (XP) or Windows Mail (Vista).

Folks using Outlook Express (XP) or Windows Mail (Vista) that had the preview pane turned on.

Then there was the person who said they had been using the computer for twelve years and didn't know how to download and install a program on the computer. Using a computer in the business environment doesn't count when asked, "How long have you been using a computer?".

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Having a problem with your computer? Having a problem doing something on the computer? Stop by one of the Open House Help Clinics we have at the John Ruehle Center and see if we can solve your problem. These clinics are from 10 a.m. to 1 p.m. on the first Saturday and the third Wednesday of the month. The clinics are open to the public so you can invite a friend or neighbor. There has been a significant increase in the number of people taking advantage of this service. If everyone arrives during the first hour there will probably be a wait. We now have three stations for members and one for nonmembers.