

Bits and Bytes

Arkansas' Premier Computer Club

July 2009

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Bella Vista Computer Club - John Ruehle Center

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Have you ever considered setting up a feed? No, I'm not talking about a big table full of food for all your friends and neighbors. I'm talking about setting up a Really Simple Syndication (RSS) on your computer. It's real easy to do and provides you with up to the minute news and information with just three or four clicks. Let's say you like to watch CNN and MSNBC. You can create a RSS feed for these organizations and have access to the breaking stories as they are released or updated. Start by going to your favorite news or financial web site. If the site has a RSS feed option, one of the icons on the Internet Explorer toolbar will turn from grey to orange. The icon is a square with a dot and two curved lines (referred to as the radio-wave icon). Click the icon and you'll go from the web site home page to the Feed page for the site. To subscribe to the feed, click the link, "Subscribe to this feed", located in the box at the top of the page. In the little, "Subscribe to this Feed" box, give the Feed the name that you prefer. Next, tell Internet Explorer where to store the Feed. Unless you're going to set up a lot of Feeds and want to store them by category, just place the link in the Feed folder and click the Subscribe button. Now that you've subscribed to a Feed, what do you do? Begin by starting Internet Explorer. Click the Favorites button, click the Feeds tab, and click on the entry for the Feed you want to view. On the Feed page, click the headline for the stories you want to read. When you left click a headline, the story appears in the same window. To get back to the Feed page, click the Back button. You might find it easier to click the link with the mouse wheel. That will open the story on a tab in a new window. This will be especially helpful if you start clicking links in the story to go to other web sites. To get back to the Feed page, close the tab you're on or click the tab for the Feed page. By opening web pages on tabs you have the option to use the "Quick Tabs" button or the "Tab List" button to switch between the web pages you have opened on a tabs.

magicJack revisited. How much are you paying each month for local and long distance telephone service? How much do you pay, per minute, for a long distance call to someone in the US or Canada? If you make international calls, what is the per-minute charge? If the answer to these questions is, "Too much", you might want to consider magicJack. This device is about the size of a match box and plugs in to any USB port on your computer. Plug any standard telephone, including wireless, into the device. Start your computer, double-click the icon on the desktop and in about two minutes magicJack is ready to use. Now, just pick up the phone and dial the area code and number. Local and long distance call to anyone in the US or Canada will cost you

\$19.95 per year - yes, that's per year. If you sign up for five years of service the total cost is \$59.95 (that's \$11.99 per year). International calls to many countries is about 2¢ per minute. To make international calls, you make a deposit to your account in increments of \$5.00 or \$10.00. At 2¢ per minute, \$10.00 lasts for a long time. The following services are included at no extra charge; directory assistance, voice mail, call waiting, three way calling, call forwarding, and 911 emergency service. Here's a unique feature of the program. If you take magicJack overseas you can call the US, Canada, or another magicJack user for free. When you access the program for the first time you need to provide your physical location (street address and zip code). This information will be used by the 911 responders. You will also need to select a personal telephone number. magicJack now has local numbers for Bentonville. By selecting one of these numbers, anyone in the Bella Vista, Bentonville, and Rogers area, can call you by dialing your magicJack number (no area code requires). Anyone calling from outside the local area would make the normal long distance call (1+area code+telephone number). When the phone that's connected to magicJack rings, pick it up and start talking. The quality of the calls are, for the most part, as good as you would get on a long distance service with AT&T or your cell phone. In order to use magicJack you need a computer running Windows XP or Windows Vista, a corded or cordless phone (you plug the cordless phone base into magicJack), and high-speed Internet service (cable or DSL). The initial cost is \$39.95 plus about \$6.95 shipping and handling. Included in that cost is your first year of calling to the US and Canada. What's the downside to this program? The computer has to be on to send and receive calls. If your computer dies, you don't have phone service unless you have two computers (you can plug magicJack into any computer as long as it meets the requirements listed above). You can purchase magicJack at Radio Shack and Best Buy. The web address is www.magicjack.com.

Microsoft has announced the release date and pricing for Windows 7. The program will be available on October 22. If you have to purchase a new computer between now and the end of January 2010 and it has Windows Vista Home Premium, Business, or Ultimate installed, contact the computer manufacturer for a free upgrade to Windows 7. The upgrade version of Windows 7 Home Premium will cost \$120, \$200 for the full version. If you want to pre-order the upgrade version of Windows 7 Home Premium, you can do so at the Microsoft web site for \$50 plus shipping and tax (\$58.83). This is a limited time offer and the supply is limited.

We have an election coming up in August. If you're interested in becoming personally involved in your club by running for President, Vice President, Secretary, Treasurer, or a two year Board position, call Don Schatz at 855-0710.

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.