

Bits & Bytes

Arkansas' Premier Computer Club



December 2023

The Bella Vista Computer Club - John Ruehle Center

Highlands Crossing Center, 1801 Forest Hills Blvd Suite 208 (lower level), Bella Vista, AR 72715

Website: <http://BVComputerClub.org>

Email: editor@bvcomputerclub.org

MEETINGS

Board Meeting: December 11, 6pm, in John Ruehle Training Center, Highlands Crossing Center.

General Meeting: December 11, 7pm.
Program: "Making Custom Greeting Cards", presented by Joel Ewing.

We will meet in-person in Room 1001 on the lower level of The Highlands Crossing Center, 1801 Forest Hills Blvd, Bella Vista, or you may attend the meeting on-line via Zoom. Zoom access information is published on our website. Visitors or Guests are welcome.

Consider attending by Zoom if you are unable to attend in-person.

HELP CLINICS

December 2, 9am - noon at John Ruehle center

December 20, 9am - noon at John Ruehle center

Members may request Remote Help on our website at <https://bvcomputerclub.org> at menu path Member Benefits ► Remote Help .

Genealogy SIG: No meeting in December

MEMBERSHIP

Single membership is \$30; \$15 for each additional family member in the same household.

Join on our website at <https://bvcomputerclub.org> at menu path Get Involved ► Join/Renew, by mailing an application (from the web site) with check, or complete an application and pay in person at any meeting.

CLASSES

(At BVCC Training Center)

No classes currently scheduled for December.

Advance sign up required for each listed class: For reservations: email to edu@bvcomputerclub.org, or sign up at the General Meeting. Classes are **free to Computer Club members.**

Check the monthly calendar and announcements for any last minute schedule changes at <https://bvcomputerclub.org> .

NEW OR RETURNING BVCC MEMBERS

We are pleased to welcome the following new members or members returning as BVCC members after an absence:

Gail Meyer

Ron Evans

SURVEY QUESTIONS FOR OUR MEMBERSHIP

Within my memory, BVCC General Meetings have always been held at 7pm on a 2nd Monday. I was a little surprised from a cursory view of our historical minutes that it appears that the General Meetings have been held at 7pm on a Monday since the organization was incorporated in 1995; although, sometimes not on the 2nd Monday of the month. This is clearly a well-established BVCC custom, even though it is not fixed by our By Laws or Operating Rules. Basically, we meet when we do because that's when we have always met.

At this time of the year, when sunset in Bella Vista can occur as early as 5:02pm, one is more likely to hear comments that it would be easier to attend a General Meeting if it didn't require driving at night. The obvious question is whether we could attract a larger percentage of our membership to General Meetings if we met at a different time. It is currently unusual to have as many as 20% of our members at a General Meeting; although, this could also reflect that many join BVCC for our other benefits and not for the General Meetings.

In any event, it is probably worth asking our members whether there is any consensus for a daylight hours General Meeting, while keeping in mind that a time change might also be less convenient for those with busy schedules. To stay out of time periods typically used for BVCC classes and Help Clinics and be during daylight hours year round, something in the 3pm to 5pm range on a Monday thru Saturday would seem the best bet for an alternative time.

An email was sent to our active members asking for responses to the following:

- (1) Would you be more likely or less likely to attend a General Meeting if it were held in the afternoon to avoid driving at night?
- (2) If the General Meeting were shifted to the afternoon, would you be more likely to attend a weekday meeting or a meeting on Saturday?
- (3) If the answer to (2) is a weekday, are there any specific days of the week that an afternoon meeting would be impossible for you?
- (4) Do you currently attend the BVCC General Meetings regularly (Y |N)?
- (5) Any other comments or thoughts about whether a meeting time change is desirable:

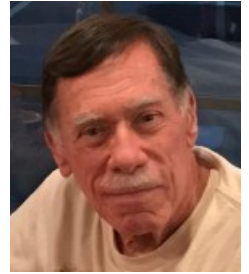
Responses should be sent to president@bvcomputerclub.org.

If there is a consensus among a significant percentage of our members for a change, we will check to see if our meeting room would be available at a different time.

Joel Ewing, BVCC President

FIXING A NASTY COMPUTER HACK

David Kretchmar, Hardware Technician
Sun City Summerlin Computer Club
<https://www.scsccl.com>
dkretch (at) gmail.com



I recently completed a repair on a club member's computer after he allowed a "helpful" technical representative, probably from the other side of the world, to remotely access his computer. Unfortunately, the victim in this case apparently failed to read or heed my article in the November 2021 *Gigabyte Gazette* (https://www.scsccl.com/Gigabyte/gg_2021-11Nov.pdf) warning that these types of scams were becoming increasingly prevalent.

The "bait" in this instance was an official-looking email, supposedly from Cox, stating that the victim had been substantially overcharged on his Cox bill and he was due a refund of \$400. The victim telephoned the scammer using the phone number in the email. Next, he went online and downloaded and installed remote access software at her instruction. He then allowed the purported technical representative to initiate a remote access session and log into his system. The victim began to feel uneasy when he saw that things were being done on his computer that had nothing to do with Cox. He finally became alarmed and hung up on the scammer when she asked for his bank account information "to process his refund."



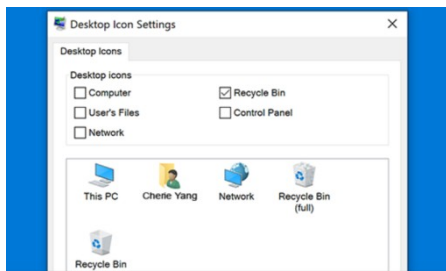
Unfortunately, this victim did not immediately shut off his computer, so the scammer could continue to mess with his system remotely, I suppose as a departing coup de grace for a failed scam. The victim could no longer access his computer, which displayed the Windows 11 "Gray screen of death" right after he entered his PIN during login. Microsoft has finally replaced its famous "Blue screen of death," which provided a bit of mostly useless information, with a "Gray screen of death," which provides no information.

The victim, who runs an online business, called me in a panic. This was especially interesting to me since I have had minimal experience working with pooched Windows 11 machines. I was curious to see if there was a substantial difference in addressing issues in Windows 11 versus Windows 10 (there was not, at least for this user's issue).

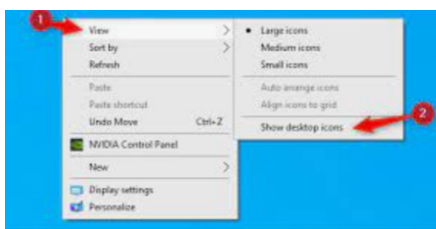
I researched the gray screen issue online and did not find much helpful information. Many writers suggested the problem was bad video drivers or a bad hardware connection. I knew there was no physical issue since the miscreant obviously never had physically assessed the victim's computer. And I doubted the graphics card drivers were the problem since messing with them would cause an immediate catastrophic system failure, even if it could be done remotely on the fly. After providing answers that did not solve the issue, many sites did offer to sell me their software, which they said would fix the problem. No thanks.

I finally decided to approach the Windows 11 system the way I would Windows 10. Getting past the gray screen of death was straightforward; I booted into Safe mode and repaired the Windows startup. When I finally got into the victim's computer, I removed the remote access software. Then I did a system refresh, keeping all of his original data files and programs but replacing all of the system files. I wanted to assure the club member that there were no nasty surprises on his system due to his encounter with the scammer.

Yet when I could finally boot to the victim's desktop, I saw something very strange. The victim's desktop icons, files, and folders had disappeared. I considered that the scammer could have put the victim's computer in tablet mode, which messes up the desktop. I learned that Windows 11 does not have a dedicated tablet mode. Again, an online search for the problem was mostly useless. Most writers suggested going to Personalize themes, Icons and checking the icons I wanted to appear on the desktop. This did not address the issue of nothing showing on the desktop, files, folders, and icons. Naturally, many of those offering useless advice online had a software package to sell, which they assured would fix any problems. Again, no thanks.



I found an article that suggested I right-click on the desktop, left-click on View (#1), then make sure "Show desktop icons" was checked (#2). Yes, that sneaky scammer had hidden everything on the victim's desktop with three clicks of her mouse. However, when I left mouse clicked on "Show desktop icons," the victim's desktop appeared normally. This was the first time I had seen a scammer throw two problems onto a victim's computer.



When contacted, a scammer will often state that to help you, they must remotely access your system. They will try to get you to download remote access software that will give the scammer access to your computer. Just say NO! There are few legitimate reasons someone needs to access your computer to provide assistance.

I mentally divide computer hacks/scams into two categories: tarantulas and scorpions. Tarantulas are big and scary looking, yet their bite is virtually harmless to humans. The most dangerous scorpions are the tiny ones you are likely not to see until they have stung you, and they can send you to the emergency room or at least to bed for a day or two. The unfortunate victim in this story ran into a scorpion that stung him twice. The sting would have been even worse had he allowed them access to his bank account.