

## HAPPY HOLIDAY



LCACE Meeting Dates 2005- 2006  
14 January - Round Table  
11 February - Shareware/Freeware  
04 March - Anti-Virus Software

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**Lake County Area Computer Enthusiasts**  
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### **Membership**

Membership for LCACE is open to all individuals and families interested in personal computing. Annual dues are \$20.00 per individual/family. Associate membership is only \$10.00 (out of state, unable to attend meetings). Membership includes a one year subscription to the L.C.A.C.E. News Journal and access to all club libraries and functions. Applications for membership may be obtained at the monthly meeting, by request on the club Hotline, and are now available on our WEB site at - <http://www.lcace.org>.

### **Meetings**

LCACE meetings are usually held on the second Saturday of each month at the Grayslake Area Public Library, 100 Library Lane, Grayslake, Illinois. The meeting room opens at noon and the formal meeting begins at 12:30 p.m. All meetings are open to the public. Bring a friend!

### **Advertising**

Ad rates per issue: Full page - \$25, Half page - \$15, Quarter page - \$10, Business Card - \$5. Discounts are available on advance purchase of multiple issues. Please send camera-ready copy and payment to the club address by the 21st of the month preceding publication. For more information on ad pricing, please call our Hotline. Ads are FREE to all paid members.

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**Dwight "J.J." Johnson**  
**President**  
**Lake County Area**  
**Computer Enthusiasts**

# President's Notes

**H**ey, gang, I am sorry I was unable to attend the November meeting, but I have heard it went well. I am going to have to corner Jim for maybe a one-on-one presentation, since I was the one who initially asked for the Ghost presentation. I am still not sure just how this program would benefit me, although, I know I need to backup my data, sooner, and not later.

Well, as Linda would say, "Just a few more shopping days until Christmas" that is when she is referring to the Holiday Party. The holiday committees informs me we have as many as ninety door prizes, so everyone should have a chance to win. I hope the committee has purchased an additional roll of tickets just for Linda so we do not run out.

Linda informs me all the raffle tickets have been distributed, therefore, I hope there will be some tickets turned in for those who have not gotten theirs yet. So let us hope that you have that winning ticket already. Also, be reminded that the club member who sells the winning raffle ticket and the most raffle tickets will receive a special reward. Mike says there will be a SPECIAL give-a-way prize this year. He will not tell me what it is, so you will have to be there to see and to win.

Jim is sending out a postcard reminder to all members and former members within the area to remind everyone of the time and date. So do not forget this is a friend and family event, therefore, bring your friends and family. The more the merrier.

In the past, the Holiday Party has been the kick off to a great season of good food, and fun. I do not know how many times Robin has asked me about the ham, but she can be assured that I will have it there, hot and ready to serve. My plans are to pick up ice cream the night before the party with everyone's favorites of Pralines and Crème, Very Berry Strawberry, and Butter Pecan. Do not fret, Terri, I will not forget the Winter White Chocolate. I'm looking forward to Lew's fruit bowl delight and his delicious salad. I also hear that Anna is bringing her famous Swedish meatballs. That's just some of the goodies I am looking forward to eating at the party, and I know there will be much more. Do not forget to THINK HEALTHY.

The Party starts at 11:00 a.m. and Linda should be there well before that time for those who want to show up early and help us set up. If you need directions, more information can be found on the club web site.

That is all I have for now, so I hope to see all of you at the Holiday Party!

J.J. Johnson

## Places4Aces

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### My Favorite Sites

By Howard Shaughnessy

Being as the end is coming (of 2005) these are websites I visit most days. Most days I learn something of interest. I suspect you might as well.

<http://thehumorlist.com> is my source of jokes. A daily site with both new & old guffaws that you'll pass along to your online friends. High class as it is from the Univ. of GA.

Get the news from the New York Times. They, as well as other papers, will put their headline stories on your home page. I prefer the online editions. Try NYTimes.com

Digital photos are everywhere. [www.flickr.com/](http://www.flickr.com/) has the best from photo bugs all around the world. You can also upload your photos as well.

No day goes past without clicking on Chicagoist.com. This local blogger is part of the world-wide network of 'ist' blogs, You can tap into all the local papers, radio & TV stations, the photobloggers & more. Click on side bar's [www.rachelleb.com](http://www.rachelleb.com) for her great photographs. Oh yes, my OzWiz blog is part of Chicago Bloggers at that site.

The best of all encyclopedias is WIKIPE-

DIA.org. It's interactive as well.

Bob Rankin's [www.Tourbus.com](http://www.Tourbus.com) is one special site. Check out his CDRoms & Crest toothpaste way to revive damaged discs.

Computer Tips Weekly from [Steve@worldstart.com](mailto:Steve@worldstart.com) is full of tips. I just learned how to get a cent sign into my Word - ALT key + 155. It really is a daily site but I prefer it as a weekly.

Marylaine Block's <http://marylaine.com> gets you Neat New Stuff. She's a librarian with material from A to Z. No shhing here.

"It's not news, it's FARK.com. Daily weird, funny, unusual happenings.

## The Programs for the next months are:

3 Dec - Holiday Party

14 Jan - Ask the Gurus

11 Feb -Freeware/Shareware

4 Mar - Anti-virus

1 Apr - Build your own PC

13 May - DSL

10 Jun - Camera/Photo

## Talking Tech April 13, 2004

### Free software just may be spying on you!



Donna Johnson Edwards

2004 It was a business trip just like any other, a week at the client's site and then back home on Friday evening. Just after touchdown, we were given the all clear to power on our cell phones. I turned on both of mine and within a minute heard the "you've got mail" ring tone. I like the fact that we can use our phones now before the plane door is opened. It allows one the opportunity to pick up messages while seated comfortably with absolutely no place to go!

The message was from a good friend. She sounded panicked, frantic and frankly more than a little ticked. I had to listen to the message twice, she was so hysterical. I did however, successfully pick up on the keyword clues "porn" and "modem dialer."

It seems that those of us who are considered "computer people" are expected to take calls day and night from friends and family to troubleshoot software, hardware and DFU errors. Most of the time, we really don't mind, and often can answer the question very quickly. In this case, it didn't turn out to be a quick solution.

I phoned her back from the plane to hear the rest of her story. It seems that one of her three boys (or husband) had used her computer while she was away on business and now nothing was working right. She described to me that when she connected to the Internet, a buxom blonde filled her monitor screen and beckoned her to make a return visit to the blonde's website. Ouch! Not only that, her modem would disconnect and then

reconnect. I told her that quite likely someone had visited adult websites and she may have a virus.

Needless to say, this wasn't going to be a simple telephone support call, I needed to touch her PC. So I made arrangements to visit her home the following day. When I arrived, it was eerily quiet in her house. Normally the boys are watching sports on TV or playing video games, but not today. They were seated at the dining room table with school books and papers in front of them, sheepish looks on their sad faces. She'd obviously let them have it, either they were all in on it together, or nobody was fessing-up to the dastardly deed.

I asked her to demonstrate the symptoms. Sure enough, I was a witness to the blonde's provocative invitation. It was painfully apparent when I visited the history file and looked at the temporary Internet files that someone had spent hours upon hours visiting adult sites. If one tried to steer away from the smut, dozens of browser windows opened each and every one offering salacious content.

There were so many anomalies with the PC; I wasn't sure where to begin, not only was there a computer program taking over her modem dialer, but it also took over her browser and appeared to be gobbling up all of her CPU processing power, basically leaving the PC crippled.

I looked through "Add and Remove Programs" for something that might seem abnormal. I saw nothing unusual. I tried to terminate the programs with task manager to no avail. I deleted her dial-up configurations, but still the mystery dialer reappeared. I began to feel frustrated and helpless.

Remember, PC support is NOT my specialty and the situation with my friend occurred before I started to research ills of the Web. I had immediately thought a virus had infected her PC; little did I know that a virus would have been good news! I suppose one could have called the malicious code a virus, but a more specific label has evolved for this strain of nasty code -- spyware (spying software).

Spyware is defined as a computer program which, serendipitously, gathers information without the knowledge of the user and may port that data back to another entity, or software that asserts control over a computer without the user's knowledge.

Experts estimate that there are some 75,000 known spyware programs and strains of spyware lurking around in cyberspace. The programs are just waiting to hijack your browser (called web-jacking), which occurs simply by visiting a Web site, as was the case with my friend. Spyware can also log your every keystroke (keylogger), or even change your computer settings. Quite possibly the most vile of spyware programs are those that run unceremoniously in the background of your PC reporting your every cybermove to the mother ship (and quite possibly, collecting all of your personal information such as passwords, credit card numbers, social security numbers, etc.).

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A kissing cousin of spyware is adware, software with a sole purpose: to gather information about your Internet browsing habits and report the data back to marketing types. Typically adware is found hiding in peer-to-peer applications and other "free" software (freeware) and is installed along with the known software. Usually, if one were to read the fine print of the EULA (end user license agreement), one would discover that by clicking "I AGREE," one has granted permission for information to be collected and reported back to the sponsoring company. You may even be asked to view advertisements, which seems innocuous enough, but these advertisers hope to learn how to attract you to a web site and to sell you more.

Spyware can also come in the form of hardware, a device as small as your pinky finger can be attached to a keyboard connector. As the user types, the device collects each keystroke (a keylogger) and saves it to a miniaturized hard drive within the device. Naturally, this type of keylogger requires physical access to the PC, as in the case of Larry Lee Ropp, a California man who has been arrested in what U.S. district attorneys call the first case of federal wire tapping involving a hardware keylogger. He installed a device called Key Katcher on a co-worker's PC in hopes of gaining access to a client database with a password collected by the logger. He faces up to five years in jail.

What's crazy about keyloggers is that anyone with access to the Internet can purchase a genuine spying tool. These devices are marketed for collecting evidence about a spouse or teen's Web activities. "No need to wonder what your spouse does while you're away, rest easy with keylogger gizmo, it's always on duty!" And, if you don't happen to have access to your beloved's computer, no problem -- use a fake greeting card e-mail to lure them to a site where logging software will be installed without any fuss (or their knowledge). Don't try this at home

folks; it could be an offense under the Computer Fraud and Abuse Act!

The Center for Democracy and the National Cyber Security Alliance estimate that 90 percent of broadband users are infected with some form of spyware. Other experts estimate that one in every 20 computers with an Internet connection has been infected. This malware has infected millions of computers that, once infected, can also be used to relay spam or even worse, launch an attack on others (including those used to protect our national security), without your knowledge.

In another example of spyware used in a criminal act, a 19-year-old Pennsylvania man used a keystroke logging program to capture online brokerage account numbers and passwords that he used to conduct fraudulent transactions, saving him over 30 grand in trading losses. All in a day's work for a hacker!

In an effort to fight spyware, three U.S. senators have introduced a bill that would attempt to combat this plague by making it a crime to offer this type of spying computer program. The bill, (S.2145) is entitled "Software Principles Yielding Better Levels of Consumer Knowledge Act," or the "SPYBLOCK Act." Cute name!

If passed it will outlaw software that, without explicit user permission, installs itself or other programs, reconfigures settings (or redirects the user), captures personal information or keeps track of visited Websites. And, this is the best part: The software must disclose in clear language each aspect of what the program will do to your computer and with your information and must obtain your consent to do so. In addition, the software must be easily uninstalled through the "add and remove programs" feature (in Windows OS) or other standard methods. Spyware programs are so notoriously difficult to remove from

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infected systems they are often referred to as parasitic.

While legislation is helpful to provide law enforcement with muscle when cyber criminals are nabbed, it isn't likely to make fundamental behavioral changes in hackers. It is up to us to protect ourselves with whatever tools and methods available. As part of the never ending quest to prevent fraudulent, deceptive and unfair business practices, the Federal Trade Commission is conducting a public workshop on April 19 in Washington, D.C., to address the issue of spyware. For more information on spyware, the workshop and safe online practices, visit [www.ftc.gov](http://www.ftc.gov).

There are, fortunately, some software programs designed to fight back against spyware, called anti-spyware (wow, that's a shocker). Many of these programs are available for free, but before you follow an online advertisement for an anti-spyware program beware: It may actually be spyware impersonating anti-spyware. Is your head spinning? SpyBot Search & Destroy is free for download; however, experts say that most anti-spyware programs don't find all spyware and that you really need to run several to detect and prevent the insidious pests.

So, beyond the other safe online tips I've given you in the past, anti-spyware is the only recommendation I can offer. Oh, well, I'll share with you what I recommended to my friend. You see, before it was all said and done, her system was so corrupted by that nasty spyware that we had to back up all of her data, reformat her hard drive and reinstall all of her programs and data. Yep, it took the entire weekend.

I took her to the local computer software store and recommended a personal firewall and anti-virus program -- one with parental controls included. Before we connected to the Internet, we installed the software and created a parental account, leaving the default, restricted account for the kids. We were able to configure the restricted account based on categories of content to be blocked (including the types of websites which had initially corrupted her PC).

We then created a top-secret password to access the parental privileges, only the two of us knew. This way, whoever had been the culprit to the devious cyber-behavior would not be able to repeat his actions. Whether or not she ever shared the parental password with her husband, I don't know, but I suspect that he would never have asked for it to access the types of sites we restricted. By the way, the Web-jacking software had racked up huge phone charges by calling numbers in the Middle East. She was fortunately able to have the charges removed by telephoning her local phone company.

Have you installed a personal firewall for your home PC? Are you running updates to your anti-virus program? Are you installing patches recommended by software publishers to fix known vulnerabilities? Are you doing everything you can to keep yourself, your family and the rest of the world safer online?



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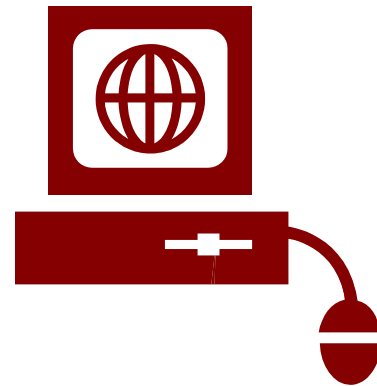
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*Local IT expert Donna J. Edwards has more than 20 years experience implementing and managing IT projects for companies including the Federal Judiciary, IBM/Lotus and Hamilton Beach Proctor-Silex, where she was the senior member of the New Enterprise Technology Team. She works for Tenax Inc., and consults businesses on the implementation of IT compliance programs in the U.S. and Europe. ([www.tenaxcorporation.com](http://www.tenaxcorporation.com)). Read her column every other Tuesday on [Richmond.com](http://Richmond.com).*



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December 3, 2005

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Lake County Extension Site

11:00pm—3:00pm

**This month:**

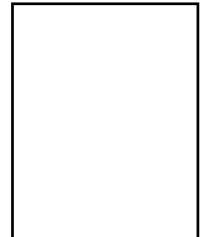
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