

Lake County Area Computer Enthusiast News Journal

November 2015

Members Helping Members

Volume 32—8

Tech Support Scam – Received a Tech Support call lately?

By Phil Sorrentino, Member of The Computer Club, Florida

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This is a very nasty, and possibly costly, scam. It preys on people's concern that their computer might be running slow or might be infected with a virus or some other type of malware. It typically starts with a call from, ostensibly, "Microsoft or Windows or Dell or some other, known Computer Manufacturer's Tech Support" organization. And it can end with the computer owner paying for basically nothing, and giving the scammer his credit card information.

Let's make the point here: Microsoft says "You will never receive a legitimate call from Microsoft or our partners to charge you for computer fixes." So, never respond to a call of this nature; just hang up.

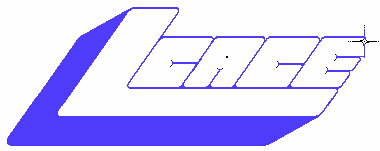
There seem to be many variations on how the scam can get started. Sometimes you will get a call from the "Microsoft or Dell Tech Support Desk" saying that they have noticed that there is a virus, or errors, on your computer. Sometimes it is started with a pop-up window on your screen while you are browsing the internet. The window (in a variety of different wordings) indicates that you have been infected by a virus and you should call a particular number to remove the virus. Calling that number puts you in contact with the scammer's bogus "Tech Support Desk". Once you are on the phone with the "Tech Support" technician, the scam begins.

This scam is very insidious because the victim may never even realize that he has been scammed. There are many variations on the details of the scammer's interaction with the computer owner once the call has been made; but basically the steps are: the scammer demonstrates, to the computer user, that there is a virus on the computer; the scammer offers to remove the virus for a fee (\$199 to up to \$549, which may be negotiable); the computer user accepts the offer to remove the virus and pays for it with a credit card; the scammer charges the credit card for the agreed upon fee; the scammer "fixes" the computer; the scammer demonstrates that the computer now has no viruses; the computer user thanks the "Tech Support technician" for his help.

The scammer uses a variety of ways to show you that there is a problem. One such ploy is; the scammer asks you to open the computer's Windows Event Log Viewer to show that there is problem. The scammer attempts to win your confidence by showing you that your system has "Errors". When you open the Windows Event Log Viewer, you see errors which lends credence to the scammer's statement that you have a virus. (The scammer relies on the fact that whenever you open the Windows Event Log, you will see some type of error or warning listed, which is quite normal.) Another way the scammer shows you that there is a problem is to have you view files that look like problems, but are really just views of a file that

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Logo designed on an Atari Stacy Laptop in 1989 by Dwight Johnson Jr.

Lake County Area Computer Enthusiasts

**LCACE
c/o Group Ambassador**

["J.J." Johnson](#)

Membership

LCACE membership is open to all individuals and families interested in personal computing. Annual dues are \$20.00 per individual/family. 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 Saturdays 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!

Newsletter Submissions

Club members are welcome to submit classified ads, reviews, tips and other articles for publication, to our newsletter editor in Microsoft Word format (.doc). **Publication deadline is the 20th of the month for all ads and articles.** Please do not use tabs or special formatting.

Newsletter 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 15th 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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Phil's Ramblings

In last month's column I described two MVNO alternatives that can reduce smartphone costs for lower-volume users. (For those not familiar with the term, MVNO stands for Mobile Virtual Network Operator. These are the many companies which offer smartphone and basic cell phone service, but do not own their own cell phone towers, servers, etc. Instead they purchase unused capacity from MNOs – Mobile Network Operators like Verizon, AT&T, Sprint and T-Mobile - and re-sell the service to users at whatever price they choose.)

Until recently, MVNOs typically offered a limited selection of older model phones to their customers. As an example, Tracfone did not even begin offering smartphones until about a year ago; prior to that customers were limited to a relatively small number of cell phones. But competition seems to be forcing their hand. An increasing number of MVNOs are now allowing customers to activate their own phone on the MVNO service. In the cases I am familiar with the BYOP phone must be compatible with the MNO network used by the MVNO, and there are restrictions from the MNOs about how long your phone must have been active on an MNO plan before they will release / unlock it for reassignment to an MVNO plan. Still, while somewhat cumbersome, this process is a welcome development which can provide you with the same coverage and speed you were used to as an MNO customer, at a lower cost.

Moreover, an added feature of the BYOP option for at least some MVNO services is the ability to buy a new, never-activated smartphone sold for service on the MNO network used by the MVNO, and then to activate it directly through the MVNO. No waiting, no hassle to get your MNO to release or unlock your phone.

Here's an example, involving a family member. She did not use her Tracfone cell phone much, but wanted to try a smartphone after seeing other family members using them. Tracfone

does offer smartphones but these are generally rather basic Android models limited to 3G service. However, they have recently launched a BYOP option and customers can now activate their own 4G LTE phones on the Tracfone service. So she bought a new mid-range 4G LTE Microsoft Lumia 640 Windows phone offered for AT&T's Go Phone prepaid service and a Tracfone Activation Kit (which contains a Tracfone SIM card and a 90-day airtime card). She then activated her new phone on the AT&T network through Tracfone. The phone works great, the coverage and speed are excellent and her low-usage plan costs her only \$19.99 for 90 days – or roughly \$80 a year. The good news is that when connected to Wi-Fi, her calls and data usage are free; only the calls and data accessed through cellular towers are charged against her plan allocation. She will see how this basic plan works for her; if her usage exceeds her initial plan Tracfone offers various tiers of service, including \$29.99 and \$39.99 for 90 days which will double or triple her call minutes, messages and data while still representing an excellent value.

If you or someone you know wants a modern smartphone but does not need a lot of minutes, messages and data it may be worthwhile to look into the various BYOP plans being offered these days by MVNO service providers.

On a different subject, PC World published in their October 2015 issue the results of their most recent PC browser tests. While they got into a lot of benchmark test results and features of interest to sophisticated users, here is the bottom line:

- a. Overall, they believe that Google Chrome is the best PC browser
- b. A close runner-up, in their eyes, is Opera
- c. Microsoft's new browser, Edge, is still a work in process; however, it is already

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clearly better than Internet Explorer and shows promise of giving Chrome a run for its money as Microsoft continues to fine-tune it.

Those of us using or switching to Windows 10 will automatically get Edge as our built-in browser. (You can install Internet Explorer as a separate option, but I can't see why you would want to.) At this point, I do not know of any option to install Edge on an older version of Windows.

Many of us are already using Chrome; for those who are not and are frustrated by IE or Edge, you should give it a try. Even if you are happy with Chrome, you may want to experiment with Opera to see which you like better. (It is worth noting that Opera also comes in a mobile version, streamlined for use on your smartphone, as does Chrome.)

Speaking of smartphones, Microsoft is still working on their smartphone version of Windows 10. I haven't seen a release date yet, so they must not be completely satisfied with their current test version. However, Windows Phone 8.1 works well on Windows phones and already offers Cortana voice support, in case you want to try a Windows Phone. If you do elect to go this route, be sure the model of phone you buy has been certified by Microsoft as compatible for the eventual Windows 10 phone upgrade.

Finally, speaking of upgrades, you were right Julie! Several months ago Julie Bell shared with me an article she had just seen that claimed Microsoft was downloading many of the components of Windows 10 to upgrade-ready Win 7 & 8.1 PCs through the automatic Windows Update feature even though the owners had not reserved the upgrade and had no intention of upgrading at the present time. The article concluded that Microsoft was assuming that every eligible PC would eventually be upgraded, and by pre-delivering a portion of the software download they could speed up the upgrade process. I was skeptical at the time, but the October PC World repeats the story, claiming that Microsoft has confirmed that they began that soon after the July 29 launch. (It is unclear to me if they have done this to all Windows 10-eligible PCs, or only a portion.) Since there has not been a big hue and cry, this apparently has not affected many

PC owners negatively; however, the PC World article did mention that some PC owner with limited remaining storage space unexpectedly had it further reduced with 6 GB of downloaded Win 10 files – and were not happy.

There is one month left until our Holiday Party. Please keep selling those raffle tickets! And, please get back to Liz Barnett regarding your food contribution for our party. Thanks!

Happy Thanksgiving!

Holiday Party Timetable

**11:00 – 11:45
Set-up**

**12:00 Appetiz-
ers served**

**12:30 Main meal
served**

**1:15 Santa
Clause**

**2:00 Raffle
drawing**

3:30 Clean-up

(Continued from page 1)

are not typically seen by the average user, but are quite normal. Still another technique is to have you run the Configuration Utility. You see “stopped” next to some services or programs and the scammer states that “the fact that those programs or services are stopped indicates that there has been some damage to the computer”. (In truth, it is normal to have some programs or services that are stopped, which may not be obvious to the average computer user.)

So, how can we tell if a scam attempt is in progress? Here are some tip-offs to help you recognize a scam attempt. The first tip-off is that they, the scammer, called you. Note well that, Microsoft, Dell, or any other major company’s tech support organization is not very likely to use their resources to get in touch with users to fix their computers. (The scammer may tell you that they are doing this as a Public Service; don’t buy into it.) If a Tech Support issue arises with a computer, it is incumbent on the user to contact the appropriate Tech Support organization. The user should make the contact with a known phone number!

A very strong indicator that a scam attempt is in progress is that the “Tech Support technician” will ask you to go to a Website and Install a Tool so that they can Remotely Connect to your computer in order to “fix” the problem. This can be a very good, legitimate, way of having a legitimate Tech Support technician fix your problem, if you truly have a problem, and if you called Tech Support. (There are a few free remote control software tools available just for this purpose, such as TeamViewer and GoToMyPC.) However, if they called you and you then give the scammer control over your computer, the scammer now has the ability download malware (viruses, rootkits, Trojan horses, key-loggers, etc.) to your computer. This malware could then lead to future problems.

This may be another tip-off: the Caller ID on the phone says “Microsoft, Tech Support”, or something similar, which gives the appearance of a legitimate number. Remember, he called you. (Spoofing Caller ID information, I’m told, is extremely easy to do, with Voice Over IP technology. Brighthouse or Verizon phones employ VOIP technology.)

A strong indication that a scam may be in progress is that the “Tech Support” technician claims that your computer is “sending out errors”, or is “sending out SPAM”, or is “infected,

with a new virus that is undetected by current virus protection software”, or something similar. This is an attempt to create fear that the computer is infected and to scare you into taking action to correct the situation.

Another tip-off may be that the Tech Support technician has a heavy foreign accent, but he uses a name that sounds like it is of western origin. He will definitely have an explanation for why he does this, but don’t buy into it. (Though, I have talked to a legitimate Tech Support technician, “Bob”, with a heavy foreign accent from Dell who was very helpful, so this may not be the best way to identify a scam.)

I haven’t gotten a call, yet, but I have heard of many recent experiences. If you do get a call from “Microsoft Tech Support”, just hang up. If you are having a problem with your computer, call the appropriate Tech Support organization, using a number you are confident is correct (not one that you get from a pop-up window). With the number of people in Sun City Center receiving these calls, this area code may be a prime target for these scams.

I’d like to thank Computer Club Member and Instructor, Matt Batt, for bringing the severity of this scam to my attention. Matt has seen the results of many of these scams and has heard of many computer users experiences with this scam.



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Please click here ► [amazon.COM](https://www.amazon.com) ◀ to help support our club with your on-line purchases

LCACE Website

**Check out our Website
The Web Master had been
making many improve-
ments and update.**

<http://www.lcace.org>

**L.C.A.C.E.
Club Historian**

History Report, 10/10/15 Meeting
By Les Larkin
LesLarkin@AIM.com

Our October meeting was conducted by Phil Bock.

Our door prize winner was Bobby Jacobs. She won one of the great modern party tools, a selfie stick! William Fosdick won the 50/50 raffle, the club and William each receiving \$15.00. Congratulations to all winners!

Thanks to Linda Busch, DeBorah Sirilla, Liz Barnett, & Phil Bock who provided refreshments.

This month's program was "Ask the Gurus". One of the topics was concerning the ability of our members to use our Google Groups Member account. Some members have noted the inability to log into their account to make adjustments therein. Hopefully, this will be resolved by the next meeting.

Another great meeting, and I hope to see you at our November 14 meeting.

Membership

**Membership Chairperson Report
10-10-15**

Active Members = 55

Attendance 24 = 44%

THANK YOU FOR RENEWING
None

THANK YOU FOR VISITING
None



November

Diane Carlson

Gerald Straw

Dorothy Reynolds Brenner

December

Kenneth Savage

Richard Eisenmann

Linda Rohlfing

Barton Bemdtson

Steve Russell

Linda Busch

The World's Easiest Computer Book

Finally a computer book I can almost understand.

by *Jasmine Blue D'Katz*

Discover how you can improve your life and save money — not only with your computer, but with your cellphone, TV, digital camera, and other common gadgets, too!

This book shows you — in plain English — exactly what you need in order to get your electronics to do what you want! You'll not only learn how to troubleshoot and fix common problems, but also easy and often overlooked maintenance tasks to prevent problems in the first place. You won't find all this in the manual, and it's so much simpler to use!

If you are a novice in working with computers I would highly recommend it. I have gleaned many ideas and tips from this book. Coming from a very "challenged" computer user that is high praise. I have purchased several books to help learn various things and this one actually seems to work for me.

This book as provided me with information on how to stop paying for cable and still being able to watch my favorite show. I've also learned how

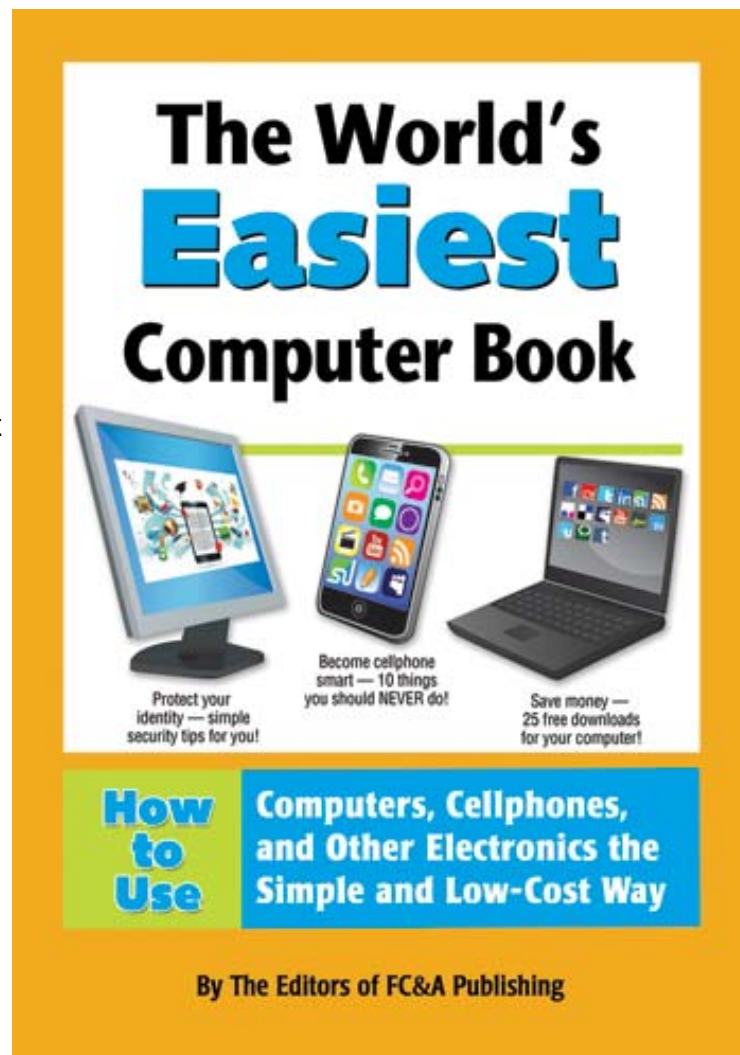
to convert my old video tapes into DVD before they become unplayable. And if you want to get out of your cell phone contract the book tell you things your mobile provider won't tell you.

The book is loaded with information. Even though I'm more than just the everyday novice I found lots of facts about the computer that I didn't know. The book is a perfect book for seniors, especially those who are new to computers and it's nice to have everything you need in one place. The print is fairly large making it easy to read

Better in my opinion than the "For Dummies" books. However, the book was published in 2013 therefore on the downside this book is mainly for Windows 7 users and there is very little about Windows 8 in it.

If you purchase from Amazon, you can

get it for as low as \$11.93 whereby other sites are selling it for as high as \$37.00. If you plan to venture over to Amazon, I would also suggest taking a look at "Is This Thing On?" A Friendly Guide to Everything Digital for Newbies.



Happy **Thanksgiving** Everyone form your
News Journal Editor

Websites and Apps for Seniors

Compiled by Jasmine Blue D’Katz

Internet Buttons

(www.internetbuttons.org)

Internet Buttons is perfect for anyone who is new to the Internet of a little overwhelmed by the number and complexity of websites out there. This handy tool lets you create a personalized page of buttons that take you straight to your favorites sites, like email and search. You can even customize buttons with photos and your own labels. According to the developers, “It removes all the complicated bits of the Internet and makes it easy to keep going back to the places you want to go to.”

Wi-Fi Finder

Instantly find Wi-Fi Internet hot spots all over the world with this handy app. It uses your mobile device’s GPS and network triangulation capabilities to scan and connect you to the spot closest to you. New locations are added daily, so you’ll always have access to the latest data. To download this free app for Android or Apple mobile device visit the JiWire website at www.jewire.com/iphone or go to iTunes or GooglePlay

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Let HelloFax help you go paperless without spending a dime. This online service allows you to send and receive five faxes a month for free, without a fax machine. Create an account with an email address and password and choose the plan that fits your needs and budget. There’s no contract so you can cancel at any time, and there are no setup or cancellation fees. Visit their website for details on their heavier monthly plans and other services.

OnGuardOnline.gov

(www.onguardonline.gov)

Visit this website for the latest news and tips on Internet security, online scams, computer safety, and more. If you are at all hesitant about surfing and shopping online, be sure to go here and find out how to be safe, secure, and responsible using today’s technology.



And the
Winners
are...

50/50 Winner



William Fosdick won \$15.00 9



Amazon will pay our club a small advertising fee if the shopper comes from our website and makes a purchase

Dear family and friends

Lake County Area Computer Enthusiasts is now an Amazon.com affiliate.

Amazon sells books, technology, just about anything you can name. if you plan to shop at Amazon.com, please visit our website www.lcace.org and click on the Amazon link at the top.
Thank you



Lake County Area Computer Enthusiasts

Do you have computer questions or need help with your computer?



Visit Lake County Area Computer Enthusiasts' help desk for one on one help

Open to all

11:15 a.m.-12:15 p.m.
Grayslake Area Public Library
Rooms A-C



L.C.A.C.E.

Phone: 847.623.3815

Web Site: <http://www.lcace.org>

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might see
yourself.

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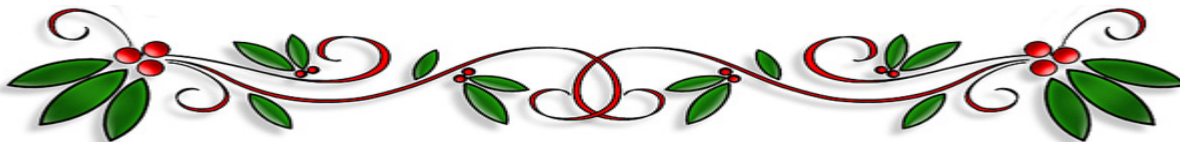
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HOLIDAY RAFFLE 2015

1st Prize:

Acer Laptop Computer

- 15.6" Touchscreen
- Windows 8.1 64-bit
- Intel Core i5 Processor
- 8GB Memory
- 1TB HDD



2nd Prize:

Apple iPad Air 2 16GB Wi-Fi

- 5th Generation Retina Display
- Dual-core A6X chip with quad-core graphics
- 5.0MP iSight camera, 1080p HD video recording
- Up to 10 hours battery life

3rd Prize:

HP OfficeJet Pro All-in-One Printer

- Print, copy, scan, fax, Web
- 2.65" CGD touchscreen
- HP ePrint, Wireless direct printing
- Network ready, WiFi 802.11
- Duplex printing



4th Prize:

1-Year's Membership LCACE *"Members Helping Members"*

Tickets: \$1 each, 6 for \$5, or 25 for \$20

Drawing December 5, 2015

WINNER NEED NOT BE PRESENT

