

## **Consider the Risks of Helping Friends**

By Dick Maybach, Brookdale Computer Users Group, NJ

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If you are known as a computer enthusiast, your less-experienced friends probably come to you for help when they run into problems. However, you should consider the risks before you agree. While you have a lot of computer experience, most of it is probably limited to your own system, which you are careful to maintain and back up regularly. You also are aware of the risks and avoid suspicious Internet sites, are alert to e-mail scams, and have installed protection against malware. This may not be true of the owner of a PC you are asked to repair.

I once agreed to help a friend who was complaining about his laptop being slow. My first clue that I was in over my head was when I saw the missing keys on the keyboard, but by then I was already committed. I did what I could to clean things up, but the slow processor, full disk, and inadequate RAM remained, and my several hours of work produced little improvement. Another experience was more successful. A PC was thoroughly infected with malware when a teen-age son downloaded pirate music. I cloned the disk, mounted it on another PC, and deleted the problem files. The owner used the restoration partition to put the disk back to its condition when the PC was purchased, after which I loaded their files from the sanitized clone disk. This too took several hours.

Your friends may have unrealistic expectations. If the problem appears to be a full disk or inadequate RAM, the money spent on the parts may not result in a dramatic performance improvement. If you suspect malware and recommend they purchase anti-virus software, it may not fix the problem, and may even slow their PC. You've cost them money without fixing the computer to the degree they expected. And once

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### News Journal

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### 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



Hello, everyone! It has finally stopped raining (at least temporarily) and its nice to see the sun again! Maybe spring is finally here.....

As a reminder, it's time to renew your LCACE membership. For those who have already done so, thank you! For those who have not, please see Judy or J.J. at our next LCACE meeting; they will be happy to accommodate you.

DeBorah recently raised some VPN questions to members via our LCACE Google Groups email set-up. David Carlson reported that he is setting up his own personal VPN and hopes to be ready to share his experiences with our members in a couple of months. I also responded, providing links to various VPN information sources. If any of you wish to learn more about VPNs and did not read those group emails, you may wish to look at them for helpful links. If there is enough interest, we will plan to schedule a VPN presentation / discussion at one of our monthly meetings in late summer or early fall. Please let Linda Roling ([programs@lcace.org](mailto:programs@lcace.org)) or me ([president@lcace.org](mailto:president@lcace.org)) know if you would be interested in such a program.

Speaking of programs, our May 11th meeting will feature Les Larkin with an updated review of email providers, choices and related activities. Our June meeting will be on the third Saturday of the month, June 15<sup>th</sup>. The program will be a combination of "show 'n tell" and "ask the Guru". Please plan to join us and bring along any new tech items that you care to share with us, along with tech questions that you would like some answers for. Our annual picnic will be on the second Saturday of July (7/13) at State Bank of the Lakes, Grayslake. More info and sign-up will take place at our May and June meetings.

On the tech front, I'm starting to see more and more reminders that Microsoft is scheduled to stop support for Windows 7 on January 14, 2020 – approximately eight months from now. If you have a computer running Win 7, it will continue to work after that date but you will not receive any further security updates from Microsoft. Thus, the longer you continue to use that computer to connect to the Internet after 1/14/2020, the more at-risk you will be for a malware attack.

You have several options. First, if your computer meets the hardware criteria for Windows 10, you can upgrade your operating system to Win 10. While Microsoft will be happy to sell you a brand-new copy of Win 10, there may still be ways by which you can upgrade at no charge. If this is an option that appeals to you, search the Internet for "free Windows 10 upgrade". Also, although I have not read anything to this effect, I do wonder whether Microsoft may once again offer free upgrades as a goodwill gesture before the Windows 7 cutoff. (After all, there are almost as many people worldwide still running Win 7 as there are people running Win 10.)

Second, you can use this deadline as justification (to yourself, spouse, significant other(s)) to go out and buy a new computer with Windows 10 preinstalled. (This may be the default option if your current PC will not run Windows 10.) However, as you consider this choice keep in mind that Wi-Fi 6 (or 802.11ax) is scheduled to be released in 2019. If your present computer is new, it may have 802.11ac connectivity built-in; older computers are more likely to have 802.11n or even 802.11b connectivity. As you might surmise, each version allows faster Wi-Fi connectivity than the previous one. So, in a perfect world, you should wait until PCs with the newest Wi-Fi 6 capability built-in hit the market before you buy a new PC. Otherwise, you would have to purchase a separate Wi-Fi 6

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adapter to take advantage of the increased connection speeds associated with the new Wi-Fi version.

Third, you could use this event as the catalyst to finally cut the Microsoft cord, and switch to an Apple or Chromecast computer. This would require learning a new operating system and would still pose the Wi-Fi 6 issue that I mentioned above. But, if this is something you have been fantasizing about, it is worth thinking through before you go out and buy another Windows PC.

In any event, the good news is that we have 8 months in which to stay abreast of the latest Win 7 news and think through what we will do to ensure we still have safe, efficient connectivity to the Internet after 1/14/2020.

### **Phil**

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you've mucked about with their PC, they may suspect that any subsequent troubles are your fault.

Finally, because you are working in an unfamiliar environment, you will probably be spending many hours, even if you aren't successful. Repairing someone else's PC is usually a lose-lose situation. If you fail, you lose a friend, and if you succeed you'll most likely be asked to do it again. The bad habits and poor maintenance that led the initial problem are still present.

If you decide to help, what are some reasonable actions? Your first concern, of course, is to safeguard the owner's information, which means cloning the entire disk (or disks) to an external drive, which can take several hours. Note that this means you copy every byte, not just the complete files. By doing so you may

be able to recover deleted and damaged files, directories, and partitions, should that be necessary. If the problem PC is dead, you will of course have to remove its hard disk and install it in a good computer to clone it.

Before you try to diagnose the problem, recognize that you may not be able to trust either the hardware or software in the problem PC. My preference is to use a USB memory stick with a bootable diagnostic operating system, such as PartedMagic, which has tools to check hardware, recover files, and test for malware. (See my articles in June, July, and August, 2012 on file recovery, in April 2012 and February 2017 on PartedMagic, in May 2015 on the Trinity Rescue Kit, and in June 2015 on the SystemRescueCD, all available at [www.bcug.com](http://www.bcug.com).) Whichever diagnostic tool you use, become familiar with it on your own PC before trying it on one with which you aren't familiar.

If you save the user's files you should check them for malware before reinstalling them on a repaired or new PC. Take the clone disk home and run a thorough malware check. (Parted Magic, in particular, has the relatively weak ClamAV, which checks only and doesn't repair. If you use Windows, you most likely have far better software on your machine.) Once you have cloned a disk, you can use Parted-Magic's tools, or those of a similar system, to recover damaged files. If, as is likely, the problem PC runs Windows, some user data (for example, Internet favorites and e-mail) may be stored in the system area. The locations vary with the version and restoring them in a new system may be difficult. Before spending a lot of time, ask the owner if they really need to recover these.

*(Continued on page 5)*

Although it can be very time-consuming, you can attempt to clean up the file system. This means removing malware, pop-ups, spurious menu bars, and the like. It may also require disabling programs that launch at boot time, and perhaps editing the registry. This is likely to be frustrating as the owner still has the bad habits that caused these problems, meaning the will most likely recur.

Before you agree to anything, try to find out how the problem began. Did they install hardware or software? Did they see a pop-up or get a phone call or message advising them of a problem? Did they visit a new website? Did they delete files or directories by mistake? Did the symptoms appear suddenly or build over time? You are trying to discover whether the problem resulted from hardware failure, software failure, malware, or operator error.

If you have decided to help, this is what I recommend. (Most likely you'll modify these steps to fit your own experience and tools.) Before you begin, be sure the user understands that you are an amateur, and that you can't guarantee success.

- For a casual friend, find out what you can over the phone and recommend a shop.
- If you decide to get more involved, go to the house with a diagnostic USB memory stick and check the hardware and file system. Write down what you find and recommend a shop.
- If this is a very good friend or a close relative, tell them not to use the PC until you can image their PC's disk. (If you don't have a spare USB hard disk they will have to purchase one for the purpose.) Then use your diagnostic

memory stick to create an image of the system disk on the external one.

- If the hardware is good, use the restoration partition to return the PC file system to its state at purchase time. (In the unlikely case that the owner has a valid Windows installation disk, you don't need a restoration partition.)
- If the hardware has failed, the owner can decide whether to have the PC repaired or replace it. After this, do what you can to restore the data you have saved, but make it clear that some may be lost.
- Be sure the owner understands that a new PC or a clean install of the operating system means any applications installed after purchase will be lost unless he or she has their original installation disks.
- The last option is to attempt a repair. However, before you jump into this tar pit, be sure the owner understands and accepts the risks. He or she should purchase the parts, with your advice of course. Be sure to make clear that you are amateur in unfamiliar territory and that success is not assured. For example, if the disk has failed because of a faulty power supply, its replacement may be damaged immediately. Who pays?

This is not to say you shouldn't try to help, but it would be prudent to think about your possible approaches as well as the risks before you get the phone call. You don't want to disappoint a friend or cause them to lose money.

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# THE CYBER SHIELD

Cyber News for Counterintelligence / Information Technology / Security Professionals

## Home routers are open to attacks, as Huawei 'backdoor' shows.

Fox News, 4 May 2019: Earlier this week, Bloomberg reported that home routers supplied by Chinese electronics giant Huawei to UK-based Vodafone possessed a backdoor. At a high level, this is a U.S. national security problem. The Trump administration, including the FBI and Department of Homeland Security, has repeatedly been saying at public forums that Huawei's equipment is a vehicle for Chinese government espionage. Most recently, the U.S. is advising against the adoption of Huawei 5G hardware for the next generation of mobile networks. But the vulnerability also points to a problem closer to home. Backdoors can allow hackers to break into your home router and get into any connected device in your home. The problem lies in old firmware, default passwords, and a host of other configuration issues. After a hacker breaches the router's Wi-Fi security and login page, then they typically target the software that controls the router, the so-called firmware. Then, in a process known as "rootkitting," a hacker drops custom, malicious firmware into the router. "Depending on the goals and resources of an attacker, this can include spying on the user and any connected devices [and] injecting malware into the browser to exploit connected devices". "The 'backdoor' that Bloomberg refers to is Telnet, a protocol commonly used by many vendors in the industry for performing diagnostic functions. It would not have been accessible from the internet," the spokesperson added. "In our experience, backdoors are very often found on home routers, regardless of the vendor," Jimmy Jones, Telecom Business Unit Lead at Positive Technologies, an

Internet security firm, told Fox News in a statement. Jones said routers from D-Link, Cisco Linksys/Netgear, TP-Link, Zyxel and other well-known brands have all been found to have backdoors. "So there's no need for consumers to be any more worried about Huawei routers than any others," he added. Avast suggest steps such as installing your router in a safe place "where the wireless signal is available only inside your own house. Avoid placing it near a window." Other suggestions include: turn off the older WPS security setting and turn on WPA2 encryption, change the default admin username and password to a strong password, upgrade your router firmware, don't forget to log out after managing the router and disable remote management of the router over the internet.

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## ***Ready for a new iPad***

*By Jasmine D'Katz*

Apple had just announced two new iPad to be released at the end of March. The iPad Air with a 10.5-inch Retina display will start at \$499. It will have the same A10 Bionic processor as in the iPhone XS, The iPad Mini for \$399 and will replace the iPad Mini 4 but basically has the same design.

The **iPad Air** display resolution (2,224X1,669-pixel) and unlike the one announced in October, it will support the Apple Pencil. It will be

available in 64 or 256GB, and supposedly it has a 10-hour battery life. Unlike the new iPad Pros, it still has a Lighting connector and not the new C-connector. Your choices of colors are space gray, silver or gold.



As I mentioned, the **iPad Mini** didn't change at all. It still has the 7.9-inch display although the camera has been moved, therefore you may have to purchase a new case for it to fit. With the new A12 processor (same as the iPhone 6), you will see a little boost in speed. Like the iPad Air, you can choose between either 64GB or 256GB. And again, the old Lighting connector remains, but you get the Pencil support. The color choices are the same as the iPad Air.



# A Great Photoshop Alternative

A Great Photoshop Alternative

By Sheila Swaikowski, Webmaster, The PCUG of Connecticut

March issue, The Program

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**G**imp is a great free image manipulation program much like Photoshop. Here is a YouTube link to a 13+ minute video of a basic beginners' guide that I found very helpful: Q8C0LJPpr64.mp4. It is entitled 'How to Use Gimp (A Beginners Guide)' and produced by TechGumbo. According to the instructor, Gimp is one of the top five best free Photoshop alternatives and his favorite.

The video begins by showing where to go (gimp.org) to download Gimp and walks you through the whole download process. Then it goes over the layout you should see when you start Gimp: the primary window in the center, the toolbox on the left and the layers window on the right.

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## Chuckles

I've been uplinked and downloaded. I've been imputed and outsourced. I know the upside of downsizing; I know the downside of upgrading. I'm a high-tech lowlife. A cutting-edge, state-of-the-art, bicoastal multitasker and I can give you a gigabyte in a nanosecond.-

**GEORGE CARLIN**

The instructor starts a new project by creating a new image from the file tab at the top. He shows how to scale it down (resize it) and add a background color.



Gimp works with layers, which is a new concept for me. Changes are made on individual layers which become part of the whole exported image at the end. If a

change has to be made, you can go back to that particular layer which has what you want to change. You create a new layer from the right layer window. The video shows how to create text in a new layer by going to the toolbox, selecting the text tool, then selecting a different text color and changing the text size. It shows how to use the move tool to move the text anywhere in that layer.

If you don't like what you produced, you can go back to a previous step or steps by going to the Edit tab at the top and choosing Undo Move Text Layer which will undo the last operation or using the shortcut, ctrl z, until you get back to the step you want.

The instructor creates an oval in a new, second layer, by selecting an ellipse tool from the tool box; other options are the rectangle tool or circle tool. He also shows how to use the blend tool in the background to show a color variance in the background.

In this video there are three levels: the background image, the layer with the text and the layer with the oval drawn on it.

When you are done, its time to export the created image by going to the File tab and clicking on Export As and exporting the image in the file type you want, png or jpg being the most popular. Even though you work with each level separately in Gimp, they become one image upon exporting.

If you choose the Save As option in the File tab and also save the image as an .xcf file type, you can retrieve and work on the image later and make changes in the different layers. It seems to me to be a good idea to also save an .xcf file.

So there you have it, a very good, basic beginners video introduction to Gimp. There are other You Tube videos you can find by searching for Gimp that will show you how to do specific things, such as rounding corners in a photo. If you've ever wanted to do photo editing, but hesitated because of the cost of Photoshop, this Gimp tutorial is just what you may need.





# L.C.A.C.E. Club Historian April 13, 2019



## MEETING NOTICE!

By Les Larkin

[LesLarkin@AIM.com](mailto:LesLarkin@AIM.com)

L.C.A.C.E. celebrated 36 years! Thanks to J.J., and many others who participated over the years to make our club AWESOME!

Our April meeting was conducted by Phil Bock.

Linda Busch won the door prize. J.J. won \$12.00 in the 50/50 raffle. Congratulations to our winners!

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Linda Busch made the coffee, and she and Liz Barnett J.J. provided munchables for us, which included our 36th Anniversary cake!

Last month's presentation was about "Skype" by Mike Andrews.

Another great meeting, and I hope to see you at our May 11 meeting.

April 13, 2019

**Membership Chairperson**

J.J. Johnson

**Members: 50/48%**

Meeting Attendees: 24

**THANKS FOR JOINING**

Yvonne Mitchell

Dorothy Bulls

**THANKS FOR RENEWING**

Johanna Triggs

Michael McEnery

Eric & Judy Rehberger

Phil Bock

Leslie Salsburg

**THANKS FOR VISITING**



**Risinger, Stephanie**

**Koudelka, Linda**

**Dunham, Judy**

L.C.A.C.E.

FEBRUARY DOOR PRIZE WINNER



L.C.A.C.E.

FEBRUARY 50/50 WINNER





# Lake County Area Computer Enthusiasts

Do you have computer questions  
or need help with your computer,  
smartphone or tablet?

**WE'RE READY TO HELP!**



**HELPDESK**



**11:15 a.m.-12:15 p.m.**

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