

# DATALINE



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**Meetings**  
**SCV Senior Center**  
**22900 Market Street**  
**Newhall CA 91321**  
[www.scvpcq.org](http://www.scvpcq.org)

**Wednesday, January 14, 2015**

**Security is Everyone's Business**  
**Knowledge is King. Ignorance leads to**  
**Computer Infection, Identity Theft**  
**or Worse!**

**Presented by**  
**Bob Gostischa, Avast Evangelist**

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**6:00 pm** – Bring your favorite gadget or one you got as a holiday present (from someone or to you from you :-)) and tell us a little bit about it and how you use it.

**7:00pm** - Bob's presentation focuses on ordinary computer users rather than "IT geeks," and clearly explains the following topics:

- The loopholes and pitfalls of using a computer and browsing the Internet.
- Learn to decrease the likelihood of becoming a victim of the many common scams that await the uninformed user.
- Some of threats that hide in unexpected places.
- The difference between Privacy and Security and what you can do to enjoy both.
- Android Smartphone and Tablet safety and security recommendations.

Bob will also discuss programs that will keep You and Your Computer safe and secure.

- Basic Computer Safety Tips & simple procedures that will increase your security.
- The benefits of installing avast! Free on your computer so you're protected against viruses, worms, Trojans, & rootkits.



[www.avast.com](http://www.avast.com)

## **What's New in Avast Antivirus 2015?**

**By Bob Rankin, Ask Bob Rankin**  
**December 8, 2014 Column**  
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The holiday shopping season starts earlier each year, and so does the release of major annual updates of security software. The 2015 edition of Avast Free Antivirus arrived before Thanksgiving, for instance. Avast 2015 contains some features never before seen in Avast. Read on for the full story, and learn how you can get the paid version for free...

First off, there's a home network scanner in Avast 2015 that I have not seen in any other security suite. When launched, the network scanner checks your router's administrator username and password, warning you to change them if they're still set at factory defaults.

It warns of unencrypted Wi-Fi connections, or those encrypted with the easily hacked WEP protocol. It checks to make sure your DNS has not been redirected and that your router is not accessible from the Internet. If there is a problem, Avast 2015 will display step-by-step instructions for solving it – if your router model is one that Avast supports. Otherwise, you'll have to consult the user manual or Google it.

These are "front door" security precautions that many users miss, so I applaud Avast for these additions to the already comprehensive protection that this free security suite provides.

### **Avast 2015 Review**

With the 2015 edition, Avast seems to be morphing into an all-in-one system maintenance and security suite, much like Advanced System Care, PC Matic and other utility suites. Avast's emphasis is on maintenance issues that affect security, but they may also improve system performance.

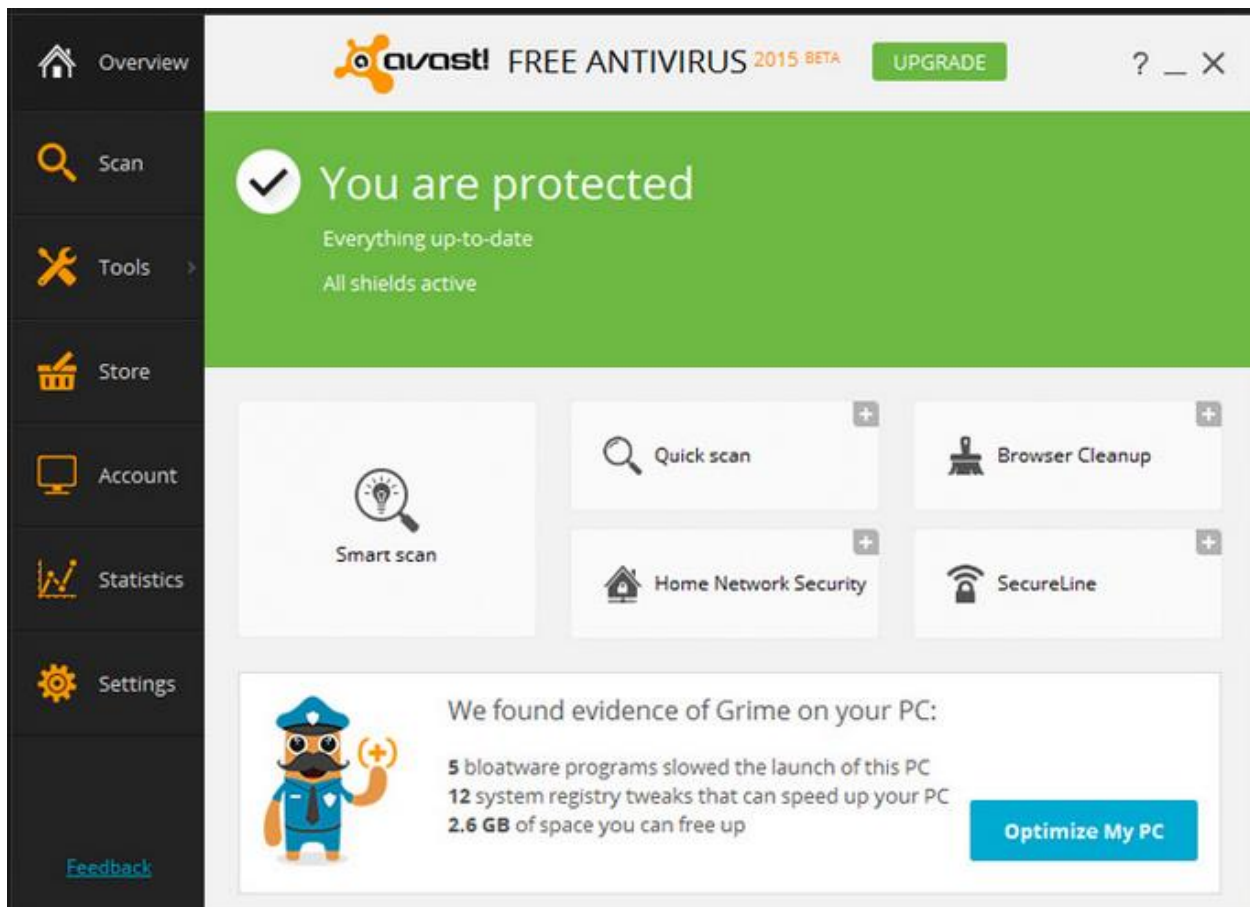
Avast's "Browser Cleanup" feature is not what its name implies to most people. Instead of clearing the browser's file cache, browsing history, etc., Avast cleans up unwanted toolbars and plugins, eliminating points of vulnerability to hackers and places where malware likes to hide.

Keeping all of one's software up-to-date is another security issue. Avast 2015's "Software Updater" makes it a breeze. You can set it to notify you when updates are available or just install them automatically. This module checks for updates of operating system, browser, and popular applications, but if you don't see some of your apps in the tool's list you'll have to update them on your own.

### **Free or Paid Version?**

"Avast Free Antivirus" is the name of the free version of the Avast suite. "Avast Internet Security" is a paid version that offers extra features such as Anti-Hijack Protection (to secure your online banking and other sensitive accounts), a Silent Firewall (to shield you

from hackers) and an Anti-Spam module. The cost is \$39/year, but there's a way to earn a free copy.



Want to get a free copy of Avast 2015? You can, with Bob's Avast Friend Referral Link. <http://www.avast.com/en-us/get/6Y7QxHvD> You can even get the PAID VERSION FOR FREE by earning Avast Karma Points with your own referral link. What's this all about? Full details are at the end of this article.

Avast Free 2015 also includes demo versions of premium security tools. The SecureLine VPN option is a free three-day trial of a fully encrypted proxy service; using it hides your IP address and Web surfing activity even from your own ISP. A one-year subscription costs \$60. "GrimeFighter" analyzes your system for junk files, bad registry entries, and other junk that can slow your system; but to fix the problems you'll need to pay \$20. (Or you can use Privazer, the free cleaner-upper I recommend.)

The free Mobile Backup trialware comes with a 2 GB Dropbox account and stores your mobile device's data in the cloud; the premium version costs \$15.

The main Avast interface screen includes a "Store" button that reveals a host of premium and freemium products, an indication that competition in the Internet Security marketplace is heating up, or that profit margins which rely on converting free users to paid customers are getting tighter.

I've been using Avast for over a year since switching from AVG, and I'm giving the new Avast 2015 version a big thumbs up for some innovative new features and continued comprehensive protection from malware threats.

### **Karma Points and Free Avast Software**

If you have registered as a member of the Avast online community you will see in the upper-right corner of Avast Free's main screen your registered email address and a notation such as, "540 karma." So-called "karma points" are awarded for various acts of participation in the community, and even for being a user of Avast Free for a long time. Referring friends, posting to forums, trying a demo feature, buying a premium feature, etc., all earn you more karma points and "status" in the community.

With enough Karma points, you can earn a free copy of Avast Internet Security. Here's the fastest way to do that. On the Avast main screen, click the ACCOUNT tab. Login to your Avast account (or create one if needed). Next, click on the colored circle under the Logout link at the top right. On the next screen, you'll see a gray box that says "Recommend Avast and earn Karma". Click that link, and you'll be given your own referral link, which you can use to invite friends via Email, Facebook, Twitter or Google+. Recommending Avast to 7 friends can earn you a free year of Avast Internet Security (14 friends, two years; 21 friends, three years). Your friends must download and install Avast via your referral link.

**Predictions, Perceptions and Protestations**  
**By Greg Skalka, President,**  
**Under the Computer Hood User Group, CA**  
**January 2015 issue, Drive Light**  
**[www.uchug.org](http://www.uchug.org) / [president \(at\) uchug.org](mailto:president@uchug.org)**



We have completed another revolution around the sun from an arbitrary starting point, and so begins a new year. Growing up in the 1960s and 1970s, the year 2015 seemed like a far-off and futuristic time. I imagined back then that in 2015 people would live in space (true for the ISS astronauts) and other planets (not true for humans, but at least we can drive our RC cars on Mars). Power would be clean (at least we are improving), abundant (true) and cheap (at least gas prices are way down right now). It seemed when I was young that nuclear power would be the solution to our future energy problems, but it unfortunately had problems of its own. I had imagined that by now we would be living a wonderful, Jetsons-like life with no strife and endless possibilities. Oh well; at least we've got smart phones and selfies.

Now 15 years into the new millennium, we don't seem as technologically advanced as I'd hoped we'd be. We do have all-electric cars, but we can't, due to speed limits and traffic, get to our destinations any faster. Air travel is safer (so long as you stay off Malaysia Airlines), more reliable and less expensive (relative to typical wages), but you can't fly any faster. In fact, commercial air travel in the previous millennium was faster due to the Concorde. A lot of people do have robots at home, but they are mostly like the timid floor-

cleaning Roomba my mother has, not C-3PO, R2-D2 or the robot in “Lost in Space”. Our medical technology has improved greatly, with CT scans, MRI and DNA sequencing, but we still get colds and the flu. We don’t yet have a “tricorder” handheld medical scanner like in Star Trek, but with the Qualcomm Tricorder X Prize as incentive, we might not be waiting too much longer. We don’t have Star Trek phasers, but the U.S. Navy is preparing to field ship-based laser weapons. We don’t have Star Trek holodecks, but we do have Oculus VR headsets and some basic telepresence devices. We don’t have Star Trek replicators, but we do have 3D printers.



Transporter platform aboard *U.S.S. Enterprise-D*.

We don’t yet have my favorite Star Trek technology, transporters, but we do have their communicators, in the form of cell phones. Our smart phones are actually more capable than any handheld device Captain Kirk had. The Internet and our computers provide an informational resource that was unimaginable when I was a child. The same information that Warren Buffet or Al Gore can get off the Internet is also available to a relatively poor call center worker in Bangalore and to a political dissident in China. Unfortunately, while we have so far managed to avoid nuclear war, we are presently fighting on the cyber battlefield with North Korea and other

foreign governments, as well as criminals.

Where will technology take us in 2015? I didn’t make any predictions last year in my column, so I have no crystal ball errors to answer for now. I might as well make a few technology predictions for 2015.

- 1) Computer sales will be up in 2015, while tablet sales will be flat or down compared to 2014. I’m still using Windows XP at work, so there are probably a lot of companies out there like mine that will be looking to upgrade and possibly buy new computers when Windows 10 is released mid-year. On the flip side, I think almost everyone that wants a tablet has one now, and upgrades are not that compelling.
- 2) The paperless society is still a long way off. While we are doing a lot to reduce the amount of printed material we use, it won’t be going away in 2015. While I see more coupons, offers and deals being redeemed on smart phone screens by shoppers, I still have to buy new printer ink cartridges a couple of times a year. I’ve been offered email receipts from some hotels and other merchants, but some merchants are going the opposite direction with their receipts. I recently received an Albertsons grocery receipt for a single item that was 11 inches long (5.5 inches of useful receipt and the rest useless advertising and customer survey solicitations). A recent CVS receipt for one item was 26 inches long (5 inches of receipt and 21 inches of coupons). It seemed like a lot of wasted paper.
- 3) Streaming video will be up but views on small screens will be down. People still don’t want to watch movies on tiny screens. Fortunately devices like Google’s Chromecast and Amazon’s Fire TV enable streaming if your TV can’t. Watching video on a smart phone or tablet might be good if you fly, ride in a car (not drive) or take public transit a lot, but I’d rather watch at home on a big screen if possible.



## I'm dreaming of an iChristmas



My wife traded in her Nokia Windows phone for an iPhone in 2014. It is difficult to understand her relationship with the iPhone. It seems to always be in her hand, except when she is asking me if I know where she left it. She reads a lot of her emails on it and is on Facebook a lot. I'll admit it is handy to be able to get instant information from the Internet wherever you are (especially since all I have is a dumb phone). This Christmas all she asked for were i-things for her iPhone. I got her several, though none were actual Apple items.

While we were on vacation a few months ago, my wife was constantly concerned about her phones charge level. My poor dumb phone can go for days on a single charge, but her iPhone needed to be charged at least every day. One gift I picked out for her was a Patriot Fuel+ 1500 mAh mobile rechargeable battery ([www.patriotmemory.com](http://www.patriotmemory.com)). It works like other portable batteries, but this one has a Lightning connector for easier connection and mobile use (and higher price due to the Apple-licensed connector).

My wife used to charge her Windows phone in the kitchen, but she now charges her iPhone in our bathroom where she can be closer to it at night. This puts her phone in my way in the morning when I'm getting ready for work. Her Christmas list included an iHome Docking clock radio ([www.ihomeaudio.com](http://www.ihomeaudio.com)), which solved that problem. It replaced her bedside clock radio and provides a Lightning connector for charging her iPhone and playing music through the clock's speakers.

We have a radio mounted under one of our kitchen cabinets, but it is kind of old. My wife wanted a new one that could also play music from her iPhone. I got her the iLive Bluetooth Under Cabinet Music System ([www.iliveelectronics.com](http://www.iliveelectronics.com)) to replace our old kitchen radio. It mounts under cabinets and can stream from most Bluetooth-capable devices.



The item she was most excited about was a selfie stick. I bought her a Noot Extendable Self-Portrait Handheld Stick Monopod from Amazon. It is an extendable pole with a phone mount. It comes with a Bluetooth remote that can be paired with your phone to actuate the camera shutter.

## What Do I Want in 2015?

I'm not much for making New Year's resolutions, though there are a few things I'd like to accomplish or improve on in 2015 related to technology. I tend to buy a lot of tech items and accessories to experiment with. These are mostly inexpensive items like adapters or cables, but sometimes they are more significant. I have a new Windows 7 desktop PC that I bought a while ago but have yet to set up to use. I bought it to replace my XP desktop computer, but for a number of reasons have not found the time to make the trade. I'd like to get my new PC running in 2015 and shut down my last XP desktop computer for good.

With my desktop PC so old, I primarily use my Windows 7 laptop. I'd like to improve the laptop's performance by putting in a larger hard drive and more RAM. I'd like to do the same for my wife's laptop.

I have a box full of VHS video tapes that I'd like to digitize. These are home videos of my kids growing up. I have a device for converting them - I just need to set it up again and do it. I also have boxes of photographic slides that I need to scan to JPEG files. Once again, I've got the scanner and have a process, but just need the time to finish the job.

I would like to get more use out of my iPad in 2015. I won an iPad Mini over a year ago in a drawing but don't use it that much. I use it as a web browsing device but not much more. I actually find it is not that easy to understand and use; this is probably because I have used Windows computers for so long. I even bought myself an "iPad for Dummies"-type book but have not had time to sit down with it.

Hopefully I can get a lot done in 2015. Right now the New Year holds a lot of promise and potential. Of course I once felt that way about 2014.

## **Computing in the Cloud: Security & Sharing in MS OneDrive**

**By Nancy DeMarte, 1<sup>st</sup> Vice President, Sarasota Technology User Group, FL**

**[www.thestug.org/](http://www.thestug.org/) / [ndemarte \(at\) verizon.net](mailto:ndemarte@verizon.net)**

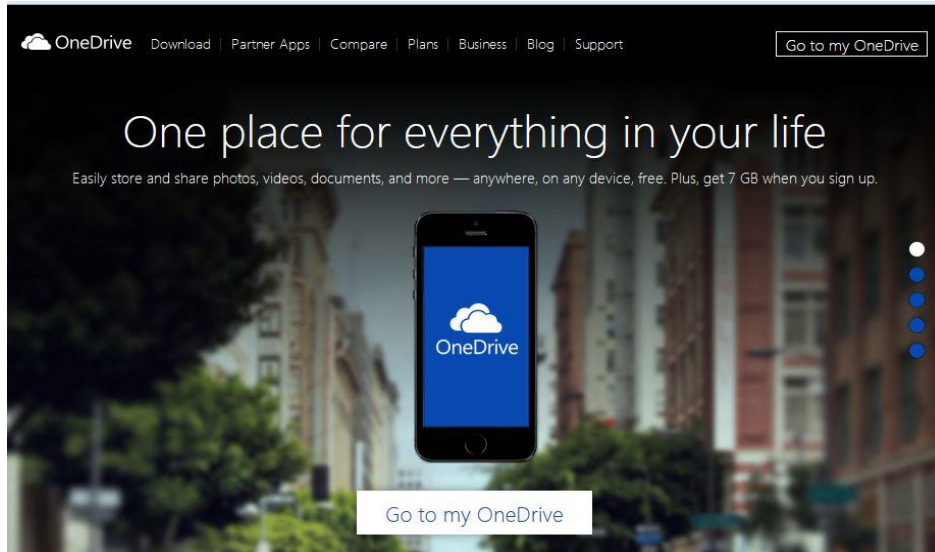


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Last month I introduced OneDrive, Microsoft's storage location on the Internet which is available to anyone with a Microsoft account. MS Office 365 home, personal, and university account owners, however, got a surprise in late June: their storage capacity on OneDrive was increased to 1 terabyte. Since 1 terabyte = 1000 gigabytes, most home users can consider this "unlimited" storage. This month we'll explore how to keep OneDrive files secure and how to share OneDrive files with other people.

**SECURITY:** The main reason people avoid using online storage is the fear that files may not be secure. Of course, there is always the possibility that files can be hacked no matter where they are stored. But there are a few ways Microsoft keeps files safe on OneDrive besides just your account password. Microsoft uses a code verification system when logging into OneDrive, which requires two pieces of verification. If you need more security, MS also offers more security options. You can get tips on creating strong passwords and setting up other security measures for OneDrive at <http://windows.microsoft.com/en-us/onedrive/security>. If you are still unsure, you can always add extra security through an external provider, such as with the free program, Boxcryptor, <https://boxcryptor.com>.

**SHARING:** The easiest way to share files stored on OneDrive is to start at the OneDrive website: <https://onedrive.live.com>. (Fig. 1) Click the blue buttons on the right side of the



home page for useful tutorials on using OneDrive. Once you sign up or sign in using your Microsoft account, you can do several things on this site: share files, get the OneDrive app for your tablet or phone, view and edit your files, upload more files from your computer, and create files using the Office Online applications.

Figure 1 -- Home page of onedrive.live.com website

There are two types of sharing your OneDrive files: share them with individuals or make them public. First choose the files or folders you want to share by clicking the checkbox in the top right corner of each file or folder. Then click Share in the top toolbar. This gives you two options for how to share: Invite People or Get a Link.

To invite specific people to view your selected file(s), click Invite People. (Fig. 2) Type email addresses or names from your contact list in the address bar. Add a quick note and, if you want recipients to be able to edit the file, click "Recipients can edit." When ready, click Share, and a link is sent to the recipients via email.

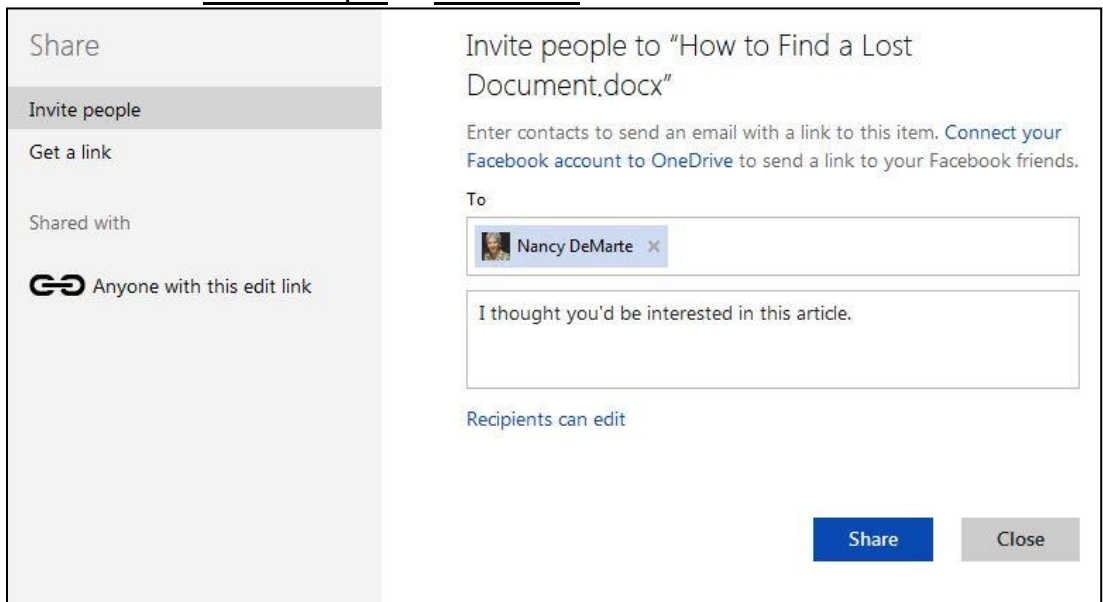


Figure 2 -- "Invite People" dialog box in OneDrive



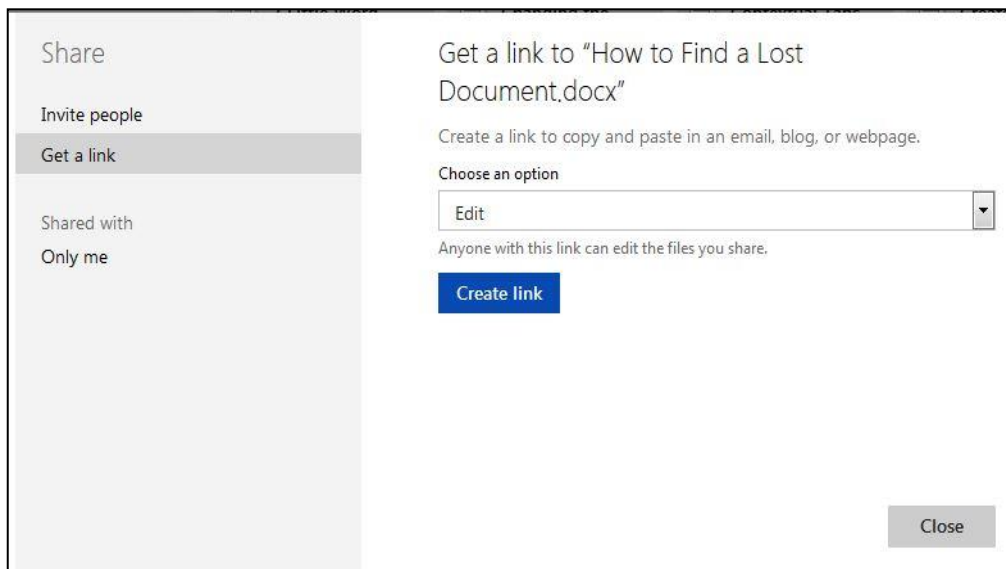


Figure 3 - "Get a Link" dialog box with Edit permission selected

If you want to send a file to a group of people or link to it from a website, use the Get a Link option. (Fig. 3) First select the file's checkbox, and then click Share in the toolbar. This time click Get a Link. Click the down arrow at the right end of the link box and choose which kind of

permission you want on this link. "Edit" (the default) means people can view your selected file and use Office Online to make minor edits without signing in to Microsoft. Other permission choices are "View only" (best for web pages or blogs) and "Public," which make files searchable by anyone, even without a link.

After you have chosen the permission level, click "Create link," and a long web address will appear in the box. (Fig. 4) You can shorten the link by clicking "Shorten link" below the box, which is useful for posting the link to website, but also makes it easier to guess. The last step is to copy the link to the clipboard and paste it into an email, web page, or a social media page if that option is checked. See more about sharing files at this link:

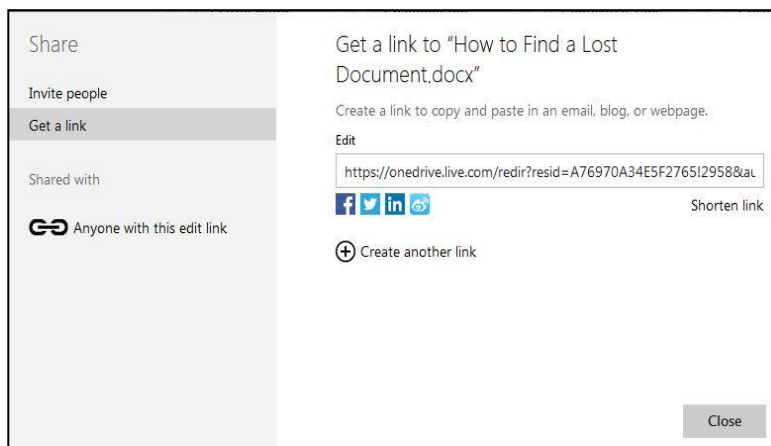


Figure 4 -- Long link option in the "Get a Link" dialog box

<http://windows.microsoft.com/en-us/onedrive/share-file-folder>. With a little practice, you will find the sharing process much easier than when SkyDrive (OneDrive's ancestor) first was introduced.

Sharing files is one valuable benefit of OneDrive. Even if sharing is not something you intend to do, remember the other big advantages to OneDrive storage: your files are safe in the cloud in case of a computer failure, and you can access them any time from any computer and most tablets/smart phones with your Microsoft password.

# Google Chromecast - Inexpensive Competitor to Cable and Satellite Entertainment

By Ira Wilsker

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*Ira is a member of the Golden Triangle PC Club, an Assoc. Professor at Lamar Institute of Technology, and hosts a weekly radio talk show on computer topics on KLVI News Talk AM560. He also writes a weekly technology column for the Examiner newspaper <[www.theexaminer.com](http://www.theexaminer.com)>. Ira is also a deputy sheriff who specializes in cybercrime, and has lectured internationally in computer crime and security.*



You may have seen the recent TV commercials for a new device from Amazon called Fire Stick, which is so new that it is just starting to be shipped. Another device which recently came on the market with great fanfare is the Roku Streaming Stick. Several other comparable devices are in development, or recently came on the market creating a crowded field of competitive products. One that has been on the market since the summer of 2013, is Google's Chromecast, which has become well established with "millions" sold, according to a July, 2014 statement from Google. One may wonder what all of the buzz is about, and why so many companies are developing or producing these items. How did Google manage to sell "millions" of Chromecast devices (their words) in the first 12 months that it was available? The answer is simple - these relatively inexpensive items have become an entertainment tool that for many users, can somewhat compete with satellite or cable TV at a fraction of the price.

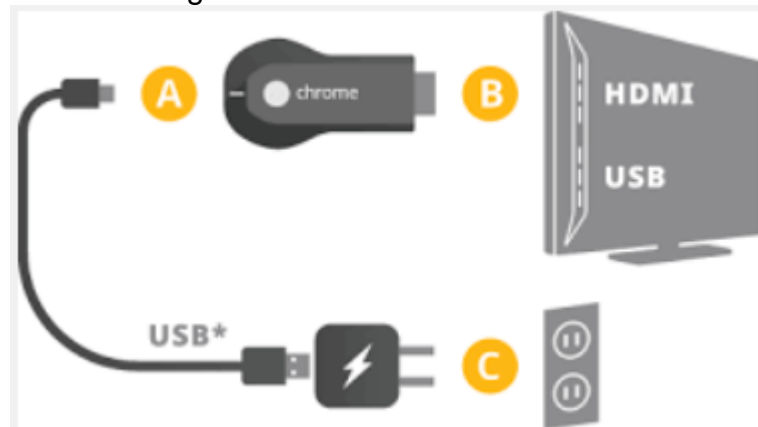
One of my daughters recently "cut the cable", even though she was on a very good fiber optic system with hundreds of TV channels, dozens of movie channels, and other features, because in her eyes the monthly cost was becoming prohibitive. She also has a separate very high-speed internet service which she believed could be better utilized for entertainment purposes, as well as providing a reliable connection for her chosen digital telephone service. She and her husband like streaming movies, sports, music, features, and other entertainment; living in the Dallas area, all of the local TV stations, both local and network, are available over the air for free, using an inexpensive digital antenna hooked up to the TVs around her house. By connecting her TVs to the internet, using some of the readily available and inexpensive devices, she has found that there is nothing that she is really missing from her former expensive cable service, other than a large monthly bill. By her calculations, she believes that she is saving about \$150 per month using these alternative devices to connect her TV to the internet in her home. Some of the newer "smart TVs" that recently came onto the market do not need external devices to connect to the internet, as they are already capable of receiving alternative internet based entertainment through an Ethernet or Wi-Fi connection. Since she does not (yet) have a new smart TV, one of the devices that she uses is the Chromecast device from Google.



A Chromecast device, which Google refers to as a digital media player, looks very similar to a common USB flash drive, and is about the same size and weight, but has an industry standard HDMI plug, rather than the USB plug

found on a typical flash drive. Specifically a Chromecast device is 2.38" long, 1.38 inches wide, and 0.47 of an inch thick, and weighs 1.2 ounces. Inside, where the magic takes place, is a Nexus Q microprocessor (CPU), with 512 MB of fast DDR3L RAM, and 2 GB of storage. Power is supplied through a standard micro USB plug and power source (included), similar to the chargers and plugs used on most of today's smart phones. The standard HDMI plug on the end of the Chromecast plugs directly into an available HDMI port on the TV (most newer TVs have multiple HDMI inputs), and Chromecast receives the digital media through Wi-Fi utilizing the common 802.11 b/g/n protocols at 2.4GHZ. Obviously, the user needs to have a decent home Wi-Fi system in order to utilize the Chromecast. The device itself is readily available in the big box stores, discount stores, online retailers, and direct from Google, and carries a suggested retail price of \$35. Bargain shoppers can currently find the Chromecast on sale online for as little as \$22 including a bundle of digital media streaming services.

Installation of the Chromecast is a simple and fast three step process; Google says, "Plug in and Play" which consists of plugging the Chromecast into an available HDMI port on the TV and powering the device through the included micro USB plug, connecting the device to the home Wi-Fi, and then "Enjoy - Cast apps from your mobile device to the TV." Casting apps is the process of selecting entertainment channels using any compatible smart device attached to the home Wi-Fi, such as a phone or tablet, including Android tablets and smart phones, iPhones and iPads, Chrome for Windows, Chrome for Mac and Chromebooks. In effect, the hand held smart device becomes the remote control, and the apps are the selected streaming media sources.



The list of streaming media apps that are available for the Chromecast is extensive, and includes a large selection of both free and paid subscription services. Google has an updated app directory at [google.com/chrome/devices/chromecast/apps.html](http://google.com/chrome/devices/chromecast/apps.html) and as to be expected from Google, is totally searchable, or content can be displayed by genre'. Among the category headings are Featured, New, TV & Movies, Music & Audio, Games, Sports, Photos & Video, and "More". Selecting a media source from these app directories connects directly to the appropriate download; if it is a paid or subscription app, such as Netflix, that information is clearly displayed prior to any purchase. Among the more popular casting apps are HBO GO, Netflix, Watch ESPN, Just Dance Now, Showtime Anytime, YouTube, and the large assortment of digital media available from Google Play.

The "Featured Apps" include the most popular apps, and includes in addition to the more popular apps listed above, Nickelodeon, Hulu Plus, Comedy Central, Sesame Street,

Pandora, game shows, Disney, Starz, Encore, iHeart radio, Major League Baseball, Crackle, NPR, Vudu, and dozens of other apps. The "Music and Audio" lists hundreds of domestic and international streaming music sources, including some local and international radio stations. Personally I am not into digital games, but the "Games" section lists about 75 streaming games that can be played on the Chromecast.

I would expect that one of the major uses of Chromecast would be to watch sports, and the "Sports" selection may satisfy fans of most major sports. Included in the Sports apps are, WatchESPN, UFC.TV, MLB.TV Premium, MLS MatchDay, NFL Game Pass, MLS Live, Red Bull TV, a high school sports channel, and several foreign sports channels.

The "More" category includes dozens of casting apps including PBS for Kids, TED Chromecast, UDEMY (online classes), ABC News, Funny or Die, FM radio stations, a baby monitor, QVC, iFood TV and Recipes, religion channels, local and international TV news stations, and many other apps.

Often, we may see something online or on our smart phones that we would like to view on the big TV screen; Chromecast can handle that. According to Google, "Whatever you're listening to or watching -- you can cast it straight from your Windows, Mac, or Chromebook directly to the TV. To cast from your laptop, just add the Google Cast extension to your Chrome browser." Owners of Android smart phones or tablets can broadcast directly from their screen to the TV using the appropriate app.

Chromecast devices are popular, with users receiving over 400 billion programs in the first year (source, Google). According to the news site Gigaom, in an article dated December 7, 2014, "Streaming on Chromecast passes Apple TV, Amazon Fire TV in US", the author Kevin C. Tofel explains, "What happens when you offer the combination of a simple user experience, a growing choice in streaming apps and a low cost? You sell a lot of that product and people use it. That's what happened in 2014 to the Chromecast according to Parks Associates, who say that Google's \$35 streaming stick now trails only Roku players in the U.S. when it comes to streaming content." While Roku released a competitive stick device during the summer of 2014, larger Roku streaming players have been on the market much longer than the Chromecast.

Amazon, who is no slouch when it comes to introducing and implementing new technologies, will be shipping by the time that you read this its new \$39 Fire TV Stick, as a direct competitor to Chromecast and similar devices, but offers improved Wi-Fi



connectivity, more internal memory, a more powerful dual-core processor, and other technical enhancements. Basically, the Fire TV Stick offers much the same content as Chromecast, but adds the hundreds of thousands of movies and TV shows currently available at no additional cost to Amazon Prime subscribers

(currently \$99 per year) which for many users is price and selection competitive to Netflix,

plus offers a lot of benefits in addition to streaming media, such as free second day delivery of most items from Amazon. The Fire TV Stick also includes a separate remote control device, or the user can use a free smart device app as a remote control. In terms of disclosure, I pre-ordered an Amazon Fire TV Stick at a greatly discounted price, and will review it when it arrives. Since I already have an Amazon Prime account, I will be able to utilize Amazon's massive video and TV library when the Fire TV Stick arrives.

One suggestion that many readers might find helpful if considering using one of these Wi-Fi connected stick devices to provide digital content to a flat screen TV; if the TV is physically located in close proximity to the Wi-Fi router, such as in the same room, signal strength should be fine. An easy way to roughly figure Wi-Fi signal strength is to connect a smart device to the Wi-Fi, and note the signal strength (bars) precisely at the location where a stick device would be connected. In my house, our bedroom TV is a distance from the Wi-Fi router, with several walls in between, giving only a "3 bar" Wi-Fi strength where the Chromecast is currently connected to that TV. To improve the signal strength, I purchased a deeply



discounted, factory refurbished, major name brand "Wireless-N Range Extender", and mounted it on the stand directly below the HDMI port on the bedroom TV; now my phone shows all 5 Wi-Fi signal strength bars, indicating a very strong signal, which has dramatically improved the performance of the stick device.

Either as a replacement for, or as a substitute to cable and satellite TV service, these stick devices may be a very cost effective way of "cutting the cable" as my daughter did. As inexpensive as these stick devices are, and with the entertainment capabilities that they provide, one of these new stick devices may be a worthwhile investment.

#### **WEBSITES**

<https://www.google.com/chrome/devices/chromecast/index.html>

<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Chromecast>

[https://www.google.com/intl/en\\_us/chrome/devices/chromecast/index.html](https://www.google.com/intl/en_us/chrome/devices/chromecast/index.html)

<http://www.google.com/intl/en/chrome/devices/chromecast/index-opt-a.html>

<http://finance.yahoo.com/news/streaming-chromecast-passes-apple-tv-150024539.html>

<http://www.cnet.com/products/google-chromecast/>

<http://www.pcmag.com/article2/0,2817,2422300,00.asp>

<https://www.google.com/chrome/devices/chromecast/apps.html>

<https://support.google.com/chromecast/?hl=en#topic=3447927>

<https://support.google.com/chromecast/answer/2998336>

<https://www.google.com/chromecast/backdrop/>



## **Can You Believe – A Good Computer for \$200?**

**By Dave Berger, CompuKISS**

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**[dberger \(at\) compukiss.com](mailto:dberger@compukiss.com) /**



Remember when a good computer cost about two thousand dollars? Well, you can now purchase a new computer one tenth of that. And the \$200 computers that are becoming available at that price are ultimately more powerful than those expensive computer of old.

Wow! A good computer for \$200?? How is that possible now? Well, not only have hardware prices tumbled, but Microsoft is coming to the aid of the average computer buyer. They are trying very hard to compete with the current sales of Chromebooks, which have recently picked up in popularity.

Microsoft is helping computer manufacturers and purchasers by lowering and, in some cases, eliminating the cost of the Windows operating system. This is being done to combat Chromebooks which have recently picked up in popularity. Chromebooks are laptops that run on the free Google Chrome operating system rather than on the Windows operating system. Many of them are selling in the \$200 range.

So Microsoft is offering Windows 8.1 with its Bing search engine as the OS for these cheaper PCs. Although this is a special version of the operating system, the only change is that Bing is the default search engine in Internet Explorer. Other than that it is the same as the latest version of Windows 8.1.

Microsoft is trying to stem the tide of defections from Windows and to bolster the use of its Bing search engine and OneDrive cloud storage. In some cases a limited subscription to Microsoft's Office 365 subscription service may be included to entice people to continue paying that yearly subscription fee and to use Microsoft's cloud storage.

Hewlett-Packard, Dell and Lenovo are all announcing these Windows 8.1 with Bing laptops for around \$200. Rumors are that a 7" or 8" HP Stream laptop may be available for the holiday season selling at closer to \$100. Although the manufacturer will determine the type of device this cheaper OS will be used on, it is expected that most will be laptops rather than tablets or desktops.



Most of the Windows laptops that are currently offered under this program have 1366 x 768 pixel resolution screens, good hard drive storage, either Intel or AMD processors, and HDMI ports. You may not want to use them for extensive video edition or CAD programs, but they should be adequate for email, Web surfing, basic computing and, light gaming.

One drawback of many of these laptops is poor battery life. Although most have a battery life of about four hours, this is only half of what some high-end laptops offer. Also, if you purchase one, try to get one with 4GB of memory rather than 2 GB.

The prices on these computer may or may not be permanent, but they are sure to keep the prices moving in the right direction for consumers.

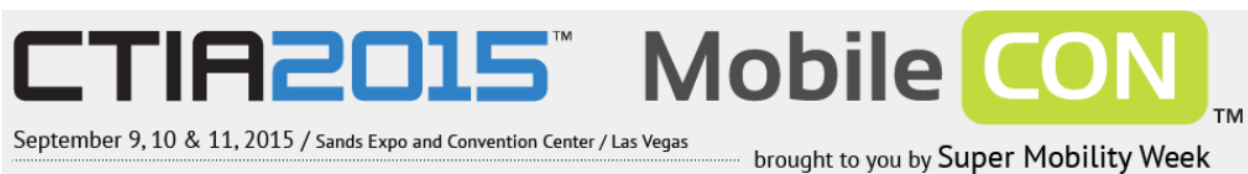
## **CEAInnovate!**

**By George Harding, Treasurer, Tucson Computer Society**

**December 2015 issue, TCS eJournal**

**[www.aztcs.org](http://www.aztcs.org) / [georgehardingbd \(at\) earthlink.net](mailto:georgehardingbd@earthlink.net)**

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I attended a program put on by CEA, the parent organization that produces the Consumer Electronics Show, presented in Las Vegas the beginning week of January.

The program included a session called Technology Trends to Watch in 2015. It covered some of the hottest subjects today: 3-D printing, the Internet of Things (IoT), Big Data Analytics, Digital Health and Entertainment.

The panel on 3-D printing stated that the technology for home use is not mature and someone trying to use the reasonably priced models available today will have difficulty using them to do anything significant. The business versions, however, are very useful. The latest James Bond movie blew up a golden Aston Martin. It was created from a 3-D printer! It was actually a miniature, but was, nevertheless, an accurate replica of the car. The panel anticipates high growth in this product area over the next few years, as more uses are found for creative products.

The Internet of Things refers to the universe of applications which connect devices to the Internet resources without human interaction. There are many examples of this already in place: refrigerators advising you of the need to replace food; the many home situations that can be controlled by remote devices like smart phones; wearable technology to monitor and measure your health quality; GPS mapping in automobiles; self-driving cars. The current state of IoT has just begun and will expand dramatically in the future, according to the panel.

Big Data Analytics refers to the collection of usage data from you and others, in order to analyze and predict actions. This may be to identify the products you want more efficiently, to broaden product categories to better satisfy customers and increase sales and profits. Whether you know it or not, you are surrounded by Big Data collection and analysis. Every

time you use a credit card, the data associated with the purchase goes to combine with other data to better serve our needs and the needs of business. An associated issue is that of privacy. There is as yet no consensus about whether Big Data is good or bad, whether it should be allowed or controlled in some way.

Digital Health is also known as Wearable Tech. This is a fast developing field, with quite a large number of products already on the market. The continued development will be in making products do more and do it better. It may go from the ability to track and measure health and fitness to actual diagnosis of disease.

Entertainment is big now, of course, but it shows no signs of slowing down. The personal game devices and the online gaming continue their rapid growth. What is just starting its big growth is the streaming of movies and shows. The trend is driven by the growing reluctance to be tied to a television set for one's entertainment.

It will be very interesting to see how these areas develop and grow over the next decade.

### **Tech Armor case for iPhone6**

There are many cases available for the new iPhones. One of the best is Tech Armor's case for iPhone6 (there's also one for the iPhone6 Plus).



The new iPhones are different in several ways: thinner, larger and with screen that is rounded at the edges. The Tech Armor case handles all of these.

Not only is it attractive, being a steel gray color, but it is tough enough to protect your phone from bumps, drops, scratches and knocks. The case has a slightly rough surface, making it easy to grasp and hold.

The cutouts for the various buttons are well done, making it easy to press the buttons when needed.

The back is clear plastic, hard and protective of the iPhone back. The case does not come with a screen protector, but Tech Armor has that, too.

The case comes with a lifetime warranty and is reasonably priced.

About: Tech Armor case for iPhone6

Vendor: Tech Armor

[www.techarmor.com](http://www.techarmor.com)

Price: \$15, screen \$7

## Ventev

This company produces wireless infrastructure products and mobile accessories. I was provided with several of the mobile accessories to test.

**Powercell 6000.** This external battery can be easily charged in any wall socket. The back of the charger has two prongs which fit the wall socket and fold into the charger case. You can charge one or two mobile devices with the built-in USB sockets, one providing 1 amp output at 5 watts, the other 2.1 amps at 10 watts. The higher capacity output can be used for a tablet, or a smart phone. In fact, you can charge two mobile devices at the same time, if needed. Price \$75.



**Dashport r900.** This is a charger, too, but designed to be used in your car. It plugs into the power outlet in the car's dash and provides power whether or not you are near an outlet. It comes with a cable for standard USB connection and also micro-USB. Price \$40.

**Chargesync cables.** There are several versions of this product, but each is designed to connect your mobile device to its charger or to another type of charger. What's really great about these cables is that they are flat, which means that they do not get tangled up like the round ones. They come in different colors, too. Whether you have an iPhone with 30-pin connection or one of the newer iPhone 5 or 6 cables, or even something else, you'll be able to find one of these cables for you.

Price: \$15 - \$25

About: Ventev

[www.Ventev.com](http://www.Ventev.com)

## WeMo by Belkin

We've known Belkin for many years for electronic gear, but they recently opened a new product area for exploration, capitalizing on the use of the Internet to connect disparate things, the so-called IoT (Internet of Things).

I received their WeMo LED Lighting Starter Set for review. It contains two light bulbs and a Link device, plus a set of very brief instructions.

The light bulbs are equivalent in illumination to 60 watt tungsten bulbs. We have been urged to replace tungsten bulbs with CFL (compact flash light) bulbs, with the incentive that illumination is equivalent but electrical usage is much lower. The bulbs in this kit are LED and go further in reducing electrical usage.

The bulbs look like what we're used to, but have some wizardry inside to allow connectivity through the Internet.

So, what does the kit do for you? It allows you to control two light fixtures separately and to turn each off or on at specified times, on specified days.



The procedure is to plug the Link into a wall socket. An LED comes on to tell you that it's connected. Next, you replace an existing bulb in a lamp or other fixture with one of the WeMo bulbs. You can use both bulbs in the same fixture (a chandelier, say) or in two separate fixtures. Each is controlled separately.

Next you download the WeMo app. There is one for Apple as well as Android. You next connect through the app to the WeMo network, then to your home or office network. Once this is done, the app searches for devices. When it finds the bulbs, it stores them and takes you to a page where you can set up your rules.

The rules involve On time, Off time and day(s) of the week. There is also an Away From Home setting, which is different from the standard setting. One other feature is the ability to fade in or out when the bulb turns on or off.

With the bulbs and the app, you have control over your lighting, no matter where you are, provided you have Wi-Fi, 3G or 4G service.

Belkin has other devices in the WeMo line: Light Switch, Switch/Motion, Crock Pot, Holmes Heater, Holmes Humidifier, Mr. Coffee and Holmes air Purifier.

About: WeMo

Vendor: Belkin

[www.belkin.com/us](http://www.belkin.com/us)

Price: \$100, additional bulbs \$30





# The Meeting that Was... December

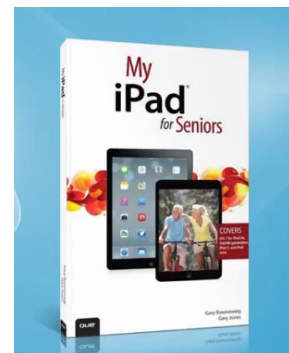
At the December meeting, we finally had the opportunity to 'review' the AARP TEK video, *Using a Tablet to Enhance Your Senior Years*. Here are some of the comments:

- Learned more info on how the apps are loaded
- Presentation was short & interesting
- Showed interesting apps; convenient
- Not being fancy made it clear and very easy to view
- Enjoyed the info on the apps

These are videos the attendees would like to watch at future meetings (x = number of people who want to watch the video):

- Mobile Apps Defined (xxx)
- Sharing Photos and Videos Online (xxxx)
- Creating Safe Passwords (xxxxx)
- 5 Reasons to Embrace Tech Safety
- 5 Tips for Using Facebook (xxxx)
- Staying Safe Online (xxxx)
- Video Chatting Basics (xxx)

The Windows demo by Bill James from the Oklahoma City Computer Club was the highlight of the meeting. Bill did an excellent job of showing us what we can expect with Microsoft's next operating system. I know I'm looking forward to working with it. I have recommended Bill's presentation to several other computer clubs and over the next month or two he's going to be busy. He's also giving the presentation at APCUG's Virtual Technology Conference on February 21.



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General Meeting 2<sup>nd</sup> Wednesday / month

SCV Senior Center  
22900 Market Street  
Newhall CA 91321

## And, the Winners were:

Logitech Keyboard – Kathy Kazmer  
Optical Motion Mouse – Dave Podsadecki  
Ream of Copy Paper – Agnes Chaney



## Membership Application (Please Print)

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Mail to: SCV CC, 18727 Nadal Street, Canyon  
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## Membership Benefits Around Town

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26117 Rainbow Glen Drive  
Newhall 91321

661.250.7440 / mark@marktcs.com  
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25570 Rye Canyon, Ste. A, Valencia  
661.295.5577

Give Judy's telephone number for the  
discount 661.252.8852

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The SCV Computer Club is dedicated to supporting the needs of its members and to the exchange of information about computers, peripherals, services, hardware and software through meetings, its web page, and the distribution of this newsletter.



The SCV Computer Club is a member of SCRUGS and APCUG (Southern California Regional User Group Summit) (Association of Personal Computer User Groups)

### Contact Judy for Discount Codes

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