(membership includes monthly subscription)

The Digital VIKING

Twin Cities PC USER GROUP NEWSLETTER

Minneapolis & St. Paul, Minnesota USA • Vol. 44 No.10 • May 2024

TC/PC Exists to Facilitate and Encourage the Cooperative Exchange of PC Knowledge and Information Across All Levels of Experience

May 2024

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General Meeting

Tuesday, May 14, 2024
7:00 PM

Neural Networks: Simplified

Via Zoom Only

At our May meeting we will watch some YouTube videos that promise to simplify what neural networks are, how they work and why we should care. With AI rapidly invading most areas of our lives, learning about neural networks and machine learning seems important. The geeks who work with them have a difficult time breaking down these concepts into terms that the average individual can grasp. We'll take a look at several tutorials and see how well they do.

Note: All TC/PC Meetings and SIG Groups will be virtual until further notice. Visit tcpc.com for info.

Tech Topics with Jack Ungerleider via Zoom at 6pm before the General Meeting.

The Digital Viking

The Digital Viking is the *official monthly publication of the Twin Cities PC User Group, a 501(c)(3)organization and an all-volunteer organization dedicated to users of IBM-compatible computers. Subscriptions are included in membership. We welcome articles and reviews from members.* The Digital Viking is a *copyrighted publication and reproduction of any material is expressly prohibited without permission. Exception: other User Groups may use material if unaltered and credited.*

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Full page (7½ x 9½)	**$100.00**
Two-thirds page (7½ x 6)	**80.00**
Half page (7½ x 4¾)	**65.00**
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Quarter page (3½ x 4¾)	**40.00**
Member Bus. Card (2 x 3½)	**10.00**

Multiple insertion discounts available.

Contact Sharon Walbran at:: SQWalbran@yahoo.com

Deadline for ad placement is the 1st of the month prior to publication. All rates are per issue and for digital or camera-ready ads. Typesetting and other services are extra and must be requested in advance of submission deadlines.

Payment must accompany order unless other arrangements are made in advance. Place make checks payable to: **Twin Cities PC User Group**

TC/PC 2023-2024 Board of Directors

Meets once or twice per year. All members welcome to attend.
Visit www.tcpc.com for meeting details.

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Sharon Trout	strout@troutreach.com
Jack Ungerleider	jack@jacku.com
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TC/PC Member Benefits

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Special Interest Groups
Monthly Newsletter

Discounts on products and services

Contests and prizes

Business Member Benefits

All of the above PLUS:

FREE ½ page ad on payment of each renewal

20% discount on all ads Placed in the *Digital Viking* Newsletter

Up to 5 newsletters mailed to your site (only a nominal cost for each additional 5 mailed)

Newsletter Staff

Editor Sharon Walbran

Annual Meeting June 11th
Your Input Needed

It's that time of year when we review the status of our user group and review the financial report. But it's very important to look forward . Bring your ideas for meeting topics that you would like to present or see presented. If you know of computer-related businesses that could give a presentation, let us know. If you are into games and you want to share a demo of that game, let us know. If you would like to be more involved, volunteer to be on the board where you can influence the direction of the club. GET INVOLVED!!

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A I Poems

By Bill James

An Easter Poem, 2023
In the early morning light,
The world awakens with delight,
As the Easter bunny brings his gifts,
And the springtime blooms begin to lift.

The air is filled with sweet perfume,
As the daffodils begin to bloom,
And children giggle with delight,
Hunting eggs throughout the night.

The sun is shining bright and clear,
And joy is everywhere you hear,
For Easter is a time of love,
A time to thank the Lord above.

So let us celebrate this day,
In a most special way,
With family, friends, and all we hold dear,
For Easter is a time to spread cheer.

Let's feast on chocolates and treats,
And dance to the rhythm of our heartbeats,
For Easter comes but once a year,
To bring us all so much cheer.
***
Sonnet on Taxes
Amidst the paperwork and forms to fill,
The tax season brings us great distress,
For many it's a bitter pill,
To pay the government no less.

We curse the day we earned our wage,
And bemoan the deductions made,
The endless rules that we must gauge,
As we struggle with the tax trade.

Yet, taxes fund our schools and roads,
Our public services and defense,
Without them, our society erodes,
And our standard of living immense.

So though we may grumble and moan,
We pay our taxes to build a better home.
***

Three Haiku on Daylight Saving Time
#1
Clocks spring forward fast
A lost hour of sleep, we mourn
Sun stays with us longer

#2
Daylight Saving Time
A bittersweet springtime shift
More light, less restful sleep

#3
Time jumps forward, but
Nature keeps her steady pace
Sunshine guides the way
***

Ode to Oklahoma Tornados

In Oklahoma's plains, so vast and wide,
The winds of nature often collide.
A land of beauty, but also of strife,
Where tornados bring both awe and fright.

The sky turns dark, the air grows still,
A distant rumble, a warning shrill.
A twister forms, a giant's dance,
As nature's fury takes its chance.

It spins and twirls, a deadly force,
A sight that fills both awe and remorse.
It tears apart all in its path,
A mighty storm's destructive wrath.

The people of Oklahoma know it well,
The fearsome power of this weather spell.
They brace themselves and hold on tight,
As tornados rage with all their might.

Yet even as they tremble and fear,
Oklahomans know they must persevere.
For in this land, both harsh and fair,
They know that storms will always be there.

So let the winds howl, let the storms rage,
Oklahoma's people will not be caged.
For they know that even amidst the pin,
The sun will rise and shine again.

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Reflections on the PC Environment

By Dick Maybach, Brookdale Computer User Group
www.bcug.com, n2nd (at) att.net

The PC world was far simpler when I began writing PC tech columns in 1992. Many of us relied on diskettes for storage; if we had a hard disk, it held only a few hundred megabytes. Software was distributed on diskettes, and its box usually contained a manual. Windows 3.1 appeared that year, and it was the first version that was really practical, but many continued to use DOS. Significantly, Windows required a hard disk; when we used DOS, two diskette drives provided adequate storage. The PC was undergoing a transition from an experimental and educational toy to an essential information appliance. The Internet was available only to governments and large corporations, although some exchanged messages through software bulletin boards, which they accessed (slowly) over telephone lines using dial-up modems—even simple configuration changes required opening the system case to access jumpers and expansion cards. There were frequent PC shows where dozens of vendors sold hardware and software. Bookstores had extensive collections of PC books and magazines. It was an exciting time for us.

The situation is far different today. Most PC users, excluding those reading articles like this, have no interest in what goes on inside the box. They would no more open a PC case than a dishwasher cabinet. As a result, PC books, magazines, and parts vendors have largely disappeared. This is good for most folks who want to communicate with friends and family, surf the Internet, and prepare taxes. But it can be frustrating for those of us who see the larger potential of the PC. However, the barriers are superficial, and the experimental and educational world is still alive, well, and accessible on the PC. We must exercise more care while experimenting with our PCs than we did years ago because it's become a vital tool in our lives and holds valuable information we have to protect. Let's look at some of the opportunities.

For years, I took pictures with a 35-mm camera, and film and processing cost about a dollar a click. Editing required a darkroom, expensive equipment, and smelly chemicals, and few did it. Today, we don't use film; bytes are free, and image processing software costs vary from reasonable to free. Any imaging program can do things that darkroom users couldn't even imagine. When you've finished the processing, you can send the results anywhere in the world for free or, if you have a suitable printer, commit it to paper. Image editing can be complex, and it takes some effort to learn, but there are very few photos that can't be improved, many substantially. I use the GNU Image Manipulation Program (GIMP), https://www.gimp.org/, to retouch JPEG image files. Your camera compresses images to produce JPEG files and discards information in the process. You can often recover this by working with images before they are compressed, using RawTherapee, http://rawtherapee.com/, or darktable, https://www.darktable.org/. These are complex programs that require some effort to master.

Early PCs limited your programming to BASIC, which, as its name implies, has quite limited potential. However, we have a much wider choice today, including Python, https://www.python.org/, which provides an accessible start to programming and includes widespread features among all programming languages. In addition, the required software is free, and although some support tools are not, they aren't really necessary.

Experimenting with operating systems does require care, as what seems like a simple configuration change can wreak havoc and sometimes require re-installation. (Ask me how I know.) For this, I prefer using a virtual machine, such as one managed by VirtualBox, https://www.virtualbox.org/, for this. In the past, I used dual-booting to install an alternative OS, but this requires re-partitioning the hard disk, which is risky, and the UEFI BIOS in modern PCs has features to protect the installed OS. Working around these requires non-trivial expertise. Your OS views each virtual machine as an

application, which avoids all this risk and complexity. If you want to experiment with Windows, you'll have to buy the software, as the virtual machine is legally a different machine. Of course, you can experiment with Linux for free.

Arduino, https://www.arduino.cc/, provides an inexpensive way to experiment with both hardware and software. This microprocessor on a small board plugs into a USB port on your PC, which supplies the power for the board and communicates with it. You program in a variant of C++, which you compile on your PC and download to the Arduino. It's easy to connect the board to external circuits, so this provides a way of learning circuit design and programming. Since all the action takes place off your PC, the risk is minimal.

The Raspberry Pi, https://www.raspberrypi.com/, provides a considerably more complex environment than the Arduino. This is a complete PC on a circuit board about the size of a playing card. While the Arduino is a controller that runs only a single program at a time, the Pi is a complete computer running Linux. You'll need a display, mouse, and keyboard to get started, making this more difficult than an Arduino. However, you can use its peripherals if you have a desktop system. (You might use a USB hub to consolidate the keyboard, mouse, and printer cables. Then you could switch between your PC and the Pi by swapping just two cables, the USB from the hub and the HDMI from the display.) After configuring the Pi, you can connect it to your home network and access it using remote desktop software on a PC; it won't need dedicated peripherals until you install a new OS on the Pi.

Fabricating objects used to require a shop and tools, but now it can be done with only a 3D printer, about the size of your existing one. You design an object using CAD software, transfer the file to the printer, and (perhaps some hours later) return to find the completed object sitting in the printer. This is an emerging technology and presently is quite limited. Printing is slow, set-up is fussy, and the material is usually plastic, but things are rapidly improving. For example, I recently saw a device, https://snapmaker.com/, that could also machine aluminum and cut sheet material and create with plastic. Currently, the projects are limited to small enclosures, key fobs, game tokens, or similar small objects, but this will surely improve.

To learn about electronics, instead of acquiring a collection of tools, parts, and instruments, you can run experiments with a circuit simulator, such as KiCad, https://www.kicad.org/. It lets you build circuits with simulated resistors, capacitors, inductors, transistors, and integrated circuits, then test the result. The next step would be to use an Arduino with a prototype board into which you plug physical components to build circuits you've simulated. Kits that facilitate this are available from such vendors as Adafruit, https://www.adafruit.com/. Because you are using Arduino to generate signals and detect the result, this approach limits you to low frequencies.

If you play a musical instrument, you probably have a collection of scores, some of which are barely legible. However, you could input them into a score composing program such as MuseScore, https://musescore.org/en, to make corrections, transpose them to a new key, or just clean up the appearance.

These examples reflect my interests and my preference to use open-source software; your interests and preferences are undoubtedly different, but perhaps these examples will inspire you to search for some that would help you. In the past, we relied on PC magazines to suggest areas to explore. There are many more interesting and useful tools today, but it takes more effort to find them without magazines. Don't let your PC become just an appliance; it can be a wonderful tool to help you enjoy life.

I've been writing these articles for a long time, have about run out of things to say, and it's time to retire. Thank you for your attention over the years.

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Learning Technology Today

Jim Cerny, 1st VP, Education Chair, and Forums Coordinator
Sarasota Technology Users Group
https://thestug.org/
jimcerny123 ** gmail.com

In the ancient computer days, ten or so years ago, learning technology was very different than it is today. Before the dreaded COVID days of isolation, classroom settings were very popular for learning technology. Classrooms had individual computers, and the subjects were on general and basic topics everyone needed to learn. Most people then purchased their own computers for the first time and needed to know how to use them. Do you remember having to learn how to use a mouse? How about changing the size of a window on your screen or searching the Internet? In those days, these things were new to most people. Now technology training (not just "computer classes") has dramatically changed.

The big jump off the cliff into something new in learning was the massive changes that COVID brought about. You know the story – training went to online classes, and in-person meetings were all but eliminated. Now that the COVID epidemic is over, have we returned to "normal" learning? I think not. Many of these changes will remain with us. So how do we adapt, and what do the "tech learning classes" look like today and in the future?

I advise searching the Internet for the specific training you want or need. Here's why:

1. More and more everyday devices will use more and more technology – refrigerators, cars, TVs, doorbells, and toilets. Can you imagine attending a class on how to use your refrigerator? No, I can't either, no matter how cool it would be! If there was a class, how many attending would have the same refrigerator with the same controls or options?

2. There are too many options, and no one uses all of them. I am still learning my car's options and have been driving it for four years! A word-processor app like Word has options I am not even aware of and will probably not use anyway but may be very useful for a few people.

3. Use of multiple devices – cell phones, TV adaptors, tablets, laptops, etc. Now you can get your email, watch a movie, or do your banking on different devices –each one will have a slightly different way of doing the same thing. Likewise, teaching even the same topic or app can be used differently on other devices.

4. We tend to have specific needs from our technology. Do any of these questions sound familiar? -- "How do I put text on a photo?", "How do I read my email on my cell phone?" or "How do I get the sports channel I want on my TV?". Our needs and wants are now getting much more specific. A class on a specific topic and device would be attended by only a few people wanting that specific knowledge.

5. We don't want to waste time learning things we will probably not use or already know. In any class, people come with different and unequal levels of experience and knowledge.

6. People are used to "convenience learning" when they have time and do not have to travel. Many colleges provide "at home" learning using the Internet.

All this is to say that the Internet is probably the best source for learning a specific task for a particular device. Ask Google, "How do I …" and be very specific. Enter the name, model, and year

of your car, the make and model of your refrigerator, or your phone or tablet. Google loves specificity. Demonstration videos and text instructions will magically appear for you on any topic. It is truly a learning gold mine of knowledge – give it a try!

TECH & LEARNING

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Photo Files - JPG Format

Jim Cerny, 1st VP, Education Chair, and Forums Coordinator
Sarasota Technology Users Group
https://thestug.org/
jimcerny123 ** gmail.com

We all take and enjoy photos. Our handy smartphones have great cameras, and we can take photos anytime and anyplace. However, the most popular file format for storing photos on Windows computers is ".jpg" or "jpeg." So what exactly is a "jpg" file, and why should we have to know anything about it?

If all the photos you work with and all the photos people send you are all file type .jpg, then you don't have an issue. But other formats can be used to save and store photos.

For example: If you are unfamiliar with the free app for all Windows computers called "Paint," you should learn a little about it. You can use the Paint app to open photos and images of more file types than just .jpg. Then you can edit or change the image if you want. You can use the Paint app to draw an image yourself, or if you open an image in the Paint app, you can save the image as a .jpg or as another file type. So the Paint app can be used to convert an image to .jpg.

Why are there several file types for photos? Each different format or file type has its benefits and drawbacks. One main reason is memory size. The higher the photo's resolution, the more memory it takes up in your computer. The jpg file type is a popular compromise of high resolution and not too much memory.

Suppose you are cruising the internet and see a picture you want to download and keep on your computer. If you right-click your mouse on that image, you can select "Save image as…" and then click on the file type you want, probably jpg. You may not get many options, but .jpg will most likely be offered.

Knowing about the jpg file type when you use other apps is also good. For example, you may use an app called Adobe Photoshop which can provide many spectacular photo editing tools. (The Paint app is not really considered a photo editor, so you can't do much photo editing with it). But, like the Paint app, Adobe may allow you to save your photo to a different file type or to convert a photo from one type to another.

My bottom line is that I save all my photos on my Windows computer as jpg files. It is a good format for me, and I do not wish to use other formats. But if you want to learn more about jpg or other photo file formats, ask Google! You can ask Google what a particular format (ANY format or file type, not just for photos) is used for and what apps can use that format. A little knowledge about file formats can help when people send you files your computer can't open. I hope this enables you to enjoy all the photos you want to see! 🖳

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“Save" or "Save As?

Jim Cerny, 1st VP, Education Chair, and Forums Coordinator
Sarasota Technology Users Group
https://thestug.org/
jimcerny123 ** gmail.com

Suppose you are editing a document in Word, and now you need to save your changes – should you use the "File" menu choice of "Save" or "Save As"? And what's the difference anyway?

My strong suggestion is to ALWAYS use "Save As."

Microsoft Word, other Microsoft apps, and many other apps may give you two ways to save your work – a quick one-click "Save" option and another called "Save As."
If you have opened an existing file (I will use a "document" file as an example) and have made some changes and then choose the "Save" option to save your changes, the changes will be saved, but your old previous version of your document will be deleted. This is because you save the document as the same file with the same name. If you realize this is what you want to do, that's fine. But using "Save As" is always better.

Here's why --
When you click "Save As" you will get many options for how you want to save your file. If you save your changed file to a different folder, you may click on that folder if you see it in that window or click on "Browse." Either way, you will open a window like Windows File Explorer. It will say "Save As" in the window's title bar at the top. The first advantage to using "Save As" is that you do not have to change anything if you don't want to – and if you choose not to change anything, "Save As" will save your changed file just like you clicked on "Save." But with "Save As," you can visually check and make sure all your save options are what you want – and if not, you can change them.

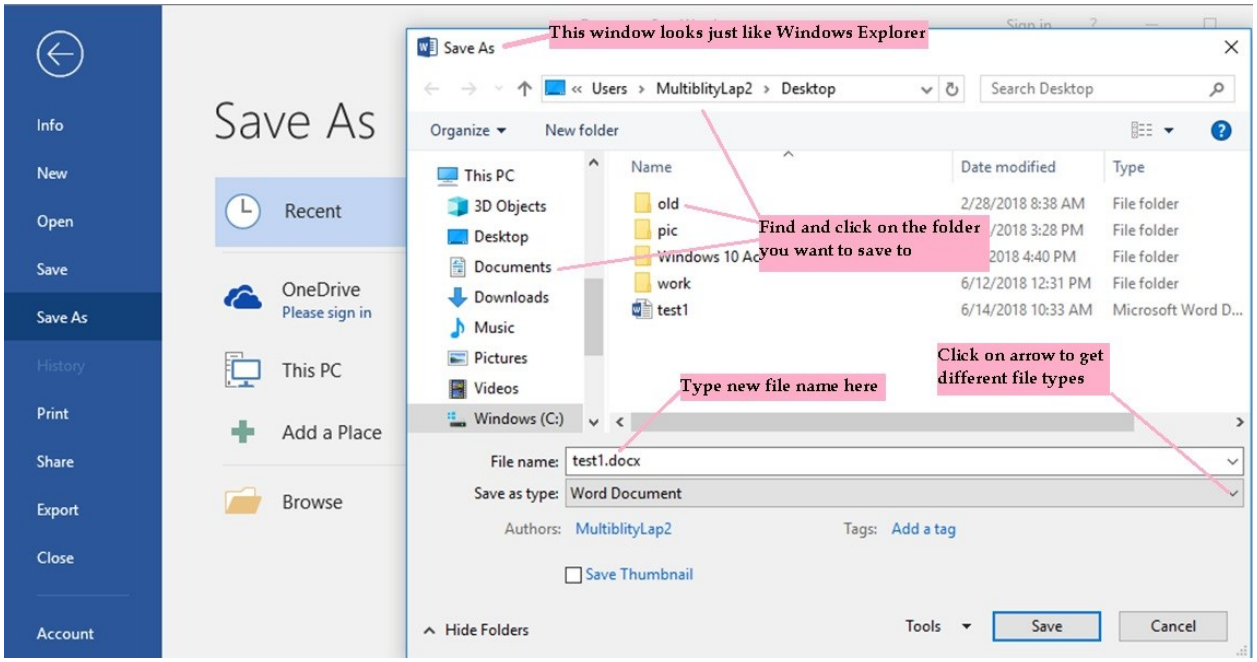
You can save your changed file to a different folder. After clicking "Save As," you are given a window with some folders (you can click on "Browse" to find any folder). The next window you see will look just like Windows File Explorer. In this window, you can find the folder where you want to save the changed file; click on it, click "Save," – and it will save it there with the same file name. The original file, without your changes, will still be in the original folder.

You can change the NAME of your file just by typing the new name in the File Name box toward the bottom of the window -- check to see that the FOLDER is where you want the file to be saved -- you can change it if you wish or keep the same folder. Your old unchanged file is still there, but your new changed file (document) is also there with the new name.

You can change the FILE TYPE of your file. At the bottom of the window, you will see the "Save as file type:" box. Hit the little arrowhead at the far right of that box to see a list of the different file types. Click on the one you want, then click "Save." You have now saved your file as that file type. Note that you do NOT have to change the text name of the file. You will have created a new file with a different name because the file type is an extension and part of the actual file name. For example, if I have a Word document file named "Letter to Sam," the file extension is ".docx." So if I open that document, make changes to it (or change nothing), and click on "Save As" at the bottom of the window, I can click on the arrowhead in the "Save as file type:" box at the right and select another file type, such as ".pdf." It will save that file in the

same folder with the same file name EXCEPT it will be a ".pdf" file, not a ".docx" file type. So it will be "Letter to Sam.pdf" instead of "Letter to Sam.docx." Of course, my original file (document) is still there and unchanged.

There are more "Save As" options, and they can be different with different apps. But my advice is always to use "Save As," which allows you to check and see that everything is what you want. After all, you want to "save your as"!



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Special Interest Groups (SIGs)

w Work phone h Home phone c Cell phone
*** Meets at an alternate location**

Most SIGs will meet at Edina Executive Plaza, Conference Room #102, 5200 Willson Road, Edina, MN
Confirm with a SIG group if they meet elsewhere.
For more info contact the SIG Leader(s) listed here.

Get SIG announcements!
Link from www.tcpc.com

Board of Directors*
All members are welcome! Check www.tcpc.com for location.
Selected Saturday mornings

Linux on Saturday
This is for the Linux newbie and those trying to come over from Microsoft to a different operating system.
Second Saturday @ 9 AM-Noon
Note: No Meetings June-August

Jack Ungerleider 612/418-3494 c
jack@jacku.com

Tech Topics
Technical presentation/discussion on various technical topics from the following areas:
- **Web/Internet**
- **Mobile Devices and Apps**
- **Playing with Programming**
- **DIY (3D Printing, R-Pi, other hobby electronics, etc.)**

Second Tuesday @ 6:00-7:00 PM
Every month
Right before the general meeting.

Jack Ungerleider 612/418-3494 c
jack@jacku.com

Microsoft Access
All levels. Presentations by expert developers within the group and by MS reps.
Third Saturday 9:00 AM—Noon
Note: No Meetings June-August

Steve Kuhlmey 952/934-8492
skuhlmey@hotmail.com

Microsoft Office
Addresses the use, integration, and nuances of the Microsoft Office applications.
Combined with Systems on Saturday
Third Saturday of the Month
9:00 AM—Noon
Note: No Meetings June-August

Steve Kuhlmey 952/934-8492
skuhlmey@hotmail.com

Directions to **Accord, 1515 Energy Park Drive** for **General Meetings**:
From I-94 in St. Paul, take the Snelling Avenue exit, then go north on Snelling Avenue about one mile to Energy Park Drive. Take Energy Park Drive and take the first left into the driveway to 1515 Energy Park Drive.
From I-694 or Hwy 36 in St. Paul, take the Snelling Avenue exit, then go south on Snelling Avenue past Como Avenue to Energy Park Drive. Take Energy Park Drive and take the first left into the driveway to 1515 Energy Park Drive.

Directions to **Edina Executive Plaza** for **Systems on Saturday, Access, Word and Picture Perfect SIGs**: Take Highway 100 to the 50th Street/Vernon exit. [If you have come from the north, cross back over Highway 100 to the east side.] Take the first right and go past Perkins [The golf course will be on your left.] and continue on the east frontage road (Willson Road) to the next building—5200 . There is ample parking in the building's lot. Conference Room #102 is on 1st floor.

Help yourself by helping others!

Join the team & share your knowledge with others.

Contact TC/PC at www.tcpc.com

Meetings start at 7:00 PM (9:00 AM on Saturday) unless otherwise noted. ***Virtual Meetings during Covid pandemic.**

May

June

SUN	MON	TUES	WED	THU	FRI	SAT
			1	2	3	4
5	6	7	8	9	10	11 Linux on Saturday SIG 9am—Noon
12	13	14 7pm General Mtg Neural Networks 6pm Tech Topics	15	16	17	18 MS Office SIG (includes Access) 9am—Noon
19	20	21	22	23	24	25
26	27	28	29	30	31	1
2	3	4	5	6	7	8 Linux on Saturday SIG 9am—Noon
9	10	11 7pm General Mtg TBA 6pm Tech Topics	12	¡3	14	15 MS Office SIG (includes Access) 9am—Noon
16	17	18	19	20	21	22
23	24	25	26	27	28	29
30	31					

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Twin Cities PC USER GROUP

You have just read an issue of The Digital Viking.

Would you like to receive this delivered directly to your email or business each month?

As a member of TC/PC, the Twin Cities Personal Computer Group, one of the benefits is reading this monthly publication at www.tcpc.com..

As a member of TC/PC, you may attend any or all of the monthly Special Interest Group (SIG) meetings and be eligible for software drawings. The small membership fee also includes access to real-live people with answers via our helplines, discounts, and various other perks.

Does membership in this group sound like a good way to increase your computer knowledge?

It's easy to do! Simply fill in the form below and mail it to the address shown.
(If you use the form in this issue, you will receive an extra month for joining now.)

5/24

Here's the info for my TC/PC Membership:

Full name_____

Company name_____

Address_____

City_____ State_____ Zip_____

❍Home ❍Business ❍Change address: ❍Perm. ❍Temp. 'til _____

Home phone_____ Work phone_____

Online address(es) _____

Where did you hear about TC/PC? _____

❍ I DO NOT want any of my information disclosed.
❍ I DO NOT want to receive any mailings

Administrative Use Only Rec'd_____ Chk#_____

I'm signing up for:

❍ Individual/Family Membership ($18)
❍ Business Membership ($100)
If an existing member your # _____

Make checks payable to:

Twin Cities PC User Group
341 County Rd C2 W
Roseville, MN 55113

Or sign up on our website:

http://www.tcpc.com

❍ Check #_____ ❍ Bill me
❍ New member ❍ Renewal ❍ Prior member

I'm interested in:

❍ Training classes ❍ Volunteering
❍ Special Interest Groups: New User, Access, etc.
List here:

May 14, 2024
7:00 pm

General Meeting

Neural Networks: Simplified

Via Zoom Only

Twin Cities PC USER GROUP

341 County Rd C2 W
Roseville, MN 55113

FIRST CLASS MAIL