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

January 2021

Membership Information 2

Video Chatting Apps:

Skype, Facebook Mes-

senger and Others3

Virtual Meetings6

Sandisk Extreme

Portable SSD.....8

What the Heck is This

And Why Didn't I

Do This Before?.....9

SIG Information......13

TC/PC Calendar.....14

Membership Application.15

Maps to Events16

General Meeting Tuesday, January 12, 2021 7:00 PM

Using LoCast

Presenters: Diane Via Zoom

Locast is a "not-for-profit service offering users access to local broadcast television stations over the Internet. We stream the service over the Internet to select U.S. cities." At our January meeting we will have a presenter from Oregon who not only runs a beer tastings on Zoom there but also knows the ins and outs of LoCast. If you are experiencing difficulties getting the local television stations through regular broadcasts, LoCast may be your solution. Diane has some tips and tricks up her sleeve for accessing local stations you will be interested in learning and applying. Bring your questions for Diane and others to answer. See you at the next meeting on Zoom. The link is posted on tcpc.com and will be sent to members in a cover email.

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

TC/PC is a Member of



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Visit www.tcpc.com for meeting details.

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Newsletter Staff

Editor Sharon Walbran

Video Chatting Apps Skype, Facebook Messenger, and Others

By Tom Burt, Vice-President, Sun City Summerlin Computer Club

www.scsscc.club

tomburt89134 (at) cox.net

While practicing "social distancing," I got interested in ways to use video chatting to have face-to-face interaction with friends, family, and potentially with doctors (telemedicine) and that led to this article. **Video chatting** is a real-time video/audio conversation between two or more parties connected via the Internet. They use your device's webcam, microphone, and speaker to create a virtual face-to-face interaction between you one or more other connected parties. These connections can be full audio and video, audio-only, or even just text messaging, depending on what hardware features are available. We'll start with an overview of some of the major video chatting apps and services and then delve into Facebook Messenger and Microsoft Skype in more detail to illustrate how it's done.

Video Chatting Apps Overview

I found a couple of good articles describing the best free video chatting apps:

https://parade.com/1010666/jessicasager/best-video-chatting-apps/
https://www.cnet.com/news/7-free-video-chat-apps-to-use-if-youre-social-distancing/
At the top of the list was Apple's FaceTime, which works for Mac and iOS devices, but not Android or Windows. The second was Facebook's WhatsApp for Android and iOS devices

(but not for Windows or macOS). High on the list was **Facebook Messenger** for smartphones, tablets, and computers. Also high was **Microsoft Skype** for smartphones, computers, tablets, smartwatches, and Xbox One. Two others of interest are **Zoom** and **Webex**. All of these have free versions as well as higher-end paid versions. There are links to the details of these in the articles referenced above.

Most video chatting services mediate the connections through dedicated web-based servers that can handle thousands of simultaneous connections. As a user, you set up an account with that service. Your login ID also serves as the "handle" to which other video callers connect. For instance, on Facebook Messenger, you use your existing Facebook ID and on Skype, you use your existing Microsoft ID. You can easily create accounts if you don't already have them.

Some of the video chatting apps are implemented as web browser extensions. Others, including Skype and Facebook Messenger, have standalone client apps that run on your desktop.

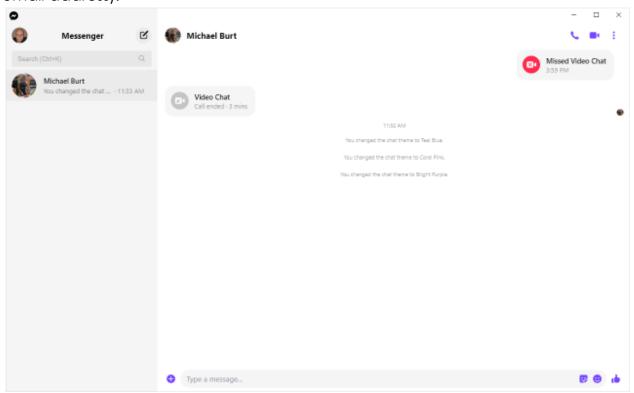
What Hardware Do You Need?

Aside from some kind of computing device (smartphone, tablet, PC, Xbox) with a video display, the key requirements are a **webcam**, **microphone**, and **speakers** connected to or built into the computing device. Laptop PCs, All-in-One PCs, tablets, and smartphones normally have these built-in and also have the proper hardware drivers installed by the manufacturer. On desktop tower PCs the webcam, speakers, and microphone are usually separate add-ons. In all cases, it's important to have the latest hardware drivers for your

webcam, speakers, and microphone.

Facebook Messenger

Facebook Messenger is available on Windows, macOS, Android, and iOS. It also can run via a web browser. For Windows, I recommend getting the free Facebook Messenger app from the Microsoft Store. Once it's installed, you can just launch it from the Start menu or a desktop icon. The first time you start it, you can configure and test your webcam, microphone, and speakers. It then asks you to login using your Facebook ID (usually your email address).

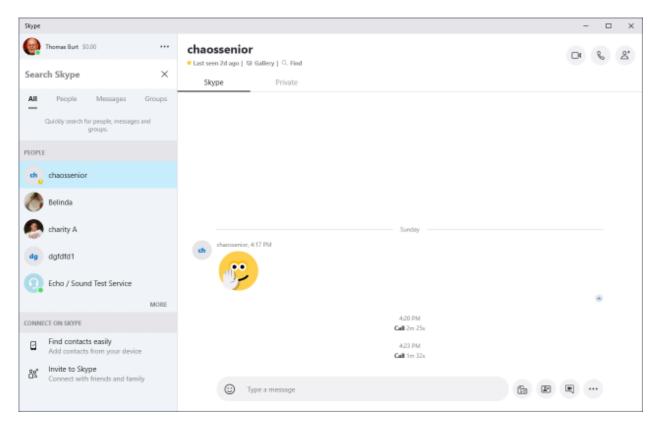


Facebook Messenger Windows App Main Screen

Once you're logged in, you can search for other Facebook users (family, friends, business associates), select one and then click an icon in the upper right to initiate a video or an audio call to that person. If the other party accepts your call, the screen will show what the other party's webcam is showing along with a small image of what your webcam is showing them. This helps you stay "on camera" during the chat. When you're done, you can click an "end call" icon to close the connection.

<u>Microsoft Skype</u>

Skype is available on Windows 7, 8.1, and 10, Android, iOS, and the Xbox game console. It is a built-in app on Windows 10 and is updated automatically via Windows update. You can download it from the Microsoft download site as well as the Android and Apple app stores. When you launch Skype, it will first walk you through configuring your webcam, microphone, and speakers. You can then log in using your Microsoft ID and password. Once logged in, you can search for other Skype users or type in the Skype ID of a user. Then you can initiate a video or an audio call by clicking the icons at the upper right or you can type text messages.



Microsoft Skype Windows App Main Screen

If the party you're calling accepts the call, the screen will display what their webcam is seeing along with a small image of what your webcam is seeing. When you're done, you can click an "end call" icon to close the connection.

Final Thoughts

As you can see, the Facebook Messenger and Skype desktop apps for Windows are very similar in layout and behavior. There's a lot I haven't touched on – especially chat's involving more than two participants. You will probably have a better experience of your desktop device is using a wired Ethernet connection, but a strong WiFi signal should also be OK. The video chat is definitely more engaging with a large screen that you don't have to hold.



Go to Page 1

Virtual Meetings – How to get together - Without getting together

By Phil Sorrentino, Contributing Writer, The Computer Club June 2020, www.scccomputerclub.org Philsorr (at) yahoo.com

Under normal conditions, we'd probably be looking forward to a meeting where we can get together with friends, but during these coronavirus days, it's better to get together without getting together. In fact, staying at least six feet apart is encouraged by everyone at all levels of authority. Fortunately there's Video Chatting, or is it Video conferencing? I used to think there was a difference. I thought of Chatting as one person to one person, and Video Conferencing as one person to many, as in making a presentation to a group of people. But now it seems like Video Chatting or Video Conferencing are used almost interchangeably. So what is the current thinking? One definition provided is, "Chatting is a form of conversation between two or more members over the internet". So Video Chatting would be a conversation between two or more members employing video-capable devices, over the internet; but that sounds like video conferencing. Definitions and terms may not be very important here, what's really important is the fact that we can interact with others using video-capable devices, over the internet (sounds like client-server technology to me). And, conveniently, these devices can be computers, tablets, or smartphones from any manufacturer.

Video conferencing or chatting is being used for a variety of reasons like Team meetings (The Computer Club Board of Directors just had their first virtual BOD meeting while everyone was social distancing in their own homes.), Webinars, where there's no interaction between attendees other than a textbox, One-on-One training and support, job interviews, attending religious ceremonies (We just attended church on Sunday in our living room.) and even telemedicine where you and a doctor interact via video conference.



<u>Typical PC Video Conferencing Screen</u>

Video conferencing allows people who are in different geographic locations to communicate by providing live audible and visual connections between them. Video conferencing technology includes audio and visual aspects so the following are the components of a typical Video conferencing setup: Internet connection (Ethernet, Wi-Fi), Displays (laptop, desktop monitor, smartphone), cameras and microphones

(webcams with built-in microphones), speakers (built-in or external speakers), video conferencing software.

Fortunately, there are a lot of Video Chatting/Conferencing software options available today. Things were not as available a few years ago when I started having a video conference with three college friends. We were spread out in the US in four separate states. I was here in Florida, one friend was in S. Carolina, another friend was in Tennessee, and the fourth was in Arizona (so we had to deal with different time zones). At that time, the only practical/free application that we knew of, and could afford, was Skype. So we used Skype, once a month, every month for almost a year. Initially, it took up to a half-hour to get everyone set up and communicating, but by the time we stopped conferencing we had gotten it down to only a couple of minutes of preparation. (From what I've seen lately, Skype seems to be a whole lot easier to use now.)

But, nowadays, you have a lot of choices. Skype, which has been around since 2003, is still a good choice. Other fairly well-known choices are WebEx, GoToMeeting, Zoom, Facebook, and WhatsApp. Some other, possibly less known, choices are Microsoft Meet, Google Hangouts, Jitsi Meet, and BlueJeans. And don't forget Duo and Facetime, which were initially intended for smartphones, though they say that under certain conditions they can work with appropriate computers. Duo is available for Android and Apple devices while Facetime is available only for Apple devices. Some of these Video Conferencing choices are free, some have a free version and some have only paid versions. Having an account or a subscription (if there is a cost) allows you to set up and initiate a conference; there is usually no cost for attendees. Zoom has been in the news lately, once positively, for its increase in stock price because so many people have been using it, and once negatively for its poor security and the infamous "Zoombombing". (In fact, some companies have prohibited employees from using Zoom.) Some of the security concerns revolved around the choice of certain defaulted settings. These default choices have recently been changed to improve certain aspects of security, but the main security problem is the fact that communication between devices is not encrypted. Maybe this will be changed in the future.

If you are trying to decide which video conferencing software might be best for you, there are a few things to consider. Cost is always an important consideration, especially if it is only going to be used for personal use. If the software is used in a business it might be easier to handle the monthly expense. Next, the number of participants may be important, especially if you have a large number of people to communicate with. The free versions will probably have lower maximums. There may be a time limit for meetings, especially with the free version. Screen sharing, which may or may not be available, is the ability for one person to have their desktop or a specific window shown on all of the participant's screens. This allows a presenter to show everyone the same information, like the slides of a PowerPoint presentation. Some packages may offer an amount of "free cloud storage" along with the software. That may be useful for sending large files (larger than could be sent in an email) to the meeting participants. This may also be useful if you intend to do cooperative document development. Messaging

between participants during the meeting is the ability to send a short "text like" message to all of the participants, allowing inter-participant communications. Messaging may be desirable for large presentations. Having a permanent record of the meeting, for future review, may be important, so you may want a "Recording" feature. Some software might have Calendar syncing which is the ability to interact with certain calendars and allow meetings to be automatically put on the participants' calendars. Whiteboard capabilities allow the participants to interact with programs, documents, and images, a feature may be only needed for business meetings. Security is always a concern and increased security probably comes with increased cost.

So, whenever you can, take advantage of Video Teleconferencing and your Windows PCs, Apple PCs, Android, and Apple mobile devices to help you get together without getting together.

What's new in my Toy Box? SanDisk Extreme Portable SSD

By Jasmine Blue D'Katz, Lake County Computer Enthusiasts, IL March 2020 issue, News Journal www.lcace.org, mmcenery (at) sbcglobal.net

I wrote an article several months ago about the new SSD storage devices SanDisk has produced, I just purchased my second one. This time I went with the 1TB Portable SSD because, as a videographer and photographer, I need more space for the rather large files I create during some of my projects. I felt that I would stick with something that I've found it to be reliable. The 500TB SSD is now my backup for personal files, photos, memorabilia, and data which I will archive and keep in my safe.

I've been a longtime advocate for SanDisk products, especially the SD card which I use in my photo and video cameras. They have been very reliable over the years and give me fast data transfer. Besides reliability, it comes down to speed, convenience, and value-added extras. If you are looking for a cheap Portable SSD, then you might want to look elsewhere. The 500TB Portable SSD prices out at about \$70 and \$160 for 1TB. I will now be able to carry larger files (video and photos) projects and training material along in my laptop bag.

The extras I mentioned are the SanDisk's proprietary SanDisk Access data encryption utility which is preinstalled. The software creates a password-protected "vault" on your SSD.

I've found the SanDisk Portable SSD to be very fast when it comes to transferring and saving data. It comes with two USB Type-C cables, one with a Type C and one with a Type A end for your computer, rather than an easy-to-lose USB-C -to-A adapter. The unit is backward compatible with older USB specs. SanDisk offers one of the longest (five-years) warranties found on any product of its kind.

Go to Page 1

Why SSD? NO MOVING PARTS!

The Digital VIKING

January 2021

President's Corner

What the Heck is That, and Why Didn't I Do This Before?

by Greg Skalka

Drive Light newsletter

www.uchug.org

president (at) uchug.org

The world is full of interesting things. As an engineer, I am usually in the habit of analyzing everything I see. Occasionally I will find something I cannot quite figure out initially, but often with a little help, it may make sense.

We all at times get in the habit of doing things a certain way. Even when it has become inconvenient or more costly, we often stick to our old ways despite having considered better solutions. It sometimes takes reaching a tipping point before we decide to try a new method, and often later wonder why it took us so long to change.

What the Heck Is That?

I love little tech gadgets. I buy a lot of little (meaning relatively inexpensive) things just on speculation, thinking that they might be useful. If they are not, at least I will have probably learned something. I am especially attracted to items on sale or that appear to be a bargain.

I buy a lot of USB Flash memory devices - after all, who cannot use more digital storage capacity? I have bought all sorts and styles of USB drives. Some have caps over the USB type A male connector for protection. Some act like a ball-point pen - the connector is concealed in the case and slides out for access. Some are large and some are tiny, not much bigger than the USB connector. I have some that are made of metal, though most have plastic bodies. Some have swivel covers, and some have no cover for the connector at all.

I bought one a while back that I thought was unique - a



Patriot Stellar Lite 32 GB MicroUSB / USB 2.0 Flash Drive. (Photo 1) It has a standard USB type A on one end and a USB micro on the other (Photos 2 & 3). It was advertised to work with both PCs (the standard type-A end) and Android mobile devices (the USB micro end), assuming the mobile device supported USB OTG (On-The-Go).



Photo 3: Patriot Stellar Lite - Micro Side

I bought this drive thinking I could easily transfer files between my computers and my Android tablet, but I found, in reality, I had little need to do that. It turns out that I seldom use my Android tablet at all. It is too big to carry around, and at 9" is too small to be comfortable for a lot of reading. With the touchscreen, it is too difficult to use for extensive writing, and adding a Bluetooth keyboard and mouse results in the equivalent of an underpowered netbook (remember those?) with some assembly required. My tablet really only served as a gateway device to my Chromebooks and smartphone.

I love my Chromebooks; they are lightweight, small but big enough to be useable, fast booting, and are great as an internet access device. They don't have much internal storage as I only buy the original, inexpensive kind (those new Chromebooks with large screens, powerful processors and lots of storage are just Chrome OS laptops), so I need to keep SD cards and USB Flash drives with them. Since that Patriot Stellar Lite drive was small and provides less of a lever to catch and break off when plugged in, I assigned it to Chromebook duty.

That is when I began thinking - what the heck is that little peg on the cord that came with the drive?

The cord obviously keeps the cap for the USB micro side from getting lost, but what is with the funny peg? It kept getting in the way under that side of the Chromebook.



Photo 4: Peg in the way

I was almost going to cut it off when my wife mentioned what it must be for. She suggested it would plug into the headphone jack, and thus retain the drive when it was unplugged.

Photo 5: Peg v Headphone Plug comparison I tried this, and it worked (at least for the USB port on that side of the Chromebook).

I tried it on my smartphone and it worked as well. (I do not know if it is a necessity, but it must be what the manufacturer of the Flash drive intended.



Photo 6: Stellar Lite in Chromebook



Mystery solved!

iviyalely solved:

Why Didn't I Do This Before?

I started regularly reading the newspaper at a young age. I have subscribed to the local paper since moving to San Diego in 1982. While I still get news from the radio and television, the newspaper has always been a trusted source, a familiar format, and my favorite way to stay informed. When internet news came along, I was ahead of many in questioning how accurate and factual the information was.

I do not often get to read books (or technical manuals, like Mr. Scott from the original Star Trek) for entertainment, but I try to keep up with the newspaper. I am too busy in life right now to succeed in this, however, and am usually days or weeks behind the current issue. Others might discard the paper after a day or so without reading it, but I find much more value in it than just the headline stories. I usually get all the front-page news I need in the little bit of local and national evening TV news broadcasting my wife has on when I get home, or on the radio during my commute. It is the more timeless articles of local, regional, and national issues in the newspaper that I find of most interest. The comics have always been worth the price to me as well.

While I have never had any real problems with the quality or content of the product, it is the price that has given me the hate in my love-hate relationship with the newspaper in the last few decades. Long ago the subscription was a fixed, advertised amount per period that had only reasonable increases over time. Then the newspaper appeared to adopt the pricing philosophy of the cable and satellite TV industry, not "what the market will bear," but what I will call "whatever the individual customer will bear." In this business model, customers don't all pay the same price, and pricing is often not well advertised. Low introductory offers are available for new customers, but these rates soon increase until customers complain or cancel. Customer loyalty seems to be an undervalued trait.

I'm fine with reasonable price increases over time, in line with the general cost of living, but I still have a spreadsheet I generated in 2014 that showed I'd seen a 140% increase in my newspaper subscription cost over the prior three years. Calling and complaining got it reduced by 25%. Then I spoke with a friend in another part of town that got the same paper by paying 1/2 what I did. This price battle with the newspaper went on for years, but there was not much I could do since I had no acceptable alternative.

Though reading the paper was something I enjoyed, it was also a source of household discord. My wife is much like Mary Poppins (practically perfect in every way), and though she did read the newspaper (at least some of the time), she did not like the way I read it. She felt that once the sun had set on an edition it should be discarded; my piles of weeks-old papers were clutter to her. She blamed the newspaper ink on my hands for grime-marks on the kitchen table (where I read), the nearby furniture, and the walls near light switches. With no children or dogs in the household any longer to blame, I had to be the culprit. The physical paper was also a nuisance when we traveled, as we had to arrange for a neighbor to collect it each day (I didn't want to stop the paper temporarily and let unscrupulous newspaper employees know our

house would be vacant). I also had to go out on the driveway each morning and hopefully pick it up (and then call to complain when it was not there).

I had looked at the newspaper's web site (Photo 8) as a digital alternative, but a hodgepodge of articles you have to search through is not what I wanted for getting my news. I wanted the same curated experience I got from the print paper, so a PDF version of the published paper would be the only acceptable digital substitute. Even then I was not sure I would be satisfied without the physical part of the newspaper experience.

Finally, after another price increase and another reading of the riot act about my piles of papers from my wife last fall, I seriously investigated the digital edition of the newspaper (it was included in our paper subscription anyway). I found you could read a reproduction of the paper on their web site (with a viewer I found less than ideal), and you could also download a PDF version. With the digital-only subscription costing 1/4 of what we were paying for print, I finally was motivated to cancel the paper version and went digital-only. No more trips to the driveway (or to the neighbor's after a vacation), and no more late (or wet) papers or tips to a delivery person.

Unfortunately, I've yet to figure out how to download the PDF version from their site successfully with a Chromebook. I now download on a Windows computer to my small USB Flash drive and read them on my Chromebook at the kitchen table (or wherever). The papers can pile up on my Flash drive without my wife complaining of clutter. She says the household grime level has gone down as well, but I am suspicious of the sudden improvement, which may just be coincident with cleaning for the holidays. I have heard it said (probably by a woman) that men are bears with clothes, so I may be accused of having my hand in the honey jar yet in the future.

I have tried reading the PDF paper on my smartphone, (Photo 9) but it is way too difficult on the small screen. I have to scroll around to show only a small segment of a column on the screen to satisfy my old eyes (Photo 10). With the Chromebook, I can read when viewing the full-page width, and can still enlarge a bit more if necessary one day (something not possible with real paper).

I've found I've adapted well to reading the PDF newspaper on my Chromebook and now don't miss the paper version at all (though I might when my stock of old papers I lay out when cleaning my bike chain is used up). Digital technology has improved my life yet again. I suspect I will still have to watch my subscription charges carefully, but it will, in any case, be a lot less than for having a real paper delivered and is better for the environment. With the digital-only subscription, I now look back at my physical paper days and wonder why I didn't do this before?

Go to Page 1

Special Interest Groups (SIGs)

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.

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

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 Summit Place for General Meetings:

Proceed to Eden Prairie Center Flying Cloud Drive . [Flying Cloud Drive runs along the West side of the Eden Prairie Center.] Once you have driven past Eden Prairie Center (on the left) along Flying Cloud Drive you will come to a stop light at Prairie Center Drive. The next intersection with a stop light and left turn lane is Fountain Place. Turn left at Fountain Place and go straight into the parking lot. Turn left again to the first covered entry way of Summit Place. There is plenty of parking in the large parking lot in front of the first Summit Place covered entry way. When you enter the door at the first covered entry way, ask to be directed to the Performance Room for the TC/PC meeting. For a map of more detailed directions and *info on Web SIG and Board meeting*, check the TC/PC website.

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.

February

January

Sun	Mon	TUES	WED	Thu	Fri	SAT
					1	2
3	4	5	6	7	8	9 9am-Noon Linux on Sat- urday
10	11	12 7pm General Mtg LoCast 6pm Tech Topics	13	14	15	16 9am-Noon Microsoft Of- fice (including Access)
17	18	19	20	21	22	23
24	25	26	27	28	29	30
31	1	2	3	4	5	6
7	8	9 7pm General Mtg 6pm Tech Topics	10	11	12	13 9am-Noon Linux on Sat- urday
14	15	16	17	18	19	20 9am-Noon Microsoft Of- fice (including Access)
21	22	23	24	25	26	27
28						



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.)



1/21 I'm signing up for: Here's the info for my TC/PC Membership: O Individual/Family Membership (\$18) O Business Membership (\$100) If an existing member your # Company name Make checks payable to: **Twin Cities PC User Group** 341 County Rd C2 W Roseville, MN 55113 State Zip http://www.tcpc.com OHome OBusiness OChange address: OPerm. OTemp. 'til _____ O Check # O Bill me Home phone_____ Work phone____ O New member O Renewal O Prior member I'm interested in: Online address(es) O Training classes O Volunteering O Special Interest Groups: New User, Access, Where did you hear about TC/PC? _____ List here: O I DO NOT want any of my information disclosed. O I DO NOT want to receive any mailings Administrative Use Only Rec'd

January 12, 2021 7:00 pm General Meeting

Using LoCast

Presenters: Diane

Via Zoom

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