

DECEMBER 2003

WELCOME TO THE DECEMBER EDITION OF FAMILY COMPUTER NEWS
published by VONTRONICS, INC., Naples, Florida

If you have received this newsletter by mistake or do not wish to receive it in the future, then we apologize. Please email us with details at <mailto:support@familycomputerusa.com>

WE'VE MOVED!!!

From the garage to the living room! With the decline in our new computer sales and increase in service on both aging and name-brand computers, we've decided to stay at our Naples Park address and enhance our service area by remodeling our house to accommodate these needs. We still build custom computers for your special needs but we don't offer basic computers anymore. Please come by for a tour of our expanded facilities. Anyone who drops in for a visit gets a 2004 pocket calendar while they last! Call first 597-0001

I NEED YOUR HELP

Our continued business survival depends on word-of-mouth advertising. As a special offer to my existing customers and newsletter readers I am offering a \$25 credit for every new customer that you refer to us! And there is no limit to how many credits you can accrue. Just print out and fill in this coupon with your name and phone number, then give it to a friend who needs help with their computer. When they turn in the coupon to me you will get the \$25 credit and they get \$25 instant rebate against their first invoice. And I get a new customer, so we all win! If you have any questions, please call 597-0001

\$25 INSTANT REBATE

One of my customers decided that you should receive \$25 off your first invoice for Computer Services at

VONTRONICS, Inc.

779 92nd Avenue N., Naples, FL 34108
Call first for an appointment 597-0001
Expires August 1, 2004

name and phone number of referring Vontronics customer:



INFLIGHT E-MAIL AND MESSAGING

Verizon has added messaging to its Continental Airlines Airphone services that will allow up to 46 passengers paying \$6 each per flight to connect their laptops to the new JetConnect service by plugging into the seat-side Airphone jacks. You can use instant messaging services like AIM,

MSN, ICQ or Yahoo or, for \$16 per flight, correspond with e-mail from your laptop computer. Verizon plans to add high-speed internet and file transfer services soon.
<http://www22.verizon.com/airfone/jetconnect/>

COMPUTER CLASSES ANYONE?

Naples FreeNet is offering several computer courses in a classroom environment for the beginner and intermediate user. Here's your chance to learn some of those skills you've been putting off or to improve some of the skills you already have. <http://home.naples.net/education/>

If you need one-on-one tutoring at your home or business, Vontronics has several freelance tutors we recommend. Just give a call and we'll match you up with the best teacher for your needs. 597-0001

CAN HACKERS ATTACK?

Frequently, I am asked about how possible is it for hackers to get access to home or office computers. Well, it depends mostly on how you connect to the internet. If you have an always-on high-speed connection you are more vulnerable than a dial-up connection simply because a hacker can't predict when you are next going to dial in and connect so they have a chance to compromise your system. Most hacker efforts are concentrated on commercial high-visibility accounts instead of private home or small office connections due to the notoriety factor; the majority of hacker attacks are motivated by the notoriety factor within their peer-group. It's the same motivation that drives computer viruses writers and graffiti artists.

There are two main ways that a hacker can gain remote access to your computer. The most common is to connect directly to it by knowing its IP address and then using weaknesses in your operating system to gain access. The other way is to send you a virus/trojan that will send your information to the hacker on its own.

I'm sure you have noticed the occasional notice that pops up from Microsoft informing you of a critical update that needs to be applied to your system. Always take these critical updates because they patch a weakness in your operating system. If you haven't seen these notices, then with Windows 98 or newer, connect directly to windowsupdate.microsoft.com to scan for updates that are available.

A secondary precaution you can use to prevent unauthorized remote access to your computer, whether from direct attack or from an internal virus/trojan trying to send out information without your permission, is to install a firewall. A firewall can either be hardware or software. A hardware firewall is usually a broadband router that behaves as if it were a PC sharing its internet connection with your computers. Since it is not an actual computer, it doesn't have the ports, connections or weaknesses that a PC has and it will not allow hackers to pass through it to your computer. A software firewall is a program similar to an anti-virus program that runs in the background all the time and monitors the traffic on your internet connection. If it detects any traffic that hasn't been pre-approved then it stops the traffic and alerts you for a decision. One of the best software firewalls available now is ZoneAlarm which offers a free version here:

http://www.zonelabs.com/store/content/company/products/zna1m/freeDownload.jsp?lid=zadb_zadn
down

By far, most home computers do not contain enough information of value to hackers for them to spend the time or risk to get, but it is not impossible for them to do it. You've heard it before but it's still true: keep your anti-virus updated, accept critical updates from Microsoft and, if you have an always-on high-speed connection, use a firewall, whether it is hardware or software based.

Don't forget to print and hand out your coupon!

Thanks for reading. Now you're one of the Family!

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