

Happy New Year to everyone! I wish all of you the best for 2012good health, joy and happiness.

I've decided that the best way for me to start of the year is with some information that might help you with your computing experience. My goal is to try and send out news that I think will help all of you and that will keep you up to date on the newest threats, software that's available and things you should or should not be doing. I have had several phone calls about updating software and questions about what is good to download or what could be dangerous. It made me think that it's time to be in touch with some basic information for you. If you don't want to receive these emails, just let me know and I'll be glad to take you off my mailing list.

First of all, it's time to make sure that your security is up to date. I still recommend AVG Free and the reason is that it is one of the best anti-virus software programs out there and it's also "free". A few months ago messages started to pop up telling people to upgrade to AVG 2012. I know that I put it on a lot of the machines that I work on, so if you have it PLEASE make sure that you're updated to the new version. The software will still work, BUT it won't download all the latest .dat files that keep it up to date.

Also, If you're finding that your machines are running slow, it could be a couple of things are going on. You could have a virus, or your anti-virus software can be slowing things up. Norton 360 is one of the programs that can use a lot of your resources and if you have an older machine, that could be the culprit. I recommend that you don't renew it and look for another anti-virus program to use. Make sure that your scans are being done on a regular basis.

If you're a Mac user, now is the time to put an anti-virus program on your machines. For years we've heard that Macs never get viruses, but that has changed. Again, you can get a free one called i-AntiVirus. I strongly suggest that you do this so you don't fall victim to the infections that could get onto your machine.

If you need to download any of these programs, go to www.download.com This is a safe site to go to.

And as always, DON'T open email from someone you don't know, go to a website through an email if they say that you have a problem with your account, or run a scan because something on the internet has come up telling you that you're infected. Let your anti-virus software take care of it for you. In most cases it's a scam that can get you into a lot of trouble.

On a brighter side, there are some good things that you can get for free and I'm going to list some of them here. Anyone that knows me knows that I hate to spend a lot of money on programs....so here we go.

If you want to get Photoshop but balk at the \$700 price tag, try downloading "Gimp". It's just like Photoshop and it's free!

http://download.cnet.com/GIMP/3000-2192_4-10073935.html

If you've lost files on your computer, here's a free program to recover them. It's called Recuva by piriform

http://download.cnet.com/Recuva/3000-2242_4-10753287.html?tag=mncol;1

3. And if you want to clean up your computer, Ccleaner is a program that will do the job for you. This is another free program from Piriform.

<http://www.piriform.com/ccleaner/download>

And back to one of the first things I mentioned...updating. Make sure that anything that says "Adobe" or Windows Updates are done. Also Java should be updated if you get a prompt to update to the latest version. ***With Firefox or Adobe Reader, I'd wait on that for a while. You can just refuse to update (for a couple of weeks) to make sure that they've worked all the bugs out of the software.

I just want to take a minute to mention a service to pet lovers that I find amazing. I had a student in my Photography class and she has started a business doing animal portraits. She sent me some of her compositions and her work is beautiful! Mary gears the photos to the persons specifications perfectly, going with a theme that suits the family's interests. These are very unique and the price is right for all the work that she does on them. They make perfect gifts for friends and are great for any pet lovers home. And she even does children's portraits. :) If interested, please contact Mary Pace gofiggy1@gmail.com 786-3930 I'm sure she'd be glad to show you her work. :)

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If you have any questions, please feel free to write me. I can answer in the newsletter or personally if requested. I hope to send you shorter letters in the future, but who knows. If I have a lot of news, I'll be wanting to share it!

It looks like winter is finally making an appearance. Stay warm and stay safe!

Shirl

<http://www.shirlscomputersolutions.com/>

