

Willow Valley Computer Club

March, 2025 | Newsletter | Volume 26, Issue 2

Programs are at 2:00 pm the first Thursday of the month (except July-August) in the Cultural Center unless otherwise noted.

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Computer Club Leadership

- President: Al Williams
- Vice President: Dick Beidleman
- Secretary: Paula Sandridge
- Treasurer: Lee Wermuth
- Previous President: Sid Paskowitz

Committee Chairpersons

- Club Website: Paula Sandridge
- Computer Room: Lee Wermuth
- Information Central: Sid Paskowitz
- Newsletter: Mike Pancione
- Programs: Dick Beidleman
- Publicity: Bill Adams
- SmartLife: Al Fulvio
- Training: Bill Skelly

Directors

- CCTC: John Santora

Advisors

- Bruce Mawson
- Tony Poulos
- Cathy Thorn

President's Pen

by Al Williams

Cybersecurity isn't just a concern for organizations of all sizes—it's a necessity for individuals at home. Fortunately, the US government's Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency, CISA, has developed an informative program called Project Upskill, which offers guidance through a series of courses which are useful in helping internet and cell phone users defend themselves against cybercrime.

While CISA's Project Upskill provides a valuable foundation to empower individuals with essential skills to defend against cyber threats, our Project Upskill II goes beyond, offering concrete hardware and software recommendations tailored to your specific needs with immediate application. We focus on foundational skills, provided at no cost, making it easy to invest in your security. Take the next step. Sign up for our ongoing presentations. Read more about it in this issue of our Newsletter.

Contact Information

For more information about the Computer Club, please contact Al Williams via email at wvcomputerclub@gmail.com.

Please keep your email address on Club records current so we can send you important emails. Send email corrections or updates to Lee Wermuth at lwermuth582@gmail.com.

Bill Skelly is the Willow Valley Computer Club Training Coordinator. We are always looking for residents qualified to teach computer-related topics. We want our classes to support your needs. Contact Bill (whskelly@aol.com) to volunteer or to offer ideas on topics needed.

Computer Club Technology Center

NOTE: The Computer Club Technology Center (CCTC) is open on Mondays only, from 10 am to 4 pm. The CCTC is located on the 5th floor of Manor North 'J' building. The door may be closed, but with a sign indicating *Please Knock*.

Apple Items Available: See Bruce Thompson in the CCTC.



Project Upskill II Series: Identifying and Mitigating Cyber Threats to Your Assets

By Al Williams

If you use a computer, a phone, or drive a car, you are vulnerable to identity theft. Your personal information is valuable and scammers- criminals - can use it to steal your identity. This information includes:

Your identifying information: Name, address, date of birth, Social Security Number, etc.

Your financial information: Bank accounts, investment accounts, credit cards, etc.

There are ways to significantly mitigate (reduce) personal information exposure, or loss, due to physical access or cybersecurity breaches. *Our Project Upskill II series will help.*

Eight modules cover all areas where identity theft can occur. Presentations on these modules began on January 28th with a general overview of the situation and will continue every other week until early May. All are given in the Education Room at the Cultural Center at 10 AM.

Project Upskill II series presentations

- Identifying and Mitigating Cyber Threats to Your Assets: 1/28/25
- Basic Cybersecurity for Personal Computers and Mobile Devices: 2/11/25
- Protecting Your Accounts from Compromise: 2/25/25

The above presentations are available at wvcomputerclub.org. The remainder will be posted shortly after the presentation.

- Protecting Data Stored on Your Devices: 3/11/25
- Protecting Your Data in Transit: 3/25/25
- Securing Your Home Wi-Fi: 4/8/25
- Managing Your Privacy and Security Online: 4/22/25
- Virtual Private Networks: 5/6/25

Here is a summary of the first presentation

The cyber security problem.

The advent of the internet and cell phones provided unprecedented access to information. In the early days, privacy was not a high priority. Social media platforms enticed people to share personal information and millions eagerly did, and still do. Before long, many unscrupulous and criminal actors around the world began to target vulnerable people and companies to gain information for financial gain. Over time this problem has gotten worse; taking preventative measures to protect oneself is no longer an option.

Supreme Court Rulings – Third-Party Doctrine

With rulings in 1976 and 1979, the Supreme Court affirmed that “a person has no legitimate expectation of privacy in information he voluntarily turns over to third parties.”

Many organizations have privacy policies which ask for our consent to use our personal information. Often, we don't read these policies which can be couched in legalese and/or be so lengthy that they are tedious to read, let alone understand.

The issue is: *the use of our personal information when it is publicly available or given by consent* has value to criminals and legitimate organizations. There are some laws which put limits on the Third-Party Doctrine, thereby protecting some use of our personal information. But, don't expect criminals to abide by them.

Identity Theft

If you use the Internet in any way, you should assume that you are vulnerable to identity theft and you should adopt ways to mitigate the danger. Vulnerabilities exist everywhere: computer apps, web browsers, phones, and even in your car.

For example, this is what Google says about collecting your personal information through use of its products and services:

"The activity information we may collect include:

- Terms you search for
- Videos you watch
- Views and interactions with content and ads
- Voice and audio information
- Purchase activity
- People with whom you communicate or share content
- Activity on third-party sites and apps that use our services"

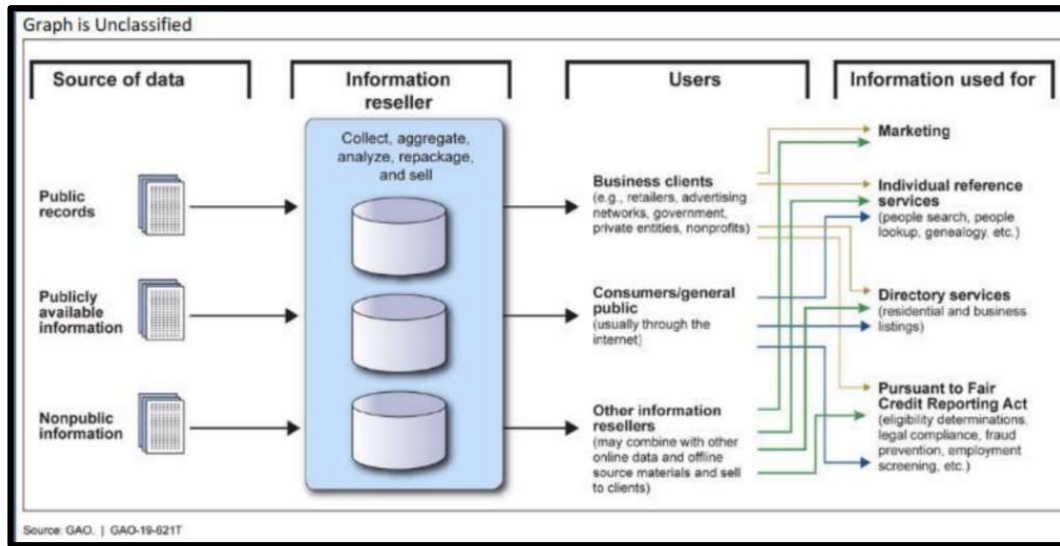
"We also collect the content you create, upload, or receive from others when using our services. This includes things like emails you write and receive, photos and videos you save, docs and spreadsheets you create, and comments you make on YouTube videos."

"We collect information about your location when you use our services, which helps us offer features like driving directions, search results for things near you, and ads based on your general location."

....in other words: everything.

Commercially Available Information

Collected personal information may become Commercially Available Information (CAI). CAI is often sold or otherwise made available by commercial entities...often referred to as *data brokers* who maintain large, sophisticated databases with consumer information, including credit histories, insurance claims, criminal records, employment histories, incomes, ethnicities, purchase histories, and interests. The diagram below shows how this works:



This data-gathering activity is massive and growing annually. While the diagram shows the general participants, one must assume that criminals will and do attempt to gather and use the information for illegal financial gain.

What you can do.

While cybercriminals are constantly finding new ways to collect personal information, there are suitable ways you can reduce giving that information away by:

- reading privacy policies,
- reviewing privacy reviews,
- choosing the apps you will use,
- limiting the personal information that you provide, and
- controlling location services.

While these techniques can limit what is shared, Project Upskill II identifies tools that can be used to reduce your vulnerability to identity theft due to information about you already “out there” as well as new information you have to provide.

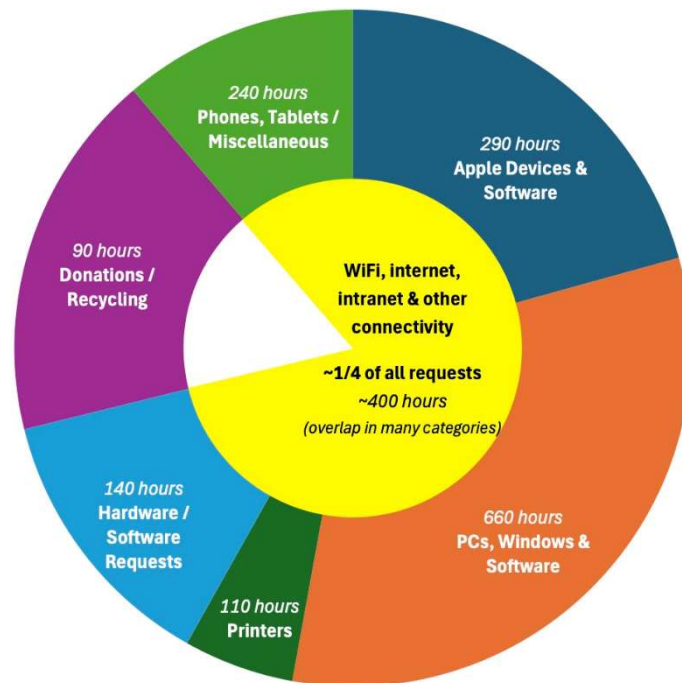
In summary, Project Upskill II's lessons show threat actors' varied avenues of attack to help users understand the steps they can take to mitigate risk. After completing Project Upskill, users should feel more confident that they can implement basic cybersecurity protections

Computer Club Technology Center 2024 Annual Summary

By John Santora

Computer Club Technology Center – Drop in Support

The Willow Valley Computer Club Technology Center (CCTC) is open most Mondays from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. on the fifth floor of North J building. In 2024, CCTC was open 48 days, with a rotating group of 5-8 Resident volunteers. Our volunteers provided about 1600 hours of service, on a variety of technology issues, to about 450 residents. The graphic below shows the topics covered and approximate hours dedicated to drop-in visits.



Direct Resident Interaction: by phone and in residence

Separate from the CCTC, about 30 of our volunteers helped Residents, in-person or by phone, on many technology issues, including printer setup, router troubleshooting and TiVo installations, among many others. Residents greatly appreciate this personalized service and the time spent working on their technology issues. Of course, our volunteers react on a “best efforts” basis so there are limits on what can be done.

The Club cannot accurately estimate the hours spent by these volunteers, since Residents often contact a volunteer directly, or by referral from another Resident. However, we conservatively estimate that this assistance amounted to **hundreds of additional hours** of service last year.

Closing thought

As computing technology gets more powerful and useful, the issues that come up when something fails or doesn't work as expected (prayed for, wished) seem to never go away. The Willow Valley Computer

Club stands ready, and able, to help residents deal with those issues – at no charge. Drop-in, call or email the Club when you have technology issues. We are happy to help! Direct line: 717-464-6727 or by email: gethelp@wvcomputerclub.org

**Willow Valley Computer Club
Volunteer Opportunity**

Volunteer Position Title: Deputy CCTC Director

Description of Role: The Deputy CCTC Director assists the CCTC Director as needed to accomplish the objectives set forth by the Willow Valley Computer Club’s Executive Committee.

Training: The CCTC Director will provide training as needed for the Deputy CCTC Director to successfully accomplish their assignments.

Reporting: The Deputy CCTC Director will report to the CCTC Director.

Time Commitment: A minimum of four hours per week is needed. The candidate must be able to work during hours acceptable to the CCTC Director

Qualifications: Prior operations experience is desirable. A willingness to learn is imperative.

WVCC mission:
“to provide the means to educate beginners or interested non-users on how to use a computer”

WVCC mission:
“to provide a forum for interchange of computer information among members”

WVCC mission: “to arrange for speakers to talk about subjects of interest to those with some background and experience in computer use”
