

Willow Valley Computer Club

July , 2025 | Newsletter | Volume 26, Issue 4

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: open
- 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: open
- Smart Life: Al Fulvio
- Training: Bill Skelly

Director

- CCTC: John Santora

Advisors

- Bruce Mawson
- Tony Poulos
- Cathy Thorn

President's Pen

by Al Williams

Are you eager to conquer the digital world, or perhaps just looking to connect with like-minded residents who share an interest in technology? Our Computer Club is designed specifically for you! We understand that the fast pace of technological change can be daunting, which is why we offer a welcoming and supportive environment for all skill levels. Whether you're a complete beginner who wants to learn the basics, or an experienced user looking to expand your knowledge, our club provides the perfect setting. We're dedicated to helping new and interested non-users gain confidence and proficiency in using computers, ensuring everyone can comfortably navigate today's increasingly digital landscape.

Beyond foundational learning, our club serves as a vibrant forum for exchanging valuable computer information among members. Share your insights, ask questions, and learn from the collective wisdom of your peers. We also regularly arrange for engaging speakers who delve into subjects of particular interest to those with some background and experience in computer use, keeping us all abreast of the latest trends, software, and hardware advancements. From exploring operating systems to understanding cybersecurity best practices, our presentations are tailored to enrich your technological understanding and spark lively discussions.

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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.

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 Presentations

Introduction

The Project Upskill II series of presentations is devoted to helping people protect their personal information from cybercriminals' theft. The most consequential information is financial or highly personal, and it is stored on home computers, cell phones, vehicle systems, and legitimate internet websites. Of course, it can also be on fraudulent sites that users may unwittingly be lured to use.

Cybercriminals pose real threats, and defending against them requires constant vigilance. Unfortunately, being vigilant takes effort, and most people prefer not to or lack the skill to devote time to it. The Upskill series discusses protective measures that require little effort but offer excellent protection if implemented well. Of course, the Computer Club provides help to residents who lack basic skills.

The eight Upskill presentations were given over four months, and for those who missed some or all, this Newsletter will attempt to summarize the key points of each presentation. The original presentations are available at **wvcomputerclub.org**. The summaries will try to elaborate on the points in the presentations, which were explained in detail by the Computer Club speakers: Al Williams, Cathy Thorn, and Tony Paulos. The first two presentations were summarized in our last Newsletter. The next two are summarized below.

How to Protect Data That is Stored on Your Digital Devices (Presented March 25th, 2025)

Anything you have stored on a digital device that accesses the Internet is vulnerable to compromise by external agents, or Threat Actors. Digital devices include: computers, cell phones, tablets even vehicles as well as devices that can attach to them such as flash drives. Even data stored in so-called "clouds" is vulnerable. Threat actors are those who attempt to extort money from you by making your data unusable by you in some way.

In the past, there have been stories of cybercriminals extorting money from companies that failed to adequately protect their data. Typically, these criminals were looking for targets with deep pockets to attack – to make it worth their time. However, they also seek the path of least resistance, so it is in everyone's interest to protect themselves from such attacks.

There are steps you can take to protect your data, and while nothing is foolproof, a few simple strategies, along with a little effort on your part, will go a long way to giving you peace of mind.

Broadly speaking, there are two types of malicious threats to your data: malware and ransomware

- Malware an attack done by any person or software that gains access to your device or accounts to read, manipulate, or steal personal information or data
- Ransomware is an act by any person or software that denies you access to your device (DOS) or data and makes you pay money, gift cards, or cryptocurrency to restore your system or data.

As bad as these are, there is also a third threat: accidental destruction (or loss) of your data, in absence of a cyber threat. Examples include: fire, flood (or spillage onto a device) or power surges. For many people, these are even more likely.

Regardless of how your data is affected, loss of your critical data can give you a lot of misery: loss of time spent creating the data, exposure of private information, and/or loss of money – or all of the above.

Here are things you can do to mitigate all of these threats. Each of these requires an investment in time if you are to be successful. However, you will get the time back if, and when, your data becomes compromised.

- Make a backup copy of your data and store the copy off-line and/or off-site. Backups are the most effective means of protecting your data from all kinds of threats. However, backups should be done consistently (daily, weekly, monthly) depending on
 - how often, and how much, data is changed,
 - how valuable the data is to you (financial, pictures, videos, etc.)
 - how much time you want to invest in doing backups
 - how much time would be invested in recovering from a loss of your data
 - the possibility of never being able to recover from a loss of data
- Encrypt your computer, mobile device, hard drives, removable media – like a flash or USB drive. Encryption ensures that your data cannot be used if it's stolen, since it is difficult or impossible to decrypt. Of course, you must also ensure that the key to decrypt the data is stored where you (or people you trust) can find it. And, it goes without saying that encryption can't help if you have a fire and the storage device is destroyed.
- Make sure you properly discard old equipment. Hard drives and other storage devices must be wiped clean of any stored data. It is not simply a matter of deleting data because remnants can remain. On a PC this means formatting the hard drive, which returns it to its "factory" state or removing, and destroying the hard drive.

Backing your data up is an easy, most important, step in protecting yourself from data theft or loss. There are several types of backups and the differences can be confusing: copy, data copy with synchronization or full backup.

- Copy Backup: makes a duplicate of data without the software that was used to create it. For example: you create a Word document (ABC.docx) on your PC and store a duplicate of it on an external device. You can retrieve the file but you must have Word to use it. This is the easiest approach, and it works. If you do nothing else, do this. A Copy Backup has several variations and each has pros and cons.
 - A full copy of all the data to be backed up. This can include files that have changed and those that haven't. This might typically happen when backing up a complete folder, such as "Documents" in Windows, without identifying files that have been changed. For example, if there are 1000 files and only 10 have changed since the last backup, when you do a copy backup you are duplicating files that haven't changed as well as those that have changed. Copy backups are easy to do but because they can indiscriminately copy everything, you create a lot of needless redundancies. Such backups can take a long time to complete and can take up a lot of space, if several older versions of the same folder are kept. Of course, you can be very selective in what you backup and only back up files you cannot afford to lose.
 - Two other types of copy backups are incremental and differential. Once an initial copy is made of the target data, these processes focus on backing up only changed files. The advantage is that they are much quicker to perform and take up less space. A disadvantage is that special software is required (perhaps at a cost) and setup can be complicated.
- Data back with Synchronization: Data Backup term implies that your data will be synchronized using hardware and/or Cloud services, and software. Synchronization means causing a set of data or files to remain identical in more than one location. This option requires more effort, and possibly cost, but is a good option for heavy users – publishers, journalists, for example.

- **FULL BACKUP:** Encrypts and compresses the operating system, applications, settings, configurations, AND all other data. FULL BACKUP Requires a Restore to put everything back on a computer the way it was. For the majority of Willow Valley residents, this option exceeds the need and skill to perform to obtain the basic protection required.

Devices for external backup.

- **Flash drives:** small, portable devices that plug into a PC's USB port. They are fairly cheap and can store a lot of data. For example, SanDisk sells a drive (the Ultra) that can hold 64GB of data and costs about \$10. Flash drives are easy to use and store off line. For many residents, this might be all that is needed to protect critical data. They are best for home use but OK for travel, provided you protect them from theft or loss
- **External hard drives:** fairly small, and portable extremal disk drives that plug into a PC's USB port. About the size of a cigarette pack, they typically cost around \$80 to \$100 or more and can store several terabytes of data. External drives can store the entire contents of a PC, including the operating system, and they can transfer large amounts of data faster than a flash drive. While they are portable, one would usually not take them on a trip. Well known sellers of these drives are Western Digital and Seagate.
- **Cloud Storage:** A cloud, in computer jargon, is not a concentration of water vapor in the sky. It is a large computer-based storage facility, in an anonymous location, anywhere in the world. Typically, clouds are managed by commercial entities such as Microsoft, Google and Apple. They offer storage of data - for a fee - which varies with the amount of data to be stored. The advantage of cloud storage is that is available to you via an internet connection. This means you can access your storage as long you have an internet connection no matter where you are. Clouds are supposed to be secure but it's possible for cybercriminals to get around that.

Back-up software.

- Software exists that facilitates backing up data. One product, Acronis, is included with a purchase of a Western Digital backup drive. It is free to use for several years, after which you must pay a fee to continue to use. The advantage of this tool is that the backup process can be automated on a user selected cycle, thus freeing the user from the task. Also, it makes efficient use of storage space. The disadvantage, for the average user, is that it requires learning how to use and setup the backup process, which isn't as easy as the company suggests.

A Very Basic Strategy for Data Backup: 3-2-1-1: 3 sets of data on 2 different media with one copy offsite

- Your computer,
- Other local hardware,
- Offsite hardware, a Cloud service, or a bank safe deposit box.

A final suggestion: if you are reluctant to make backups out of fear of process complications or distaste for using arcane software, contact the Computer Club Help Line and someone can help you develop a simple procedure that will help you protect your most valuable files.

Information Central

This article details some of the 450 topics included on the "**Information Central**" webpage for Willow Valley designed to enhance the quality of life of its Residents. The webpage serves as a central hub for crucial information, resources, and tools across various domains, promoting safety, convenience, engagement, and well-being.

1. Computer Club Newsletters - 15 Years of Newsletters and Index to Key Topics:

- **Description:** Archive of the Willow Valley Computer Club's Newsletters, offering a wealth of information on technology, software, and digital skills, with an index for easy navigation.
- **Quality of Life Enhancement:** Promotes digital literacy, helps Residents stay connected, learn new skills, and troubleshoot technology issues. The index makes this resource easily accessible.
- **Benefits for Seniors:** Offers opportunities to learn and stay engaged with technology at their own pace. The index is especially helpful for finding information on specific topics they might be interested in (e.g., video calling to connect with family, online banking safety).

2. Assistive Technologies - For Those with Limitations:

- **Description:** Information and resources on assistive technologies available to individuals with physical, cognitive, or sensory limitations. This could include local providers, funding options, and demonstrations.
- **Quality of Life Enhancement:** Empowers individuals with limitations to live more independently and participate more fully in community life.
- **Benefits for Seniors:** Crucial for many seniors who may experience age-related limitations. Provides access to tools and resources that can significantly improve their daily lives, such as hearing aids, mobility aids, or screen readers.

3. Computer & Internet Account Inventory - Form for Recording Account Names & Passwords:

- **Description:** A downloadable form to help Residents securely record their various online account usernames and passwords.
- **Quality of Life Enhancement:** Improves online security and reduces the frustration of forgotten passwords, making online services more accessible and safer to use.
- **Benefits for Seniors:** Can be particularly helpful for seniors who may find it challenging to remember numerous passwords. A well-organized inventory can reduce stress and prevent being locked out of important accounts.

4. Have I Been Pwned - Is Your Personal Information on the Web?:

- **Description:** A link to the "Have I Been Pwned?" website, which allows users to check if their email addresses or phone numbers have been compromised in data breaches.

- **Quality of Life Enhancement:** Raises awareness about online security and empowers Residents to take proactive steps to protect their personal information.
- **Benefits for Seniors:** Important for protecting seniors from online scams and identity theft, as they may be more vulnerable targets.

5. Internet Crime Complaint Center (IC3) - Where to Send Reports of Fraud:

- **Description:** Direct link and information on how to file a complaint with the IC3, a partnership between the FBI and the National White Collar Crime Center.
- **Quality of Life Enhancement:** Provides a clear channel for Residents to report online fraud and scams, contributing to a safer online environment.
- **Benefits for Seniors:** Offers a crucial resource for reporting scams that often target older adults, potentially helping them recover losses and preventing others from falling victim.

6. Spam Complaint Center - Where to Report Spam:

- **Description:** Information and links to resources for reporting spam emails and messages.
- **Quality of Life Enhancement:** Helps Residents reduce unwanted and potentially harmful communications, leading to a less cluttered and safer online experience.
- **Benefits for Seniors:** Can reduce the risk of seniors falling for phishing scams or being overwhelmed by unwanted emails.

7. Digital Assistants - Tools to Improve Quality of Life:

- **Description:** Information and resources on digital assistants (e.g., Amazon Echo, Co-Pilot, Gemini, Google Home), including their potential benefits for organization, communication, and accessibility.
- **Quality of Life Enhancement:** Introduces Residents to tools that can simplify daily tasks, provide information hands-free, and enhance independence.
- **Benefits for Seniors:** Can be particularly helpful for seniors with mobility issues or those who live alone, providing voice-activated assistance for communication, reminders, and accessing information.

8. Keyboard Shortcuts - Using Keyboard to Avoid Needing to Look for Icons:

- **Description:** A guide to common and useful keyboard shortcuts for various operating systems and applications.
- **Quality of Life Enhancement:** Increases computer efficiency and can reduce physical strain by minimizing mouse use.

COMPUTER CLUB TECHNOLOGY CENTER BI-MONTHLY REPORT

The CCTC, along with Computer Club volunteers, provide a range of information technology services to residents, practically on a daily basis. On Mondays, the Center is open for resident visits. Daily, volunteers help residents with technology issues in residents homes. This report details these services.

May – June 2025 Activity

North "J" 5th floor Technology Center

Hours – Monday 10am – 4pm (sometimes 9:30am – 5pm)

Open days – 8

Active volunteer hours in CCTC – approximately 185

Active WVCC volunteer hours outside CCTC – unknown

Active current CCTC volunteers – 7 technical; 8 administrative

Resident interactions

o Visits to CCTC – 78

o Apple issues – 15

o Windows issues – 28

o Printer Issues – 2

o Phone/Miscellaneous – 7

o Donations – 22

o Product Requests – 4

• Known phone calls from/to residents – approximately 15

• Known visits to resident's locations – approximately 12

o Printer/scanner setup and connectivity issues

o Connectivity issues, including TiVo and log-on security issues

o Estimated hours outside normal CCTC hours: volunteers visit residents to troubleshoot and fix issues, for which records are spotty, at best.

President's Pen (continued from page 1)

Most importantly, our club serves as a trusted resource for residents facing common computer issues. Whether you're facing confusing error messages, battling a pesky scam, dealing with online threats, or simply need a hand with a software application or a piece of hardware, our experienced members are here to help. We're committed to providing practical assistance and demystifying the complexities of modern technology, ensuring you feel empowered and secure in your digital interactions. Join us and discover a community where learning is continuous, support is readily available, and your passion for technology can truly flourish!

Al Williams

Do you have a question or want to provide feedback?
Please get in touch with us at wvcomputerclub@gmail.com

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"