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February 21, 2011
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CHECK YOUR COMPUTER FOR SERIOUS PROBLEMS:

Is your machine crashing, stalling or generally running weird? Recently I had a friend's Dell laptop computer behave exactly this way. I would like to share some testing that you can do on your own to diagnose some deadly problems. Although some desktop keyboards have the Function Key (aka...F-Lock Key), it is most common on a laptop. Turn off your computer. Now hold the FN Key found typically on the bottom-most row near the ALT or CTRL keys. Keep holding this while you press the power up button. Allow the computer to begin booting and then let go of all keys. There are various diagnostic tests that will run, each with their own potential error code. Write these down! They are very important for any technician to know what the problem is. If you like, allow multiple tests to run. Some will take upwards of 30 minutes but you will have a great deal of information. You could even do a web-search for these error codes. If your computer is still under the warranty, you should be able to get any and all replacement parts done in your home within a week. At least Dell operates this way. Check with your manufacturer for their practices. By the way, the computer I mentioned above needed a new hard drive, motherboard, keyboard and mouse tracking pad. If this had been out of warranty, it might have been trashed. Let's hope all is well now for Debby.

CONNECT YOUR PC TO YOUR HIGH-DEF TELEVISION:

There are now many ways to enjoy your favorite movies and television shows over a broadband Internet connection on your computer for a small amount of money, or even for free. Unfortunately, watching such media in the confines of your home office does not always make for the most enjoyable experience. If you would like to escape the office, however, and enjoy your entertainment on the big screen in the living room, you can connect a PC to an HDMI TV. Remember many TV shows and many other programming is available only on the computer. Why not see them on your big screen? Grab a flashlight and investigate the possibilities behind your television. You may see HDMI, DVI or VGA port (they are marked as such). You may also see a 15 or 29 pin port. You will want to match these up to your laptop. Most likely you already have a video out that has pins. In that case all you need is a cable that matches up both on the computer and television. Try Radio Shack or any computer outlet for this inexpensive cable. When buying a new laptop, you may want to request a HDMI port for easy connecting. It is not standard. All you need now is perhaps some external speakers. You can buy some really cheap ones that will do a great job or go crazy; your choice. Don't let this lingo be intimidating. It is not any harder than connecting any two units together. Plug and play. Oh...don't forget to change your input just like when you watch a DVD rather than broadcast television to see what is coming from your computer. Within a few years televisions will broadcast from the Internet so you will not have to connect anything. Enjoy!

ARE YOU A COMPUTER NOVICE?

I talk a lot here about all levels of computer use. I assume most of you feel comfortable with your machine. If you or you know someone who needs the confidence to start using their computer, then I have a class for you. The Wittman Center is part of Monroe County Community College at the corner of Stems and Lewis just over the line. I am holding a class especially for you. It only costs \$29 (seniors pay half of this if you are a MI resident) and you get to spend four hours with me on Saturday, February 26. Give the school a call today and sign up. I look forward to meeting you (734-847-0559). We start at 8:30am. Come casual and learn a lot. Absolutely no computer experience is required. These computers have the Windows 7 operating system. Beginner classes follow this one if you choose to join us.

I MAKE HOUSE CALLS:

I will come to your home or office to help you with almost any predicament including REPAIRS and upgrades. I have an endless amount of patience and knowledge. I offer a 20% discount on my hourly rate for those aged 60 and over. Give me a call at 419-318-9112. References are always available upon request. Don't forget to sign up for my FREE NEWSLETTER at OhComputerTraining.com. Subscribers will get added hints, tips and exciting web-links.

Janis Weber, B.A., owner of Ohio Computer Training, is a personal computer instructor at UT, Lourdes, and MCCC. E-mail any specific questions or comments to jwpctutor@gmail.com or contact her for assistance at 419-318-9112. Public classes are listed on her website: www.OhComputerTraining.com. **Private tutoring and repairs are a just phone call away.**