CAMP

August 2004 Newsletter

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The Capital Apple Macintosh Performa User Group will meet on
Wednesday August 11, 2004 for a Potluck Dinner
at

6:30 pm.

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Rob Darbys House

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44 Charles St. Winthrop
Go north on Rt 133 from Rt 202 about 100 Yards
to Charles Street (between European Auto & Homestead
Reality & opposite the NAPA Store).
Last House on Left.
White with Natural addition.

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gwi
Great Works Internet

Special Offer From Great Works Internet

As most of you know by now, Great Works Internet (GWI) of Biddeford hosts CAMP's web site at virtually no cost to CAMP, and has been doing so since October 2002 or thereabouts. This is a tremendous benefit for which we are extremely grateful. Thank you, GWI!

GWI has extended a special offer of internet service to CAMP members. As a CAMP member, you can get unlimited internet access for only $9.95 per month for the first three months when you sign up during the month of August 2004. We have teamed up with GWI to help our members experience the internet at the lowest possible cost. With this special offer, setup fees are waived and the first three months of service are only $9.95 per month – a savings of $45.00.

As Maine's oldest and largest independent internet service provider, GWI is the fastest, most reliable provider in the state. They offer state-of-the-art equipment, free experienced technical support seven days a week and statewide local access numbers. Also, getting online with GWI is easy – just call and be online in as little as 15 minutes!

To get online, call GWI at 866-494-2020 (286-2054 local). To receive this special, limited-time offer, be sure to mention that you are a CAMP member. (Give the full name of our group to be sure.) This offer expires at the end of August 2004.

gwi
Great Works Internet

Walk In Wireless
Jeff Frankel, CAMP Secretary

Apple introduced its Airport-branded wireless networking technology to the Macintosh line back in 1999 or thereabouts, and I just recently took the plunge. Not completely, I should say. The 3+ Macs in our household are all networked via ethernet cable, and I have no compelling reason to buy a wireless base station. But for years, my sister in New Jersey has had a home Airport network, and when I visited this past April we temporarily installed one of their Airport cards into my Pismo Powerbook. This was fun! I could share their cable modem internet connection from anywhere in the house, and we could swap photos between my machine and theirs – all without the bother of cables.

When I got back home, I considered buying an Airport card for Pismo, but I wasn't sure of the need. I don't travel with Pismo all that much, and usually don't have any pressing need to connect to the internet from public places when I do. What pushed me over the edge was Apple's discontinuance of the original Airport card, which is the only wireless network card that fits wholly inside my computer. (Third-party cards can be inserted into my Powerbook's PC card slot, but I use that port for other things.) I immediately bought a used card from Small Dog Electronics, and it's a good thing that I did: I read in TidBits recently that the price of the original Airport cards, both new and used, has skyrocketed.

Installation of the card in the Powerbook – like installing anything in a Powerbook – was tricky but do-able. OS X's Network preference pane recognized the card, which was a good sign. But to make sure that the card was in good working order, I needed to actually connect to a network. That posed a challenge, as the various web "hotspot" finders list no public wireless networks in the Augusta area. Cruising around by car with Pismo on my daughter's lap turned up nothing. I figured that I'd visit my son in Portland and try out my new toy — I mean, my newly acquired Airport card -- on the University of Southern Maine's growing wireless network.

Then I checked the Maine State Library's web site (www.maine.gov/msl) and struck gold. MSL has just finished the first phase of its "Walk In Wireless" program, a $120,000 initiative to enable wireless internet access at public libraries across the state. In May and June of this year, MSL installed wireless networking routers in 46 Maine libraries, including Gardiner Public Library, Hubbard Free Library in Hallowell and Bailey Public Library in Winthrop. Lithgow Public Library in Augusta and Waterville Public Library are among 14 additional sites that have applied for supplemental funding. You can read full project details by clicking the Walk In Wireless link on the MSL home page. Also, the tech in charge of installation wrote an interesting account of implementation issues in the July/August 2004 issue of Maine IS Technology Newsletter, which is on the web at www.maine.gov/newsletter/index.htm. See Karl Beiser, "Walk In Wireless at 50+ Public Libraries."

So it was with bated breath that I sat down at Gardiner Public, fired up Pismo, turned on the Airport card, and voíla! The network connection immediately registered. I put this new tool to work right away by downloading my month's allotment of audiobooks from audible.com. At Gardiner Public, the signal is strong, registering 12-13 bars out of 15 in Internet Connect, and the signal is fast. On the two occasions that I've logged on, the file download rate was in the neighborhood of 500 megabytes per hour. Ill be putting that capacity to good use keeping my system current with Apple's Software Update and browsing around in the iTunes Music Service.

 Security is a major concern when logging on to public wireless networks. In a nutshell, the only security measures in place at the WIW sites protect the libraries' private computers from patrons logged onto the public network. To maximize ease of access and minimize demands on staff time and technology resources, almost all WIW sites have opted for wide-open wireless networks with no protection for patrons. This does not mean that users are absolutely vulnerable to interception of their private information. It does mean, however, that protection is the responsibility of the user. For a good introduction, I heartily recommend Glenn Fleishman's Take Control of Your AirPort Network (TidBits Electronic Publishing 2004). For my part, when connecting to a public network, I (1) turn off all sharing services; (2) connect to my mail server via secure socket layers for both POP and SMTP mail, and (3) don't send my user name and password or other confidential information to a non-secure web site.

 For laptop owners who lack broadband access at home, Walk In Wireless is a major improvement in the quality of digital life in Maine.
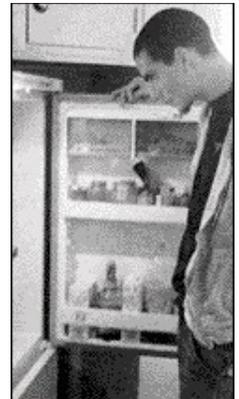
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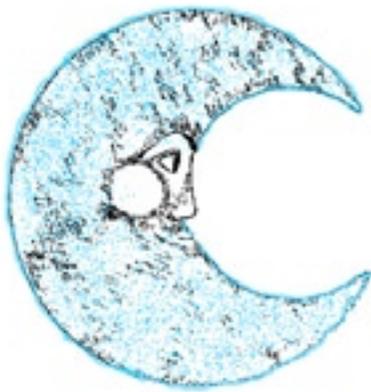
prexar

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