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READY NET GO ... NEWS

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Tip of the Month

RECYCLING

With the advent of computers, a lot of waste has been created that should not go to the landfill. Items such as monitors, batteries, computer hardware, cell phones and printer cartridges should be disposed of at special recycling centers. All of these products contain materials that either take a long time to degrade or will leach toxic chemicals while they are degrading. Fortunately there are recycling centers to handle these products and new methods are being invented every year to recycle and/or remanufacture all of our waste.

Inkjet and laser cartridges, in particular, have become much easier to recycle given their small size and ability to be remanufactured. So to start the New Year off, we've enclosed a **sample recycling envelope** for an inkjet cartridge, PDA or cell phone in this month's newsletter. The envelope is pre-addressed and stamped so all you have to do is put your item in, seal the envelope and drop it in a mail box. Quick and convenient!

In the next few months, we'll be handing out similar recycling envelopes for both inkjet and laser cartridges. If you already have a stash lying around and want to get rid of them sooner, many post offices, grocery stores, and department stores have boxes or bins for collecting used printer cartridges and cell phones. Simply drop your used stuff in the box or on our next visit, we'll pick them up for you and dispose of your used items.

Is Spyware Lurking on Your Computer??

Spyware and Malware are becoming an even bigger problem than SPAM (all those unwelcome emails for Viagra, mortgage loans, etc). Unlike SPAM, which only affects your email program, Spyware is software that is downloaded and installed on your computer. The software or code has the ability to communicate with a third party and transmit information that is on your computer. Most Spyware programs or files are tracking cookies that alert companies to your surfing habits; the software serves as a monitor for tracking who's visiting their websites.

Other Spyware or Malware is potentially harmful; special code/software could be downloaded and installed to your computer that will search your hard drives and send personal data back to the creator. As long as you have an Internet connection, the door is just waiting to be opened. That's why it is extremely important to have the right protection on your computer and to monitor your computer often; not just for viruses but for Spyware as well.

Most Spyware is downloaded and installed unknowingly – either an individual fails to read the privacy notice when downloading legitimate software or by simply browsing the internet, you come across a website that puts a cookie on your machine just for accessing their site. A cookie may or may not be harmful depending on the originator.

In the case of Amazon.com, their 1 click ordering option puts a cookie on your computer so you don't have to fill in your contact information every time you

Calling the Office

Mark and Linda are out in the field nearly every day. If you are experiencing a problem, please call the office first: # 610-856-0990 so we can route your call to the best person available. Thanks and Happy Holidays!

checkout. This makes online shopping quick and convenient. Other cookies are not as honest though. By inadvertently clicking on a link to a website, a tracking cookie could be downloaded to your computer that, unless removed, will open a door for that company to send you information for which you did not ask. Pop-up windows are the classic example. You may not even remember which website you clicked on – all you know is that you're seeing a lot more **pop-up windows** while you're browsing than you did before or worse, you see pop-up windows and you don't even have a browser open (e.g., Internet Explorer, Netscape Navigator). All of this is essentially a new form of marketing that isn't going away anytime soon. As long as people click on the links, companies that produce adware, Spyware and Malware will continue to create new ways to infiltrate our computers.

Preventing Spyware

No one is immune from Spyware but there are things you can do to prevent it from disrupting your computer activities. **First**, be diligent with the sites you visit. The Internet has a mind boggling amount of information. Be cautious with the links you click and try to browse reputable sites. **Second**, chat rooms and instant messaging are great ways to communicate and seem relatively harmless but they are crawling with hackers looking for email addresses and personal information and therefore these activities do not belong in most business environments. If you enjoy chat rooms and instant messaging, use your personal computer at home (and make sure you have current anti-virus software like Trend Micro and anti-Spyware software like Ad-Aware installed on your computer– see below).

Lavasoft Ad-Aware

One of the best programs for finding and deleting Spyware is LavaSoft's Ad-Aware SE (not to be confused with the type of Spyware known as adware). This program is quick to install, scans all drives efficiently and, best of all, there is a FREE version. Two paid versions are available for businesses and for those who want additional features like real time scanning and automatic updates. Instead of manually running the software, the paid versions will scan your computer in real time as you surf the web and will prevent any known Spyware, Malware, etc. from being downloaded to your computer. The paid versions are ideal for a business environment, for those who surf the web regularly, and for those who want the convenience and protection of real time scanning and updates. The personal version is ideal for the home user who surfs the web occasionally and can remember to run the software manually. When used regularly, either of these versions will help keep your computer free of unwanted tracking cookies and potentially harmful files.

For download instructions, go to: www.readynetgo.net/newsletter/adawareinstructions.pdf

In addition to Ad-Aware, there are two other products that are highly regarded – Spybot Search & Destroy and Pest Patrol. **Spybot Search & Destroy** is a free program (donations are requested). Computer Associate's **Pest Patrol** costs approximately \$40. As with Ad-Aware, both programs will scan your computer for known Spyware and Malware programs and remove any potentially harmful files.

Keep in mind that testing scenarios have shown mixed results with all three programs. Some programs were able to detect and remove known culprits while other programs did not. For any program, users must realize that detection is not 100% guaranteed. Since the field of viruses and Spyware/Malware is constantly changing, code could be created and deployed before a fix is created and downloaded to your computer. **Some tips:** use multiple resources to ensure that if one program doesn't catch a potentially harmful file, another program might be able to detect it. Also, **update each program prior to scanning your computer and run the program more than once**. Sometimes it takes more than one scan to rid your computer of all known culprits.