

# User Friendly

LACS  
A Computer and  
Technology  
User Group

## IN THIS ISSUE

From Your President / Editor	2
General Meeting Report	3
From APCUG	4
Tracking Hurricanes and Cruise Ships	5
LACS Information	8, 9
<b>Zoom Meetings</b>	<b>8, 9, 20</b>
LACS Calendar	9
Members Helping Members	10
Officers, Directors & Leaders	11
What Are Tracking Cookies, and Should They Concern Me?	12
Our New "Ring" Doorbell	14
FYI	15
Special Offers	18
Laughing Out Loud	18
Membership Information	19



Watch your email for APCUG workshops and other upcoming events.



**LACS IS A MEMBER OF  
APCUG**

An International  
Association of Technology  
and Computer User Groups

[www.apcug2.org](http://www.apcug2.org)

[www.facebook.com/APCUG](https://www.facebook.com/APCUG)

[www.X.com/apcug](https://www.X.com/apcug) (Twitter)

## LACS HOLIDAY LUNCH PARTY SATURDAY, DECEMBER 7, 2024, 1:30 PM

The LACS Holiday Luncheon will be at Earth, Wind & Flour in Santa Monica on **Saturday, December 7, at 1:30 PM**. The address is 2222 Wilshire Blvd, Santa Monica, 90403. There is parking in the rear.

**Please try to let Leah Clark know before December 5 how many people are coming** so they can have tables set up for us, and name badges can be made.

See their menu at <https://earthwindflour.com>.

They have a variety of food from salads, sandwiches, and pizza, to full dinners.

We will have a private room, can order off the menu, and have separate checks. Our treasurer, Gavin, will play his guitar for us.

You may invite family and friends. It would be wonderful if many of our members attended to celebrate a year of friendship and learning in LACS. You may share a holiday decoration or item with us, and bring items you want to give away.

Mark your calendar now and watch your email for updates. Let's have fun together.



Happy  
Holidays


**FROM YOUR PRESIDENT / EDITOR**


### LACS BOARD OPENINGS

**We still have openings for a board secretary and two director positions.** We especially need a secretary to stay in compliance with our 501(c)(3) non-profit status. We can't keep LACS a viable organization without volunteers. It is not that difficult, and we are ready to help you. Why not give it a try?

### LACS 2025 DUES

Members may start paying their 2025 dues any time now. Early payment will help to prevent a deluge of mail coming in at once. See page 19 for amounts and application, and page 8 for alternate ways to pay.

### NEW INVENTIONS

The November 11, 2024 issue of *Time Magazine* features 100 of the best inventions of 2024. This is fascinating reading for those of us who are interested in the latest technology.

### LACS 2025 BOARD

The following LACS members were duly installed at the November general meeting. They are all incumbents. We thank them for all they do for LACS.

**President:** Leah Clark

**Vice President:** Stephanie Nordlinger

**Treasurer:** Gavin Faught

**Directors:** Irv Hershman and Paula Van Berkom

Directors Loling Beckman, Donna Benton, and Mark Presky have one more year to their terms.

*Thank You!*



### LACS WEBSITE

<https://www.lacspc.org>

Paula Van Berkom, the webmaster for LACS, has been updating the LACS website. Be sure to check it out and see how amazing it looks now!

**HAPPY HOLIDAYS TO  
ALL LACS MEMBERS,  
THEIR FAMILIES AND  
FRIENDS**



Happy New Year!

## GENERAL MEETING REPORT

November 12, 2024

By Leah Clark, LACS President/Editor

### 1. Building My Computer

By Larry McDavid, LACS Member

### 2. Encryption Software

By Mark Schulman, APCUG Speaker

**Larry McDavid** has been building his own desktop computers since 1976. He is a heavy Adobe Photoshop Illustrator Premier user and needs a very capable computer. He showed us pictures and described the various parts. He showed us the heatsink for the CPU, which is a little bigger than a cantaloupe. He showed detailed pictures and explained the placement of the motherboard, a high-end video card, and the other components. He says if you want a very powerful PC, you must build it yourself. LACS members and guests can see all the pictures on the recording of this presentation.

**Mark Schulman**, an IT expert, talked about encryption software. Encryption is the scrambling of information so unauthorized people can't read it. A Wi-Fi hotspot is usually encrypted, and websites that begin with **https** are encrypted. You want to use encryption if you have personal information that you want to keep private, if you have devices that might be lost or stolen, or if you are emailing personal information.

#### Casual Encryption

Email is not at all secure. Treat every email as if it would be published in a newspaper.

You can use **Single-File Encryption** to attach a file to an email to make it secure. Encrypted files on a flash drive or a laptop could not be opened by someone who found it.

#### 1. How To Encrypt a Single File

- a. Microsoft Office has built-in encryption. Open the document and go to File > Info > Protect Document (or Spread sheet) > Encrypt with Password.

- b. There are lots of programs that encrypt other types of files. Mark uses a free version of AES Crypt. To use it, right-click on a file in the context menu, click on AES Crypt, and enter a password. A new file is created with the same name but followed by .aes, which can be attached to an email, put on a flash drive, etc. The password is needed (name doesn't give away what's in the file). Give the file password to the recipient in some way separately from the file, like by a phone call or text message.

#### 2. Encrypted Containers

- a. Enables you to create a virtual drive on which all "your files" are encrypted.
- b. You can put containers to store a number of files on a flash drive or an external hard drive. When you copy files to a container, they automatically get encrypted.
- c. Mark likes VeraCrypt to do this. A container is just a file that can be created via VeraCrypt. Create it wherever you want, on a hard drive, flash drive, etc. Tell VeraCrypt how much storage you need in the container, and supply a password.
- d. To access the files in a container, tell VeraCrypt you want to "mount" it, which requires the password. Data is only accessible when the container is mounted. When it is not mounted, the container's contents are unreadable.

Mark demonstrated how to create a container, how to use it, and uses for it. Mark, as the IT manager for a group of family practice physicians, must back up all patient records to an external hard drive containing a VeraCrypt container. Each evening, a doctor takes the drive home with him, so if there is any disaster in the office or with the doctor, medical records cannot be lost or accessed

by any unauthorized person.

A **traveler flash drive** allows one to access a VeraCrypt container without installing the software on a borrowed computer. A portable copy of the VeraCrypt program is on the flash drive. To set it up, go to VeraCrypt > Travelers Disk Setup > and give the location of the flash drive.

A **Hidden Volume** allows you to hide one VeraCrypt container inside another.

### 3. Whole-Drive Encryption

- a. Encrypts the entire contents of your hard drive to prevent anyone from accessing your PC or laptop without a password.
- b. To do this, open VeraCrypt and go to System > Encrypt System Partition/ Drive.

### 4. Rescue Flash Drive

- a. VeraCrypt will ask you to create a rescue flash drive. It will write some data on it, and you can put it somewhere safe.
- b. If your laptop is damaged, you can put the hard drive into another computer, enter the password, and the rescue disc can read the data from it.
- c. VeraCrypt is very reliable and uncrackable by any known technology. You do have to use a good password and don't lose it.

### 5. Phones

- a. We have much information on our phones. Modern phones include whole phone encryption. Use a good password or PIN.
- b. Have an app on your phone to put and encrypt notes. Mark likes ColorNote.
- c. Microsoft OneNote is an alternative for storing information and for encrypting it.

Mark recommends using a password manager. Use different passwords everywhere, and use a password generator. He gave us the URLs to some password generators.

Mark will share his slides, and LACS members and guests received a link to the recording of this presentation, which includes URLs to the software he spoke about. There was too much information to include in this short summary report. ❖

**FROM APCUG**

<https://www.apcug2.org>

### **THIS CLEVER TIP ALERTS YOU WHEN APPS ARE ADDED TO STARTUP IN WINDOWS 11**

Did you know Windows 11 can immediately inform you when an app is added to the auto-start list? The Startup page in Windows 11's Settings is really useful for toggling which apps auto-start when you boot the system. But the more apps you have enabled in Startup, the longer it takes for Windows to be fully usable after restarting. That's why it's good to check the Startup page every so often and disable unwanted apps.

[How to get alerts when new apps are added to Startup in Windows 11 | PCWorld](#)

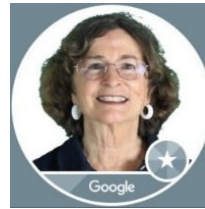
### **22 AWESOME FREE APPS ALREADY INSTALLED ON YOUR WINDOWS PC**

When you install Windows 11, you get a wide variety of programs and apps. In the Windows world, these words get mixed up a lot, and they really mean the same thing. Many of them are linked to the operating system itself. For example, you use Explorer to manage your files and Microsoft Defender to protect your computer against attacks.

[22 awesome free apps already installed on your Windows PC | PCWorld](#) ❖

## TRACKING HURRICANES AND CRUISE SHIPS

By **Chris (Mrs. Jim) Gould**, aka Mrs. Geek  
Geeks-on-Tour, October 10, 2024  
<https://geeksontour.com>



*Chris Guld is President and Teacher-in-Chief*

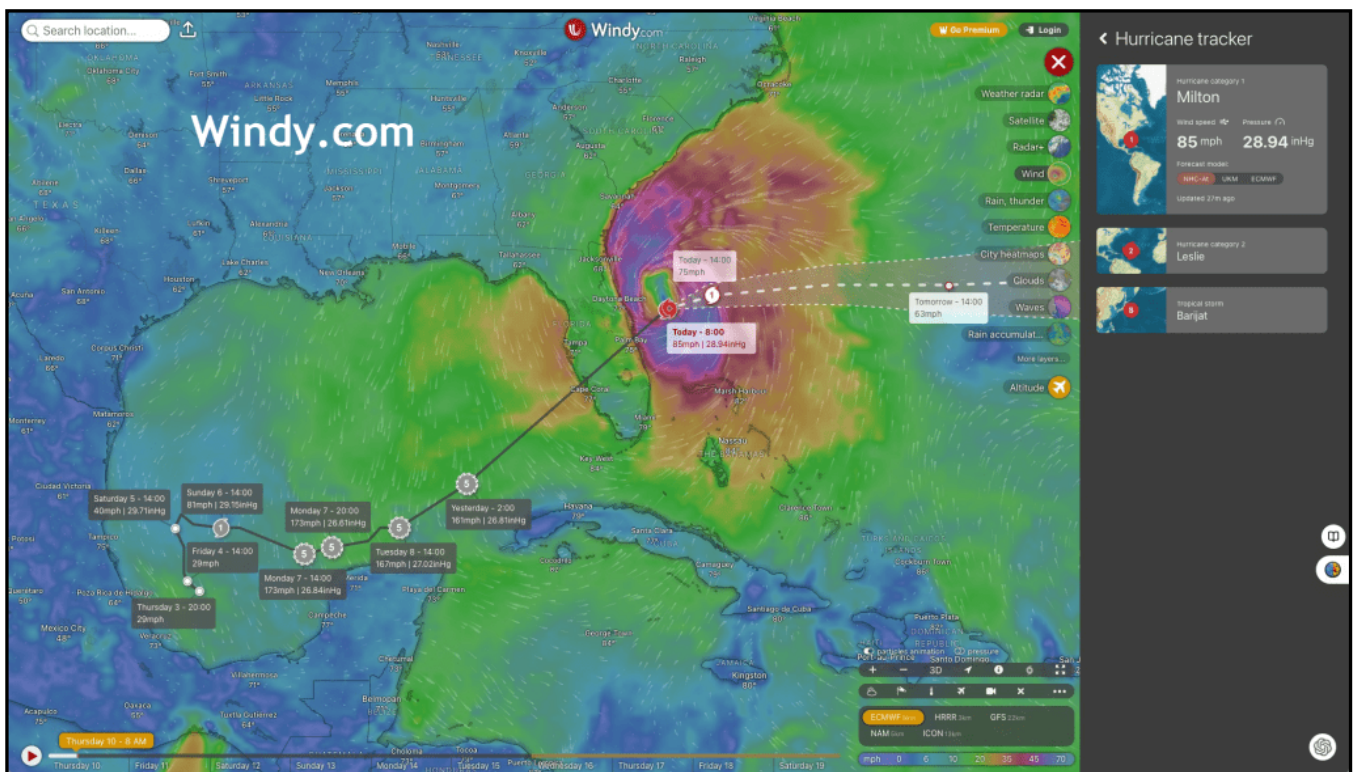
*at GeeksOnTour.com.*

*She's been teaching technology since 1983 and still loves it! People appreciate her simple yet complete teaching style. Chris is a scuba diver, RVer, and world traveler. She takes a LOT of photos and uses Google Photos to manage over 100,000 of them from her life. Google recognizes her as a Diamond-Level Product Expert for Google Photos. She's written a book on it and loves teaching others how to manage their photos with Google Photos.*

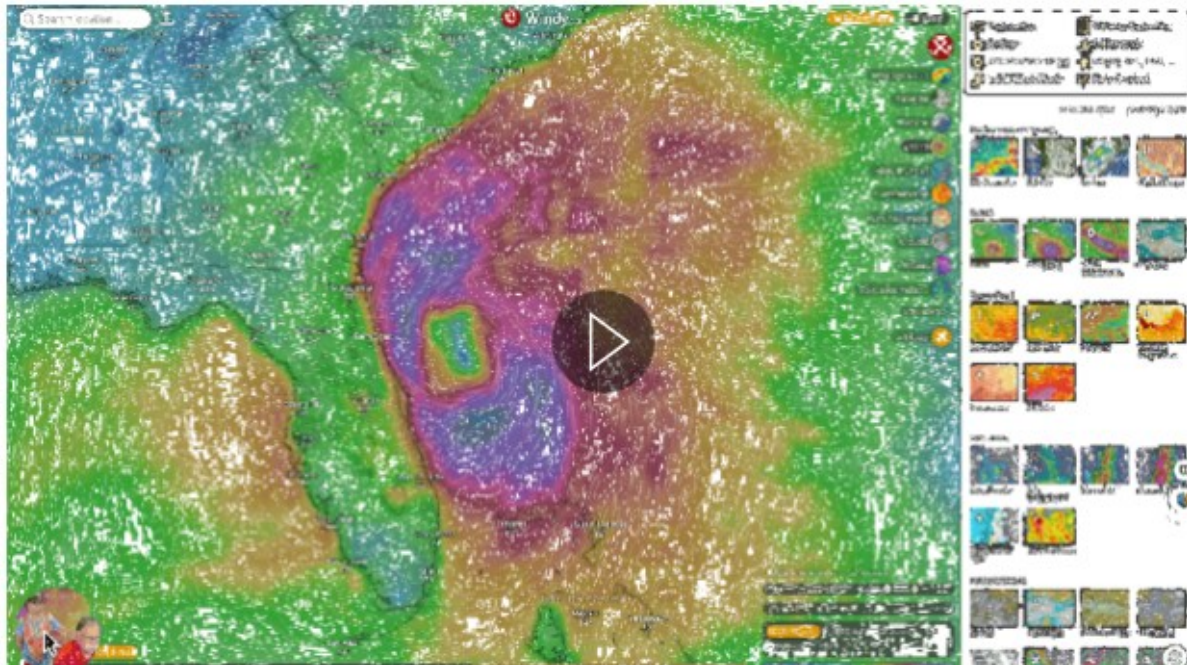
**B**oth our cruise ship and Hurricane Milton were scheduled to arrive at the same time. Not good. My husband, Jim became obsessed with tracking them both.

### Tracking the Hurricane

Jim tracked the hurricane with a website called **Windy.com**. This is the map from the morning of October 10, the same day we were scheduled to board the Cruise Ship. It actually missed us in Fort Lauderdale, but you couldn't know that for sure as of the day before. Port Everglades closed down on Oct 9, and our Cruise Ship informed us they would be delayed at least one day.

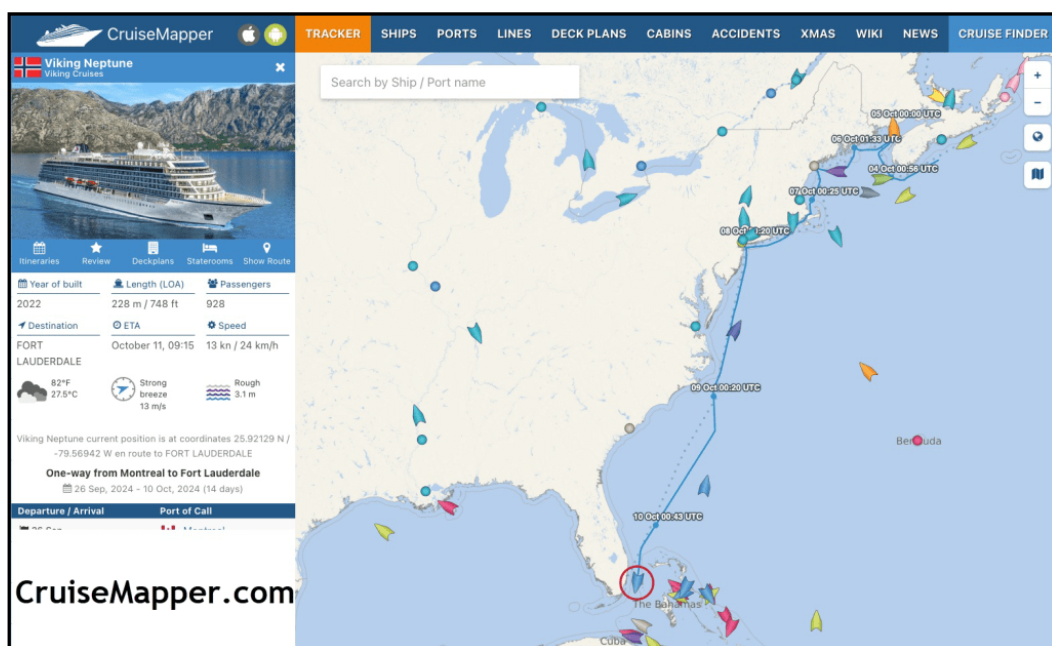


The special feature of Windy.com is that you can actually see the way the wind is blowing.



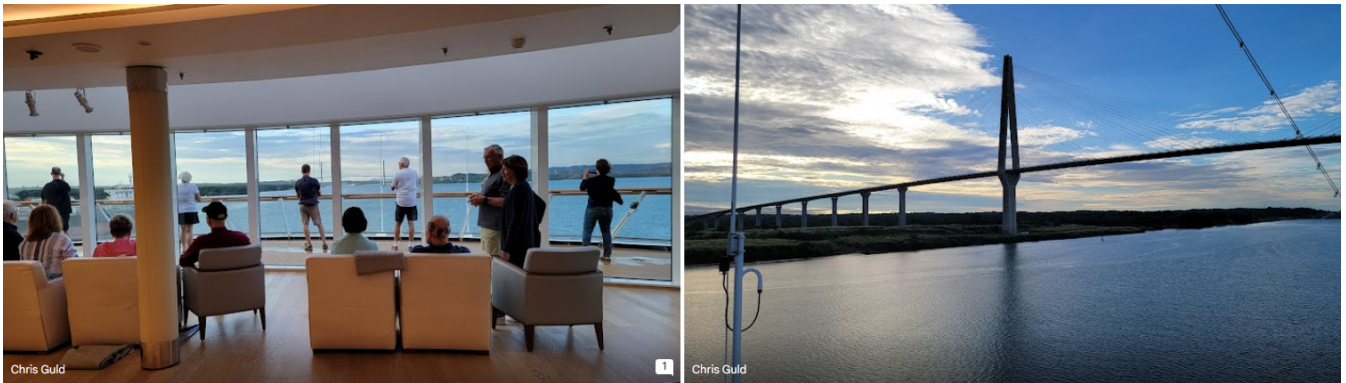
### Tracking the Cruise Ship

The Viking Neptune cruise ship was on another journey in NE US waters. Jim could see it when it was in Maine. Then it stopped in New York City. He could [watch it leave port in NYC on a webcam](#). It was headed to Fort Lauderdale to pick us up for our Panama Canal cruise. It was still in New York City as late as October 8, and we were supposed to board on the 10th. This boat is fast. Jim watched its progress using **CruiseMapper.com**. It only took 2 days to arrive, but the port was closed due to the hurricane. 😞



### Tracking Geeks

We received official notice that the port has reopened, and our cruise ship will be docked and ready for us to board tomorrow, October 11. We will be on board for nearly 3 weeks. We cruise through the Panama Canal and up the west coast to Los Angeles. Then we fly home. You can track us on the CruiseMapper.com website by looking up the Viking Neptune cruise ship. You can also follow us by watching our [photo album](#).



The above two pictures were taken from the photo album at <https://tinyurl.com/dxah5xea>.



In preparation for the cruise, we read the book [The Path Between the Seas](#). It's the story of the building of the Panama Canal. An Epic story! ❖

## LACS INFORMATION

### HOW TO JOIN LACS'S MAIL LIST

LACS has an active general email list: [PC@LACS.Groups.IO](mailto:PC@LACS.Groups.IO) which goes to all members on the list. Members will receive meeting notices and Zoom links via this list. You can also ask questions, offer suggestions, and help others.

New LACS members should receive an invitation to join our list with two weeks to accept. Other LACS members who want to join the list should send an email to Larry McDavid, our Groups.IO Coordinator. (See your roster for contact info.) He will send you an invitation to join. If you have any problems or questions about joining, please contact Larry.

### USING PAYPAL OR ZELLE

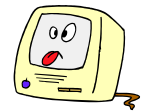
To pay LACS by PayPal, go to this link: [www.paypal.com/paypalme/00001024](http://www.paypal.com/paypalme/00001024) and then click on **Send**. Log in to your PayPal account or sign up for an account so that PayPal will know where to get the money to send. Follow the prompts. Enter the amount to pay, then click on **Add a note**. Say what the payment is for. If it is for dues, add any updated information: physical and email addresses, preferred phone number, and your dues type (regular, electronic, etc.) and if you don't want your contact information to be in our roster.

To pay LACS by Zelle, log into your bank with your username and password. Select **Transfer Money > Send Money with Zelle**. Follow the instructions. The recipient is **Los Angeles Computer Society**. Select **Send by email**. The email address is: [lacomputersociety@gmail.com](mailto:lacomputersociety@gmail.com).

The wording may be a little different on your bank's site.

Email questions to Gavin Faight. See our roster for contact info.

### FIX YOUR PC FOR FREE?



LACS member and presenter, **Jim McKnight**, has an open offer to LACS members to diagnose, repair, disinfect, or upgrade members' PC's for free. There are certain limitations to Jim's offer, so see the details by clicking the "Fix my PC for Free?" link at [www.jimopi.net](http://www.jimopi.net).

Non-members can wisely invest in a one-year **new regular** LACS membership (\$40.00), and Jim will fix your PC problem, too. Contact Jim for specific considerations.

### CHANGE CONTACT INFORMATION

Go to [www.lacspc.org](http://www.lacspc.org). Click on **Join LACS** in the bar under the picture. Under **Membership Update**, select **Click Here** to select either the DOC or PDF form. Fill it out; email it with your changes to Leah Clark. See the LACS roster or pages 9 or 10 of UF.

Or snail-mail it to

Los Angeles Computer Society  
11664 National Blvd. #343  
Los Angeles, CA 90064-3802.

### ATTENDING A ZOOM MEETING

LACS members who are on our PC email list will receive a link, meeting ID, Passcode, and instructions to attend the LACS general meetings a few days before the meeting.

**Please let Leah Clark know by the morning of the meeting if you don't have it or have a problem.**

**You can put an icon to the link on your desktop so it's handy at meeting time.**

1. Right-click a blank spot on your desktop.
2. Select **New** from the drop-down menu.
3. Select **Shortcut**.
4. Type or copy and paste the link in the box that says "Type the location of the item."
5. Click **Next**.
6. Type a name for the shortcut.
7. Click **Finish**.



## LACS CALENDAR

## DECEMBER

**LACS Board Meeting, Monday, December 2****Time:** 7:00 P.M. (Open from 6:30 P.M.)**Place:** Wherever you are

Please log in early so we can start on time. Allow time to be sure you have the link, or to solve any issues before the meeting starts.

**December 2: LACS Board Meeting****December 7: Holiday Luncheon Party— See front page****December 21:** Winter Begins**December 25:** Christmas**December 25:** Hanukkah**December 26:** Kwanzaa**December 31:** New Year's Eve.

HAPPY★NEW★YEAR

### VISIT OTHER APCUG COMPUTER USER GROUPS AND SEE THEIR NEWSLETTERS

LACS heartily welcomes visitors from other user groups, and we are welcome to join other groups' meetings.

Go to [www.APCUG2.org](http://www.APCUG2.org) . Click on **Member Benefits**, then on **Groups Sharing Meetings** or on **Newsletters Online**.

## UPCOMING MEETINGS/EVENTS

**December 7: Holiday Luncheon Party****January 14: Touring the Web -**

J. B. Burke

**February 11: The Wonders of Cell Phones - Bill James**

Please watch your email and *User Friendly* for changes and updates.

## ZOOM MEETINGS

Members on our PC email list will receive, via email, an invitation to join LACS Zoom general meetings. Click on the URL in the invitation before the meeting and follow the prompts.

If you have any questions or if you don't receive the link by the morning of the meeting day, contact Leah Clark at

leahjc@sbcglobal.net

## ZOOM RECORDINGS

**LACS members and meeting guests will receive links to the recordings of Zoom meetings via email.**

## HYPERLINKS

Underlined text (blue in the color edition) in *User Friendly* usually means it's a hyperlink to a website. Click on the link in the online version to see the referenced place. You can also copy and paste it into your browser's search or address bar.

### USER FRIENDLY BACK ISSUES AND INDEXES

To see back issues of *User Friendly*, go to <http://www.lacspc.org/category/user-friendly/>.

For indexes to past issues, go to <https://www.lacspc.org/category/uf-index/>

To find a specific article or topic, use the search box on the top right.

## MEMBERS HELPING MEMBERS

LACS members volunteer to help other members solve hardware and software problems by telephone or during the hours listed below. Select the topic from the list and then contact a person whose number is listed next to it.

**Find a helper's email address and phone number on your roster.** If you don't have your roster, call 424-261-6251. Only members in good standing may receive a roster. We hope you find this LACS free service useful.

**If you are experienced using a particular program or hardware, please volunteer to be a consultant. You don't have to be an expert.** To volunteer for this list or to make corrections, please email Leah Clark at [leahjc@sbcglobal.net](mailto:leahjc@sbcglobal.net) or call her at 424-261-6251.

Android Smartphones - 5	Mozilla Firefox - 7	Photoshop Elements - 2
Apple devices - 7	MS Excel - 5, 7, 8	Quicken - 5, 8
Anti-Malware and Backup - 4, 5	MS Word - 1, 3, 5, 8	Thunderbird - 4
Dragon Naturally Speaking - 3	MS Outlook - 1, 5	Utilities - 4, 5
Genealogy - 5	MS PowerPoint - 5, 7	Windows - 4, 5
Groups.IO - 9	MS Publisher - 2	WordPerfect - 5
Hardware - 4	PDF - 8	Zoom - 2, 6
Lotus Word Pro, Approach - 4		

Preferred Time for Phone Calls			
Number	Name	From	To
1	Beckman, Loling	10:00 AM	6:00 PM
2	Clark, Leah	7:00 AM	5:00 PM
3	Hershman, Irv	11:00 AM	11:00 PM
4	McKnight, Jim	8:00 AM	7:00 PM
5	Nordlinger, Stephanie	9:00 AM	5:00 PM
6	Presky, Mark	Any	Any
7	Van Berkom, Paula	9:00 AM	5:00 PM
8	Wilder, Joan	9:00 AM	9:00 PM
9	McDavid, Larry	Contact by email	

**Note:** Times are Pacific Times

## OFFICERS, DIRECTORS AND LEADERS

TITLE	NAME	TERM
President	Leah Clark	2024
Vice President	Stephanie Nordlinger	2024
Secretary	<b>Open</b>	2024
Treasurer	Gavin Faught	2024
Director	Loling Beckman	2025
Director	Donna Benton	2025
Director	Mark Presky	2025
Director	Irv Hershman	2024
Director	<b>Open</b>	2024
Director	<b>Open</b>	2024
Director	Paula Van Berkom	2024
APCUG Representative	Leah Clark	
Corporate Counsel	Stephanie Nordlinger	
Database Manager	Loling Beckman	
Groups.IO Email Lists	Larry McDavid	
Newsletter Editor	Leah Clark	
Program Chair	Stephanie Nordlinger	
Publicity – Press	Mark Presky	
Publicity – Online Media	Open	
Quick Consultants	Leah Clark	
Webmaster	Paula Van Berkom	

**Mailing Address:** 11664 National Blvd., #343, Los Angeles, CA 90064-3802

**Website:** <https://lacspc.org>

**Contact the President/Editor at 424-261-6251.** Follow the prompts. This is a Google Voice number.

Please use your LACS roster for email addresses and phone numbers to contact any officer, board member or other member. If necessary, you may leave a message at the above number. **Only LACS members may receive a roster.**

**Please note:** The 2024 roster was in the middle pages of the May User Friendly. It was mailed to all LACS members, including those who usually receive only the electronic version. The roster will not be sent to anyone electronically. Be sure to keep it where you can find it when you need it.

## WHAT ARE TRACKING COOKIES, AND SHOULD THEY CONCERN ME?

**They don't worry me, but others feel differently.**

*Making Technology Work For Everyone*

by **Leo Notenboom**, <https://askleo.com/>

As printed in the Newsletter for the Rochester Computer Society, Inc., November 2024

Cookies are placed on your machine by websites -- often more websites than you realize. We'll review cookies and how third parties can use them.

Through clever use of cookies — typically associated with advertising — some services gather and use more in-



formation about you. We need to talk about tracking and third-party cookies.

### Tracking Cookies

Cookies are pieces of data stored on your computer by websites to remember information between visits. Third-party cookies, often used by advertising services, track your behavior across multiple websites.

### Cookies 101

First, a quick review: a cookie is just some data placed on your computer when you visit a website. That data is sent back to that website the next time you visit it. That's all.

When you visit askleo.com, for example, the website might place a cookie on your machine that says "This person has seen the newsletter pop-up." A week later, when you visit askleo.com again, that cookie is automatically and transparently sent to the website so it knows you've already seen the

newsletter pop-up and it won't annoy you with it again.

That's all cookies are: a way for websites to remember things between visits. What they remember is completely up to what the website chooses to place in the cookies it leaves on your machine. They can contain pretty much anything.

Next, we need to talk about how most advertising works on a website.

### Advertising 101

Most advertising on the internet is performed by services connecting large numbers of advertisers with large numbers of websites signed up to display ads.

So when you visit <https://example.com>, you might see ads from <https://ads.somerandomservice.com>. (To be clear, all URLs here are fictitious examples.) Later, when you visit some other site — maybe <https://reallybigbookstore.com> — you might see ads there from that same advertising service: <https://ads.somerandomservice.com>. When your browser loads the page from <https://example.com>, the HTML on that page says, in effect, "Place an image here. Get that image from <https://ads.somerandomservice.com/...>" at which point your browser dutifully goes out to [ads.somerandomservice.com](https://ads.somerandomservice.com) and gets the image, which is an ad.

This is where cookies enter the picture.

### Cookies + Advertising = Third-Party

When your browser fetches a URL — be it the page you asked for or an element within that page, like an ad — the website it contacts can place cookies on your machine.

So when you go to <https://example.com>, then of course [example.com](https://example.com) can place cookies. However, if that page also references another website (like <https://ads.somerandomservice.com/>) for an image on that page, [ads.somerandomservice.com](https://ads.somerandomservice.com)

can place cookies as well.

These are called third-party cookies.

- You are the first party.
- The site you visit is the second party (example.com in our example).
- The site(s) referenced for additional content by the site you visit are third parties (ads.somerandomservice.com in our example).

So far, so good; you visit a site, it can place cookies, and the sites that provide additional content on that page can also place cookies.

Here's where it gets interesting.

Let's walk through a scenario step by step.

- You visit example.com.
- Example.com has ads that are loaded from ads.somerandomservice.com.
- The first time you visit example.com, ads.somerandomservice.com puts a cookie on your machine that says, "This is advertising visitor #12,345,678."
- Now you visit reallybigbookstore.com.
- Reallybigbookstore.com happens to use the same ad service, ads.somerandomservice.com.
- Ads.somerandomservice.com already has a cookie on your machine. When the request is made to display an ad, that cookie is sent to ads.somerandomservice.com.
- Ads.somerandomservice.com sees the cookie it put down earlier that said, "This is advertising visitor #12,345,678."
- Ads.somerandomservice.com now knows that you, advertising visitor #12,345,678, visited both example.com and reallybigbookstore.com.

That is a tracking cookie at work. Third parties use cookies to understand where you go on the net within the sites they service.

### It Gets Bigger

So far, all I've talked about is advertising services. In reality, this simple technology can and does span more services.

For example, you may have heard of a company called Google. They have their fingers in many, many pies.

- Advertising – Adwords for advertisers, Adsense for websites who want to make money from ads
- Analytics – Google Analytics, a comprehensive analysis tool that allows websites to understand how people use their site
- Personal productivity – Gmail, Contacts, Calendar, and more
- Cloud services – Google Drive, photo sharing, YouTube, and more
- Personal publishing services – Blogger

The list goes on.

The net result is that by interacting directly with a Google service or interacting with a site that uses a Google service, you are exposed to many opportunities for Google to leave tracking cookies on your machine.

It's not just Google; they're just a large, easy-to-understand, somewhat extreme example. The same is true for varying degrees of other advertising networks and behind-the-scenes online service providers.

### Blocking Third-Party Cookies

Most browsers block third-party cookies by default. It seems like this would invalidate much of what I've listed above. Sadly, that's often not the case.

When third-party cookie blocking is on the rise, advertisers and other services have developed other approaches. Tracking still happens via cookies, so-called ever-cookies, local storage, on-page information, and more. It's complex, but not that difficult.

That's why you'll sometimes see ads that "follow" you around the internet even if you have third-party cookies disabled.

### Who Cares?

My fervent belief is this:

**Your actions as an individual are completely uninteresting. No one cares.**

No one is tracking you personally. Besides, most of these services collect way too much data to drill down to any one person.

Instead, this type of tracking is examined in aggregate. For example, with this data, the advertiser can determine things like "40% of people who visit example.com also visit reallybigbookstore.com." None of them say or care that "Leo Notenboom visited both example.com and reallybigbookstore.com."

At best, they can say, "Anyone who visited example.com and looked at X should then be shown ads for X when they visit reallybigbookstore.com." Note that it's "anyone" — generic, anonymous people — and not "Leo Notenboom".

Advertisers and website owners eat that stuff up. They use it to make decisions that support their profitability.

But, again, I strongly believe that Leo Notenboom just isn't that interesting as an individual. And don't take this personally, but neither are you.

### Do This

Don't sweat cookies or other targeted advertising. I know it can feel creepy, but I strongly believe they're not looking at you individually but rather as anonymous people who behave in specific ways.

Don't be anonymous to me! Subscribe to Confident Computing! Less frustration and more confidence, solutions, answers, and tips in your inbox every week. ❖



## OUR NEW "RING" DOORBELL

By **Jim Cerny**

Forums Coordinator / Instructor  
Sarasota Technology Users Group

[www.thestug.org](http://www.thestug.org)

vp1 (at) thestug.org



Technology is everywhere, finding places in our lives, even in the simplest activities. Take your doorbell, for example, just one button and a "ding-dong," and that was it — someone was at your front door. So, what could be better than that simple signal system? Well, welcome to the new "tech" doorbells! Here is my experience installing and using a new "Ring" brand doorbell (the cost is about \$100 to \$200, depending upon the model).

Our new doorbell has a built-in video camera. It can video any activity around your front door and is motion-activated. So, in reality, anyone coming near your front door doesn't have to touch the button at all. The doorbell was not that difficult to install and can be attached to your existing doorbell wires. If you do, it will still ring your old doorbell chime or ringer when the button is pressed. This is nice that the "old" technology is still used with the new. The new doorbell is powered by batteries, which must be changed or charged when needed. It sends you a "low battery" message to let you know.

Now for the interesting (hopefully fun) part — the new doorbell connects (wirelessly) to your home Wi-Fi network. Now, you can have almost any of your other devices work with (that is, to be connected to) your new doorbell. Your iPhone, for example, should have the "Ring" app installed on it, and you use this app to adjust and change your doorbell settings and options. For example, our doorbell was being activated by a car driving down our street, so I adjusted the sensitivity to make it less "sensitive." In addition to your iPhone, if you have an iPad, an Alexa, or



other internet devices, they also may be connected. This means when someone gets near your front door, these devices will play or speak a notice that there is someone near your door, even if they never pressed the actual button. So you are notified, for example, if a package was placed at your front door on your iPhone wherever you are. This is a very nice convenience and worth the cost of the doorbell alone. If you are not at home and get a tone/notice on your iPhone that someone has pressed the button, you can see who it is and TALK to them too! You can say you are not at home, in the bathroom, or anything you want. Pretty neat, right? But there is more.

You get a “live” video of what is happening at your front door anytime you want, from your iPhone or another device. Also, as an option for a small monthly cost, the camera will record videos of all activity for you to look at later. (Without paying the additional fee, you can only see a “live” video). The “Ring” company has a program to make “safer neighborhoods” by using their doorbells as security cameras. So, these new doorbells are yet another “internet” device connected to all your other devices.

However, we have discovered some drawbacks in addition to adjusting the “sensitivity” level. We recently had to install a new home internet modem/router. This means ALL our internet devices, including the doorbell, had to be changed to connect to the new Wi-Fi ID (and password if required). Considering all the

devices, including phones, printers, laptops, tablets, etc., was very troublesome and time-consuming. Another drawback is the frequency of front-door activities. If you get frequent deliveries from Amazon, for example, all your devices connected to the doorbell will sound an alarm each time. Hopefully, you can find the correct settings and notifications that suit you best.

Overall, it is a great and fun device and, in my opinion, worth the cost. And keep in mind, even if you do not purchase one for yourself, your neighbors probably have them! So don’t do anything funny in anyone’s front yard; you may find yourself in a video on the internet! ❖

### FYI

From **the Durham Personal Computer Users’ Club Newsletter**, August 2024  
Oshawa, Ontario, Canada  
By **Dan DeLong**, Librarian

### Tattle Tale Cars Are Coming

Actually, most cars already reveal incriminating data (after an emergency) by revealing speed, acceleration, steering, and braking data from the OBD2 port. In addition, some insurance companies reduce premiums for customers who install a customized dongle into the OBD2 port, which can inform about safe vs. unsafe driving habits.

At least one American car manufacturer is hinting at a further step... the ability to detect other unsafe drivers in real-time (via 360-degree cameras) and send proof to nearby police cars so they can apprehend offenders more quickly. The primary target is speeders. But what threshold determines speeding? In some countries, tickets are issued by radar cameras for as little as a few mph over the limit.

<https://supercarblondie.com/ford-tech-would-tell-cops-if-someone-speeds/>

<https://www.f150gen14.com/forum/threads/ford-pass-app-360-cameras.3611>

### Dual Monitor Stand with Storage

Monitor stands like this lift the monitor(s) a little higher without needing to remove the existing table stand from the base of the monitor(s), as would be required for mounting on articulating arms. The empty space under it makes for a great organizer and a place for small device storage [\$45 CAD]. Similar stands are available for single monitors.



<https://www.amazon.ca/Simple-Houseware-Monitor-Stand-Drawer/dp/B0BS9RB6J7>

### SSDs in High Demand

Hynix, a South Korean manufacturer of solid state drives, nearly doubled its shipments this year (to accommodate AI and data center demand). These drives store vast quantities of quickly accessed data. When installed in large numbers of data centers (along with GPUs and CPUs), they require vast quantities of electricity—to the point that some cities in the States are feeling the ‘pinch.’

<https://www.tweaktown.com/news/99629/sk-hynix-exports-of-ssds-rose-84-in-1h-2024-big-increases-for-ai-data-centers/index.html>

By 2025, Hynix will ship even faster SSDs as the company works on introducing more layers to their devices.

<https://www.tweaktown.com/news/99644/sk-hynix-says-hbm3e-expected-to-make-up-more-than-half-of-hbm-shipments-in-2024/index.html>

### Potassium Silicate in Solid State Batteries

Although ‘dry’ lithium is now used for some solid-state batteries, they are, as with conventional ‘wet’ lithium batteries, sensitive to moisture, both during production and after final manufacture. A post-doctorate researcher at Denmark Technical Institute has conducted promising research using potassium silicate instead of lithium. If this pans out, a readily available replacement for lithium, with no hindrance to stability during and after production, may be installed in the next wave of electric cars. Perhaps this is a far-out claim, but such batteries may gain enough charge in ten minutes to provide 1000 km of travel.

<https://forecourtrader.co.uk/latest-news/danish-researcher-patents-new-material-that-could-replace-lithium/693651.article>

Wikipedia contributors have been updating K-Ion research at the following link.

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Potassium-ion\\_battery](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Potassium-ion_battery)

<https://www.komando.com/shopping/9-gadgets-to-keep-you-safe-and-secure/>

### Synesthesia

A senior reporter at the *MIT Technology Review* (also a newsstand magazine), Melissa Heikkila, delved more deeply into Synesthesia’s talking avatar business by visiting the London, UK studio and allowing herself to become a Synesthesia avatar. This happened before the July 29th showing of a totally convincing faked Kamala Harris video on X, and after the Taylor Swift deep fakes. Melissa’s article appears in the magazine’s July/August 2024 issue. I will attempt to summarize it here.

Normally, Synesthesia hires actors (225 of them since 2020) for digital cloning. An exception was made for this reporter. Surrounded by cameras and lights, after okaying her black sweater and tidying her hair and



makeup, she went through calibration movements of her eyes, head, and mouth. Remember, the aim here is to create a flawless digital talking head from the waist up. The tiniest limb movements and facial micro-expressions are captured.

Voice capture is also done in a training session, involving a script narrated in several vocal tones. The final result is a digital persona, capable of saying just about any passage in many languages so convincingly that only the real person might suspect fakery. Synesthesia also watermarks content and monitors any videos clients produce, so terms of service violators can be cut off. The *MIT Technology Review* has so much more to explore.

### Guaranteed Photo Provenance – Almost

In the past, professional photographers retained physical possession of negatives and slides to prove ownership. The Leica M11-P camera is the first to incorporate Content Authenticity Initiative (CAI), which embeds this proof of ownership into digital photo files by including an encrypted thumbnail of the original image along with camera details and the name of the photographer. If the photographer edits the image in Photoshop, this ‘watermark’ information is also carried to the edited version. No one else can change it. As this feature becomes accepted by other camera makers, photo viewers, and photo editors, the use of copied digital images without accreditation will lessen. Now that PhotoShop can manipulate images with AI, a notice to that effect will also accompany the file from that point on. The Leica M11 -P body, by itself, costs almost \$10,000 USD. Lenses cost just as much.

[https://www.bhphotovideo.com/c/product/1792197-REG/leica\\_m11\\_p\\_rangefinder\\_camera\\_silver.html/overview](https://www.bhphotovideo.com/c/product/1792197-REG/leica_m11_p_rangefinder_camera_silver.html/overview)

### 3-D Printed Human Tissues

In the weightless environment of space, cell growth can be encouraged to retain a desired

shape before transport back to Earth. An earlier mission used specialized print heads to bio-fabricate knee replacement tissue called the meniscus. The next experiment attempts to fabricate liver tissue that can grow its own circulatory channels.

<https://tinyurl.com/34tstv8h>

### Reliable Electric Power from Space

Caltech researchers have proven that a satellite equipped with solar panels to gather power can transmit that power via a focused microwave beam to another satellite or to any place on Earth. This method uses solar panels in space to collect sunlight with eight times greater efficiency, night and day. This means that power can be sent to remote locations without using wire transmission lines... in theory. Implementation may take at least a decade. The article also explains how energy beams are steered and focused without mechanical parts.

<https://www.caltech.edu/about/news/in-a-first-caltechs-space-solar-power-demonstrator-wirelessly-transmits-power-in-space>

### Leviton Decora Edge Duplex & Switches

Home plumbing and electrical fixture suppliers have continually improved products for do-it-yourselfers. Leviton has added a new item to the Decora line, calling it the “Edge” design. This makes installation of wall switches and duplex outlets a breeze. The Edge handles both 12 gauge and 14 gauge wire, eliminating accidental shocks with a secure and simple ‘click lever’ snap. Home Depot is one of the Canadian distributors carrying this product.

<https://www.homedepot.ca/search?q=leviton%20decora%20edge#!q=leviton%20decora%20edge> ❖

**FOR MANY HELPFUL TIPS AND TRICKS**

Go to <https://www.apcug2.org> for all aspects of computing and operating systems.

**SPECIAL OFFERS**

Go to the APCUG website at <https://apcug2.org/discounts-special-offers-for-user-groups/> for discounts and special offers for members of User Groups. Avast Anti-virus and Acronis True Image, and several book, media and training sites offer discounts including the two mentioned below.

- Members can save at the **Pearson Technology** websites: InformIT, Cisco Press, Pearson IT Certification, Que Publishing, Adobe Press, and Peachpit Press.  
[Informit.com/user\\_groups/index.aspx](http://Informit.com/user_groups/index.aspx)  
Code for print books: **ITCOMMUNITY**.  
Code for eBooks: **DIGITALCOMMUNITY**
- See books on digital imaging and photography, gaming, animation, film and video, post-production, audio, music technology, broadcast and theatre at [Routledge](http://Routledge.com) | [Focal Press](http://Focal Press.com) today! They offer discounts to User Group members.

**TECHBOOMERS.COM**

For learning how to use internet-based websites and applications for free.

- <https://TechBoomers.com>
- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=O2-bwYIYu1I>

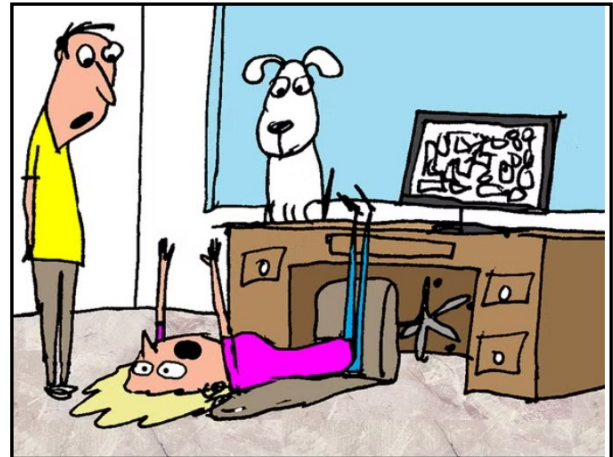
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**LAUGHING OUT LOUD**

**Q** Why do programmers always mix up Christmas and Halloween?

**A** Because Oct 31 = Dec 25! \*



*"She likes things neat and organized. So, when she sees my messy desktop, she goes into a state of temporary shock."*

From *How-To Geek*, November 5, 2024



\* This joke plays on the fact that "Oct" is the prefix for octal (base 8) and "Dec" is the prefix for decimal (base 10), and in octal, 31 is equal to 25 in decimal

**NOTICE**

The columns, reviews and other expressions of opinion in *User Friendly* are the opinions of the writers and not necessarily those of the Los Angeles Computer Society. LACS became a California non-profit corporation on July 17, 1991. Its predecessor was the UCLA PC Users Group.

**MEMBERSHIP INFORMATION and BENEFITS of MEMBERSHIP**

**Annual Membership Dues:**

Regular New and Renewal,	
Printed Newsletter	\$ 40
Electronic Newsletter	30
Family-Associate	12
Students	18
Contributor	50
Supporter	75
Benefactor	100
Gift Membership	20

A subscription to *User Friendly* is included with membership.

**Associate members** use the same mailing as a regular member; they do not receive their own subscriptions to *User Friendly*, but may read it on the LACS website. **Students** must prove full-time status. A member may give a 1-year, 1-time gift to a non-member.

**Monthly general meetings are via Zoom.**

In-person or hybrid meetings may take place in the future.

**Members also enjoy these special benefits:**

- **Monthly Newsletter** *User Friendly*. We publish your article submissions or free classified ads to buy or sell your computer items.
- **Get FREE help** by phone or email (See your roster) from knowledgeable members who are Quick Consultants listed in *User Friendly*.
- **Get help by email** by using our group email list. Send your questions to [PC@LACS.Groups.IO](mailto:PC@LACS.Groups.IO)

- **Receive important news** and announcements via *User Friendly* and LACS's email list.
- **Free APCUG** (International Association of Technology and Computer User Groups) **Webinars, virtual conferences, programs, and technical information.** Check *User Friendly* and your email to see what's offered.
- Occasional **free software and computer books**, if you review them for *User Friendly*.
- **Annual Holiday Party**
- **Social Interacting** with others who have like interests in computers and technology.
- **Special Interest Groups** (SIGs) on various topics may be created by members.

All renewals are due in January. New members will pay the annual amount when they join.

Check # \_\_\_\_\_ **LACS** New or Renewal Membership Application

Date \_\_\_\_\_ Dues may be paid by PayPal, Zelle, or check. If paying by check, make the check out to "Los Angeles Computer Society", and mail it with this form to:  
 Los Angeles Computer Society, 11664 NATIONAL BLVD. #343, LOS ANGELES CA 90064-3802

- Please PRINT Clearly**       New       Renewal
- New / Renewal with printed newsletter - \$40.00     Associate - \$12.00     Student - \$18.00
- New / Renewal with electronic, no paper, newsletter - \$30.00     Gift Membership - \$20.00
- Contributor - \$50.00     Supporter- \$75.00     Benefactor - \$100.00     Other

Name: First \_\_\_\_\_ Last \_\_\_\_\_

Name of Associate: First \_\_\_\_\_ Last \_\_\_\_\_  
 (Same address as a primary member)

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

City, State, Zip + 4 \_\_\_\_\_

E-mail Address: \_\_\_\_\_ E-mail of Associate \_\_\_\_\_

Contact Info in Roster  Yes     No      Preferred Phone: \_\_\_\_\_ Publish \_\_\_\_\_

Did a member of LACS invite you to join? If so, who? If not, how did you hear about LACS? \_\_\_\_\_

# First Class Mail

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*User Friendly* is published by the Los Angeles Computer Society.  
11664 NATIONAL BLVD, #343 LOS ANGELES CA 90064-3802  
Voice-mail: 424-261-6251. Web site: <https://www.lacspc.org>

## Los Angeles Computer Society

### **GENERAL MEETINGS ARE ON ZOOM.**

Before each meeting, members and invited guests will receive an email with the URL link to the meeting. **Just click on the link.** If you haven't received it by the morning of the meeting, let Leah Clark know. When you click on the link, you will enter a waiting room. Then the host or a co-host will admit you to the meeting.

Please try to arrive at least a few minutes before the meeting start-time so you don't interrupt the meeting and any technical problems can be solved. If you need to take a break during a meeting, do not click on Leave or End. If you do, the meeting will be interrupted for someone to re-admit you from the waiting room. You may turn off your video when you are gone.