The following was one of the Q & A's at the December Meeting:

### PLASMA TV VERSUS LDC TV
*(submitted by Don Colombo)*

Both Plasma and LCD TV technologies are advancing rapidly, and prices have fallen dramatically since both were introduced. Both definitely represent two of the best new television technologies and generally offer excellent picture quality. Of course, there are advantages for both Plasma and LCD TV technologies. To help you decide which is the right for you, we have prepared the following Plasma vs. LCD overview.

### *Screen size*

Currently, Plasma TVs have the advantage of offering larger screen sizes. Commonly available Plasma TV screen sizes include 32-inch, 42-inch, 50-inch and 63-inch models. LCD TVs are currently limited mainly to smaller sizes, ranging from 10-inch to 40-inch models (with 40-inch models just now becoming available). However, manufacturers such as Sharp, Samsung and NEC are currently working on larger LCD models (up to 54-inches), so expect screen sizes to increase considerably over the next few years. It should be noted that the technology behind LCD TVs is more flexible, allowing a wider variety of screen sizes. This may be important if you are looking for a particular screen size.

### *Cost*

Again, currently, Plasma TVs have the advantage over LCDs. Higher production volume allows Plasma TVs to compete very favorably compared to LCD TVs, especially considering screen size. Of course, both technologies are seeing fairly rapidly price decreases as manufacturing technologies and volumes improve. Currently, 42-inch Plasma TV MSRPs range from $3000-$6000, while 30-inch LCD TVs often are priced similarly. Street prices are lower for both of course.

### *Picture Quality*

Currently, picture quality for both Plasma TVs and LCD TVs are very close. The most recent LCD TVs have caught up to Plasma TVs in regards to color saturation and brightness. Many of the most recent LCD TVs will actually perform better in regards to contrast when viewed in a very bright room - something to keep in mind if your viewing room receives a lot of ambient light. Some of the newest LCD TVs actually offer more lifelike color display over Plasma TVs. Additionally, LCD TVs generally hold a resolution advantage over Plasma TVs, especially when comparing similar screen sizes. A greater number of LCD TVs support HDTV as a result. However, both Plasma and LCD TVs offer excellent picture quality (depending on the model of course), so buyers of both should be quite satisfied.

### *Image Refresh Rates*

Plasma TVs generally have an advantage here. Image refresh rates are important when watching rapidly moving images, like those found in many action movies and sports broadcasts. Plasma TVs generally have no issue displaying fast moving images (also making them better for video gaming, if that is planned). LCD TVs are at a disadvantage yet here, as fast moving images will often leave a 'ghosting trail' as the LCD TV changes voltages to adjust colors. Newer LCD TVs are improving in this regards, but have not caught up to Plasma TVs yet. Smaller LCD screens also generally see less of this effect.

### *Viewing Angle*

The advantage in viewing angles goes to Plasma televisions, but with LCD televisions improving in quality recently, and nearly matching. Most Plasma TVs can be viewed at a 160 degree viewing angle, or greater. LCD TVs by comparison at best perform up to 160 degrees, and are frequently less. Both technologies are generally sufficient for stationary viewing, but watching TV while wandering around a room will generally be much easier to view with a Plasma TV.

### *Screen Burn-In Effect*

Here, LCD TVs have a marked advantage. Because of the liquid crystal technology, there is absolutely no risk of images burning in from prolonged viewing, resulting in an after image 'ghost' effect. The lack of burn-in risk of LCD TVs is helpful when watching shows that have a common viewing pattern (such as a news or stock ticker, or video games). However, many Plasma TVs include a screen saver function to help minimize the risk, and some of the newest Plasma TVs include clever technology to very slightly move static pixels to minimize, if not remove, this risk.

### *Television Size and Weight*

LCD TVs are considerably thinner and lighter vs. Plasma TVs. Generally, LCD TVs are approximately 3-inches deep, compared to around 4-inches or more for Plasma. LCD's also weigh approximately 10-20 percent less than Plasma TVs, for a comparably sized screen.

## DECEMBER GUESTS

*(by Ilene Shope )*

There were three visitors at our HCC Party on December 20, 2003. (Peter Bickford, Michael Kustek and David Lee.) The three men were guests of Bill Woodall. They all said Bill asked them to join in on our festivities and they shared information with us during Lon's Q&A session and Bob Inglis' MIDI holiday music presentation. Bill Woodall shared his latest digital photographs - (a) A Fall landscape with his Church steeple peeping through the reds of turning leaves. (b) A photo, broadside a train- its length deepening - as if to infinity. (c) A superb photoshot of row houses in Pennsylvania with striking contrasts of light and shade captured in that special moment, in black and white rendering. Michael Kustek is from Somerville. He said he enjoyed the meeting.... Welcome.

## WHAT IS THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN WINDOWS 98 AND WINDOWS 98 SE?

*(NY Times, 1/7/04)*

A. Windows 98, released in 1998, was Microsoft's first major upgrade to its three-year-old Windows 95 operating system. Windows 98 Second Edition, or SE, is an updated version of Windows 98 that was released in 1999. It remained the current version of Windows for home users until Windows Millennium Edition (Me) was released in 2000.

In an update to the original Windows 98, Windows 98 SE included Internet Explorer 5.0, Windows Media Player 6.2 and DirectX 6.1, but these were in any case available to download free from Microsoft's site. Along with several patches, system updates and code corrections to eliminate bugs, the Second Edition also included the Internet Connection Sharing feature, which allows multiple computers to share a single Internet connection, and offered improved support for U.S.B., FireWire and DVD-related hardware.

You can tell which version of the system is on your computer by right-clicking on the My Computer icon on the desktop and selecting Properties from the pop-up menu. On the General tab in the Properties box, look to see whether it says Windows 98 Second Edition or simply Windows 98.

Windows XP, released in 2001, is the current version. Microsoft ended free tech support for Windows 98 last July and is supplying paid support only until Jan. 16 as it retires that version. It will continue to provide Web-based technical help for Windows 98 and 98 SE at its site.

## Q: WHEN IS AN UPDATE NOT AN UPDATE?
## A: WHEN IT'S A WORM PRETENDING TO BE AN UPDATE

*(Smart Computing, 01/04)*

With the heightened awareness of security, users are anxious to protect their PCs with the release of any new updates from Microsoft. A new clever threat to your computer exists, and as of this writing, Microsoft hasn't come up with a Security Update. A new worm, W32/Swen@MM, spreads through email and network shares. The rub is that the worm creates messages that are designed to appear as if they were Microsoft Security Updates. Until Microsoft releases an authentic update, take heed: Whether you subscribe to Microsoft's security email notification services or not, if you receive an email claiming to be from Microsoft instructing you to open an attached file, don't open the attachment. Delete the email. Use the following clues to verify an authentic security-related message generated by Microsoft.

⇒ The message contains no attachments. Microsoft Security Bulletin notifications never include software updates as attachments. Customers are referred to the complete bulletin on Microsoft's Web site.

⇒ The message is digitally signed. The Microsoft Security Response Center signs its bulletin notifications before distributing them. Verify the signature with the key published on Microsoft TechNet (microsoft.com/technet/).

⇒ The bulletin is listed on Microsoft's Web site. Microsoft will not distribute security update notices until information about them is on the Microsoft Web site. If you doubt the authenticity of a Microsoft Security Bulletin notice, check TechNet to see if the bulletin is listed there.

## SENIOR ALPHABET

*(submitted by Eleanor Mistler)*

A for arthritis.

B for bad back.

C is for chest pains. Perhaps cardiac?

D is for dental decay and decline.

E is for eyesight--can't read that top line.

F is for fissures and fluid retention.

G is for gas (which I'd rather not mention).

H high blood pressure [I'd rather have low).

I for incisions with scars you can show.

J is for joints, that now fail to flex .

L for libido--what happened to sex?

Wait! I forgot about K!

K is for my knees that crack when they're bent.

M is for memory--Please forgive me, mine ain't worth a cent.

N for neurosis, pinched nerves and stiff neck

O is for osteo-and all bones that crack

P for prescriptions, I have quite a few
Give me another pill; I'll be good as new!

Q is for queasiness. Fatal or flu?

R is for reflux--one meal turns into two.

S is for sleepless nights, counting my fears.

T for tinnitus--I hear bells in my ears.

U is for urinary: difficulties with flow.

V is for vertigo, that's "dizzy", you know.

W is worry, now what's going 'round?

X is for X ray--and what might be found.

Y for another year I've left behind.

Z is for zest that I still have my mind.

I have survived all the symptoms my body's deployed, and kept 26 doctors gainfully employed!!!

## COMPUTER VIRUS TYPES
*(submitted by Don Colombo)*

Adam and Eve virus: Takes a couple of bytes out of your Apple.

Airline virus: You're in Dallas, but your data is in Singapore.

Arnold Schwarzenegger virus: Terminates and stays resident. It'll be back.

AT&T virus: Every three minutes it tells you what great service you are getting.

The MCI virus: Every three minutes it reminds you that you're paying too much for the AT&T virus.

Congressional Virus: The computer locks up, screen splits erratically with a message appearing on each half blaming the other side for the problem.

Elvis virus: Your computer gets fat, slow, and lazy and then self destructs, only to resurface at shopping malls and service stations across rural America.

Federal bureaucrat virus: Divides your hard disk into hundreds of little units, each of which do practically nothing, but all of which claim to be the most important part of the computer.

Freudian virus: Your computer becomes obsessed with marrying its own motherboard.

Gallup virus: Sixty percent of the PCs infected will lose 38 percent of their data 14 percent of the time (plus or minus a 3.5 percent margin of error).

New World Order virus: probably harmless, but it makes a lot of people really mad just thinking about it.

Nike virus: Just Does It!

Oprah Winfrey virus: Your 200MB hard drive suddenly shrinks to 80MB, and then slowly expands back to 200MB.

Paul Revere virus: This revolutionary virus does not horse around. It warns you of impending hard disk attack---once if by LAN, twice if by C:.

PBS virus: Your PC stops every few minutes to ask for money.

Politically correct virus: Never calls itself a "virus", but instead refers to itself as an "electronic micro-organism".

Right To Life virus: Won't allow you to delete a file, regardless of how old it is. If you attempt to erase a file, it requires you to first see a counselor about possible alternatives.

Ted Kennedy virus: Crashes your computer but denies it ever happened.

Texas virus: Makes sure that it's bigger than any other file.

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## E-TAILERS RING UP A BIG YEAR
*By Matt Hines*
*Staff Writer, CNET News.com*
*(submitted by Don Colombo)*

The online retail sector experienced significant growth during 2003 due to record holiday sales, a strong travel market and increased consumer confidence, according to a new report.

Revenue for online retailers in 2003 reached $93 billion, a 27 percent increase over the same period last year, research firm ComScore Networks reported on Monday.

The growth in sales was spurred by a record fourth quarter holiday buying season, typically the largest sales period for both online and brick-and-mortar vendors. ComScore said that online retail spending during the 2003 holiday season totaled $12.5 billion, a 29.5 percent gain over the same period last year.

The online travel segment continued to outperform the rest of the e-tail market, with ComScore counting $41 billion in sales for 2003, a 35 percent gain over travel revenue recorded in 2002.

The firm reported that for several weeks during June and July, the peak vacation season, travel spending exceeded all other e-commerce product categories combined.

ComScore analyst Graham Mudd said the fastest growing areas of the e-tail market beyond travel included sales of big-ticket items such as furniture, appliances and jewelry, indicating increased confidence among consumers.

The apparel and accessories market also showed signs of renewed growth after falling off for the last two years, further evidencing a shift among online shoppers.

"Despite some weakness earlier in the year related to the Iraq war, increased consumer experience and programs allowing buyers to interact with physical store locations for returns or service helped to drive sales," said Mudd. "Renewed performance of the apparel market after two years of flat numbers also indicates that buying patterns may be shifting again."

ComScore said that consistent performance over the last two months of the year were crucial to overall growth in the e-tail segment and estimated that consumers spent an average of $200 million per day online throughout November and December.

The firm's holiday numbers appeared conservative compared to other researchers' figures. The eSpending survey published last week by Goldman Sachs, Harris Interactive and Nielsen/NetRatings indicated that consumers spent $13 billion during the holidays, a 46 percent increase over its own 2002 figures.

The positive numbers stand in contrast to a Commerce Department report released in December that found a 3.1 percent month-over-month decrease in orders for durable goods for the month of November.

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Visit the HCC website at hunterdoncomputerclub.org.

Read an interesting history of the club.

Access other information.

## NEW YEAR'S RESOLUTIONS
*(Smart Computing, 1/04)*

Resolution #1
Make More Money

Check out Clear Station (http://clearstation.etrade.com) for tips on managing money wisely. The site is free and you will be able to customizable your own portfolio.

Resolution #2
Eat Better

The Center for Nutrition Policy & Promotion (http://www.cnpp.usda.gov) has a variety of online brochures in addition to the widely recognized Food Guide Pyramid. There is an interactive Healthy Eating Index which lets you enter the food you've eaten today and see an analysis. There is a free registration with no email address required.
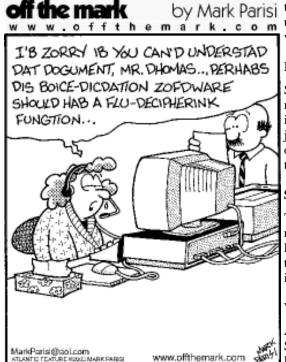
Resolution #3
Exercise More

The American Council on Exercise site is http://www.acefitness.org. This site won't make exercising any easier, but will help you find a health club, fitness facts, and a fitness job.

Resolution #4
Make a Difference

If you thought that this year you would be more about helping others and less about helping yourself, check out http://www.voiceyourself.com. From thoughts and poems to activist activity calendars, organic products, and ways to preserve mother earth, the mission here is simply to be a good, healthy, happy citizen. It's not a preachy or patronizing site, but well-put-together and often inspiring.

Resolution #5
Go to Outer Space

The web site (http://www.exploremarsnow.org) has many interesting facts about Mars; it's almost like being there, without, of course, suffering through the average –67 degrees Fahrenheit temperature. So you may not be able to go to Mars this year, but it may inspire you to dream a little bigger.



*off the mark* by Mark Parisi
www.offthemark.com

*Submitted by Eleanor Mistler*

## STUPID TECHNOLOGY TRICKS OF 2003
*(by eWEEK Labs/12/03)*

### DMCA Misuse

A number of organizations this year invoked the Digital Millennium Copyright Act—written to stave off Internet piracy—in an attempt to limit their competition. Whether they'll succeed remains to be seen.

### Product Activation

In 2003, many software vendors introduced product activation schemes that inconvenienced and annoyed customers by working only some of the time and almost always failing to stop piracy.

### Microsoft Patching the Patches

In Microsoft's zeal to fix new vulnerabilities, initial patches often provided, less-than-optimal results. End result? Another patch.

### SCO Lawsuit

Thrashing about like a bull in a china shop of intellectual property practice and precedent, the SCO Group's unsupported threats against Linux developers and users did all of IT a grave disservice.

### Rise of Spyware

Spyware rounded the corner from mild annoyance to major grievance in 2003. As a result, Ad-aware, Hijack This and Spycop became part of the IT toolbox as techs wrestled the beast.

### Social Security Number Blunders

The casual use of the Social Security number as an ID is permitted by law but should be resisted by customers of any private enterprise, as it paves the way for identity theft.

### Viruses and Worms

As Comic Book Guy from "The Simpsons" would say, "Worst. Year. Ever." Viruses and worms spread like never before in 2003—and not through clever new tricks but simply by taking advantage of unpatched systems and users' failure to learn from past mistakes.

### Server Dependence

Microsoft's newest products are more feature-filled than ever, but fully exploiting these features often requires an upgrade to Microsoft's latest and greatest everything.

### General Patent Insanity

First SCO Group decides to tussle with IBM over the company's "misuse" of Unix and ends up going after the GPL (General Public License). Then Eolas took on Microsoft, claiming Internet Explorer infringed on a patent that describes how a Web browser can use external applications.

### Diebold Debacle

Software quality and source code security became mainstream topics when Diebold fell short in delivering reliable e-voting.

A couple of years ago, people searched for information, now searches are being driven by shopping.
*(Nielsen/NetRatings)*

### THE BASICS OF HDTV

*(submitted by Don Colombo)*

Buying a TV is not as simple as it once was. Not more than a few years ago, the average TV buyer needed to really only think about three things when buying a TV: the price, the screen size, and the picture quality. High Definition Television (HDTV) has changed all of this, and has made buying the right TV more challenging then ever. Luckily, guides like cheap-plasma-tv.com are here to help you navigate the maze that is TV buying today.

HDTV is finally here, and everyone wants one. It has taken years of slow starts by manufacturers, high prices for consumers, and differing standards to get where we are today. Although still young, HDTV is here to stay, has dramatically grown in popularity, and is finally getting the programming support from broadcasters, cable and satellite providers needed to jump-start sales. But, if you are reading this, you probably know this already, so let's jump into the basics of HDTV.

#### *What is HDTV?*

To begin, HDTV is a set of standards for higher resolution display set by the Advanced Televisions Standards Committee (ATSC). The ATSC set about to create a variety of resolution standards to help benefit both television manufacturers and programming providers. There are 18 HDTV standards set by the ATSC, with them differing in pixel resolution and scan rate.

The good news is that all current HDTV sets for sale on the US market will receive, display or convert all of these 18 formats. So, there is no need to worry that a HDTV you buy today will not be able to display one of these different formats, depending on what format your favorite television stations finalize on.

#### *HDTV Resolutions*

One of the most confusing aspects for many HDTV buyers is the various resolutions that these formats may support. Most HDTVs on the market today sup-port some range of resolution from 480p to 1080i. What do these numbers mean? The number refers to the number of lines of horizontal resolution the screen is able to display. Generally speaking, the higher the resolution, the better the display will appear in terms of picture quality and crispness.

So, what does the p or i mean? You may see the various TV resolutions labeled as 480i, 720P, or 1080i. These refer to whether the picture is (p)rogressive or (i)nterlaced. Before HDTVs, all TV displays in the United States were of the Interlaced variety. What this basically means is that as the TV 'draws' the picture, it draws every other line, and then goes back and draws the lines it missed. In other words, it draws lines 1, 3, 5, 7, etc. and then after completing all odd numbered lines, it goes back to draw 2, 4, 6, 8, etc. Of course, this all happens amazing fast, fast enough that the human eye can not actually see these lines being drawn. However, Interlaced displays are often noted to have a bit of shimmering or flickering as a result. For most of us, since this is what we have spent our whole lives watching, it appears quite normal.

Progressive on the other hand draws the lines in order, and at a higher number of framers per second. In other words, it draws lines 1,2,3,4,5 and on down, and does so at a higher speed than an Interlaced display. As a result, the display is generally much cleaner and appears sharper. For many, once they have seen a Progressive picture, it is difficult to go back to interlaced.

The most common HDTV standards set by the ATSC are 720p (720 lines of horizontal resolution and progressive scan) and and 1080i (1080 lines of horizontal resolution and interlaced scan). 720p is also generally described as TVs being capable of 1024x720 pixel resolution (similar the resolution settings on your computer monitor), but individual HDTV sets may have actual different resolutions and still be able to support 720p. This is particularly true of Plasma TVs. The same goes for 1080i, which is described as 1920x1080 pixel resolution Note that 480p is generally not consid-ered a HDTV resolution, but a DTV (digital television) or ETV (enhanced TV) resolution that allows you to view improved clarity from a DVD player that supports Progressive output.

There is a pretty sizable debate ranging within the audio/visual community on whether 720P or 1080i produces a higher quality image. 1080i has the advantage of having more lines of resolution, whereas 720p has the advantage of a progressive scan picture. The important thing to remember here is that both will be much better looking generally than a standard 480i (non-HDTV) signal, and that all TVs are able to receive, display and/or convert these different formats. So, you should not have any issues in viewing any HDTV formats with current generation TVs. Also, keep in mind that true HDTV signals are always in a widescreen (16:9 ratio) format, compared to standard broadcast televisions 4:3 ratio.

#### *Types of HDTV Sets*

When looking at HDTV sets, there are three main details to consider: the technology that powers the television, the screen type (regular, 4:3 or widescreen, 16:9), and whether the set includes a HDTV tuner or requires a separate unit. First, let's take a look at the technologies currently available, and your options for each.

The most common type of HDTVs today are still direct view (standard cathode ray tube (CRT) - just like most 'regular' TVs), and traditional rear-projection (traditionally what we have called 'big screen'). Both have advantages and disadvantages, but in all likelihood their days are numbered as we moved towards newer technologies that pack additional features, potential cost savings, and brighter, clearer picture quality. Direct view TVs suffer in their costs to manufacture and limitations on size (the largest direct view HDTVs are 36 inches). Traditional Rear projection suffers from convergence issues, screen burn in, and difficulty of viewing in a bright lit room or from an angle.

HDTV (con't.)

Newer technologies include Plasma TVs, LCD (liquid crystal displays - like most laptop computer screens), and LCoS (Liquid Crystal on Silicon) and DLP (Digital Light Processor) rear-projection units. Again, each has it's advantages and disadvantages, but in all cases, these newer technologies generally produce picture quality at least equal to the older technologies, and in many cases considerably better. In the case of Plasma TVs and LCD TVs, these technologies also provide the advantage of a compact form, and in many cases are only a few inches thick, with weights that are a fraction of the older technologies, and the new rear-projection technologies. Be sure to take a look at the advantages and disadvantages of Plasma TVs compared to other HDTV types.

The next main consideration when buying a HDTV is whether you want a widescreen TV or a standard size. Widescreen HDTVs offer a 16:9 ratio display, whereas standard HDTVs are 4:3 (basically square). Widescreen is similar to the formats used in movie theaters, DVDs and is also the standard HDTV signal format. This is the recommended format, and the direction TVs are heading (many manufacturers are already planning to drop the old standard, 4:3 format TVs, and only produce widescreen TVs). Note that LCD and Plasma TVs are sold exclusively in widescreen formats.

A final consideration is whether the set includes an integrated HDTV tuner (also called a receiver), or if it requires a standalone unit to perform this function. Most HDTVs are sold without a built in tuner, and there are several advantages to this. First, it helps manufacturers keep prices down, as they obviously do not need to build in the components of the HDTV tuner, and it allows them to keep their HDTV sets more compact. Second, since tuner technology will surely change over the years (as improvements in digital signal processing occur), this protects your HDTV set investment since you can always upgrade the tuner separately as needed. A third, very important reason, is

that most cable and satellite providers that offer HDTV programming provide this tuner as part of their subscription package -in many cases eliminating this cost for you.

Armed with this basic knowledge you are now ready to learn the basics of Plasma TVs and how they work.

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Jac Carroll sent this in after the December edition was mailed:

Only a geek could appreciate...

"Phrosty the Photon"
*(sung to "Frosty the Snowman")*

Phrosty the Photon was quite a quantum sight, with a zero mass and an endless life, and a speed approaching light.

There must have been some magic in a physics lab one year, for when they studied X-Ray beams, old Phrosty did appear, Ooooooh...

Phrosty the Photon says he knows he's not that large, but he said one day, if he comes this way, he will give us all a charge.

Thumpity, thump, thump, thumpity, thump, thump, moving fast as light. Thumpity, thump, thump, thumpity, thump, thump, Phrosty's out of sight.

May all your Christmases be light.

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**Home Phone  (  _____  )  _____       E-mail _____@_____**

**Fax  (_____) _____**

**Information that will help us help you:**

1.  **WOULD YOU BE WILLING TO HELP THE CLUB ?  (circle one or more)**
    **Club officer     Technical advisor     Setting up for the meeting     Taking club minutes     Newsletter     Programs**
    **Other**_____

2.  **DO YOU HAVE AN AREA OF COMPUTER EXPERTISE?____    IF SO, WHAT IS IT?**
    _____

3.  **PLEASE LIST ANY COMMENT AND/OR  LIST WHAT WOULD YOU LIKE TO SEE IN OUR COMPUTER CLUB**
    _____

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**CHECK OUT THESE SITES**
*(NY Times, 1/8/04)*

What do the final screens of classic video games look like? You don't have to play them to see, thanks to the Video Game Museum's database of game endings (www. vgmuseum.com/end/arcade).

Trivia enthusiasts will go into overdrive at Fun Trivia (www.funtrivia.com), which features more than 40,000 quizzes on thousands of topics. Charts All Over the World (www.lanet.lv/misc/charts) links to music charts world-wide.

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Submissions for articles, cartoons, pictures, or other information pertinent to the club are due to the editor by the 3rd of each month.  If you plan to email your submission, please be sure to include HCC in your subject line.   Send to:

mreuter@ptdprolog.net

or

marlynreuter@hotmail.com

or use snailmail

# Hunterdon Computer Club

### Next Meeting  Saturday, January 17, 2004
### Hunterdon Medical Center
### Rt. 31  Flemington NJ

### 8:30 A.M.  To Noon

### PROGRAM — (To Be Determined)

### Guests Welcome  —  all ages  all  levels

## HCC NEWSLETTER

**HUNTERDON COMPUTER CLUB**

**Marlyn Reuter**
**267 Federal Twist Road**
**Stockton, New Jersey 08559**

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