KEEPING OUR COMPUTERS HEALTHY

It is necessary to clean our computers frequently just as we would clean our homes or automobiles. Our computers will not only look better, they will also serve us better! When is the last time you cleaned your computer??

CLEANING THE EXTERIOR:

It has been recommended when computers to use static free cloths, cotton tip swabs, and denatured alcohol (rubbing alcohol contains water and takes longer to dry). Denatured alcohol may be purchased at the pharmacy section of a drug store. It is necessary to clean ALL hardware very carefully on a regular basis. DO NOT ever allow drinking or eating around computers!! Have you ever seen what Coke or food crumbs can do to a keyboard – much less gum? Clean the computer, monitor, keyboard and printer on a regular basis. Use a mouse pad to help keep it functional. While you’re at it, clean and organize the work area around the computers and printer. Next you will give your mouse a good cleaning following the instructions on the handout.

CLEANING INSIDE

As we clean our houses at least once a week or at the very least once a month! – We should set aside a set time to clean our computers on a regular basis!

Empty the Trash! Click on the trash can on your desktop and delete all of the pieces in the can. NOTE: when you delete materials from trash can – they will be sent to cyberspace never to be seen again but this really is a necessary task. Next open up your email and delete all of the messages in the email trash. Next, go to sent messages and delete as many of the messages as possible. To accomplish this task quickly when you have a lot of messages in these places, highlight the top message on the page and go down and highlight the bottom message – all messages on the page should become highlighted – press the delete button.

Checking for Viruses: Just like when we get a virus and don’t feel well and do not perform to the best of our ability, when your computer gets a virus it will not function properly. Some signs of a virus being present are: your computer will not boot up, your CD-ROM will not work, your machine is sluggish, or the printer is not working. It is recommended that you use Norton’s AntiVirus to check for viruses on your hard drives and on all floppy disks brought into the building.

SCANDISK

Hard drive: This takes time but should be done on a weekly or at least a monthly basis. This procedure will check and repair the hard drive and correct any problems that it might find. The procedure is as follows in Windows 98:
Go to the start button, Select Programs, select Accessories, select System Tools, then select Scandisk.

This will bring up a window that allows you to customize the Scandisk options. First, select the drive you would like to perform to scan. Next you have the option of performing a Standard test or a Thorough test. The standard test checks all files and folders to make sure none are corrupt or missing. The thorough test will do this as well as check the physical surface of the disk to make sure that the disk is in good shape. Bad clusters are an indication of a serious problem and should be discussed with a computer professional.

Next select the option to Automatically Fix Errors. Now press the start button. You should perform the standard test on a weekly basis, and the thorough test once a month.

NOTE: If your computer tells you it cannot open the Scandisk program because of a problem with a disk utility, you will need to restart your computer in Safe Mode to perform the Scandisk. To do this, go to the start button, then select Shut Down, then select Restart. Press and hold down the Ctrl (Control) key until the Windows 98 logo screen appears. Shortly, your computer will bring up a menu screen. Select Safe Mode. Your computer may look different, so don’t be startled. You will not be able to use your speakers, modem, printer, or other things in Safe Mode, but you will be able to perform this test and Disk Defragmenter (below). Once these tests are completed, you can restart again normally to resume normal operation.

DISK DEFRAGMENTER

The disk defragmenter looks at the files are organized on your hard drive and reorganizes them to optimize the computer’s ability to access the files. Keeping your files organized allows your computer to respond more quickly to open and save commands. The procedure is as follows in Windows 98:

Go to the start button, Select Programs, select Accessories, select System Tools, then select Disk Defragmenter.

From the pop-up window, select the drive you want to defragment. Then press OK. This test will take a while to complete. You can watch the progress on the chart onscreen.

CLEANING YOUR CACHE

The cache holds the contents of all the pages that you have visited. It needs to be cleared regularly to enhance your browser’s performance.

In Netscape: Open up Netscape. You do not need to connect to the Internet. Open the File menu, choose Preferences, then click on the Advanced category, then select Cache. Now click on the Clear Disk Cache button, then click on the Clear Memory Cache button.