The *GAB'er*

The Newsletter of the Greater Albany Apple Byters

Free iPod Touch with Mac Purchase

Apple has officially launched the Back to School promo for 2008.

If you're a student, faculty, or staff member and you buy a Mac before September 15, you can get a free iPod touch or iPod nano. After all, isn't college about seizing every opportunity?

Official list of Terms and Conditions (PDF) have been posted, and is primarily targeted at college students, faculty and staff. The promotion runs from June 3rd to September 15th and provides a rebate of up to $299 for qualifying individuals who buy a Mac and an iPod Touch or iPod Nano.

Although they only list the MacBook, MacBook Air, MacBook Pro and iMac on the promo page, the terms and conditions specify that "All new Macintosh computers and the Configure-to-order versions of these products are eligible, except for Mac mini and 17" iMac".

Customers may purchase an 8GB iPod Nano ($199) to receive a $199 rebate, or may purchase an 8GB ($299), 16GB ($399), or 32GB ($499) iPod Touch to receive a $299 rebate. The rebate can not be applied to the iPhone or any other iPod.

This is the most aggressive Back to School promotion that Apple has offered and should dramatically increase the installed base of iPod Touch users over the next few months. The iPod Touch uses the same operating system as the Apple iPhone and will be able to run upcoming "iPhone applications" that will be released on the iTunes App Store.

Coordinator's Corner

by John Buckley

The June meeting will be a celebration of our Twenty-fourth Anniversary. By request, we will be having a special meeting beginning at 6:00 p.m. on Wednesday, June 11th with a dinner at the Red Front Restaurant. After discussions at our last meeting, it was decided to change our dinner location to provide some variety to the menu. I am a regular at the Red Front and find it an excellent family restaurant with good prices.

There should plenty to discuss with the Apple Worldwide Developers Conference taking place June 9th through June 13th.

Please note the change in location. GAAB will provide the dinner. Sign up is through my e-mail address (jbuckley@applebyters.com). Please make sure you contact me as soon as possible so I can make reservations. This should prove to be a Grand Finale for our twenty-fourth year.

Directions to get to the Red Front Restaurant at 71 Division Street in Troy follow. There is also a map link on our website. The restaurant is about 10 minutes from where we have our regular meeting at Troy High School.

Next GAAB Meeting
June 11, 2008

24th Anniversary Dinner
6:00 p.m.

Red Front Restaurant
71 Division Street, Troy

Featured in this Issue

Serving the Apple Computer User Community Since May 1984

Officers & Special Interest Group Leaders

Program Coordinator
John Buckley
272-7128

Membership Director
Cecilia MacDonald
872-0823

Treasurer
Cecilia MacDonald
872-0823

Public Domain Librarian
Bill Shuff
393-9753

Newsletter Editor
Roger Mazula
466-7492

Education SIG
John Buckley
272-7128

Internet SIG
Lou Wozniak
465-2873

Apple Ambassador

The following is the latest Mac Owner Support Group Newsletter. There are a number of interesting links in the newsletter which you can reach by reading this article online.

The MacOSG "Big Brother's Watching" Newsletter
June 1, 2008

====Mac OSX TIPS & TRICKS====

Practical Privacy-protection Practices

Despite our Mac's bevy of built-in privacy-protection features, most MacNuts probably don't realize how much personal information can still reside internally, squirreled away in cache files, system logs, on our hard drives, etc. (Did you know, for example, that deleting a file in the Trash doesn't necessarily mean that someone with the right tools/skills can't still retrieve that file?) Whether you want to surf the 'Net securely, protect the stuff on your computer, or are getting ready to sell your old Mac, here's several links you might find handy:

Surf like a Ghost

* Check your current Internet visibility at https://www.grc.com/x/ne.dll?bh0bkyd2 While this site's tests might feel too-technical for some of us, it easily tells you if your IP Address (your computer's unique "fingerprint") is seen, and the File Sharing, All Service Ports, and Browser Headers tests readily display any vulnerabilities you might need to address.

* There are several applications available that will help cover your tracks while surfing. This MacOSG Forums link offers two of them (http://macosg.com/group/viewtopic.php?t=14645); otherwise Google "mac internet security" for many others.

* I've found this blog dedicated to Mac security very informative too, so check out http://www.isfym.com/site/blog/blog.html

Internet SIG

Sites Help You Get Your Finances in Order
by Kim Komando
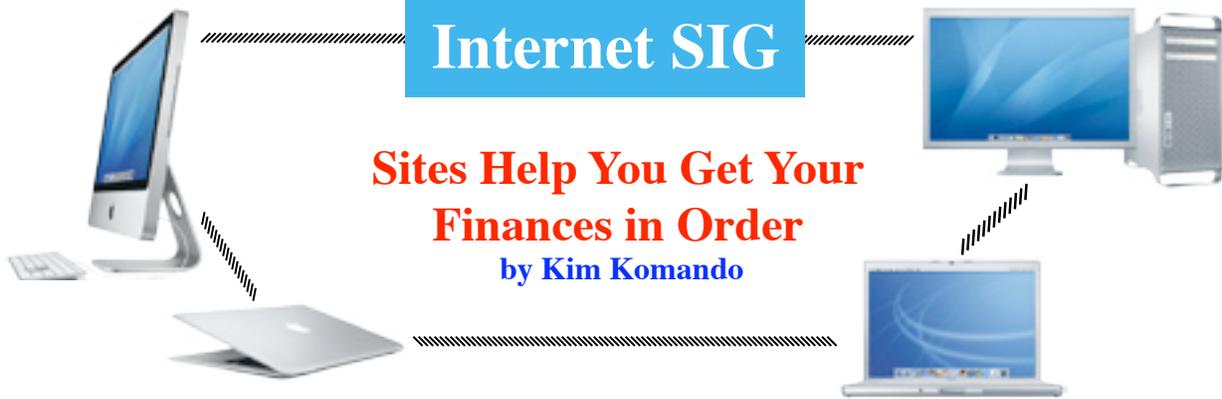
House prices are falling, and the cost of gas and food is on the rise. Specialized software and sites can help you manage these financial changes. And if you use the right resources, it won't cost you a thing.

Create a budget

The first step to taking control is to understand how you spend your money. Start by determining your basic living expenses such as housing, food and transportation.

Then, list other monthly expenses. This may take some work. So pull out your bills and credit card statements. Fortunately, free software can make light work of organizing it all.

SimpleD Budget (Windows) is a small program that helps you track expenses. You enter your monthly expenses and income. After allocating your money to certain categories, you enter payments as you make them.

You'll see when you're approaching the limit for a particular category. You'll also get an idea of how fast you're spending money.

Buddi (Mac/Windows) works much the same as SimpleD Budget. However, it can also help you generate various reports. For example, you can see how your net worth has changed over the months.

Another free finance manager is AceMoney Lite (Windows). It has more features than the other two. For example, it can download stock quotes from the Internet.

Review your credit report

Once you know where cutbacks can be made, you're ready to make changes. Maybe you want to downgrade your car to a cheaper model. Or perhaps you're looking for a car that uses less gas. And, of course, you may want to refinance your home.

Before you do this, you should review your credit report. A poor credit report can stifle your chances of locking in a lower rate on loans.

You'll want to check your report for accuracy and fraud. Then, you can contact the credit bureaus to correct errors.

You can get your credit report at AnnualCreditReport.com. You can request one copy from each of the three reporting institutions once a year. Those reports are free.

You must enter your Social Security number to get your report. If you're uncomfortable doing this online, you can mail your request.

AnnualCreditReport.com provides information on disputing items on your reports. However, it does not provide your credit score. For that, you'll need to pay about $10.

Find your credit score for free

Your credit score can play a large role when you apply for credit. Quicken Loans has an interesting site—Quizzle.com. It will give you a free credit report, and throws in a score. That is a Quizzle score.

It tells you how well you're doing as a homeowner. Quizzle also will help you gauge your home value. You'll also find out how to save on your mortgage. Additionally, there's a budget management tool.

Quizzle is interesting, even if you don't need a mortgage, or can't qualify. You should come away with a better understanding of your finances.

For now, Quizzle is aimed at homeowners. It should provide service to renters soon.

CreditKarma.com also provides you with a free credit score. The score comes from one of the three major credit-reporting bureaus. The site will also help you monitor your score over time.

CreditKarma provides you with special offers based on your credit score. For example, you can get a lower interest rate on credit cards. You may also apply for offers from cable companies and other businesses.

These are tough economic times. Using these resources could make them a little more bearable.

Education SIG

Researchers Identify Key Ed-Tech Trends
by Meris Stansbury, eSchool News

One-to-one computing, online assessment on the rise in schools--but keeping up with bandwidth needs is a problem

Widespread adoption of one-to-one computing programs and the growing use of online assessments are among the key ed- tech trends occurring in schools across the country, according to the 2008 America's Digital Schools report. However, implementation of these and other technologies leaves little funding for new initiatives, and bandwidth issues are limiting the scope of interaction students can have with technology.

The report, conducted by Thomas W. Greaves of The Greaves Group and Jeanne Hayes of The Hayes Connection, isolates the most important ways in which technology is changing teaching and learning and identifies the implications of those changes for the future.

The results were compiled from a survey of more than 400 school administrators between April and September 2007.

Besides one-to-one computing and online assessment, the report identifies and examines new computing devices, interactive whiteboards, learning management systems (LMS), and growing bandwidth needs as other key trends on the rise in schools.

"...District-level respondents make it clear that these six trends are becoming increasingly entrenched, indicating that America's Digital Schools are moving beyond the concept stage and becoming a reality," says the report. "Understanding the trends and their implications is increasingly important for educators, policy makers, and industry alike--to help them make plans, maximize opportunities, and avoid pitfalls."

One-to-one computing programs--defined here as programs that provide full-time personal computing devices for all students in at least one whole grade level, and not simply mobile laptop carts--have improved dramatically in the last few years, the report notes. Professional development has improved, teachers are more involved, and hardware failures have been reduced.

In 2006, 30 percent of districts reported moderate to significant improvement in one-to-one computing programs. In 2007, this number climbed to 78.7 percent. Consequently, the average district pilot program has climbed to include 1,631 students. Forty percent of one-to-one pilots include more than 1,000 students, and 10 percent include more than 5,000 students.

Implementation also is more widespread, with 27 percent of districts reporting their involvement with one-to-one computing programs. Thirty-one percent of district pilot programs involve three or more schools, meaning these districts have moved beyond the initial stages and are on the path toward system-wide implementation.

For Hayes, the most positive finding of the report was this improvement in one-to-one computing programs. "They're bigger, in more schools in a district, and are being evaluated more closely and for longer," she said. "This is good news, suggesting that one-to-one computing is not a fad, but has lasting efficacy.

" David Underhill, principal of Bayshore High School in Manatee County, Fla., believes that one-to-one computing can only be successful through teacher ownership. "If teachers are presented with the new machines without any prior involvement in the decision, the program probably won't succeed," he said. "But if teachers have an opportunity to learn about the program early in the process and provide input, they feel brought in--and the picture totally changes."

Another trend on the rise is online formative assessment, with 30 percent of districts employing this strategy. According to the report, a key reason for this trend is that schools are now more data-driven and more careful to ensure that assessment is driving instruction. Hayes and Greaves believe the widespread availability of high-quality online assessment software and test items will allow this trend to accelerate in the future.

"The use of ... online assessments [is] exploding," Hayes said. "That suggests a real improvement in using tests to help students learn what they don't know, rather than beat them over the head--after the fact--about what they don't know."

The only major inhibitor to online assessment, according to survey respondents, is the lack of suitable student devices with which to take the exams. However, Hayes and Greaves believe this hindrance will be solved in the next few years with lower-end devices now coming to the market--yet another trend noted by the report.

For instance, the report reveals that vendors are racing to ship sub-laptop devices into schools, segmenting the market for mobile computing devices into traditional laptops, student appliances, handheld devices, personal digital assistants, smart phones, and Wi-Fi enabled music/video devices.

Yet, vendors still have a long way to go before the ideal student device emerges, the report suggests. For instance, "survey respondents indicate that they require an average battery life of eight hours, but today the average is less than four," it states.

Another finding is that interactive whiteboards (IWBs) are now viewed as "standard equipment" in schools. The report predicts that IWBs will be in nearly every school five years from now. As with one-to-one computing, this widespread implementation can be credited to educators who are comfortable with the technology and with IWB improvements.

Just in the last few years, the report notes, IWB innovations have included:
- Boards thaat support multiple, simultaneous input devices;
- Improved classroom ergonomics;
- Integration with other classroom technologies, including student response units and mobile computing devices;
- A trend toward very specific software, such as for high school algebra, calculus, et cetera; and
- A more mature purchasing process--districts now know what they want, and order sizes are increasing as schools move from pilot programs to full-scale rollouts.

While one-to-one computing, online assessment, and interactive whiteboards are examples of successful ed-tech trends, another key trend--the growing use of LMS software in schools--hasn't fully realized its potential, the report suggests. While the number of school districts using

LMS software climbed to nearly 50 percent of respondents, with another 19 percent indicating plans for future use, schools "frequently take less than full advantage of the available applications," the report says.

These applications include school portals, teacher authoring, electronic assignments, electronic supplements, electronic core curriculum, and content management.

The report suggests that educators might need time to take full advantage of all new features, because in the past, districts were faced with two alternatives, "neither of which met all their needs--either a highly sophisticated LMS with good educational content but no ability to add other applications, or an open LMS from the university world with no K-12 content."

Now, proprietary systems are opening up, and "the open standards systems are maturing, giving schools K-12 features such as the ability to search for content using state standards tags," says the report.

The final trend--internet bandwidth--remains in a state of crisis, according to the report.

What's more, although awareness of inadequate connectivity has risen substantially among educators, this crisis is evolving and intensifying. School administrators who were surveyed revealed that the average amount of bandwidth needed per student has climbed some 123 percent from year to year.

Schools are dealing with the problem by using optical-based solutions that expand data at a lower cost per megabit than copper solutions, and by adding bandwidth shaping and metering services.

The crisis also is intensifying, according to school leaders, because 54 percent of districts foresee a problem obtaining sufficient funding, regardless of the source (local, state, or E-rate). Forty-three percent foresee a problem with E-rate funding levels in particular.

Says the report, "The prevailing opinion is that E-rate funding will remain capped at $2.25 billion a year. As demand goes up, the percentage of reimbursement [that each school system receives] will go down. Since we are facing another funding shortfall cycle where states are projecting teacher layoffs, the possibility of increased bandwidth funds is slim."

Thirty-seven percent of districts foresee a problem obtaining sufficient bandwidth regardless of their ability to pay. Two- thirds of those polled say they have implemented

a policy to restrict the use of certain applications in order to conserve bandwidth--including banning streaming video.

Hayes says she finds it striking that technology directors would choose to restrict or prohibit the use of video streaming and other media as a solution to limited bandwidth. "This seems to be the opposite of the objective that we should be striving for--to create a 'real-world' environment with all media used to help kids learn," she said.

Another disheartening trend, according to Hayes, "seems to be a serious shortage of tech support, which makes support of new initiatives very difficult. Schools continue to lag behind businesses in terms of tech personnel." (See "Schools need help with tech support.")

She continued: "If technology is going to be a full-time partner in digital learning with teachers, it has to be accessible and fixed ASAP if there's a problem. The shortage of staff to help teachers limits further growth. The current economy suggests a concern about budget cuts in technology, as well as in other areas; many IT directors tell us that new programs cost too much when they are struggling to support the programs they already have."

Links:
America's Digital Schools 2008 Report
The Hayes Connection
The Greaves Group

Note to readers: Don't forget to visit the "Creating the 21 st Century Classroom" resource center. Preparing today's youth to succeed in the digital economy requires a new kind of teaching and learning. Skills such as global literacy, computer literacy, problem solving, critical thinking, creativity, and innovation have become critical in today's increasingly interconnected workforce and society--and technology is the catalyst for bringing these changes into the classroom. Go to Creating-the-21st-century-classroom.

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Program Coordinator
Continued from page 1.

The following are directions from Route 7 and the Northway in Latham.

Interstate 87, Latham, NY 12110 to Red Front at 71 Division St Troy, NY 12180

1. Head northeast on I-87 N toward Exit 7
2. Take exit 7 to merge onto RT-7 E toward Cohoes/Troy
3. Take the exit toward Downtown Troy
4. Keep right at the fork, follow signs for Hutton St/US-4 and
merge onto Hutton St
5. Turn left at River St/US-4 0.3 mi
6. Turn right at River St/US-4 S
Continue to follow US-4 S 0.7 mi
7. Turn left at Liberty St 335 ft
8. Turn left at 4th St/US-4 N 236 ft
9. Turn left at Division St 157 ft
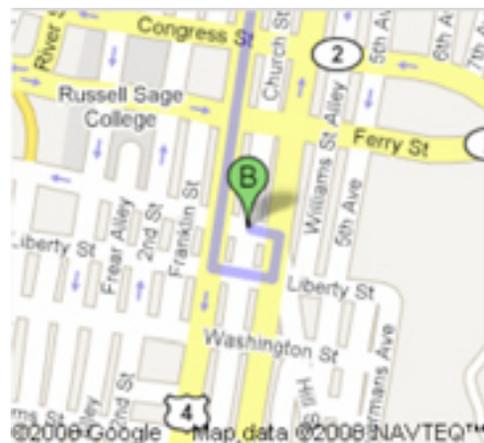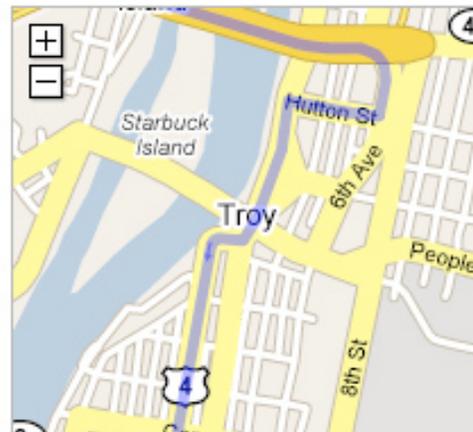
Apple Ambassador
Continued from page 2.

* And if you run Windows on your Mac via Boot Camp or Parallels or whatever, or also use a straight "Gates Machine," you might want to explore this blog by the "Washington Post" that covers security issues from a larger perspective: http://blog.washingtonpost.com/securityfix/

Secure Files, Folders n' Flash Drives

* Thanks to its built-in FileVault, the Mac OS offers encrypted security of everything on our hard drives. To activate FileVault in Leopard, follow this path: System Preferences>Security>FileVault.

* This old Forums link still offers good insight on further protecting a specific folder: http://macosg.com/group/viewtopic.php?t=14929

* And don't forget the vulnerability present on that flash drive you carry around! http://macosg.com/group/viewtopic.php?t=15957

Strip Naked Before You Sell

* Years ago, I read a report by two security gurus who purchased 100-or-so used PCs and deliberately resurrected whatever deleted files they could from those hard drives. Unfortunately, I can't relocate that report (if you know of it, please email or PM a link to me on MacOSG), but take my word for it: The results were embarrassing and eye-opening! So, before you sell your old Mac, check out the following thread on the MacOSG Forums about the importance of first stripping your hard drive: http://macosg.com/group/viewtopic.php?t=13693

====MACSIMUM NEWS====

Forbes.com: Jobs Earning Tons of Frequent-flyer Miles!; Apple Secretly Shipping "Mysterious New Product"?

Speaking of being watched, is there anything under greater scrutiny than the next iPhone? The last MacOSG Newsletter focused on the impending release of iPhone v2, but this new report and its links add further fuel to the speculative fire that Apple God Steve Jobs will announce something very hot in less than two weeks!

http://www.macsimumnews.com/index.php/archive/reports_second_generation_iphone_already_here/

Watch for This: Different DotMac Due?

I've been a .Mac (pronounced DotMac) user since it debuted and while I've questioned its value over the years, I've stuck with it. According to this item by Dennis Sellers of MacOSG partner Macsimum News, Apple's .Mac might soon be in for a serious makeover...
http://www.macsimumnews.com/index.php/archive/apple_to_revamp_mac_offer_it_to_windows_users/

====MacOSG UPDATES, REMINDERS & ANNOUNCEMENTS====

Another Milestone Approaches!

Every day, more n' more people discover the benefits of the MacOSG Website, the friendliest, most helpful site in cyberspace. We now have 5,974 registered members! Who will be number 6,000? If you recently joined, don't feel shy about posting your comments, concerns or questions in our Forums and tapping into the expertise of our worldwide membership. And please tell us how you found our site and let us know how we can help you get the most from your Mac!
http://macosg.com/group/viewforum.php?f=1

====MacOSG MEMBER BENNIES====

Was Your Name Announced?

Courtesy of our friends at O'Reilly Media, MacOSG members can score a gift just by listening to the MacOSG podcast. During each episode, MacOSG's podcast crew announces the name of a randomly selected MacOSG member, who then has two weeks to claim a free book from O'Reilly's massive selection. Visit the following link for more information but remember that there's no way you can win if you don't listen!
http://www.macosg.com/group/viewtopic.php?t=11442

Save Dough on Every O'Reilly Book!

Even if your name doesn't pop up during the MacOSG podcast, you can still take advantage of a 35% discount on any book (24/7) from O'Reilly Media's HUGE selection just cuz you're a MacOSG member! How cool is that?
http://www.macosg.com/group/viewtopic.php?t=12330

Mac Clones Are Back (for Now)
by Eric A. Taub, New York Times

Apple ended its Mac clone program in 1998, soon after Steven P. Jobs rejoined the company. At the time, there was little reason to suspect that it would ever be revived. Now a Mac clone is back, but this time without Apple's blessing.

Psystar, a Florida-based company, is selling low-priced clones that run Apple's OS X Leopard software, at an entry-level price far below that charged for official Apple machines. When first announced last month, many tech sites dismissed the operation as a fraud, given the Web site's proclivity to continually change its physical address and the inability of various bloggers to reach the owner.

But now the first machines have started to ship, and according to at least one well-known Mac user, they compare favorably in performance to some of Apple's own models.

Jason D. O'Grady, creator of the mobile Web site O'Grady's Power Page and an Apple blogger at ZDNet, recently tested a base-priced Open Computer from Psystar against its closest competitor in terms of price, the Mac Mini. He found that the Open Computer "trounced" the competition.

But take note. Like the Mini, Psystar's $399 product comes without a monitor, keyboard or mouse. It also ships without a FireWire port, Bluetooth or a wireless card. Adding those options, plus a pre-installed copy of Leopard, raised the price to $680, $80 more than Apple's Mini, which comes with wireless and Bluetooth installed, but with a smaller hard drive than the Open Computer.

Because it is a clone, installing the Mac operating system is not a simple matter, which is why Mr. O'Grady had the

company install it. However, according to Apple's license agreement, Leopard can only be installed on "a single Apple-labeled computer." That appears to put Psystar in danger of legal action. Rudy Pedraza, Psystar's owner, said he was confident that what he was doing was legal, and Apple declined to comment.

Meanwhile, it is always possible that Apple could figure out a firmware update that could disable Psystar's clones.

But Mr. Pedraza is not worried. "We have developed technology that will allow only software updates that we have verified will work with the Open Computer," he said.

On the other hand, if Apple decides to rewrite its software and knock out Psystar, Open Computer owners could be stuck running the current version of Leopard forever.

Mac Tips
Creating Live Links in Documents

Sometimes it's useful to create a hypertext link within your documents. You might, for example, make a link that automatically opens a Safari web page when clicked, or one that generates a pre-addressed email message.

Here's how to create a link in TextEdit, your Mac's word processing program: First, select the text you'd like to use as your link. Next, go to the Format menu and select Text, then Link. In the pop-up that appears, type the URL you'd like to link to. (Your linking text needn't be a URL itself. For example, you could link to the same location either by typing: "Get more info at www.apple.com," or "Get more Apple info here." Press OK, and you've got your link.

You can generate an email just as easily. In the Link destination field, type "mailto:" followed by the email address, with no spaces, like so: mailto:info@apple.com.

TextEdit boasts a new feature in Leopard: Smart Links, which automatically creates links from email addresses and URLs as soon as you type them. To activate it, select Preferences from the TextEdit menu, make sure the New Document tab is selected, and check the Smart Links box in the lower right corner. Now Leopard will automatically generate a link in TextEdit each time you type a URL or email address. (You may need to restart TextEdit to enable this change.)

Leopard also lets you create live links in Mail. First, highlight your linking text. From the Edit menu, select Link, then Add… and enter the desired web address in the popup.

In Pages, the advanced word processing program included in the iWork '08 package, there's an extra layer of sophistication: You can forge links by selecting Hyperlink from the Insert menu, or create them via the Inspector window. You can also create bookmarks that link to other locations within a multi-page document, or generate email with the subject field already filled in.

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To start or renew your GAAB membership, see Cecilia MacDonald or send your fees payable to her at the following address:

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