Computer Connection

RPCUG
ROCKLAND COUNTY ~ NEW YORK

GATEWAY COUNTRY

Please join us for the next General Meeting of the Rockland PC Users Group on Tuesday, September 12, 2000, 7:15 PM, RASO Community Room, 4th Floor, Palisades Mall, West Nyack, NY.

Want to get on the internet or are you already there? **Gateway Country**, of Nanuet, will be giving a presentation on "Getting Started With the Internet." They will introduce you to the revolution that is the internet, and show you the exciting possibilities it can bring to you.

They will show you how to communicate through the world's new post office, *E-mail*. They will teach you how to find your way around with *Search Engines* and *Portals.* Don't know the difference between *Dial-up, Cable* and *DSL*? You will after this meeting! Learn to to stay safe while you are surfing the "electronic waves."

Different web browsers will be discussed, along with some of the tricks that make them user-friendly. And last, but not least, they will show you how you can make your own Web Page.

Hope to see you there!

Join the Fun!
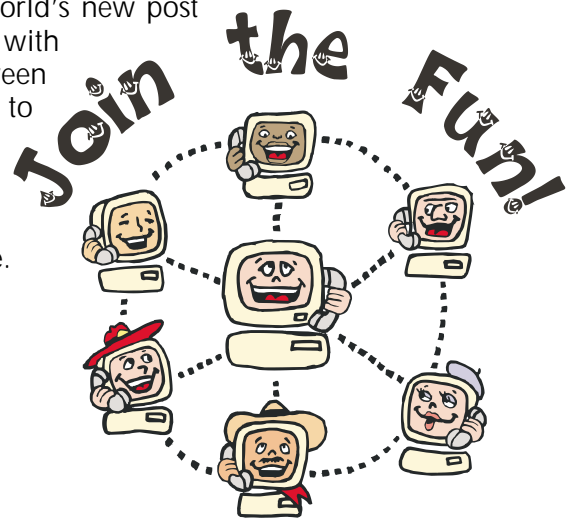
MEETING SCHEDULE
GENERAL MEETING
7:15 PM
MULTIMEDIA WORKSHOP
6:00 PM
Tuesday, September 12, 2000
The Palisades Center Community Room
Palisades Center Mall, West Nyack, NY

The **Windows 95/98 SIG** meets the third Tuesday of the month at the Pearl River Library, Pearl River, NY, 7:00 PM.

The **Investment Workshop (SIG)** wll meet Thursday, September 14, at the WaterWheel Restaurant Route 59, Tallman, NY, 7:30 PM

The **Executive Board** meets last Thursday of the month West Nyack Library, 7:00 PM

The Rockland PC Users Group, a tax-exempt educational organization, meets monthly, usually on the second Tuesday. Meetings begin at 7:15 PM. The latest information about meeting programs and dates is available on the Internet at **http://www.rpcug.org**.

COME SEE US IN SUFFERN!

RCPUG WILL HAVE A BOOTH at the Tri-State Computer Fair at the Holiday Inn (Holidome) in Suffern, NY, on September 24th. The show is from 10 AM to 3:30 PM. For directions, and information on how to get a $1.00 off admission, go to **http://www.tri-statefairs.com /schedule.html**

We are looking for volunteers to man the booth. If you can help, please e-mail Steve Weinberg at **www.rpcug@acd-pc.com**

E-ZINES

An *e-zine* is an e-mail based magazine. Unlike printed magazines or even web-based magazines, e-zines are delivered via e-mail, and that means the news and information you want is waiting for you in your e-mailbox whenever you decide to read it.

Here are a few of the editor's favorites:

- **BRIEFME** is filled with news, site reviews, and web article summaries. Each BRIEFME topic has several editors that write the reviews and summaries. The publisher then selects the best of the submitted items and publishes the complete BRIEFME e-zine by sending it to the subscribers. A typical BRIEFME contains 6 to 10 reviews/summaries. The original site/article URL is referenced in every review, so you will be able to see the entire article or site that has been reviewed. `www.briefme.com`

- **LOCKERGNOME**: From the husk of the Silicorn Valley (Des Moines, Iowa), Chris Pirillo distributes one of the world's hottest e-mail newsletters. Lockergnome (pronounced lah-ker-nohm) is Chris Pirillo's brainchild; on a regular basis, he covers software, sites, and stuff related to Microsoft Windows and the Internet. Whether you like HTML or text newsletters, Chris's info keeps you covered. Technology neophytes and wizards alike love to read the free daily and weekly publications. Customer satisfaction is one of Pirillo's primary goals, and will tell you that the service is the most helpful and entertaining. `www.lockergnome.com/cgi-bin/sub/sub.cgi`

- **TOURBUS:** Since 1995, Tourbus riders have been getting the scoop on **search engines, spam, viruses, cookies, urban legends**, and the most useful sites on the Net. So why surf when you can ride the bus? Join 90,000 others from 130 countries, and hop on the Bus today. `www.tourbus.com`

THE ROCKLAND PC USERS GROUP

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Vice President:	Eugene Frank, / hhw@icu.com
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|	
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NEWSLETTER EDITOR

Marian Baade

~ **mcbaade@aol.com**

The Purpose of the Group:
To exchange computer-related ideas and information among its members; to engage in computer-related activities for the benefit of the membership and the community at large; to increase understanding and utilization of the personal computer; to provide an opportunity for the formation of special interest groups (SIGs), to provide a medium for the exchange and propagation of public domain software, freeware, and shareware. *–(From the RPCUG Constitution & Bylaws)*
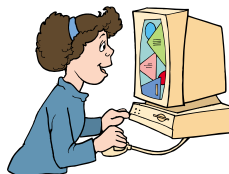
Join the Fun!

From the **"You-knew-that-Microsoft-was-powerful-but-did-you-know-that-it-was-this-powerful?"** Department:

SUMMARY: When you run Explorapedia and use the Exploratron to look at the Earth spinning, the Earth rotates in the wrong direction.

STATUS: Microsoft has confirmed this to be a problem in Explorapedia, World of Nature, version 1.0. We are researching this problem and will post new information here in the Microsoft Knowledge Base as it becomes available.

`http://support.microsoft.com/support/kb/articles/Q131/1/09.asp`

Message from the President:
"Join the Fun!"

I would like to thank the Board of Directors for all their help and ideas to help make this the best PC User Group in our area. I am looking forward to a great year.

I would like to acknowledge the Workshop (SIG) Leaders for their efforts and dedication. Without them the Group could not survive. We have a lot of new ideas to help us grow and prosper. Those of you that are participating in the workshops know their value. We are going to make a concerted effort to form a few new workshops this year. The need for a Beginners Workshop is vital to attract new members; an Internet Workshop is also very important. Anyone out there who would like to help or has any ideas, drop me a note. (Hobbikat@Hobbikats.com) I urge you, if you haven't been to any workshops yet, to come out and *"Join the Fun."* These groups are among our prime resources.

We hope to have some great demonstrations at our upcoming General Meetings. Sandy, our Program Coordinator, is working hard to bring us exciting and informative presentations. If there is anything that you would especially like to see, send your request to Sandy.

We would like to see the major companies come out to our meetings; for this to happen we need to increase our membership. The more members who come to meetings, the more attractive our group is to the major companies. Mention us to a co-worker or a neighbor before the next meeting. (People won't come unless they know we exist.) Track down former members and let them know that the Group is alive and well and **"Join the Fun!"**
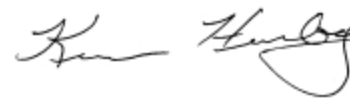
In the future, we will have a list of items that are up for review. Remember, if you do a review, the software or the item is yours to keep. What a great way to get that item you have always wanted! Use the Group - hopefully that is why you joined. If you would like to do a review or would like to see a review on a particular program or piece of hardware, send a message to Roberta (Roberta316@yahoo.com), our Review Coordinator.

Everyone wants our newsletter; it's one of the best ways for our group to learn about new products. We are fortunate enough to have an accomplished newsletter editor in Marian. (MCBaade@aol.com) The biggest challenge for a newsletter editor is getting material. She can work her magic on anything, so don't be shy. (Trust me – she helps me a lot!)

I know that everyone cringes when hearing the word "volunteer," but to keep the group healthy and alive, we must have them. In every group there are always a few members that are doing most of the work; that will never really change, it is in the makeup of most groups. But I'd sure like to see each of you try a review or write an article about something that you have seen or tinkered with. Send them to Marian and let's have a newsletter that we can be proud of. We belong to RPCUG to learn and the only way to accomplish this is to share our knowledge.

I hope that all of you enjoy this next year and I hope it meets and exceeds your greatest expectations.

Sincerely,

Ken Herbig
Hobbikat@Hobbikats.com

YOU TOO can REVIEW!

Reviewing for the newsletter is fun! You get to keep the software, CD's, and books that you review, but it is a job that requires promptness and some command of the written English language. You should be able to check out the product and review it within about a month or less. The vendors need to get feedback as soon as possible. They can be very generous if we can fulfill this requirement

If you are interested, find a piece of software or book that you already have and write about 200 words on the subject.

Keep your writing personal. Your own hands-on experience and observations are what is needed. It is helpful to make notes of observed goodies or glitches as you begin to explore the review item. Keep in mind the kinds of things YOU would like to know if you were reading a review of the product. Do not simply list the features of the program or tell prospective users how to use it—tell how YOU used it, how it helped, failed, facilitated, hindered, etc. Look up past issues of **ComputerConnection,** find a review that you enjoyed reading, and use it as a model.

If you have any questions, please feel free to call or email Marian, or Roberta Mikkelson, our Review Editor.

COMPUTER HAIKU

In Japan, they have replaced the impersonal and unhelpful Microsoft error messages with their own Japanese haiku:

A file that big?
It might be very useful.
But now it is gone.

The Web site you seek
Can not be located but
Countless more exist.

Chaos reigns within.
Reflect, repent, and reboot.
Order shall return.

Windows NT crashed.
I am the Blue Screen of Death.
No one hears your screams.

Yesterday it worked.
Today it is not working.
Windows is like that.

First snow, then silence.
This thousand dollar screen dies
So beautifully.

The Tao that is seen
Is not the true Tao-until
You bring fresh toner.

Stay the patient course.
Of little worth is your ire.
The network is down.

A crash reduces
Your expensive computer
To a simple stone.

Three things are certain:
Death, taxes, and lost data.
Guess which has occurred.

Out of memory.
We wish to hold the whole sky,
But we never will.

Having been erased,
The document you're seeking
Must now be retyped.

Serious error.
All shortcuts have disappeared.
Screen. Mind. Both are blank.
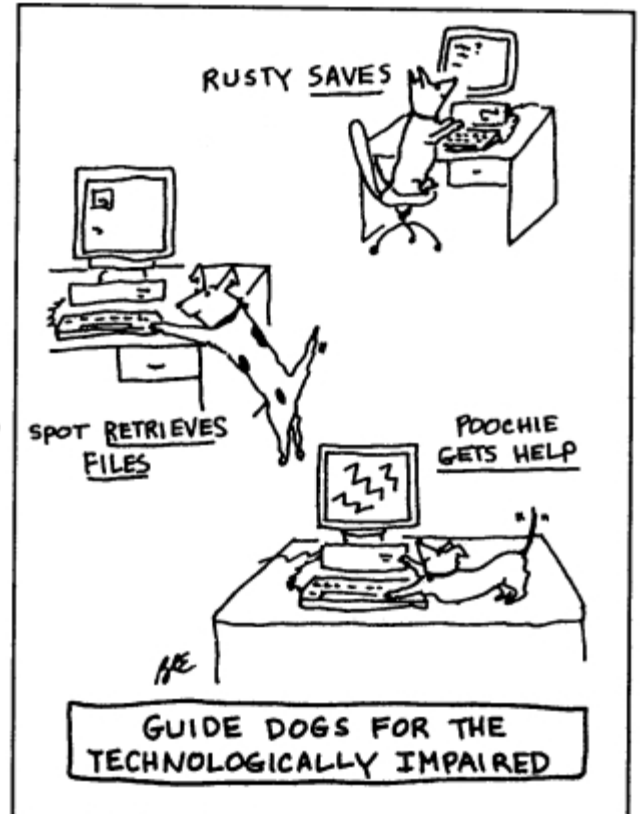
Reprinted with permission from *The Funny Times*

In the News...

New York, NJ, Dec. 8 — People for the Ethical Treatment of Software (PETS) announced today that seven more software companies have been added to the group's "watch list" of companies that regularly practice software testing.

"There is no need for software to be mistreated in this way so that companies like these can market new products," said Ken Granola, spokesperson for PETS. "Alternative methods of testing these products are available."

According to PETS, these companies force software to undergo lengthly and arduous tests, often without rest for hours or days at a time. Employees are assigned to "break" the software by any means necessary, and inside sources report that they often joke about "torturing" the software.

"It's no joke," said Granola. "Innocent programs, from the day they are compiled, are cooped up in tiny rooms and 'crashed' for hours on end. They spend their whole lives on dirty, ill-maintained computers, and are unceremoniously deleted when they're not needed anymore."

Granola said the software is kept in unsanitary conditions and is infested with bugs. "We know alternatives to this horror exist," he said, citing industry giant Microsoft Corp. as a company that has become extremely successful without resorting to software testing.

—PETS is a nonprofit organization dedicated to improving the lives of software programs and promoting alternatives to software testing.

Hang2000, version 1.3

Reviewed by Roberta Mikkelsen (and her nephew)

Hang2000 is the electronic version of the old fashioned *Hangman* game. Remember the one we use to draw on a chalk board? When choosing letters you can use the mouse or keyboard. There are many categories built into **Hang2000**, or you can enter your own words or even phrases.

When I heard about **Hang2000,** I thought to myself: *do I really want to download this and go through the trouble of installing and learning a new game?* Well, I agreed to review **Hang2000** and boy, was I pleasantly surprised! I went to the Winograd web site, e-mailed Ken and within 24 hours, I had the registration number.

Downloading was quick and problem-free. The registration number worked, and before I knew it **Hang2000** was up on my screen.

My eleven-year-old nephew was helping me test-drive **Hang2000**. I said to him, "Let's read the 'read me' file first."

"Why?" was his reply, "just click on the 'words' category." Before I could stop him, he was clicking away. He choose the category, "authors." The screen filled with dash lines and he was off playing and choosing letters. Could it be this easy, I wondered? Doesn't it come with a three-pound manual? No, it doesn't come with a manual and yes, it is user-friendly.

There are many interesting categories from which to choose. A big plus is the additional information given with the answer. For example, Rudyard Kipling was the answer in the "authors" category my nephew chose, and on the bottom of the screen he received much more information about Kipling.

There are many fun categories, such as Star Trek, Rock and Roll, Television Shows, etc.

My nephew loved the graphics and sound effects. Each time he chose a wrong letter, a piece of an image appeared on the screen, building a desert scene complete with a stage coach, cactus mountains and a hangman area. The graphics are non-violent and my nephew gave them a rating of "coool!" He enjoyed the sound effects even more, and for days remained glued to the computer playing and learning at the same time. He got to choose the number of guesses for each game with 12 being the maximum. When he chose 12, he could hear a chicken clucking.

One great feature is that you can program your child's spelling list into **Hang2000**. But you can do so much more with this feature. My husband likes the American Indian culture. My nephew and I set out on a research expedition. Reading books and catalogs, we designed a custom word list for my husband. Then the fun began as we watched my husband choose each letter carefully. Every time he choose a wrong letter the sound effects sent us roaring with laughter!

This isn't a game only for children, but for us all. A report recently stated that if we use our brains in the problem solving mode, it keeps us younger. They are now discovering that the brain does regenerate new cells - but only by using it. **Hang2000** is perfect for keeping families learning and growing together.

Download a 14-day free trial from:
www.mv.com/ipusers/spacetime/
Register a single copy for $20.00;
Hardware requirements: Windows 95, 98 etc.

Ken Winograd
Space Time Associates
15 Hutchinson Rd
Merrimack, NH 03054

—*Editor's note: Ken's home page (www.winograd.com) has other fun software for kids, it's worth a visit.*

TEN SIGNS
you bought a
bad computer

- You've decided that your computer is an excellent addition to your fabulous paperweight collection.
- The only chip inside is a Dorito.
- The manual contains only one sentence: "Good Luck!"
- The screen often displays the message, "Ain't it break time yet?"
- Whenever you turn it on, all the dogs in your neighborhood start howling.
- The "quick reference" manual is 120 pages long.
- It's slogan is "Pentium: redefining mathematics."
- In order to start it you need some jumper cables and a friend's car.
- Its celebrity spokesman is that "Hey Vern!" guy.
- Lower corner of screen has the words "Etch-a-sketch" on it.

GOD'S VOICE MAIL

We have all learned to live with "voice mail" as a necessary part of modern life. But have you wondered, what if God decided to install voice mail?'

Imagine praying and hearing this:

"Thank you for calling My Father's House. Please select one of the following options:

- Press I for Requests
- Press 2 for Thanksgiving
- Press 3 for Complaints
- Press 4 for All Other Inquiries.

"I'm sorry, all of our angels are busy helping other sinners right now. However, your prayer is important to us and will be answered in the order it was received, so please stay on the line.

"If you would like to speak to:

- God, Press 1
- For Jesus, Press 2
- For the Holy Spirit, Press 3
- If you would like to hear King David sing a Psalm while holding, please press 4

"To find out if a loved one has been assigned to Heaven, Press 5, enter his or her Social Security number, then press the pound key. (If you get a negative response, try area code 666.)

"For reservations at "My Father's House" please enter J-O-H-N followed by 3-1-6.

"For answers to nagging questions about dinosaurs, the age of the earth and where Noah's Ark is to be found, please wait until you arrive.

"Our computers show that you have already prayed once today. Please hang up and try again tomorrow. This office is closed for the weekend to observe a religious holiday. Please try again Monday after 9:30 AM. If you need emergency assistance when this office is closed, contact your local pastor."

—*Quoted in* **"The Evangelist,"** *St. John's Episcopal Church, New City, NY.*

PC POSTAGE

Stamps.com? E-stamps? ClickStamp? NeoPost? Has anyone tried them? We have read a number of reviews, and none of these services seems to be perfect. What have your real experiences with them been? Please send an email to mcbaade@aol.com and let us know what you think. ⊠

We get letters...

Dear Ms. Baade:

I like what you are doing with the **Computer Connection**. I especially like that all of it is not reviews. I am enclosing something I just wrote to contribute to the next issue. If you need help and read what I have written and you will know I am still a novice after many many years. Please sign this *anonymous,* (reason is obvious.)

"I REMEMBER! DO YOU?"

I remember when we wrote with pencils and pens, and we filled them with ink. I remember when we memorized our multiplication tables by rote.

I remember when we dialed a number we got a real person. Do you ever speak to one at your favorite company?

I remember when we used a keyboard with a Remington, and we made multiple copies with carbon paper. But when we made a mistake, we had to do the whole thing over again.

Then came the computer.

We just have to type out the words, press ENTER and lo! there it is! All we have to do is learn the new computer language.

Bytes used to refer to eating; a menu was handed to us at the restaurant; log on like put another log on the fire; operating system was something we examined before surgery; the path was in the garden and we took it with our favorite person.

So when we want the definition of a computer word, don't look in the dictionary, look at the menu and find help.

But what do we do when the entire thing is just a maze of ignorance? We can take a course, get a book, ask your younger child for help, or give up and let the world pass us by.

If you are like I am, and remember all the above, and more, and yet you succumbed to temptation and wanted to be part of the new technological world, where do you start?

First learn how to turn the darn thing on. Then learn how to turn it off. What goes on in between is whatever you can fathom. It will take years and years but don't give up. And for goodness sake, don't expect to be able to do all the things that your child or in some cases, your grandchild, can do.

Here's to you! Good luck and don't forget the four-letter word, I mean: HELP.

My thanks to the author of this piece, who wishes to remain anonymous. It would be great if more of our members would send such material. Don't be shy!
— The Editor

Cool Web Sites:

http://www.cartalk.com

This is the Web site of **Car Talk**, starring Tom and Ray Magliozzi (aka "Click and Clack The Tappet Brothers") They've been described as America's funniest auto mechanics— "the Marx Brothers meet Mr. Goodwrench." They've been featured on ABC's 20-20, CBS News "60 Minutes," and lots of other programs with numbers in their titles. And, aside from being amateur comedians, they really know cars. To find out more about these M.I.T. educated grease monkeys, check out the articles in this section, or check out the other areas of this site. Editor's note: I start my day with a visit to "Time Kill Central," Car Talk's daily trivia game.

http://www.pcpitstop.com

PC Pitstop can help you get your PC in top form — running fast, stable and secure. PC Pitstop runs diagnostics on your PC to identify things that might help improve performance. The process is fully automated, private and safe. After the diagnostics run, they'll give you tips for improving all kinds of things. Best of all, the service is free!

http://www.bartleby.com/

Here you can read the Bible, the Columbia Encyclopedia, Roget's Thesaurus, Gray's Anatomy, Bartlett's Quotations, the American Heritage Dictionary - get the idea? And that's just in the "reference" section. There's also fiction, non-fiction, and verse. Great for students and crossword puzzle buffs, or as the site says, "providing students, researchers and the intellectually curious with unlimited access to books and information on the web, free of charge."

http://www.thruway.state.ny.us/webcams

We check this out every morning before my husband heads across the Tappan Zee Bridge. You can look through the live webcams at both northbound and southbound traffic, refreshed every minute or so. Cool.

AND, because there always has to be a silly one:

http://www.jagat.com/joel/socks.html

"The Bureau of Missing Socks." Check it out.

GOT A FAVORITE? *Email the editor!*

CUDDLY PC VIRUS TURNS CHILDREN INTO WEB VICTIMS

LONDON, *Aug 24 (Reuters)* - Children everywhere beware — Pikachu is not as cuddly as he seems.

The Japanese Pokemon cartoon character has mutated on the Web into a nasty little computer-bugger, spreading himself via emails like the devastating "Love Bug" did.

Virus experts said on Thursday the cute yellow rabbit-like creature, a darling of the Pokemon video-game family, had popped up in the United States, wrecking PCs that it gets into by wiping out their system files.

"Pokey" has so far sown only a fraction of the havoc its famous predecessor did, but for a worrying reason. Kids, not corporations, are this time the target of the cyber-vandals.

"We haven't seen viruses or worms targeted at children before...This is the first one. Since it comes as a little Pokemon animation, 10-year-olds are likely to be more interested in double-clicking on it."

Viruses infect a computer and cause damage, but rely on users unwittingly spreading them from one PC to another. Worms, usually using the Internet, find their own way to spread.

This worm appears as an email with the title "Pikachu Pokemon" and the English message ``Pikachu is your friend."

Japanese anti-virus firm Trend Micro advises anyone receiving the mail to delete the file without opening it. The Love Bug and the earlier Melissa viruses attracted so much attention that many computer users now know they should treat unsolicited email attachments with suspicion, experts say — but that is unlikely to include young children.

For further information, go to:
http://biz.yahoo.com rf/000824/ 124399887.html

USPS MULLING EMAIL OPTION FOR RESIDENTS

By Melanie Austria Farmer, Staff Writer, CNET News.com
July 31, 2000

As part of its ongoing attempt to revamp itself for the digital world, the U.S. Postal Service today said it is considering offering all U.S. residents a service that would route their physical mail to an email account.

The USPS, which maintains a database of some 120 million residential addresses, said no specific timeline was given for when the new service—still in early stages of research and development—would be available.

"What's in the works is seeing if we can (offer) the possibility of linking physical and electronic addresses," said Sue Brennan, a USPS spokeswoman. "This (new service) is about giving a customer a choice on how they want to do business with us." For example, she said, a customer can request that some items, such as catalogs or utility bills, be sent via email instead of by the traditional mail service. In a secure environment, similar to that of First Class mail, utility bills and other items could be sent to an email address rather than a home mailbox, she added.

The USPS also said it is mulling ways to provide a forwarding email service for customers who switch their email accounts to a new Internet service provider (ISP).

In recent years, the USPS has taken steps to keep up with emerging technologies as the Internet gives traditional mail service added competition. Among its efforts to stay with the rapidly changing and competitive landscape, the USPS has licensed Internet postage services to companies such as E-Stamp and Stamps.com, as well as entered other new areas such as electronic bill payment.

Earlier this year, the postal service linked with CheckFree to allow customers to pay bills electronically. CheckFree is providing electronic billing and payment services to the post office's Web site, allowing customers who sign up to pay their bills online to a small number of large companies, including long-distance carriers, regional utility companies and wireless companies.

WANT TO JOIN THE GROUP? HERE'S HOW!

Bring your completed application and a check payable to RPCUG to a meeting or mail your application and check to RPCUG at 169 South Main Street, Suite 384, New City, NY 10956-3358. (PLEASE PRINT ALL INFORMATION)

Name

Address

Day Phone:

Evening Phone:

E-mail Addreess

Spouse's Name (if joint membership)

Spouse's E-mail address

Children's Names (for Family Membership)

INDIVIDUAL: $ 35	JOINT: $ 40	FAMILY: $ 45	STUDENT: $ 15	COPORATE SPONSOR: $ 100	RENEWAL: Member # _____