Vic Kiviat presided.

Computer Problems:

After an update Dennis Evans lost the screen saver on his Windows 7 computer. Tom McCabe suggested unlinking it and then linking it again.

Presentation:

Tom McCabe helps a long list of friends and acquaintances maintain and fix their computers via Team Viewer, a program that allows remote access to their computers. Team Viewer is free for private individuals. Software must be installed on Tom's computer and on the computers that he services remotely. He needs to have the passwords to access the computers but other than that all he needs to do is click on the button representing the URL of the computer he wants to service.

Tom believes in using free software whenever he can. But, he warns, if it is free it may be difficult to download without getting malware or software you don't want in addition to what you want. CNET.com prides itself on downloading software that has been thoroughly checked for malware. But CNET's download sites are notorious for presenting a confusing array of download choices so they can trick you into downloading small programs that earn CNET a commission. They are just one of many download sites. So, if you want to avoid some of that hassle, go to our website's own freeware page (http://home.comcast.net/~BSCClub/freeware.htm), which is periodically updated by Eric Hein. If you forget how to get to our website, Google "Bowie Seniors Computer Club", click on our listing, then select the Freeware page. Most, but not all, of the free programs that Tom mentioned in his talk are listed. For those that aren't listed, Google the software title and click on the link to the software's vendors download site.

"Knowledge is knowing that something CAN be done. Google the rest." -- Tom McCabe

Among the clients of Tom's generous time and help, their most common complaint is "My computer is TOO SLOOOWWW!" Tom's First Step is to use CCleaner to delete temporary files and other stuff that doesn't need to be there. He then removes unnecessary and seldom used programs using Revo Uninstall. There are several levels of program removal, the last of which is to remove all references to those programs in the registry. Then he uses the Registry cleaner portion of CCleaner or a program especially designed to check and clean the registry. Tom likes to back up the registry before cleaning it just in case something goes wrong, because the registry is essential for the operation of the computer. Tom doesn't think that it is absolutely necessary to clean the registry but it may improve speed slightly. CCleaner is under the heading System Tools on our website's freeware page.

He then defrags the hard drive using the Puran Defrag part of Puran Utilities (http://www.puransoftware.com/Puran-Utilities.html). The first time you use Puran Defrag, checkmark "Boost Overall System and Optimize" under Additional Operations. Also check "Boot Time Defrag: Restart – Defrag – Restart"

The Page File keeps track of when and where on the hard drive it is being used for memory instead of the memory chips. Memory chips are a lot faster than a hard drive. So if Window's Task Manager indicates that the page files for one or more processes are using the hard drive excessively, it might be time to check the condition of your hard drive by running Disk Check (Chkdsk) (It's a Windows utility listed under Programs/Accessories/System Tools.) which will find and note the location of any bad areas on the disk.

Does the computer take a long time to boot? Use Puran Startup Manager to see what loads each time you boot up your computer and remove unnecessary processes from the initial load up list. Microsoft's msconfig utility can also be used for this purpose. In msconfig, click on the Startup tab.

Mechanical hard drives frequently fail after a few years of use. The S.M.A.R.T. monitor and analyzer will warn you of impending hard drive failure. See (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/S.M.A.R.T.) and (http://www.howtogeek.com/134735/how-to-see-if-your-hard-drive-is-dying/). You can also download Hard Disk Sentinel (http://www.hdsentinel.com/hard_disk_sentinel_trial.php). You can use the software to analyze your hard drive then delete it before the 30-day trial is over.

Browsers frequently become slow and full of junk. Tom believes "Lean and Mean" is best. Get rid of popups, toolbars, add-ins, etc.

Tom uses Avast anti-virus, MalwareBytes, and SuperAntiSpyware, the free versions, to scan for malware. All three are listed under Security on our website's Freeware Page.

For computers with difficult problems, Tom uses Slim Computer, specifically Slim Cleaner and Slim Drivers; all three are free (https://www.slimwareutilities.com/index.php). Tom warns that this is not for the "faint of heart". It relies on social networking with hundreds of other computer users to determine what is useful and what should be eliminated. Slim Cleaner is "nifty": it does an intelligent defrag and does it differently for mechanical and solid state hard drives. Slim Drivers downloads updated drivers. Before using these, Tom does a mirror image backup.