

The Open Pitt



What's cooking in Linux and Open Source in Western Pennsylvania

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www.wplug.org

Change Coming to WPLUG

For the past few years, WPLUG has delivered an aggressive schedule of presentations and tutorials on Open Source topics. The burden of producing this is currently being carried by just a handful of people.

Since its founding in 1997, WPLUG has gone through a couple different organizational structures. The current one outlined in the bylaws <http://www.wplug.org/pages/bylaws> consists of a self-perpetuating Board of Directors which assumes full responsibility for the group's activities. This has had its drawbacks, and at the present time there are only two active Directors, Beth Lynn Eicher and Mark Dalrymple.

To remedy this problem, the Board appointed a committee several months ago to revise the bylaws and create a new structure for WPLUG. The major difference proposed is that WPLUG become a membership organization with elected officers. It is

hoped that this will get a greater number of people involved and create a more sustainable organization. Broader participation should not only spread the load, but will help ensure that WPLUG as a whole is responsive to everyone's needs.

While the revision process is not yet complete, some characteristics of the new structure are firmed up well enough to discuss them here.

What's Next

If all goes as expected, nominations for the Board of Directors will take place at the September General User Meeting. Ballots will then go out to all who have signed up as Members.

All the details of the election are yet to be worked out; it's possible ballots may be accepted by mail, e-mail, or web form. You'll have the option of either sending in your ballot or bringing it to the October election meeting to cast it in person. All the

votes will be opened and counted at that meeting.

Moving forward from there, as a Member-driven organization WPLUG will conduct regular business meetings to keep the membership informed and involved. These will be scheduled in conjunction with General User Meetings.

What You Can Do

First and foremost, sign up! Member pre-registrations are being taken at each meeting and installfest. Or see <http://www.wplug.org/membership>. It's effectively free as dues are only \$5 and you get a coupon for pizza at a WPLUG event (a \$5 value). Only Members will be able to make nominations, run for office, or vote in the election.

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June Roundup

Jun. 4 General User Meeting: **Patrick Wagstrom** demonstrated MythTV, software which turns a Linux system into a digital video recorder like TiVo. After covering some of the basic concepts, he reviewed the hardware needed for a successful system. Next came some tips for installing the software, or avoiding installation hassles entirely by using the KnoppMyth live CD. Patrick then demonstrated how MythTV can record programs for you by title, by individual episode, or by time. When two different shows you want to see are on at the same time, it will automatically figure out whether one is on at another time and schedule recording then. It's also possible to

record programs to DVD. Patrick's slides are available for download.

Jun. 11 Tutorial: **James O'Kane** explained regular expressions, a feature used in many UNIX and Linux programs like *Perl*, *sed*, *awk*, and *grep* when searching for text that matches a particular pattern. Starting with the basic building blocks, he showed how to combine them to create more complex patterns. He also pointed out some pitfalls, such as how "greediness" can cause a match you didn't expect, or how less-efficient expressions can cause a dramatic slowdown of your searches. You can find James' presentation online.

MythTV - <http://patrick.wagstrom.net/weblog/linux/mythtv/wplugMythTVslides.xml>
RE's - http://www.wplug.org/meetings/one-meeting?wp_meeting_id=3181

Coming Events

- Aug. 7:** 4th Annual WPLUG Open Source Picnic. 1PM to 7PM, Snyder Park, Whitehall
- Aug. 13:** General User Meeting, Topic: Security Audits with Linux Live CDs. 10AM to 2PM, 1507 Newell-Simon Hall, CMU
- Sep. 10:** General User Meeting/ Nomination Meeting. 10AM to 2PM, 1507 Newell-Simon Hall, CMU (*date tentative*)
- Sep. 17:** Installfest. 10AM to 5PM, 1507 Newell-Simon Hall, CMU
- Oct. 1:** Ohio LinuxFest 2005. Columbus, Ohio: see <http://www.ohiolinux.org/> for details
- Oct. 15:** General User Meeting/ Election Meeting. 10AM to 2PM, 1507 Newell-Simon Hall, CMU

The public is welcome at all events

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Beyond that, consider volunteering for a position. In addition to (probably five) Directors, WPLUG will need people to help plan and run events, maintain the web server and mailing lists, and recruit new Members. You don't necessarily need any special skills or experience; commitment and a willingness to help are what's most important.

If you'd like to follow the ongoing discussion of the bylaws revision, the mailing list is open to public view at [http://mail.pghfree.net/mailman/listinfo/wplug-bylaws_pghfree.net](mailto:mailto:mail.pghfree.net/mailman/listinfo/wplug-bylaws_pghfree.net).

Would You Like to Play a Game?

For as long as computers have existed, programmers have created computer games. Some of these have iconic status on a particular platform, like *Dungeon* on old Digital systems or *Hunt the Wumpus* on BSD UNIX.

Linux has also started to develop a list of games intimately associated with it. (Of course, many of the older favorites have been ported to it, too.) Two of the most popular and addictive are *Frozen Bubble* and *Tux Racer*. One relative newcomer that's a strong candidate for inclusion on this list is *Blob Wars: Metal Blob Solid*.

The blobs' homeworld has been invaded by alien robots. You play the steely-eyed Blob Soldier Bob, whose mission is to rescue trapped blobs while fighting off the attackers.

Basic gameplay is relatively simple; you run and jump around à la *Super Mario Bros*. Also included are underwater levels, locked doors which require you to find keys or remote switches, moving platforms, and hidden passages.

Starting off with a pistol, Bob can collect other weapons to defeat the droids as well as blobs which have been mutated into enemy warriors. While grenades and laser cannons offer greater firepower, only the lowly pistol can be fired under water. Missing-in-action (MIA) blobs are rescued by touching them.

Possible Venue Changes

Our current meeting space at 1507 Newell-Simon Hall on the Carnegie Mellon University campus has served WPLUG well for meetings and installfests. However, other needs within CMU may put competing demands on this room or result in it being converted into office space.

Keep a sharp eye on future meeting announcements to be sure you show up at the correct location. While we'll make every attempt to put accurate information in *The Open Pitt*, the web site and mailing list are your best bets for up-to-the-minute details.

It's not difficult to learn at first, but there are many variations contained within. Five different degrees of difficulty range from "practice" to "extreme," which requires Bob to complete multiple objectives within a set time limit. Environmental factors like ice, lava, water, and wind each present their own challenges.

There is some (cartoon) violence in the game, but the "Blood and Gore" setting can be turned off in the options screen if you're squeamish.



Bob tosses a grenade at a flying droid

All in all, *Blob Wars: Metal Blob Solid* is an addicting experience with plenty of variety to keep you interested for quite some time. Since it's based on the cross-platform Simple DirectMedia Layer libraries, versions are available for BSD, MacOS, and even Windows. Your favorite distribution may include it already; if not or if it's a pre-1.0 version, grab the latest from the Parallel Realities site at <http://www.parallelrealities.co.uk/blobWars.php>.

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What is Linux?

Linux is a *kernel*, the core of a computer operating system, created by Linus Torvalds. It is typically packaged as a *distribution*, which includes the extra programs necessary to make a computer functional and useful. Since 1991, it has grown from a one-man project which ran on one computer to one with thousands of contributors running on everything from personal organizers to million-dollar supercomputers.

What are Open Source and Free Software?

Open Source and Free Software provide you, the user, with the opportunity to see the source code of the programs you use. You are free to use it, share it with others, and even make changes to it if you wish. While the Free Software and Open Source communities differ in their philosophical approach, in practical terms they share nearly identical goals. Learn more at <http://www.opensource.org/> and <http://www.gnu.org/>.

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You Are Invited

August 7, 1 to 7pm

WPLUG will hold its fourth annual Open Source Picnic at Snyder Park in Whitehall Borough (same location as last year, in the South Hills).

The reason why we call it "Open Source" because everyone who attends is to contribute by bringing food, helping out, or organizing activities. It will be as good as the community makes it!

Check the mailing list for updates or to suggest activities. Plan to bring the whole family!

More details can be found at http://www.wplug.org/meetings/one-meeting?wp_meeting_id=3186, and make sure to RSVP by e-mail to picnic2005@wplug.org if you are coming.