HEROIC RECOVERY EFFORTS

By Stan Meyers, a Grateful Coordinator

Many of you are not aware of the heroic efforts expended by a small cadre of our people to get CCCP operational after a ransomware attack on our server. The group, led by Sandy Schneck, has spent numerous hours on this problem, which is critical to our entire operation.

This problem was first encountered by Irene, who attempted to log in from home, on January 15th. When she did, got a message saying:

"Attention!!! Your files are encrypted. To recover, follow the prompts in the text file "Restore Files"

She then called Rich Romaneck, who advised her to do nothing else. Rich logged in from his home and found the same message. He sent out a message to Larry Guerrera and the members of the advisory group, letting them know what he and Irene encountered. Later, he went into the office to further assess the situation, disconnected the CCCP server, from the router, and sent out a second email advising every one of the current status.

From this point on, Sandy Schneck stepped up to take charge and put together a working group consisting of Ed Brown, Sam Shapiro, and Robin Fertig to find ways of working around the hacked server.

Sandy:

- Identified what had to be done
- Laid out a project plan
- Assigned and managed the required tasks.
- Identified and resolved dozens of problems as they arose.
- In a nut shell, he managed the recovery of this disaster.

There has not been a single day since January 15th that Sandy hasn't spent at least 3 hours a day working on this.

The first order of business after our server was shut down was to recover our files from our cloud backup system. First, Sandy found that the files, including PATS, were saved on the iDrive. Ed then spent days down loading our files to an external drive. These files needed to be checked to make sure they weren't contaminated as well as verifying the accuracy of the information and to try to make sure they did not contain a hidden virus.

While the data recovery was going on, Sam Shapiro was prepping a desk top to be our interim server. He consulted continuously with Larry Guerrera, our resident server expert, on software issues as well as what additional software we should use to protect our system from another ransomware attack and how to allow the office staff and CCCP Advisory Group to remotely access this interim server, which Sandy named iComputer.

Once Sandy, Robin and Ed were satisfied with the status of the down loaded data, Sam loaded the data onto the iComputer and set it up for remote access in his home. He also setup a daily, local backup system. Sam kindly offered to temporarily house the server in his home so that he could immediately respond to any server related issue. This is long temporary, until we can bring our regular server back online.

Given the limitation of using the server one person at a time, Robin set up a schedule of usage by those CCCP personnel and office staff, which relied upon the server to contact clients/agencies, issue delivery, repairs and other work orders so that we can serve our clients. When the interim server first came online, the first thing done was to check that each user had the files they needed for operation.

By the time you receive this Issue of Connexions, we will be back in operation! It will take a little while for Irene, Phyllis and Linda to get up to speed on everything, especially since for the present, only one person can work on the iComputer at a time.

Bringing our regular server back online will await Larry's return to Long Island. Of course, despite being far away, Larry spent considerable time acting as our remote consultant as well as checking our files and iserver operations

I know that without Sandy's efforts over the last 4 weeks, CCCP would have no computer and would not be able to function.

All the members of his team did a wonderful job and deserve a great deal of praise. CCCP owes them a large debt of gratitude.

One other person I want to acknowledge:

Joel Becker, for without his wisdom in setting up our cloud backup we would non-operational.

Here's Sandy hard at work ……………………….

MESSAGE FROM CCCP PROGRAM COORDINATOR
Stan Meyers

2018 almost started out with a disastrous impact on CCCP's operational capacity. On Jan 14 our server was subjected to a ransomware attack. All our data files were encrypted but we refused to pay the ransom.

I want to extend a thank you from everyone in CCCP to our dedicated staff who expended hours of effort to mend the problem. These persons are: Ed Brown, Sandy Schneck, Larry Guerrera, Sam Shapiro, Rich Romaneck and Robin Fertig. We are currently operating on an interim computer which is acting as our server. It only allows us to have one user at a time on the system. We will be fully operational as soon as the necessary steps can be taken to clean and reboot the server. Thank goodness that Joel Becker set up a backup system on IDrive otherwise we'd be out of business.

A more complete explanation of what was done to get us operational again was explained on the previous 2 pages. These steps include additional protections to hopefully prevent this and any other cyber-attacks from occurring.

Last year was a below average year for providing clients with computers. This was partly caused by the high demand for laptops vs desk tops and our lack of laptops. In addition, there was a drop off in the number of requests we received. To overcome this latter problem we activated an Action Committee composed of Ed Brown, Robin Fertig and Sandy Schneck who worked hard to provide us the capability to do mass emailing to our existing Agencies who have submitted client requests to us in the past. Our initial mailing went out just before our ransomware attack. We are not sure how the attack impacted this effort.

MARK YOUR CALENDARS: OUR NEXT General Meeting/get together is March 15th @Plainview-Old Bethpage Library Meeting Room A @ 6:45.

I want to wish Howie Scheer, Arthur Ritz and Joel Becker on their retirement from CCCP and their moves out-of-state. You all are seriously missed.

Thanks to Joel Wasserman for editing this issue of Connexions.

From Pegi Orsino, Executive Director RSVP

Hi CCCP volunteers,

Hope our LI winter is treating you fairly and no one has been felled by the Flu that is going around. I realize some of our delivery/installation folks are at greater risk for exposure for this, so please take all precautions. All the medical research points to volunteering being great for your health but not when you are visiting people's homes with equipment!

A very special thank you to the dedicated group of troubleshooting experts that are CCC volunteers, who were quick to respond to our Hacking Crisis on the CCC server that happened over a weekend about 3 long weeks ago.

The perpetrators even asked for ransom in the form of bitcoin. The good news is that our "team" has patched and restored the server and database (after many, many hours of hard work) and RSVP has opened another cablevision account to further isolate the CCC server from our own. Should be operational at some point in the next week so that you all can continue to do the good work of giving to our veterans and low-income families and individuals the equipment they need to enhance their lives.

Thanks and stay warm!

Pegi Orsino, Executive Director

Email Security Hints from Robin

We have learned, from our ransomware attack, that there are email best practices that we all need to follow. Some pertain just to people who use our server, but can certainly be applied to any entity that you may connect to, such as at work. Among them are the following:

Do Not:

- Allow others to use your login credentials
- Use strange/unknown computing devices to log into the server at any time
- Click on email links you are not 100% sure of, and even then, be VERY VERY careful
- Never EVER open unknown or unexpected attachments in email
- Leave your computer logged into the server if you're not using it
- Allow your computer's antivirus software to be "old" and not updated
- Allow your computer to be behind on Windows updates

This is by no means a comprehensive list! But it is a start. Look for a more comprehensive procedure to be posted soon. Please practice "safe-computing"; you'll help yourself and everyone else you 'compute' with to prevent this >>>>>>

What to do if people stop requesting computers? by Sandy Schneck

Late last fall Robin Fertig noticed that the number of client requests had dropped substantially. A committee was formed, consisting of Sandy Schneck, Ed Brown and Robin to address this problem. It was decided to send an email to every social service agent who had requested a computer from CCCP in the past, reminding them we were here and asking them to pass that information along to their colleagues.

After several drafts, the email's text and layout was agreed upon. See below. Email addresses were extracted from PATS. A professional mass email server was found. We submitted the email list to it and discovered that many addresses were invalid for a variety of reasons. Many were very old and no longer existed. That list, which originally consisted of over 1,500 addresses, was reduced to less than 200 valid emails.

On January 3, 2018 the emails were sent. Less than a dozen were undeliverable. It is too early to tell what will happen but as of January 12th we have received 10 new client requests from 6 different agents. We will continue to track all incoming requests, to determine the effect of the mailing. We will also try to email the addresses that were rejected by the email server, directly from our own server.

Sample of email sent to agents

Note: The text in red is different for each agent, depending on whether we've gotten a request in the past year and if we've gotten more than one request from that agent

	Robert recently lost his job doing construction and has been looking for work. When he received his computer, he used it to create flyers that he has distributed all over his community advertising for a handyman.
Ms. M is a single mother of three school aged children. Her youngest son has a learning disability By providing a computer to this family, the Community Computer Connection Program has allowed Ms. M's children to continue to excel in academics and keep up with classmates who are more fortunate	
	Poor Johnny has to do his homework this way because no one submitted a request for a computer to RSVP/CCCP

"We hope the computer we recently gave to your client was beneficial."

RSVP/CCCP currently has an abundance of desktop computers ready to help those who need them. If a computer can help your clients, we are here for you. It is really simple to request one.

**If you need a blank request form or instructions on how to submit it,
click here { www.rsvpsuffolk.org/cccp/forms.php }
Please submit the request to CCCP.clientrequest@gmail.com**

Please pass this information along to your coworkers and to any other agencies, with which you are familiar, that might not know about us. Let us know about them at CCCP@RSVPSuffolk.org so we can be helpful to their clients.   If you have any question you can contact us there as well.

We would love to help your clients and look forward to hearing from you.

Sincerely,

Pegi Orsino   Stan Meyers
Executive Director   Program Coordinator
RSVP   CCCP