CAEUG — Computers Are Easy User Group

Confirmed meeting dates

2025
Dec 13

2026
Jan 24

:: ::
Hybrid
Board Room
in person
OR Zoom
:: ::
Check
website for
dates and
meeting info
:: ::

**!!!! NEW !!!
Mailing
address:**

**CAEUG
P.O. Box 153
South Elgin,
IL 60177**
:: ::

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PER GLENSIDE Library (Masks are optional)

INFORMATION for Saturday December 13 start time in person at
Library Board Room is 9:30am or at home Zoom is 10:00am.
There will be a meeting invitation e-mail Thursday evening
before the Saturday meeting.

Our November/December presentation
We will have various videos on mini computers

NEW MAIL ADDRESS!!!   NEW MAIL ADDRESS!!!

**CAEUG,
P.O. Box 153
South Elgin, IL 60177**

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*Thank you! to all who paid the
low $20.00 dues for 2026!
Your support helps pay for our
APCUG membership and CAEUG website*

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Join CAEUG meeting in Library or from Home,
Stay Safe! Update information on our website at
https://www.CAEUG.net

The Glenside Public Library address is at 25 E Fullerton Avenue, Glendale Heights, Illinois. The meeting(s) are not library sponsored Individuals with disabilities who plan to attend this program and who require certain accommodations in order to observe and / or participate in the program are requested to contact CAEUG president, at least five (5) days prior to the program, so that reasonable accommodation can be made.

Members Helpline

Any member can volunteer to be on the Members Helpline.
Hardware problems, Win 7, Win 10, Linux and Virus Removal

  - John Spizzirri

Lamp Post 285
November / December 2025
by John Spizzirri

Night hours are getting longer so now is the time to check the Aurora cam sites in your favorites. The Northern Lights (Aurora Borealis) cam at Churchill, Manitoba, Canada **(1)** is in the Central Time zone as is the polar bear site **(2)**. If you stay up really late or get up early, try the Alaska Borealis cams **(3)**. Two places to try offer various cams from around the world **(4, 5)**. To check on the space weather (for aurora forecasts) try here **(6)** and NASA **(7)**.

1) **https://is.gd/3RjcRQ**
2) **https://is.gd/7PDEvO**
3) **https://auroranotify.com/aurora-links/**
4) **https://seetheaurora.com/webcams**
5) **https://lightsoverlapland.com/?p=79**
6) **https://www.spaceweather.com/**
7) **https://www.swpc.noaa.gov/**

WGN TV Morning Show **(1)** had a segment about local grocery stores. Comparing the costs, quality, and services using the company Checkbook.org **(2)**. Chceckbook.org offered their service to WGN viewers for free until December 20, 2025. To get the free service just go here **(3)**. The web site rates most of the grocery stores in Chicagoland for prices on produce and meat. It checks their parking, delivery services, store layouts, ease of finding prices, speed of checkout, and help loading your car. It also checks on whether you will save on groceries by joining a warehouse club. Be sure to check out

that site before the deadline to get the information for free.

1) **https://wgntv.com/morning-news/**
2) **https://www.checkbook.org/**
3) **https://www.checkbook.org/wgn/free**

Malwarebytes researchers have identified a hidden malware that hides inside a fake Windows Update screen **(1)**. It entices users to complete three steps when the Windows Update screen is on. The steps are Hold the Windows key and press R then Hold the Ctrl key and press V then Press "Ok' or "Enter". Those three steps load the Rhadamanthys infostealer in a somewhat more complicated way. Windows Update will NEVER ask you for key strokes. If it does turn off your PC and restart it.

1) **https://www.malwarebytes.com/?p=340530**

Between you, me and the LampPost, that's all for now.

New Mini-Computers
By Larry Bothe
11/12/2025

Maybe I better explain what I'm talking about here. The mini-cube computers I'm familiar with are all about 4.5" square, and 2" high. They have of variety of connection ports; USB A & C, HDMI (monitor), and power-in. Maybe an SD card slot. They don't have an optical drive or a VGA port. Some can be upgraded with more RAM and/or a larger SSD; some are fixed with no changes possible. If you can't get your head around a "desktop computer" that small, imagine a laptop computer with no screen, and no keyboard. The remaining components are stuffed into a small box. That's a mini-cube.

I am vaguely aware that Apple has offered a very small computer for a number of years. But I'm not an Apple guy, and the Apple offering was very expensive, so I didn't pay attention. But in more recent times, with both mine and my wife's desktop Win-10 PCs from 2016 becoming obsolete, we needed to make a move. Further, the museum where I am the volunteer Curator, and responsible for computers, was pretty much in the same boat. I was in the market for an economical solution.

In the spring of 2025, I visited a nearby museum that had two of the mini-cube PCs in service. I really liked the small size, and the price was right, around $150 each, but they had shortcomings by my standards. They had small SSDs, not enough ports, and came without an operating system. I liked the idea, but wanted better/simpler. Later, I met with a computer technician I know. He was

more familiar with mini-cubes, but had not worked with them very much. He had heard stories of overheating due to the lack of cooling capacity in the small format. But he encouraged me, and even did a quick internet search to find one he might recommend. I made a note of the one he picked out, and left, determined to do more research on my own when time permitted.

After returning from the aviation convention at Oshkosh at the end of July, and with the end of support for Windows 10 only two months away, I got to work on selecting a mini-cube PC to purchase. My plan was to buy and set one up for myself. If that worked well, I would buy two more; one for my wife, and one for the museum. Off to the Internet!

There is a dizzying array of mini-cubes available. They range in price from $150 to over $1500. Some have Win 11 Home installed, others the Pro version, and some (even expensive ones!) have no operating system at all. Be very aware of the OS in the computer you decide to buy. My computing needs are not very demanding, but I didn't want to cheap out and be sorry later. I subscribe to the Ask Woody computer newsletter, and the editor, Susan Bradley, often mentions that in order to run at its full potential, Win 11 needs at least 16 gigs of RAM, and the Pro version of the OS is preferable. I don't need a lot of storage space. Even with all my pictures from traveling, and my museum files, I have just over 200 gigabytes of data to store. That means a half a terabyte drive is fine for me; plenty of room to grow.

Now I had an idea of my minimum requirements: Win 11 Pro OS, 16 gigs of RAM, .5 TB drive. It would be nice if the new cube was upgradeable in RAM and hard drive space. An SD card slot would help because that's how the database in my car GPS is updated. With those things in mind, the challenge was to determine which cube was the most bang for the buck. I looked at a lot of cubes, including the one the technician had recommended to me a month before. I ended up selecting a Geekom A-5; the model with the faster AMD Ryzen 7 processor, 16 gigs of RAM (upgradeable to 32), half a terabyte SSD drive (upgradeable to 1TB), Win 11 Pro OS, VEGA 8 graphics, and 2 HDMI ports (supports 2 monitors, but I use only 1). And it has the SD card slot I wanted, along with a 3-year warranty. All this cost $299 (plus tax), delivered, from Amazon, in August.

That's what I got, which I think is pretty impressive, but what didn't I get that I ended up needing and had to buy extra? Several things. First, there is no 3.5mm audio-out jack, at least not in the back. I wanted to reserve the front

one to plug in headphones or a headset. To hook up speakers, I had to buy a set of small USB speakers, from Amazon, for $18. They look and sound great. Problem solved.

I mentioned at the outset that none of the mini-cubes have an optical drive. There just isn't room in the small cases. Since nearly everything is downloaded these days, most people won't miss the optical drive. However, I had some ancient software on DVD that I want to run, and I needed a way to install it. The quick solution, and one that I could move from machine to machine, was to buy an external optical drive for $20, again from Amazon. Did that. Works well.

I have a lot of USB-connected accessories (webcam, label printer, wireless keyboard, wireless mouse), and I was sure I would run out of USB ports. I bought a USB dock for $16, but in the end didn't need it. You can buy adapters to go from USB-A to -C, if you have old stuff like I do. But before you spend additional money, count your USB port requirements more accurately than I did.

If your monitor is old and has only VGA-in, you will need to buy a VGA-HDMI adapter. My 27" HP monitor has HDMI-in, and Geekom includes a 24" HDMI cable with the computer, so I was all set. Note that most people put their little cube computer under the edge of their monitor (no more big "desktop" box on the floor); that's why the 24" HDMI cable is just right.

That's about it. After buying the external optical drive and the USB speakers, all the accessories worked well, as did nearly all of my software. I did have a problem installing Microsoft Digital Image from 2003; photo-editing software that I love. It wanted Internet Explorer 6.0 or better. But Win 11 doesn't have IE of any version, so I was out of luck. But I didn't give up; I queried the internet. I got just one response that I thought might have merit. Odd as the work-around sounded, it worked perfectly. I won't have to buy Photoshop after all. Don't give up on old software; you may be able to get it to run.

I ran my old desktop beside the new mini-cube for about a week. It barely got warm after running for hours. I made sure I wasn't going to have a big problem, and, and learned more about using Win 11. After that, I did a reset

on the old Win 10 desktop (wiped out all my personal files), and donated the old machine to the museum to for the single purpose of running a flight simulator. It doesn't matter that old machine is obsolete and won't update. It isn't even connected to the internet.

After I was satisfied that the new Geekom mini-cube was a success, and didn't have any infant mortality issues, I went back to Amazon to order the two additional machines (one for my wife; one for the museum). They were still available, but the price had risen to $319. That was about 6 weeks ago. My wife's is set up and running. The one for the museum is running, but I still need to transfer some files to it. The good news is that I have had no trouble with any of the 3 machines I bought. The bad news is that I checked for a friend at the end of October, and the price for this same machine was up to $360. Lord only knows where it will be by the time you read this article.

Why the continually rising prices? I don't really know, but I imagine it is a combination of tariffs and demand. The demand part is from the people who did nothing as the end-of-support date (10/14/2025) for Win 10 approached. Now they are scrambling to catch up and get into the Windows 11 world, and back under the Microsoft security blanket. If the Trump Administration makes a trade deal with China, and the supply catches up after Christmas, maybe prices will come back down again. In any case, I think mini-cube computers are here to stay. I like them.

Larry Bothe is an associate member of CAEUG. He served as president for a time back in the 90's when he lived in the Chicago area. Larry presently resides in southern Indiana where he is retired from the plastics industry, does a little flight instruction, and is the volunteer curator of the Freeman Army Airfield Museum. He can be contacted at LBothe(at)comcast.net.

Merry Christmas & Happy New Year!

Why are Christmas trees so bad at sewing?
They always drop their needles!

What kind of music to elves like best?
Wrap music!