

The Maple Lake MESSSENGER

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Techmate: Taking care of all your computer and technical needs

By Brenda Erdahl

In this COVID-19 era technology has taken on new roles for many of us as we try to navigate working and attending school remotely from home. Fortunately, the role of technicians at Techmate in Buffalo hasn't changed at all.



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"A year ago, most of us wouldn't even have heard of Zoom," said owner Andrew Nickel. Now the app that allows people to teleconference, telecommute and distance learn is practically a household name. Techmate can provide the help you need to navigate this new world of technology. Whether you need help setting up a home office, advice on remote access or troubleshooting, Techmate technicians are available to help. For instance, when the pandemic first began and people were forced to work and teach from home many were surprised to discover the desktop computers they had at home didn't have a web cam, Nickel said. "For a while you couldn't find a web cam in the entire country," he said.

The increased dependence on technology has put a strain on the supply line and that can be a challenge, Nickel said. Fortunately, the supply lines have caught up with the need for webcams and he expects the same will be true for other electronics once the world learns how to better deal with the pandemic.

In the meantime, Techmate technicians are available to help with any pesky problems that may arise, no matter how bizarre, and when you have kids working a lot with technology you never know what is going to happen. Nickel recently had a customer who came in with a computer that had a suspiciously pencil shaped looking hole in their computer screen.

"You can't say 'I can't go to school today because I crushed my pencil in my computer,'" Nickel said.

Pets too can be saboteurs if they feel their owner spends too much time staring at a screen. Nickel has seen dog bites in equipment and power cords chewed apart.

Free diagnostics

Fortunately, there is no risk involved when you take your broken computer, phone or tablet to Techmate where diagnostics are always free.

"Sometimes someone will bring in something really complicated, and we spend hours on it only to find out we can't do anything with it. The customer will ask 'what do I owe you?' I like to say, we don't charge for bad news," Nickel said.

There will of course be times when Techmate technicians can't fix your device, but don't ever hesitate to bring it in no matter how bad it looks.



Andrew Nickel performs a diagnostic on a broken cell phone. Diagnostics are always free at Techmate.

"I once fixed a phone that was run over by another truck," Nickel said. "This was before the hands-free law. He was talking on a speaker and the window was open. A gush of wind took it out the window and the truck behind him ran it over. He brought it in in a bag. Every square millimeter of the screen was smashed but the frame underneath was intact and that saved the guts."

Phones

Water damage is the worst when it comes to phones. Nickel compares water damage to a snake bite, "every minute counts."

The biggest mistake you can make when your phone falls into a puddle, toilet or sink is to plug it in to see if it's okay. Plugging it in, even if you dried it off, connects a potentially wet surface to a high source of power. Instead, if the phone is on, shut it off, wrap it in a paper towel and put it in the refrigerator. The paper towel will soak up some of the moisture and the cold air will slow down the rate of corrosion. Then get it into Techmate as soon as possible where technicians can open it up and dry it internally. He also advised that the popular theory of putting a wet phone into a rice bag doesn't really work. Rice isn't actually that dry and they've seen situations where dust from the rice gets into components.

"The rice rumor persists because someone says 'I dropped my phone in a puddle, put it in with some rice and it works fine when actually if they had not put it in a bag of rice it would still have worked fine,'" Nickel said. Water damage sometimes doesn't show up until months later, he added.

Bad batteries, broken screens and dirty charging ports are some of the more common and easily fixed phone problems Techmate technicians see on a regular basis.

Computers

The biggest complaint Techmate technicians encounter when it comes to computers is speed. A slow computer is frustrating and unproductive and many times the reason is the hard drive.

"Marketing at bigger stores is all about the processor. A lot of people are a little dismayed by the expectation vs the reality. While it may have a great chip in it, the storage system is slow and a computer always runs as slow as its slowest component," Nickel said. The phenomenon is called the "bottle neck" and investing a solid state drive will get rid of that bottle neck.

"It's like buying a new Ferrari but limiting it to 1,000 rpm," Nickel said.

Most computers are equipped with a spinning drive that often goes bad within a relatively short amount of time. A solid state drive, on the other hand has fewer moving parts which means they are tougher, quieter and last longer. While solid state technology has been around for several years, it hasn't been affordable to the average consumer until recently.

Techmate technicians put solid state drives in all of the computers they refurbish and sell at their shops. The other nice thing about these refurbished computers is there is none of the "bloatware" you get when you buy at a big box store. "Bloatware" are the unnecessary ads, apps and offers that appear on the screen when you first turn on your new computer, Nickel said.

"If you buy from us you will get a clean computer (downloaded with Windows 10) . . . it will run faster and still have the same warranty," Nickel said.

Special offers

While Techmate strives to give every customer the best bang for their buck, they do offer a standing 10 percent discount to seniors and veterans. If you are both a senior and a veteran, it becomes a 15 percent discount. In addition, staff will always be up-



Andrew Nickel, left, is one of the owners of Techmate. Techmate now has four locations: Buffalo, St. Michael, Monticello and Osseo. Pictured with Nickel is Buffalo Store Manager Kole Overby. Photos by Brenda Erdahl



Techmate is located at 201 5th St. NE, in Buffalo. For more information visit their website at www.techmatemn.com or call 763-276-1303.

front and honest about your options and there is never any obligation to use their services further.

Business services

Besides serving your personal computer needs, Techmate is well equipped to take care of your business needs as well.

Techmate technicians are capable of everything from IT work to networking issues. If a computer problem has brought your company to a grinding halt, Techmate's emergency service will get you up and running again as quickly as possible. Techmate technicians are also available for technical advice.

Recycling

Techmate recycles computers, batteries and phones for free, but there is a cost to recycle printers and monitors that have tempered glass in them.

Four locations

Owners Andrew and Dan Nickel opened their first Techmate in St. Michael.

In February 2017, they expanded to Buffalo and today they also own stores in Monticello and Osseo. Osseo is their newest location, opening in early October. The four locations offer added convenience for customers.

Techmate in Buffalo is located at 201 5th St. NE and is open Monday-Friday from 10 a.m. to 6 p.m. and Saturdays from 9 a.m. until 4 p.m. For more information visit their website at <http://www.techmatemn.com> or call 763-276-1303.

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How to approach hosting Thanksgiving during the pandemic

Much like the holidays that preceded it in 2020, Thanksgiving figures to be different this year. An ongoing pandemic has changed the way many live their lives, including how holidays are celebrated.

As the novel coronavirus COVID-19 spread across the globe beginning in the winter of 2019-20, the World Health Organization recommended a host of behaviors designed to prevent the spread of the virus and protect those who are most vulnerable to it. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention also noted the importance of keeping distance from others, especially for those who are most likely to get seriously ill if they're exposed to COVID-19, such as the elderly and people with underlying medical conditions.



Families must make their own decisions about getting together this holiday season, but hosts who intend to welcome guests into their homes this Thanksgiving can take certain steps to keep everyone as safe as possible. Photo submitted

The WHO and the CDC continue to recommend social distancing, which means Thanksgiving in 2020 will be unlike any other. Families must make their own decisions about getting together this holiday season, but hosts who intend to welcome guests into their homes this Thanksgiving can take certain steps to keep everyone as safe as possible.

Some tips to keep Thanksgiving safe this year:

- Scale back the guest list. Families accustomed to large Thanksgiving gatherings can scale the festivities back this year in an effort to keep everyone safe. Consider hosting a meal for immediate family members only, as the Environmental Protection Agency notes that COVID-19 may spread more easily in indoor environments via airborne particles. Extended family members can visit each other over the long holiday weekend to ensure everyone still sees each other, but keep such visits outdoors when possible.
- Consider eating Thanksgiving dinner outside. If the weather permits, consider eating Thanksgiving dinner outside this year. Doing so may limit everyone's exposure to the respiratory droplets that researchers say can spread the virus when inhaled. If necessary, serve the meal earlier than you normally would so everyone can eat in midday when it's still warm outside. Hosts also can consider serving something more convenient than turkey, which takes a long time to cook, and limiting side dishes to one or two items.
- Assign seats. If the meal will be served indoors, then hosts can assign seats to protect those most vulnerable to serious illness from

COVID-19. Instead of cramming everyone in at one table, set up temporary tables and have guests sit in every other seat rather than next to one another. Isolate the vulnerable as much as possible while still ensuring they can engage in conversation.

• Discourage guests from attending if they feel sick. A list of COVID-19 symptoms can be found at www.cdc.gov. In the days prior to Thanksgiving, hosts can share that list with guests via email or social media and discourage guests who are feeling ill on or around the holiday from attending the festivities. If necessary, make a to-go plate for ill relatives and drop it off at their homes so they can still enjoy Thanksgiving dinner.

• Stock up on hand soap and hand sanitizer. Hosts should make sure hand soap and sanitizer is readily available throughout their homes. When guests arrive, make sure everyone washes their hands immediately, and encourage guests to continue doing so throughout the day.

Thanksgiving will be different in 2020. Hosts need to adjust their normal Thanksgiving routines to ensure the safety of their guests.

Follow these Thanksgiving travel safety tips



This Thanksgiving, drivers should make it a point to follow these tips to ensure they get to their destinations safely and soundly. Photo submitted

Some tips to driving safely for the holidays:

- Check the forecast before you go. Weather can be unpredictable around Thanksgiving. Conditions may be sunny one day and then cold and icy the next. Stay up-to-date on the latest weather forecasts and road conditions as you prepare for your trip, making sensible decisions about traveling if there is inclement weather.
- Get your vehicle inspected. Have your vehicle inspected in the days before you hit the road. A mechanic's diagnostic checkup and routine servicing, such as topping off fluids and changing windshield wipers, can make driving safer.
- Keep your fuel tank more than half-full. FEMA suggests keeping the tank full when temperatures are extremely cold. This is because condensation can build up in near-empty gas tanks, potentially freezing fuel lines

and leaving you stranded.

• Opt for airline updates. Flights can be delayed or canceled when weather is poor. Many airlines will now text travelers who are subscribed to updates or frequent-flyer programs and apps. That's a convenient and free bonus.

• Plan for stops. Drowsy driving and distracted driving are extreme dangers across North America. Take breaks to avoid drowsiness, and only use a mobile device when safely pulled over at a rest stop.

• Leave plenty of time. There are bound to be many travelers come Thanksgiving week. Build extra time into your trip so you don't have to speed or rush to make it on time.

Thanksgiving is a big travel holiday. Make it to family dinner safe and full of smiles by following various safety tips during your travels.

The week of Thanksgiving is a busy time of the year to travel that's marked by a large number of people traveling to see loved ones. In 2017, AAA projected 50.9 million Americans would journey 50 miles or more from home on Thanksgiving. While many people look forward to seeing their loved

ones, the sheer volume of cars on the road during Thanksgiving week makes it a dangerous time to travel.

A 2013 study examining the previous five years of data on traffic crashes in Alberta, Canada, found that long weekends have 18

percent more deadly accidents than non-holiday weekends. According to the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration, Thanksgiving is the most dangerous holiday for driving. The most recent data available from NHTSA's Fatality Analysis Reporting System indicates that there were 764 crashes

involving a fatality during Thanksgiving 2012. In comparison, there were 654 crashes involving a fatality during Christmas that year.

This Thanksgiving, drivers should make it a point to follow these tips to ensure they get to their destinations safely and soundly.

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How Memorial Day and Veterans Day differ from each other

Memorial Day and Veterans Day each honor the military, though the two holidays are not the same. Memorial Day, which is celebrated annually on the last Monday in May, honors the brave men and women who lost their lives while serving in the American military. Many communities host memorial ceremonies honoring their fallen soldiers on Memorial Day, ensuring such soldiers' bravery and sacrifices are never forgotten. While many people now view Memorial Day weekend as the unofficial start of summer, the weekend should not be celebrated without also pausing to reflect on and recognize the military personnel who lost their lives in defense of freedom and the American way of life.

Veterans Day is celebrated annually on November 11 and recognizes all men and women who have served in the military. Veterans Day coincides with Remembrance Day, which is celebrated by the Commonwealth of Nations, an association of 53 member states with connections to the British Empire. Though Veterans Day and Remembrance Day are each celebrated on November 11, the latter recognizes armed forces members who died in the line of duty, making it more similar to Memorial Day than Veterans Day. It's not uncommon for people to recognize fallen soldiers on Veterans Day, but many use the holiday to express their appreciation to existing veterans.



Memorial Day and Veterans Day each honor the military, though the two holidays are not the same.

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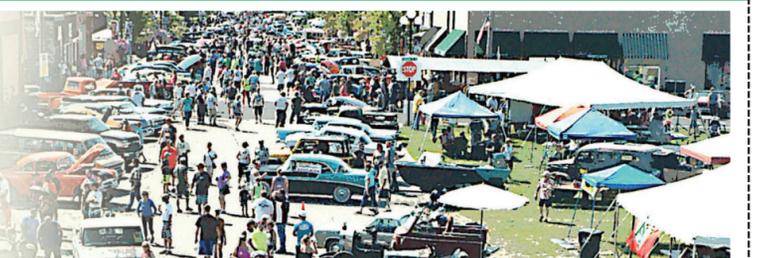
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Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
1	2	3 VOTE • Silver Creek Township Meeting, 7 p.m. • Corinna Township Meeting, 7 p.m. ELECTION DAY	4 • Maple Lake Chamber of Commerce Meeting, 12 p.m.	5 • Legion Riders Meeting, 6:30 p.m. at Legion Club	6 No School	7
8	9	10 • Chatham Township Meeting, 7 p.m. • American Legion Meeting, 7:30 p.m. • Maple Lake City Council Meeting, 7 p.m. • Late Start	11 HAPPY VETERANS DAY <i>Honoring all who served</i> • Hasty-Silver Creek Sportsmen's Club Meeting, 8 p.m. Veterans Day	12 • Sons of the American Legion, 8 p.m. • Bloodmobile at Maple Lake Legion 1 p.m. - 7 p.m.	13	14
15	16	17 • Albion Township Meeting, 7 p.m. • Corinna Township Meeting, 7 p.m. • Maple Lake Township Meeting, 7 p.m.	18	19 • Wright Saddle Club Meeting, 7:30 p.m. • Maple Lake Legion Auxiliary, 7 p.m. • Lions Club Meeting, 7 p.m. at The V by HH	20	21
22	23	24 • Wright County Snowmobile Assoc. Meeting, 7:30 p.m. at Legion Club	25	26 <i>Happy THANKSGIVING</i> No School	27 No School	28
29	30				<p>All events posted to this calendar may be affected by COVID-19. Please check with these events by calling or visiting their website.</p>	

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