

DSL: Just be sure you know what you are paying for



And the winner for high-speed digital dominance is ... Each day we get several calls from cable customers requesting cable modem Internet service. Unfortunately, that service is not yet available in our cities, but there is another alternative that may be faster yet - Digital Subscriber Line or DSL.

It is sometimes hard to decipher all of the talk about which is better - DSL or cable modems. Both have their positives and negatives. So what is all the hype anyway?

Well, for those of you who don't know, cable modems have taken this country by storm for their speed in accessing the Internet. Many believe that you have not lived until you have experienced a high-speed dedicated connection to the Internet. This dedicated connection changes the way you use the Internet because it is so much faster.

But some people have some concerns about the performance and security of cable modems. Complaints are raised all the time about cable modems and their security. Lots of people want to know if it's possible for an attacker to break into their computers and access confidential files.

Well, cable modems are more risky because they operate on a shared system, much like an old fashioned party line. You see, cable modems are based on

1980s' Ethernet technology. However, Ethernet is a broadcast network, therefore making it possible for your Network Neighborhood to be literally your entire neighborhood.

However, this business of a shared line can also be in the customer's favor. Cable modems cost less than DSL because they operate on a shared coaxial cable. A single piece of coax cable can provide this high speed Internet to thousands of customers. Then a single piece of equipment at the cable office can patch those people onto the

Internet.

DSL, on the other hand, requires a separate pair of wires for each subscriber. The phone company, here it is Ameritech, would need to install a special DSL "modem" for each phone line at its central office. This type of technology allows DSL to be inherently more secure than a cable modem because DSL is a dedicated connection over your own phone line. This dedicated bandwidth comes at a high price though. Some DSL providers charge twice what a cable company charges for Internet service.

Another downside to DSL is that you must be a certain distance away from the Phone Company's central office to be eligible to receive the highest speed service.

Our local phone company, Ameritech, has lofty plans for the future of DSL. SBC Communications, the company who recently merged with Ameritech, plans to roll out its Pronto service by 2002. This plan involves providing 77 million Americans, which is eighty percent of its customers in the United States, with always on high-speed voice,

data and video services via DSL. They also claim the service will be much faster than the DSL service the company currently offers.

How does this compare with today's DSL speed? Well, today's service features connectivity speeds that are up to 200 times faster than traditional access, which allows for near instantaneous downloads of files and graphics. DSL provided by Ameritech also pledges the "always on" technology, thereby eliminating the time consuming and frustrating dial-up connections to Internet Service Providers or corporate Local Area Networks.

So what is an Internet user to do? There are many companies out there that provide DSL. Just make sure you know what you are paying for. As far as cable modem service goes, we have to wait for Time Warner to provide it.

Melanie Young is the Community Relations Specialist for the Southwestern Oakland Cable Commission. The next CAC Meeting is at 7 p.m. Tuesday, Jan. 11 at SWOCC.

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RECREATION NEWS

For more information call 473-9570 Monday through Friday between 8:30 a.m. and 4:30 p.m.

EUCHERE

Register now as a single or as partners for an evening of playing Euchre from 7-10 p.m. Friday, Jan. 14 at the Heritage Park Visitor Center. The cost is \$6 per person. Pre-registration is required and refreshments are provided.

SWIM LESSONS

Lessons from parent/tot to adults are available beginning the week of Jan. 3 through Feb. 12 at the Costick Activities Center in Farmington Hills. The session will run for six classes. A \$30 pre-registration fee is required at the Recreation Office.

YOUTH BOWLING

The Recreation Division, in cooperation with Bel-Aire Lanes will be offering youth, pee-wee, and parent/child bowling leagues. Leagues bowl once a week for 14 or 16 weeks. You can pay your \$10 registration fee at the Recreation Office.

DOWNHILL SKIING

The Farmington Hills Recreation Division is offering a complete downhill ski program for all participants, 5th grade through high school, each Friday night starting Jan. 7 to Mt. Brighton. A bus will leave the designated pick-up location at 4:30 p.m. and return at approximately 10 p.m. Fee includes lift ticket, ski lessons, and bus transportation. Ski rental is not included and will be collected on the bus. Pre-registration is required.

MEN'S BASKETBALL

The city of Farmington Hills is accepting men's basketball registration. Leagues play on Mondays or Sundays at the Costick Activities Center. The fee is \$325 per team.

WINTER STAFF

The Recreation Division is in search of Youth Basketball Referees, Sled Hill Supervisors, Cross Country Ski Center Attendants and Special Events Assistants. Stop by the city of Farmington Hills, Department of Special Services for an application.

ICE SKATING HOURS

Following are public skating hours through June 11, 2000, at the Farmington Hills Ice Arena on Eight Mile Road:

Monday-Friday noon skate, 11:30 a.m. to 1:20 p.m.; Tuesday, Friday, 7-8:50 p.m.; Saturday, 11:30 a.m. to 1:20 p.m.; Sunday, 4-5:50 p.m. Cost is \$3.50 for residents and \$5 for non-residents. The Parent-Tot Skate is 9-10:50 a.m. Monday and Wednesday, while the Adult Skate is 9-10:50 a.m. Tuesday and Thursday.