

Web cams let you eavesdrop

PC TALK
MIKE WENDLAND

"The Truman Show" is a popular movie about a man who unknowingly lives his entire life on TV. But on the Internet, everyday people living lives already being broadcast to a worldwide audience of online voyeurs.

By now, everybody's heard of the Florida woman who gave birth on the Internet and the California teenagers who promised to lose their virginity before an Internet camera. But the Florida woman's net event was far from typical. And the site promising to chronicle the lost virginity of the teens turned out to be a hoax.

But forget those bizarre incidents. Because the idea of hooking up a Webcam is something hundreds of others are having been experimenting with on the Net for months.

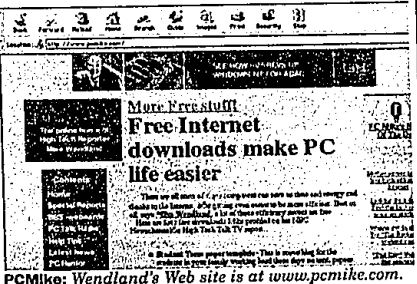
For example, consider Ben Tolbert (<http://pages.prodigy.net/bentolbert/benny.htm>) from Mt. Clemens.

Tolbert's an extrovert. So, when he's not working as an electrician at the nearby Selfridge Air National Guard base, he's on "Benny Cam," his live hookup to the Internet. A camera attached to his home computer shows the whole world Benny exercising ... cooking ... hanging around. He takes the camera all over ... the backyard, the kitchen, his living room.

"It's just fun," said Tolbert. "People ask me all the time why I do this and I just smile and shrug. It sounds kind of weird, I know, but it's fun. What can I say?"

Tolbert put his "Benny Cam" online in April. Since then, more than 2,000 people have logged in to check it out. He even has posted a schedule on his Web site so Internet surfers will know when to catch him. "I don't do anything very exciting," he explained. "On Father's Day, I had the Webcam on my son and I as we played a Chess game. That was a highlight. Then, one night I forgot it was on and fell asleep. That was my biggest embarrassment. Most times, it's just you, you know? Not a lot happens."

Still, Tolbert is having so



PCMike: Wendland's Web site is at www.pcmike.com.

much fun that he now has posted his telephone number online and, on Friday nights, talks with callers who click on his webcam.

"I guess what amazes me most is how many people think I'm interesting."

Ben Tolbert is not alone when it comes to sharing his life online. At least 300 people have cameras sending snapshots of them on the Internet. Some are pornography sites run by scantily-dressed young women who won't allow full access to their pictures until the surfer gives them a credit card number.

But most of the personal Webcam sites are ... like Benny's ... pretty mundane. For example, there's a live view of an Omaha, Nebraska family's living room and kitchen (<http://www.probe.net/~bowerman/isy.htm>). Again, what you get is whatever's happening. Mom in the kitchen, the kids watching TV.

Then there's the site (<http://www.aplea.com/~arubin/alexcam.html>) devoted to "Alex the Welsh Terrier," a California dog who mostly naps while his owners work.

In San Francisco (<http://www.geocities.com/SouthBeach/6860/homecam.htm>), there's a woman who keeps a live camera trained on her at home. And at work. No audiotape or weird stuff ... she just does it because she likes getting her 15 megabytes of fame.

The Boring Guys site (<http://www.boringguys.com/boringframe.html>) is just that ... four post-college New Jersey guys who sit around and stare at a computer camera.

A site called EarthCam (<http://www.earthcam.com/>) offers up a complete list of per-

sonal Webcams ... and other live cameras on the Net. Here are some other Webcam sites you may want to check out:

- Tommy's List of Live Cams (<http://chill.r166.com/ozone/cam.htm>) - Organized by geographic locations, with brief descriptions of what can be seen.

- Live Cam (<http://www.live-cam.com.ar/>) - This site contains links to over 1,000 Webcams in 68 different countries. My personal favorites? The live shot of the Turtle farm on Grand Cayman Island (<http://www.live-cam.com.ar/>) and Davis Station in Antarctica (<http://www.live-cam.com.ar/>).

- Kremlinkam (<http://www.kremlinkam.com/>) - A live view of the Kremlin in Russia.

- Danilo's Live Cams (<http://www.geocities.com/RodeoDrive/1695/index.html>) - You can choose between outdoor cameras and indoor cameras, all over the world.

- WebCam Central (<http://www.camcentral.com/>) - This is a huge site, most with full-color live pictures.

- Aquatic Garden Cam - This live camera from an small Massachusetts "aqua garden" features a live fish feeding every noon.

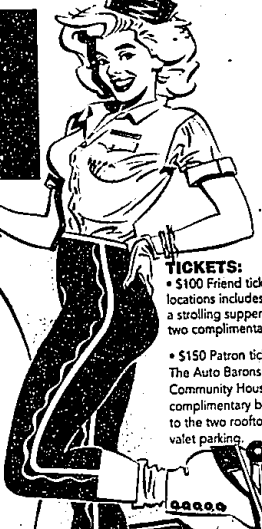
Mike Wendland covers the Internet for NBC-TV NewsChannel stations across the country and can be seen locally on WDIV-TV4, Detroit. His "PC Talk" radio show airs Saturday and Sunday afternoons on WXXT Radio 4.1170. His latest book "The Complete No Geek Speak Guide to the Internet" is available in book stores or through his Web site at <http://www.pcmike.com>

Hot Rods, Vintage Cars and Harley Hogs are Cruisin' into town!



FRIDAY
 AUGUST 14, 1998
 7:00 P.M. - 11:30 P.M.

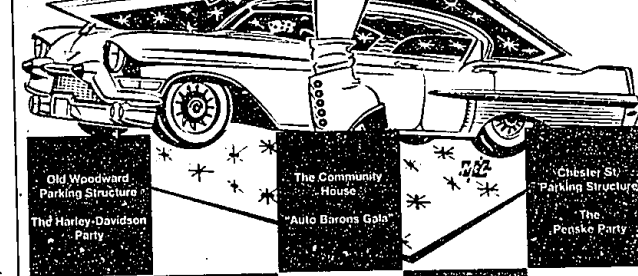
Hosted by the Children's Charities Coalition. The Child Abuse and Neglect Council of Oakland County, The Community House, Orchards, Children's Services, and Variety, the Children's Charity.



TICKETS:
 • \$100 Friend ticket to the two rooftop locations includes entertainment galore, a strolling supper, fun foods and two complimentary beverages.
 • \$150 Patron ticket includes The Auto Barons Gala at the Community House, gourmet cuisine, complimentary beverages, admission to the two rooftop locations & shuttle valet parking.

Join us under the stars in Downtown Birmingham! Rain or Shine!

Food by Matt Prentice



Milestones from page B4

Patrick McCarthy of Plymouth has been made a shareholder at the law firm of Howard & Howard in Bloomfield Hills. He is an attorney specializing in complex commercial litigation and intellectual property litigation.

Tammera Mitchell of Berkley has joined the Berline Group in Bloomfield Hills as a media assistant. She has worked as an assistant entertainment publicist with

Marontate & Co.

Timothy Nass has joined Caponigro Public Relations in Southfield as a vice president of the firm. He previously worked with the Consulate of Italy in Detroit where he directed the office of public affairs. He has 16 years of experience and specializes in working with international companies.

John Richm recently joined the Southfield office of Grant

Thornton as a new senior manager and head of the strategic consulting services team. He most recently worked for Hood & Strong in California.

Michael Suchara of Birmingham has been named senior vice president and customer relationship management specialist at Penta Mark, a Southfield-based division of Omnicom Group. He was previously vice president and account supervisor with the Dodge car group. He has been with BBDO since 1984.

Team from page B4

grill their own meals, Friedman said. The TeamWorks aspects of Friedman's business at Camp Tanuga will likely be limited to spring, summer and fall but clients are welcome to reserve a room at the lodge or use it as a retreat during the winter months.

To date the new lodge has accommodated several business clients, a wedding reception and a family reunion. Friedman hopes to have that trend continue as he works to get the three-month-old business off the ground. "We are just starting out now but we are right on the brink

and if we should continue at this same pace we'll be turning people away at this time next year," Friedman said. "And we'll also be building another lodge."

For more information on TeamWorks, call Sid Friedman at (248) 654-7000.

Walsh from page B4

king distance learning education for all of Michigan's four-year universities, community colleges, and independent colleges and universities through the Michigan Virtual University. The Michigan Virtual University is a private, not-for-profit educational corporation established this year to meet the education and training needs of specific business and industry segments and their current and prospective employees through the innovative use of distance learning. MVU was founded by the Governor and the Michigan

Jobs Commission in collaboration with several major industries in the state. At the present time, the Michigan Virtual Automotive College (MVAC), established in 1997, provides distance learning programs to Michigan autoworkers. The MVU project will include the MVAC initiative and anticipates expanding distance learning higher education offerings to new business and industry segments like plastics, furniture, tourism, education, information technology, accounting and tax, and banking and financial services. Walsh College is a private busi-

ness institution that has a total enrollment of 3,300 students at its campuses in Troy, Novi, Clinton Township, and Port Huron. Walsh College is Michigan's only upper-division institution offering the last two (or junior and senior) years of a bachelor degree, allowing a focus on comprehensive, relevant business courses to help graduates succeed. In addition, the college offers Master of Science degrees in accounting, finance, management, information management and communication, taxation and an MBA.