

# Hill Community Marketplace

February 03 • Vol. 2 Issue 4 *Where Capitol Hill gets creative, creates community and communes with the neighbors.*

## Let's give old Valentine his due...*Love could be only a mouse-click away.*

By Fred S. Gardner



If we started recognizing Valentine's Day as a Federal holiday, and everybody got the day off, it would probably garner more respect. Even so, if you type in "Valentine's Day," Google delivers around 13.5 million sites devoted to its cause. The History Channel's website tops the chart with a brief primer on the man Valentine and why we celebrate his day.

According to legend, Valentine or "Valentinus," was a priest who made his fame defying the Holy Roman Emperor, Claudius II. Claudius outlawed marriage for young men somewhere in the 260's AD under the assumption that bachelors made better, less distracted soldiers. Valentine, champion of love, or at least marital unions, thought the decree unjust and continued to join young couples in the eyes of God in illegal ceremonies. For this he was condemned to death in or around 270 AD, but during his incarceration on death row, he and his jailor's daughter fell in love. Just before his execution, he wrote her a love letter and signed it, "From your Valentine."

It is unclear if February 14<sup>th</sup> is the actual date of his death, or if the Catholic Church by way of Pope Gelasius declared it so in 498 AD in order to "christianize" another pagan festival. In the middle ages, for example, February 14<sup>th</sup> was celebrated in France and England as the beginning of the birds' mating season. It was later during the Renaissance that England trended toward celebrating Valentine's Day, which involved the exchanging

of tokens and written declarations of affection.

So Valentine, it seems, was a man who believed in the triumph and importance of love. And today his day is celebrated gregariously by everyone in love, falling in love, with the prospect of falling in love, or without any immediate prospects, but who thinks love might exist for him or her somewhere in the future... Well, maybe that paints too pretty a picture.

Indeed, a random sampling of bar patrons on Capitol Hill makes one think less of our dreamy eyed champion of emotional attachment, than of J. Geil's pop single: "Love Stinks!" I began with two women sitting at one end of the bar in a popular watering hole on barracks row. I asked them what they thought about Valentine's Day.

"I think it's a stupid \$\$^\*& made-up holiday," said the first.

"Everything makes you depressed," said the second.

Coming up with no reply, I moved on, and thankfully, that was the worst of it.

Two other couples were also sitting at the bar, and had apparently been there for a while as Crystal let me know she was on her third purple-something in a martini glass. Crystal & Ervin had been dating for a couple of months. Dante & Keisha were on their second date.

"To me, it's takin' care of the woman," Dante declared. "It ain't for the man." Keisha looked at him

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## Editor's Letter

## ABCH...Always Buy Capitol Hill: Even your Internet access!

Marketplace, in conjunction with local merchants and professional organizations, is launching a "buy local" campaign. Capitol Hill is its own little full service village. Anything you need, you can get it here, and at the same time use your dollars to help sustain our unique neighborhood shops and businesses. Marketplace says, "Keep your dollars on the Hill!" DC Access is just one example of how you could be putting your money into the local economy rather than sending it off to a chain, mega store, or giant corporation, and getting better service as well.

DC Access is a local, wireless Internet service provider located just off Lincoln Park. And why at first it may seem...unconventional...to buy Internet service from the neighbors, they actually have a lot to offer that the big companies (rhymes with horizon) don't.

### Real people, no more talking to the void...

The first thing you'll notice that DC Access has to offer you that the bigger shops don't is Matt and Martha. Matt Wade and Martha Huizenga (pronounced hi-zen-ga) are co-owners of the company. I myself was skeptical at first about purchasing Internet service from a little "mom and pop" shop in the neighborhood, I'll admit. But after meeting Matt and Martha, I wished I could figure out ways for them to run other parts of my life. They are...confidence inspiring. They're the kind of people whose minds work like well-organized filing cabinets. If you mention a need: book keeper, software tutorials, chopped firewood, a cell phone compatible with your online address book, Martha will provide you with an annotated list of phone numbers and contacts off the top of her head, or on a particularly hectic day, in a well organized email message that will arrive an hour or so after your meeting. I had an appointment with her one day on 8<sup>th</sup> street and she ended up parked at a broken meter. Before the meeting was over, she had contacted the city on her cell phone, given them the location (and probably the serial number) of the meter, and asked them to transfer the information to the local ticketing agent to rule out all possibility of an unwarranted ticket.

As far as qualifications, Martha has 14 years of telecommunications experience and Matt has 12. Together they have worked extensively on both the technical development side (engineering, hardware and software) and on the end-user side (creating programs and systems that are easy for the non-tech person to use and understand). Matt has a degree in electrical engineering and computer science from Duke. Martha graduated from

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## Inside: Being Republican on the Hill. NEW!! Weekly Capitol Hill Calendar



Matt and Martha surveying their rooftop antennas.

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Cornell College (Iowa not Ithaca) with a joint bachelor's degree in business administration and physical education, (although from what I hear, it's Matt who'll be catapulting himself up onto your roof to install the antenna for your wireless when the time comes...more on that below). She also has a master's degree in accounting. If you're throwing a party, they're the ones who show up on time, appropriately dressed, and with the perfect hostess gift.

And when you call up DC Access to inquire about their services, you actually get to talk to Matt and Martha, the people who own and run the company. You can look 'em right in the eye and say, "OK, what are you trying to sell me? How much is it going to cost? Can you explain to me how it works?"

### What are they selling and how does it work?

Well, the truth is, and this may come as a great shock to you, I'm not a very technical person, but this is how I understand it:

DC Access is selling wireless Internet access (although they also build and maintain websites at very reasonable prices). If you buy Internet access through them, you don't need DSL or cable to log onto the Internet, and you don't need to plug anything into the wall. If you're interested, they'll come to your house and do a site survey to make sure they can provide you the service they describe at the promised speed and to make sure they can get up onto your roof, preferably through some interior access. If all that goes well, Matt climbs up there, with Martha holding the ladder if necessary (Frager's, another local gem that keeps us out of the mega stores, pockets the money for the ladder rental) and installs a tiny antenna. They then go through all the computers in your home installing nifty little \$35 (approximately) cards so that you can log on from any one of them without being plugged into any outlet.

### Purchase what you want to buy, not what somebody wants to sell you.

Now, there is a little bit more to it than that. You can purchase different speeds, for example. Most of us don't need faster than 200kbps Internet access. For those few who do, they offer business packages with speeds up to 1 Mbps. They'll design a package to meet your specific needs, and you don't have to pay for higher speeds unless you need them. And they won't lie and try to convince you that you need them if you don't because a. they're honest, as far as I can tell, and b. they're the

neighbors. They have to look you in the eye when they come out to pick up the paper in the morning.

Another reason many of you may find you prefer purchasing Internet access through DC Access is that most of the big Internet service providers are currently bundling their services: you can't have Internet unless you use their phone service, or order cable TV to go with it.

### Save our streets with the only truly high-speed option

DSL and cable Internet access rely on wired infrastructures. DSL, for example, uses the telephone system, which on some parts of the Hill is over a hundred years old, and some companies have been having trouble deploying fast reliable service as a result. For comparison, DSL upload speeds are normally 90kbps, whereas DC Access's minimum upload speed is 200kbps. As for cable, there is currently not much infrastructure in place on the Hill and installing more is expensive and requires the company to tear up the streets to lay the cable down. In addition, cable is a shared medium, which means that at two in the morning, your Internet may fly like lightning, but at dinnertime or on weekends, it may limp along weighed down by the masses.

But really the best part if it all, is that if you want to purchase, upgrade, downgrade or cancel your service, there's no recorded voice asking you to press an unholy number of buttons just to end up back at the

main menu again, no holding for hours with an ear full of country or soft jazz. You can call real people and know their names, know what they look like, know where they go to get coffee in the morning. During the last hurricane scare, Martha said Matt was up all night worrying about the antennas, and in the morning he went round and checked them all, and just one was a teensy weensy bit off kilter and he fixed it. And if you ever have some sort of a problem and can't get on line, just give 'em a call, and if they can't fix it remotely, they'll come over personally and figure out what's wrong. And that's what I call getting your money's worth.

*hatta*

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