The Open Pitt

What's cooking in Linux and Open Source in Western Pennsylvania

Hot Off the Grill...

The software releases in the past couple of months have been coming fast and furious. We devote the bulk of this month's issue to cataloging some of the most important ones.

CentOS 4.4, a community-based Linux distribution based on the source code of Red Hat Enterprise Linux, became available on August 30. In addition to bugfixes and security patches, this update includes newer versions of major applications like Firefox, Thunderbird, and Open-Office.org. `www.centos.org`

The project's second release of the year, **Gentoo Linux 2006.1** came out on August 30. A favorite of speed fanatics, it also supports a multitude of processor architectures. Notable improvements include the incorporation of the GCC 4.1 compiler and the addition of a networkless install option for x86 and AMD64 platforms. `www.gentoo.org`

The venerable Debian project produced **Debian GNU/Linux 3.1r3** on September 1. This update to the stable "sarge" release includes a number of fixes for bugs and security issues. `www.debian.org`

After many years of work, the project to create a Free Software clone of MS-DOS finally released **FreeDOS 1.0** on September 3. Those who depend on legacy DOS applications or who use it in embedded systems now have an open, maintainable platform to run on. Or you could just use it to play old Sierra On-Line games you have lying around. `www.freedos.org`

September 6 saw the availability of **GNOME 2.16**, a major desktop environment for Linux, BSD, and UNIX systems. Icons and other visual elements got a makeover, power management for laptops is better and easier, and the printing subsystem is improved. A new menu editor is included as well as a new screen reader for the visually-impaired and a handy (and powerful) new note-taking application. GNOME now has support for 54 languages. `www.gnome.org`

The **SimplyMEPIS 6.0-1 DVD** came out on September 9. While mainly an update to the 6.0 release, being packaged in DVD format means that hundreds of applications normally placed on separate "Extras" CDs can fit on a single disc. `www.mepis.org`

Those with older, less-powerful machines will appreciate the release of **DeLi Linux 0.7** on September 16. DeLi means "desktop light" and it targets 80386 through Pentium machines with 8 to 32 MB of RAM. Careful software selection and techniques like using lightweight uClibc libraries let it provide a full graphical desktop including office applications, web browser, and e-mail client in a small package. `www.delilinux.de`

Looking to compete with the other enterprise Linux distributions, **Mandriva Corporate Server 4.0** came out on September 19. One major feature is full support for OpenVZ, Xen, and VMware virtualization. A new web-based configuration tool eases installation, and better integration with Act-ive Directory and LDAP servers is promised. `www.mandriva.com`

The effort to produce an OpenSolaris-based live CD advanced with the release of **BeleniX 0.5** on September 22. Code was added to read and write foreign disk partitions, including NTFS from the Windows world and ext2 used under Linux. The Xfce desktop, Firefox browser, and Thunderbird mail client have moved to newer versions. `www.genunix.org/distributions/belenix_site/`

Zope 3.3.0, the latest stable version of the popular web application server for building content management systems, portals, and custom applications, came out on September 27. `www.zope.org/Products/Zope3`

September Roundup

Sep. 16 General User Meeting: **Patrick Wagstrom** spoke about the GNOME desktop environment. After covering its history, he described the architecture and layers that make up the environment. Patrick then demonstrated a number of GNOME applications like the Nautilus file manager and Evolution e-mail and calendar program as well as new features like Tomboy, which provides a wiki-like system of (virtual) sticky notes.

New WPLUG Officers Chosen

Five members of the Board of Directors were elected by the WPLUG membership at the October 21 Annual Meeting. They have taken the following offices:

  Chair: Patrick Wagstrom
  Vice-Chair: Vance Kochenderfer
  Secretary: Bill Moran
  Treasurer: David Ostroske
  Director-at-Large: Beth Lynn Eicher

Thanks to everyone who ran in and helped with this year's election. There are always plenty of opportunities to volunteer to keep WPLUG running, so if there's some way you'd like to help out, just post to the `<wplug-plan@wplug.org>` mailing list.

Two bylaws amendments were also adopted at the meeting; one fixing the size of the Board at five instead of using a sliding scale, and the other reducing the number of members needed at a meeting to obtain a quorum.

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On October 2, the latest arrived from the oldest existing Linux distribution in the form of **Slackware Linux 11.0**. It has up-to-date versions of the 2.4 and 2.6 kernel, the KDE 3.5.4 desktop environment, and the latest e-mail and web browsing apps from the Mozilla project. Updated management tools simplify adding, removing, upgrading, and creating Slackware packages. `slackware.com`

An independent project to put Slackware on AMD64 processor-based systems, **Slamd64 Linux 11.0** came out one day after its progenitor. `www.slamd64.com`

October 4 brought the release of another Slackware-based project for AMD64, **Bluewhite64 Linux 11.0**. `www.bluewhite64.com`

Rounding out the Slackware ports, **Slackintosh 11.0** for PPC (Macintosh) systems was released on October 8. Full 64-bit support is still considered experimental. `workaround.ch`

Mandriva Linux 2007 became available on October 2. It includes the AIGLX and Xgl 3D-accelerated desktop and a new graphical theme in addition to a full update of applications over last year's release. It is available as a typical CD or DVD installation, a minimal CD which installs over the network, or on the Mandriva One live CD which also offers installation. `www.mandriva.com`

Designed to run from a CD, DVD, or USB drive, **dyne:bolic 2.2** was released on October 7. The aim of this Linux distribution is to include all audio and video tools needed for a complete multimedia studio. The core system has been completely rebuilt for this release. `dynebolic.org`

Returning briefly to Slackware-based systems, the **SLAX 5.1.8** lightweight live CD came out October 9. It features the KDE 3.5.4 desktop and read/write support for NTFS filesystems. `www.slax.org`

Scientific Linux 4.4, another distribution based on Red Hat Enterprise Linux, also appeared October 9. It includes many statistical, modeling, and simulation programs useful in the sciences. This version features many up-

stream updates and improved wireless support. `www.scientificlinux.org`

Rolling up the latest security and bugfix updates, **SUSE Linux 10.1 "Remastered"** was issued on October 13. Intended for new installs, current SUSE 10.1 users may instead simply do an on-line update to refresh their systems. `www.opensuse.org`

Another minimalist live CD, **Puppy Linux 2.11** made its appearance on October 15 and fits a full Linux system and graphical desktop into 70 MB. It can also be run from a USB drive. `www.puppyos.com`

The much-anticipated release of the Mozilla project's **Firefox 2.0** web browser took place on October 24. It boasts protection against "phishing" scams, greater flexibility in tabbed browsing, and in-line spell checking of forms, and can make suggestions as you type in the search bar. Session Restore lets you pick up where you left off after closing the browser or a system crash, bringing back windows, tabs, and downloads you had open. There's also improved handling of RSS feeds. `www.mozilla.com/firefox/`

October 24 was a big day as the **Fedora Core 6** Linux distribution also came out. It includes a 2.6.18-based kernel, the GNOME 2.16 and KDE 3.5.4 desktop environments, and 3-D desktop effects courtesy of AIGLX and Compiz. Core improvements came in font handling, filesystem performance, and internationalization support. Some high-end features included are graphical management tools for Xen virtualization and SELinux security control as well as a tool for handling storage volumes for clusters. `fedora.redhat.com`

This was followed closely by the release of the **Fedora Core 6 Live CD/DVD**. This live-disc version is produced by the Fedora Unity project. `fedoraunity.org`

The **Ubuntu 6.10** Linux distribution, code-named "Edgy Eft," came out on October 26. It uses GNOME 2.16 and debuts Upstart, a new start-up manager which speeds booting the system. Featured applications include the F-Spot photo management tool,

the latest Firefox web browser, and an updated Evolution e-mail program. Also included is code from the Linux Terminal Server Project which eases thin client setup. `www.ubuntu.com`

The first distribution to feature KDE 3.5.5, **Kubuntu 6.10** was released the same day as its GNOME-using sibling. Along with the same core improvements, it also supports many special multimedia keys on laptops, makes file and print-sharing easier, and has better power management. The layout of system settings has been improved to simplify administration. `kubuntu.org`

Also out on October 26 was **Edubuntu 6.10**, incorporating the latest and greatest educational applications. `www.edubuntu.org`

Xubuntu 6.10 followed on October 27, using the most up-to-date Xfce 4.4 Beta 2 desktop environment. `www.xubuntu.org`