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Come to the Block Party

There's a strong FoxPro community. DevCon is the community's chance to get together.

By Tamar E. Granor, Editor

I think about community a lot. I think about it on Fall Saturdays as I stand by a soccer field talking to other parents and watching our sons and daughters play, and again on Spring evenings as I sit with the parents in the stands at the Little League field. I think about community on Back-to-School night as I watch people walking from all directions or see cars lined up for blocks to reach a school and on Election Day as I talk to my neighbors outside the polling place. I'm often grateful that I live in a place where the evidence of community is so strong.

But community doesn't come only in neighborhoods and schools. I was reminded of this when I attended a preview of the Star Trek: Federation Science exhibit displayed this fall at Philadelphia's Franklin Institute. Here were people from many facets of life, brought together for an evening by their love of Star Trek (and perhaps, of the museum itself). For that evening, we formed a community, part of the worldwide community that Star Trek has inspired.

There is a FoxPro community, too. I see evidence of it daily as I visit CompuServe's two forums devoted to FoxPro (FoxForum and FoxUser). There, I see people from around the world help each other learn the intricacies of a complex product. We also spend time just getting to know each other, kidding and joking together, sharing our varied backgrounds and arguing about every conceivable topic. I've made some very good friends there, people who make my life much richer.

User Groups are another sign of the FoxPro community. People gather to share with and learn from each other. The dozens of submissions that Drew Speedie has received for our "Tips, Tricks and Traps" column are another indication of the community spirit. Many of you are willing to share the things you've learned the hard way so others can learn them more easily.

This month brings the FoxPro community's block party—DevCon. The (nearly) annual Developer's Conference brings together FoxPro developers from around the world, along with many of the people responsible for bringing us FoxPro.

The general tone of the event is "work hard, play hard." You'll find people talking about FoxPro morning, noon, and night. At the same time, there are lots of opportunities to get to know your colleagues as people. The Programmer's Exchange is often overflowing with people sharing their latest interface tricks, completed systems, or coding problems, not to mention challenging each other to a game of Hearts or to set new records in Minesweeper. Laptops abound and you'll see them in use not just in sessions, but at the breakfast table, or even at an evening party.

This year's DevCon is especially important for those who make a living working with FoxPro. Microsoft will unveil FoxPro: The Next Generation, known more formally as Visual FoxPro 3.0 for Windows. Many of the sessions will focus on the new tools and techniques provided by Visual FoxPro. Those who attend DevCon will have a jump start in developing applications with Visual FoxPro.

I've heard complaints about the cost of DevCon. There's no question that it's an expensive trip by the time you pay for the conference, air fare and hotel (most meals are included in the conference fee). However, you also have to evaluate the benefits. I've never failed to come back from DevCon with new ideas, new prospects for earning some money, and with my FoxPro batteries recharged (though my personal ones tend to need a few good nights' sleep when I get back).

If you haven't made up your mind yet, time is getting short. This year's DevCon is January 16-19 at San Diego's Convention Center. Call (800)MFOXPRO for information or registration.

Lots of our FoxPro Advisor authors will be there, many of them as speakers. I'll be speaking, too. Be sure to say "hi".

What's a Form?

We continue to prepare for Visual FoxPro in this issue. Paul Bienick's article introduces some of the key concepts in designing screens (now called "forms"), using Visual Basic as an example. Paul's explanations should serve us all well when Visual FoxPro arrives on our desks.

Down the Road

Microsoft has made it clear that the Windows version of Visual FoxPro will be released first. We're planning the future of FoxPro Advisor with this in mind. We know that many of you will continue to work in FoxPro 2.x for DOS, Mac and Unix (and probably Windows, too) for quite some time. So, even as we begin to cover Visual FoxPro, you'll still find lots of coverage of FoxPro 2.x. We'll continue to cover FoxPro 2.x as long as we sense that it's still a vital piece of the FoxPro picture. At the same time, we'll give you plenty of information on Visual FoxPro.