

# CUE

# Horizons

*Expanding your Computing Experience*

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## Next Meeting

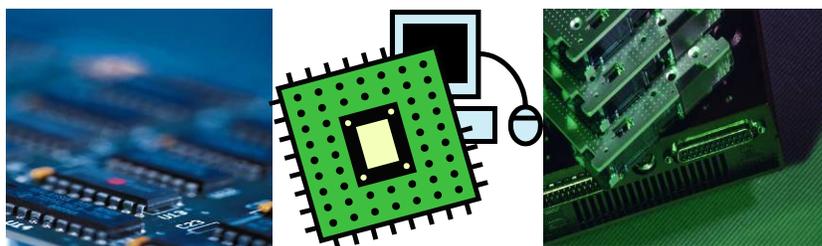
*June 21, 2007*

## Swap Meet / Auction

Do you have older, no longer used computer equipment and software laying around the house, taking up space? If you are like most of the usual computer-hobbyist type, the answer is most likely YES.

If you have such items taking up space, why not clean them out and up, and bring them to the June meeting? You may be able to sell or swap them for something you need that someone else has. Or simply make some spending money from them.

CUE will be holding a swap meet and auction to help members do some spring cleaning. Bring in what you have, and see how they go!!



*7 pm, Holy Rosary School*

## Software Review—AKVIS Enhancer

By Mark Mattson, Computer Users of Erie

*Ed. Note: While reloading the computer this newsletter is produced on (from the hard drive failure I mentioned earlier in this issue), I ran across this item awaiting review for a while now. I apologize to our friends at AKVIS for the delay in getting it to them.*

How many times have you found yourself facing the situation of having to deal with an under- or over-exposed photo? If you are like many of us, it can happen all-to frequently. If you base your exposure on a facial area, the background can (depending on the scene and lighting conditions) either burn out, losing all detail, or become too dark (under-exposed) to make out any detail of the setting of the photo.

An example of such a photo is below:

The room this was taken in was dimly



lit, so background lighting was a problem, especially due to the large expanse of white on the table. This tended to make the exposure biased more towards the table, and under-exposed the background.

One possible solution to this photo's problems would be to create a layer mask, then apply an adjustment layer to correct the brightness and contrast of the background. However, to create the mask would take some time, due to the complex path that would need to be traced around the table and the elements associated with it (those that would NOT need any adjustments made to them).

If you're a purist, and love working almost exclusively within the limits of

your image editor software, that is fine. But, if time is a limitation, and you want to get the task out of the way in a fast, but useful manner, there IS an alternative.

AKVIS LLC has a nice little plug-in that will do some amazing things with your photos that may have been relegated to the 'throw-away' file before.

Known as AKVIS Enhancer, this plug-in is now at v6. Besides bug fixes, v6 makes the plug-in Windows Vista compatible, and it works with all versions of Photoshop from v5 upwards. If you use Photoshop Elements, it works from v1 onwards. (There is a compatibility chart on the AKVIS website you can refer to for other image editors).

How does it work? From the information released by the developers, it uses an algorithm to examine every pixel in your image, comparing them to adjacent ones, calculating new values for brightness and contrast wherever needed. If a pixel appears to have a high level of brightness, it leaves it alone. If it appears to be a dark area, it applies an adjustment to that pixel to increase the brightness.

This process is done for every element of your image.

The interface gives you adjustment sliders, allowing you to fine-tune the effect of the corrections (see top of next column). There are sliders allowing you to adjust the shadow and highlight areas, as well as the amount of lightness to the scene and the level of correction. As you will see in the image at the lower right of this page, it can make some nice improvements in an image.

One note, however: be careful on the amount of



correction you apply to an image. The plug-in, by default, gives you what IT thinks is a good corrected photo. You may accept what it gives you, or override the settings and apply even ore correction. BUT, if you go too far, you risk adding digital noise to the image, introducing a whole new problem to fix.

Installation is straight-forwards; run the installer, and it sets up the needed folder, and shows as a plug-in in your image editor. Operation is just as easy...only a few sliders to worry about.

AKVIS has a wide range of plug-ins for photo editing. Enhancer lists for \$69, and is available direct from the website at <http://akvis.com>. Both Windows and Mac versions are available.

Why not give Enhancer a try? It may wind up saving you hours of aggravation, as well as some images you truly hate to lose.

