focus on TECH

WinPatrol 2009, Tripp Lite in the news

By Art Snyder

Summer is here, and that means perhaps a bit more time on your hands to indulge yourself in the digital realm — upgrade your computer system, add new software, check out the other possibilities that can ensure a productive use of the warm-weather months. That's in store for you with **WinPatrol 2009**, new **Tripp Lite** devices and promising fare from **Iomega** and others. Better still: Many of these summer draws are free. Details are below.

WinPatrol 2009

"Scotty is on patrol," and that's good news for you when you're using your rink computer. Scotty is billed as the "**Windows Watchdog**," the logo of **WinPatrol 2009**. This software is a fantastic, full-featured **Windows** utility

Windows watchdog, Scotty

that safeguards your computer's operation and monitors all electronic access and traffic as you open and close programs, folders and files, as well as go on the Internet to get e-mail, check your rink Web site, pay bills or send your newsletter to subscribers. That might seem like a lot to ask of this security software — it's *free*, too, and installs in minutes — but **WinPatrol** is a mature program developed 10 years ago by Bill Pytlovany, one of the pioneering software developers behind **AOL** and **Microsoft Windows XP Media Center Edition**. **WinPatrol 2009** is the latest version of the utility, and while it offers a host of monitoring features and other benefits to protect your system from malware and other malicious activity, perhaps the best **WinPatrol 2009** feature is its real-time analysis of everything going on behind the scenes with your computer's critical settings and operations. *Nothing* gets changed, altered, deleted or added without **WinPatrol 2009** knowing all about it and either silently approving modifications or quickly alerting you to potential

trouble. Another plus with this robust program is its surprisingly small digital footprint. It takes up little space on your hard drive, and an icon — yes, **Scotty the Windows Watchdog** — rests in the lower-right part of your taskbar, for quick access to **WinPatrol 2009** features. The software is a quick download at winpatrol.com and can be used with **Windows XP**, **Vista** and **Windows 7**. Most highly recommended!

Tripp Lite POS500, SMART-1000LCD UPS systems

Whenever you boot up your computer or operate any other sensitive digital electronic device in your rink office, one rule is paramount: *Safety pays*. That means you need to protect sensitive equipment during its use, and you need a margin of safety. The new, pacesetting **Tripp Lite POS500** standby UPS system and the **Tripp Lite SMART1000LCD** line interactive UPS system do that, with seeming confidence and ease. Long synonymous with the safety of electronic equipment, **Tripp Lite** offers the **POS500** with the promise of surge suppression of electrical current, to protect your computer, monitor, telephone, fax and other devices connected to it. With the **POS500** plugged into any nearby electrical outlet, the unit provides a buffer for the current flowing through it to your computer and other devices plugged into the **POS500**. The advanced circuitry also manages the uniformity of the current, to moderate any spikes, surges and brownouts that are so common today. The **POS500** has three

Tripp Lite Smart 1000LCD

battery-supported outlets that your computer, monitor and one other peripheral can use, for protection when your rink loses electrical service, so you can save data and power down the right way. Three more surge suppression-only outlets are for use with your printer and other items that don't need battery support. Also, the **POS500** has connections for your tele-

phone line, for added safety and peace of mind. Note that you can employ the **POS500** elsewhere in your rink, too, since its 500VA/300W power-handling capacity permits use of point-of-sale equipment in your foodservice, redemption and other areas, besides handling rink telephone lines at those locations. A two-year warranty and $150,000 connected-equipment insurance are standard with the **POS500**. Similarly, the **Tripp Lite SMART1000LCD** line-interactive UPS system offers heavy-duty support, with much longer battery-backup run-time, eight power outlets and higher-capacity power-handling capacity, among other features. Both **Tripp Lite** units work with **Windows** and **Mac** systems alike, and you can install them in mere minutes. The **Tripp Lite POS500** typically retails for about $100, and the **SMART1000LCD** is $145 (suggested list prices are higher). In my experience, these modest amounts are good investments in digital safety in the office, and my tests of these **Tripp Lite** units have been very positive.

News in brief

•**Iomega® eGo™ Encrypt Portable Hard Drive**: Traveling has gotten easier with this ruggedly built external hard drive that helps keep your files secure through encryption. The drive is available in an array of sizes (and priced accordingly) and connects via any USB 2.0 port. Prices everywhere for these handy-sized drives have been in freefall, so now's the time to get that all-important backup drive. The **Iomega® eGo™** is one of the finest.

•**TechBite Technology**: One of the best and most authoritative weekly tech newsletters is **TechBite Technology**. Authored by Steve Bass, a longtime *PC World* contributor, the newsletter provides worthy information to keep you abreast of digital doings, and signup is free and easy. Go to techbite.com to complete the deal.

• **HP PhotoSmart B8550 Printer**: From photos to documents, this new inkjet printer can work with media sizes from 4 by 6 inches on up to 13 by 19 inches, perfect for eye-catching rink signage. The **B8550** connects to any modern computer system and is easy to use, for all your rink needs. The printer seems as reliable and durable as other inkjets from this company that's noted for such trusted devices. Output, from speedy, crisp text to photo-brilliant imagery, is tops. At about $250, the **PhotoSmart B8550** is highly recommended for rinks with strong printing demands.

•**Windows 7**: The next version of the

operating system from **Microsoft** is set to be available this autumn, so keep that in mind with your capital expenses in the last quarter of the year and any such planning for 2010. As a longtime user of **Windows XP**, I've had a chance to evaluate **Windows 7**, and these pre-release versions of this operating system suggest that it's a worthy candidate to replace **XP**. The most recent beta versions of **Windows 7** are pleasantly stable and evolved, and it's good news not to have to face **Windows Vista** complaints much longer.

•**Photoshop Elements 7**: Clearly one of the most powerful, versatile software products for graphics editing is **Photoshop Elements**, from **Adobe**. The latest version of **Photoshop Elements** is out, and it has more bells and whistles than a Rose Bowl parade. Whether you need to tweak your rink logo or freshen the colors in a photograph or other graphic you want to insert in your rink advertising or media release, for example, you'll be able to do it quickly with this software. Be advised, though, that the learning curve can be a bit steeper with this brawny graphics software, but that should be expected. But once you learn it, you'll be set for years. I myself have tested new versions of **Photoshop Elements**, but I have happily used a version of the program that I got five years ago, and it continues to be more than even I might ever need. At a discounted "street" price of around $80, the **Photoshop Elements** investment has been and continues to be excellent.

•**Internet Explorer 8.0, Firefox 3.5**: The most recent Web browsers from **Microsoft** and **Firefox** have been released, and both are full-featured, substantial programs that will comfortably and competently do their everyday tasks that your rink requires for successful operation. I'll leave the carping over **Internet Explorer** to others, as **Microsoft** has done a fine job with this version at executing a stable, highly secure browser that's withstood a ton of nitpicking. It does its job well, and if you think of a browser as only a tool to access the Internet, then use it as you please. With **Firefox 3.5**, the story is similar in that the browser has withstood every fine-tooth comb in the land, and it's been superb. Its best feature is no secret: Unlike **Internet Explorer**, **Firefox 3.5** allows you to use any of literally more than *20,000* add-ons and other software enhancements and modifications, for nearly total customization. It's fantastic, thus, and that's why it's my choice for everyday browser. But if you're not a tech enthusiast, go with either browser and be happy with the preference. To download the browsers, go to Microsoft.com and Firefox.com.

Art Snyder is a longtime RINK-SIDER contributor. He lives in Centerville, Ohio, and has used computers and technology since 1986.