What is Linux?

The Western Pennsylvania Linux Users' Group

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Linux is a free, open-sourced, multiuser multitasking operating system. It was developed by a team of programmers from around the world. The Western Pennsylvania Linux User's Group supports the continued use of Linux not only in Pittsburgh, but in all of Western Pennsylvania. We believe that Linux is the wave of the future, and we are dedicated to helping users of all backgrounds and skill levels become proficient in whatever they choose to do with Linux. Membership is free, and joining our E-Mail list carries no obligation with it. Lurk around, or become an active poster!

One of the things that makes Linux and many of its applications so powerful is that fact that they are under some type of open-source license. Broadly, such licenses allow anyone to see the source code of a program. The GNU General Public License, which Linux is under (as well as many other pieces of code) makes developers release any modified code from a program under the GPL. This means that the entire community of developers can help increase the number of features, the speed, and the stability of programs that are open-sourced at an amazing pace. Some of these applications, such as Apache, are discussed below.

Linux supports a wide variety of users and their needs. For example, someone coming from a Windows-based background might feel at home with one of the desktop environments available for Linux. If an office suite is needed, Sun StarOffice 5 may do the trick. On the other end of the spectrum, Linux should be a perfect fit to those with a UNIX background. Nearly all familiar UNIX tools are available, and all of the GNU programs have been ported.

Another important item for Linux is its use as a server. Apache, the most widely-used server on the internet, is available free of charge under an open-source license, as are FTP, Telnet, and a wide variety of other daemons. Linux can power anything from a small home network to a massive corporate one.

As you explore the world of Linux today, be sure to check out the different demos running on the various machines. No matter if you're a techie, CEO, or a high-school student; Linux has something to offer. If we can be of help to you today, feel free to ask.

- wplug: http://www.wplug.org/

- Red Hat Linux: http://www.redhat.com/

- Debian Linux: http://www.debian.org/

- Slackware Linux: http://www.slackware.com/

- Freshmeat, a page dedicated to announcing new Linux software and events: http://www.freshmeat.net/

- Slashdot (News for Nerds; Stuff that Matters): http://www.slashdot.org/