



from your Executive Director

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TOI Executive Director

Get Computer Savvy!

ALL OF US PROBABLY KNOW IT. It seems like today you can do just about everything with a computer. In fact, most of the time you can do about any task with a computer or through an internet website. From paying bills to reading the daily newspaper, computers and the internet are making our lives a little simpler.

I know there are people who say that reliance on computers and the internet is risky and dangerous. I do know there can be some serious problems associated with computer/internet usage, such as identity theft, and they can be frustrating at times, but for the most part, their usage speeds things up and makes our lives a little easier.

There probably isn't a day that goes by that we don't hear something mentioned about the internet. With almost 275 million internet users in the United States alone, you can tell that internet usage is encompassing many people.

In fact, I know of people of all ages who use their computer (and now even smart phones) and the internet not only for pleasure, but also for research, doing personal banking, and making airline reservations. My two daughters, ages 16 and 13, no longer have schoolbooks but instead have a laptop to use at school and home. My daughters started "using" a computer when they were both about 20 months old and have developed their computer skills ever since. My 85-year-old father uses the computer and internet regularly now too, even though he gets frustrated quite frequently! He knows, however, that he can do almost anything and can read his favorite papers every day!

I have been involved with township government for 34 years, and when I first started computers were mostly unheard of. In fact, if you had asked me just a few years ago, I would have said that very few townships use computers. Today, more and more township officials, both rural and urban, are using computers and the internet in the daily performance of their township duties.

To help in that regard, TOI has had a website (www.toi.org) since June 1998. If you haven't visited our site, give it a quick look. Our download center on our website offers lots of helpful information including

"sample" forms, notices, and helpful links. The best part about it is that you can download and print everything out, and it's free!

More and more townships are setting up websites. In fact, as you will read about elsewhere in the magazine, TOI has a web program to help you build a website for your township. Take some time to learn about the TOI web program if you don't have a website and are interested in having one for your township.

I myself am amazed at some of the great information provided on township websites all over the state. Seeing all the township websites out there proves to me that as technology changes, township officials are faced with new challenges in communication. Having a township website allows your residents 24-hours-a-day access to your township's information. A website is a very effective means of communication. If you are interested, surf on over to TOI's website and check out the links that will take you to all the township websites in the state. I'm sure you will find it very interesting.

Township officials, whether rural or urban, need to explore the use of the internet and a website. It's something that's not expensive and the benefits to your residents and your township are many.

I challenge everyone of you, if you haven't already, to explore the endless possibilities of internet use and a township website for your township. Take a look at other township websites and if you don't have one, consider starting one for your township using the TOI Website Program. All it takes is a few clicks, and I guarantee you won't be disappointed!