Newsletter #29 (Feb 4, 2008)

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What's New

The Newbie Club

While this isn't related to Campground Master, it may be a useful resource for those of you who aren't computer experts (do I see a couple hands out there?).

This site has numerous free resources to help people learn about using their computer, from Windows basics to useful tips for seasoned users. Get free e-books, a free newsletter, a users forum and more. Just go to this web page:

http://www.newbieclub.com

Our mailing address has changed

Please make a note of our new mailing address:

P.O. Box 657
Litchfield Park, AZ 85340-0657

If you have our printed manual, you may want to write the new address in Chapter 1, under "If you need assistance", as well as on our business card.

Our phone numbers and E-mail address will not change.

Q & A

Cashing a customer's check

Q: When a customer comes in to buy quarters to use for laundry and they pay for the quarters with a check, how do we put the check in the computer so the Receipts by Payment Method comes out right to balance the cash drawer?

A: Go into Unbound Transactions (from the Transaction menu), enter a Payment with Check as the payment method, and then enter a Refund with Cash as the payment method.

Note that this method could also be used for exchanging currency, e.g. if you had separate Payment methods for Cash/US and Cash/Canadian. You could even do it within a person's reservation along with their other transactions.

Recording a customer's credit card

Q: Where can I put customers' credit card information for future reference? I want it to be secure, not just in the notes.

A: You can put the credit card in the "Guarantee Info". It will prompt for credit card information when you Guarantee a reservation. Another way to enter it is to click the "..." button at the right side of the Guarantee info line on either Reservation Details or Customer Details. As long as you're entering the information in the specifically designated fields for credit card number, expiration date, etc, then the information is stored securely (encrypted) in the database. Also in version 4.2 and later, the number will be hidden on the screen from operators that don't have Administrator access.

Entering credit card security codes

Q: On the Credit Card input screen, can a field be added for the CVV Code? It is required by our processing company.

A: The CVV credit card field can be enabled in Maintenance / Credit Card Processing Setup. Even if you're not using the processing features, you can enable that input field.

Moving the database to public documents

Q: After I upgraded to Windows Vista, Campground Master shows this message when I start up: "The data base you're opening seems to be in a location that some users of this computer may not be able to access, and you may have trouble writing to it your self. Would you like to copy to public documents ?" It doesn't sound safe, so should I do this?

Yes, you should tell it to move the database to Public Documents. This is just the name of a folder on your computer, and it's only public in the sense that other users that log in to your computer can access it (unless of course you've specifically set it to be a shared folder on your network). It doesn't mean that the data is accessible to the world. Under Vista's new ultra-strict protections, the database must be located in Public Documents or else Campground Master won't be able to write changes to it.

Note: If it doesn't ask this when you start up, then you can also go to Maintenance / Database Maintenance and select the option to "Move the database...".

Changing the First Night after check-in

Q: I accidentally checked in someone with the wrong First Night, and now it won't let me change it. How do I fix it?

A: It disables the First Night for checked-in reservations to help guard against accidental changes. To change it, you just need to undo the check-in by clicking on the "Pending" box in the upper right Status area. Then after fixing the date, click on "Checked in" to check them back in. Be sure to answer the prompts carefully if it asks which date you want them checked in.

Adding options like 50A to New Reservation

Q: In the demo database there's a checkbox for "50A" on the New Reservation window. How can I add that to mine, as well as other options?

A: Up to 5 checkboxes like this can be added to New Reservation dialog, which are associated with the Preferences as well as the Site Attributes. For instance, the 50A checkbox in the demo not only tells it to allow only sites that have 50A (according to the Attributes defined in Sites Setup), it also flags the 50A Preference in the Reservation as a "Must Have". This allows auto-rates to calculate any additional cost for that option, according to your Rates setup.

To add those checkbox options, go to Maintenance / Program Options / Reservations. You'll see 5 drop-down lists for Quick-select preferences. You can select the desired Reservation preference field in each of the 5 lists, and they will be shown as options on New Reservation.

Note that you can only select fields here that are yes/no or must-have/must-not-have preference fields, which are also known as "Attribute" or "Attrib_" fields. These are configured in Data Field Definitions, so if you don't see one you want to use then you can enable it through Maintenance / Data Field Definitions / Reservation Fields. You can also rename attribute fields -- for instance if you need one for "trash service", then you could rename one that you don't use, like "20A". Also note that you may want to enable or create matching fields under the Site Fields (being careful to use the field with a matching "Attrib_" Field ID). This will allow you to specify which sites have the option available.

Deleting old Operators

Q: What would happen if I deleted operators that are no longer working here? Would this affect the past transactions that were completed by them?

A: It is perfectly safe to delete operators (as long as you don't delete the wrong ones, of course). Unlike most other situations in Campground Master, transaction records aren't linked to the operator -- it only saves the operator's code as text. This was specifically done knowing that operators come and go, so the operator tag on a transaction can't change or get deleted if operators are changed or deleted.

Tips & Techniques

Making a new reservation that moves during the stay

If your park is close to full, you may run into situations where someone wants to stay longer than you have a single site available for, however you could accommodate them if they moved to another site during their stay. Since you need to do this when creating the reservation, using the normal split/move method after creating it won't work because no site is available for the whole duration. What you need to do is create it as linked "sub-member" reservations to begin with.

Lets say they need site 1 for 9/25 to 9/27, then site 3 for 9/28 to 9/30.

1. In New Reservation, first just select the 9/25 to 9/27 dates, then select site 1 as you normally would (e.g.

quick-pick or double-click on the site in the grid).

2. Next, check the box "Sub-member of" below the grid. That means the next selection will be a sub-member of the first one.

3. Now change the First and Last nights for the 2nd part -- 9/28 to 9/30, and select site 3 as a new site. Note that since "Sub-member of" was checked, changing the dates does not affect the first part of the reservation. Now you should see both sites selected (on the grid and in the "Selected Sites" list), on the corresponding dates.

You can continue this process for as many parts as you need to -- just be sure to re-check "Sub-member of" each time before changing the dates for the new portion, or else it will be modifying the dates of last, or selected, site.

Once you have all of the parts added, just finish the reservation like you normally would.

Automatic logout after 10 minutes, revisited

We're often asked about adding a feature that will automatically log out the last operator if the computer is inactive for a period of time. In version 4.0 and later, this can be done by adding a simple Event Action. This example will log out after 10 minutes, but you can change the time by altering the number of seconds in the function.

(This was covered in the last newsletter, but a number of our users asked if they could also have it re-open the log-in dialog automatically. So this example adds that feature.)

1. To add this feature, go to Maintenance / Advanced Customizations / Event Actions.

2. Click Add Event Action.

3. Enter an Action Name, like "Log out after 10 minutes".

4. For the Event Trigger, select "Each Minute".

5. For the Condition, enter the following (all in one line -- if this shows it as multiple lines, enter it continuously without pressing Enter).

```
CurrentOpLevel() > 0 AND !IsAnyDialogOpen() AND (SecondsInDate() -
SecondsInDate(TimeOfLastInput())) > 600
```

What this does is make sure someone is already logged in, no dialogs are currently open, and it has been 600 seconds or more since the last time any mouse movement or key pressed.

6. For the Action expression, enter:

```
Eval(Logout(),MenuCommand(32830))
```

The Eval() function is used because we want to execute a series of expressions (functions in this case), rather than just one. The Logout() function simply logs out the current user, and the MenuCommand() function executes a command from the menus as if the user clicked on it -- in this case, the "Log In/Out" command.

Note that MenuCommand() requires a numeric command value. To find the value for a particular command, you can go into "Insert Expression Element" from any expression editing window, select Fixed List Values, and then select Menu Command Values. When you select a menu command from the right-most list, the numeric value will be shown in a box below the lists.

7. Click Save, then Close to exit Event Actions Setup.

Note that since this event is only checked each minute, the actual inactivity delay may be anywhere from 10 to 11 minutes. You could make it trigger each second, but that would result in more overhead than necessary for something that doesn't need to be so precise.

Coloring the Rack dates for holidays

With version 4.0 or later, you can create a custom color scheme to change the colors of the date headers on the Rack. This can be used to highlight holidays or other special events. You can also create a scheme to color those dates for empty sites, similar to the way weekends are normally shaded in a darker color.

There is a sample color scheme that already does this, which you can import from the Color Schemes Setup. This can save a little work if you like, but you still need to edit the dates used in the conditions and set the colors the way you want. See the Color Scheme documentation for details on importing. Note that you would also need to use Select Global Color Schemes as shown in step 6 below to enable the imported scheme(s) to be used on the Rack.

To create the scheme from scratch and select it for use on the date headings, follow these steps:

1. Go to Maintenance / Advanced Customizations / Color Schemes.

2. Click "Add scheme definition", and give it a name like "Rack dates, holidays". Note that only one Color Scheme can be used to override the rack date headings, so if you have multiple holidays or other reasons to change the date colors, etc. then the rules for all of them need to be defined in this one scheme.

3. Make sure the Default scheme is "None".

4. Click "Add Color Rule", and give it a name. This is what will show in the Color Key for this color. Lets make this one "July 4th weekend".

5. Define the text and background colors you want using the "Change Text Color" and "Change Background Color" buttons.

6. Define the rule condition using an Expression, which must have a boolean result. If it's True, then this color will be used. If it's False, then it will continue on and check the next rule, and so forth. If no rules are satisfied, then the default color is used (so we don't have to create a rule for that).

The context function ThisDate() is used for the date of interest (each column's date). We just need to compare it to the special dates we want this color, using the syntax or boolean expressions. In particular, when comparing multiple dates we need to use "OR" operators so it's true if any one of the dates matches. So if the dates to color are July 4th thru the 6th of 2008, the expression for this condition would be:

```
ThisDate() = {7/4/08} OR ThisDate() = {7/5/08} OR ThisDate() = {7/5/08}
```

Note that it's curly braces around the dates, not parenthesis -- that's the format used to enter date values.

7. Save that rule.

8. Now we need to continue adding other rules to cover any other dates we want to change colors for, so repeat steps 4 through 7 as needed, just changing the name of the rule and the dates as needed. Any number of dates can be checked in a single rule, just keep repeating the sequence as needed.

9. Once the scheme has all the rules and you Save it, there's one more thing you need to do -- make this scheme the default for date headings. Go to Maintenance / Advanced Customizations / Select Global Color Schemes, and select the scheme you just created in the drop-down list after "Override Dates headings with

color scheme:".

Now your new colors should be used on date headings of the Rack.

If you want to also color all of the empty sites on those dates, you need to create another scheme, and select it for the default for open sites:

1. Go to Maintenance / Advanced Customizations / Color Schemes.

2. Click "Add scheme definition", and give it a name like "Rack open sites, holidays". (As before, you need to use a single scheme for all open-site rules.)

3. Make sure the Default scheme is "Open Sites (Rack)".

4. Click "Add Color Rule", and give it a name. Lets make this one "July 4th weekend" to match the previous one.

5. Define the text and background colors you want using the "Change Text Color" and "Change Background Color" buttons.

6. The Color Rule Condition Expression will be slightly different for this scheme, because we only want to use this color if the site is available (not marked as unavailable). We can use the ColorStatusSite() function to get the status, and make sure it's not unavailable in addition to checking the dates:

```
ColorStatusSite(ThisSite(), ThisDate(), ThisPeriod()) != 9
AND (ThisDate() = {7/4/08} OR ThisDate() = {7/5/08} OR ThisDate() = {7/5/08})
```

The expression is broken into 2 or more lines for readability here, but it must be continuous (no line breaks) when you enter it.

Note that you have to use AND between that function and the dates checking, which also means there must be parenthesis around the rest of the condition to make sure the OR operators are treated properly.

7. Save that rule.

8. Now we need to continue adding other rules to cover any other dates we want to change colors for, so repeat steps 4 through 7 as needed.

9. Once the scheme has all the rules and you Save it, there's one more thing you need to do -- make this scheme the default for open sites. Go to Maintenance / Advanced Customizations / Select Global Color Schemes, and select the scheme you just created in the drop-down list after "Override empty sites with color scheme:".

Now your new colors should be used on empty sites of the Rack.