Getting Involved

System Administration Decal
Lecture #7
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Last time...

- Yeah, the last intermediate lecture was so long ago a recap isn't even worth it.

Why get involved?

- Volunteer work: Gives you a warm fuzzy feeling doing something nice for free.

- Project engineering: Very similar to real software development cycles

- Development tasks exercise your Linux skills, and you learn new things from the experts.

My involvement

- Aug 2002: My friends get me to install Debian 3.0 on my laptop.

- Oct 2002: I upgrade to the developer "unstable" distribution.

- Dec 2002: First post on Linux Kernel Mailing List about my ATI Radeon card

- Jan 2003: First Debian bug filed (#175398)

My involvement

- Feb 2003: Signed up to enter the Debian New Maintainer process

- Mar 2003: Uploaded first Debian package, "ircd-hybrid"

- Oct 2003: Debian Account Manager calls me to make sure I'm not a skript kiddie

- Feb 2004: joshk@debian.org created

What I learned

- Makefile syntax from maintaining packages

- C, shell, and Perl while rewriting Debian Installer's network configuration tool.

- Source management using CVS/SVN/Arch/git for various projects

- The importance of writing succinct and unambiguous writeups for bug reports/lists etc. (In other words: E190 is important!)

What you can do

- Adopt an unmaintained software project
- Find a problem in a maintained project and submit a patch for it to developers (or at least file a coherent bug)
- Apply to get involved with a *nix distribution project (Debian, FreeBSD, Ubuntu, Fedora)
- Help Linux newbies on forums
- Become an OCF staffer

What you can do

- Helping out isn't limited to technical endeavors!
- Translate program UI text into different languages
- Help triage bugs (talk to users and make sure they are filing unique bugs, and that it's the software's fault and not theirs.)

Useful Links

- Unmaintained Free Software: http://unmaintained.crazy-hacks.org
- Debian WNPP: http://bugs.debian.org/wnpp
- All major Linux distros have a 'Contribute' or 'Community' page on their website!
- How to Ask Questions the Smart Way: http://catb.org/~esr/faqs/smart-questions.html

Other Perks

- I was sponsored to go to a Debian conference in Helsinki! They like beer.

Other Perks

- Linux hackers also look goofy in photographs

Conclusion

There is no better way to learn the ins and outs of Linux and open source than to get involved with making it happen.

Also they might give you beer for it.