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GLUCOSE, WIRELESS CHAT FOR LOCAL COMMUNITIES

By Noah Shibley

As the technologies of electronic communications and entertainment are on the incline, conversely social interaction and community have been on the decline. Particularly on the decline are interactions among people in local communities such as apartment buildings and neighborhoods. The one type of community that is an exception to this trend and has seen a lot of recent growth are online communities. In following with these trends this project uses the electronic medium of a chat-room which allows people to use the communication tools they are becoming more comfortable with, in order to build relationships in their local community. By combining a wireless local area network with a chat-room interface the usually anonymous users of the network are brought together into a communal social space . While the users of the network can choose whether or not they want to participate in discussion in the chat-room, their presences on the network can be seen by all the other users. This creates the physical analogy of sitting together in a room, with some people participating in a conversation and other people keeping to themselves. In addition to this, the use of mesh networking will allow local networks to spread geographically. Each new wireless router connected to the network will create a new chat room that any user on the network can join. This provides a means for people in an increasingly large local area to interact and possibly get to know one another. The project also allows for the owner of the wireless network to easily control the usage of their network both through technical and social solutions. Personalizing the network by transforming it into a social environment creates a situation where people are less likely to abuse the resource provided by that individual. Supplying a way to see who is using your network and the ability to talk to them, allows for "stealing" wireless to become "borrowing" wireless. User testing of the prototype has shown significant promise in building community among neighbors. Based on these results, deploying this project into a potential community environment such as a large apartment building, could eventually foster a strong sense of community among the occupants.

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