ArcBITS Newsletter

ArcSys Hot Tip
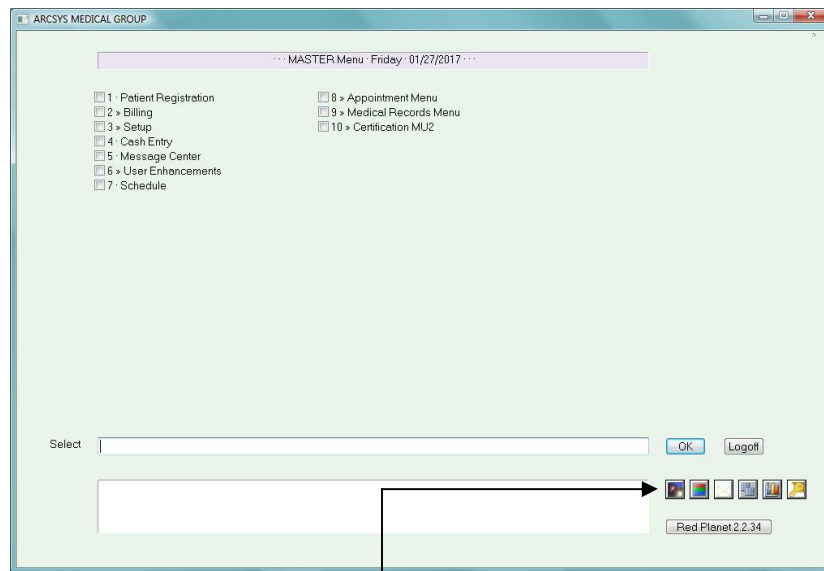
Here are the magic dates mentioned in the article:
Jan 1-5
Jan 21
Feb 2
Feb 12-14
Mar 15-17
Apr 1-3
Apr 7
Apr 15
Apr 27
May 1-3,
May 11-14
Jun 1-3
Jul 1-7
Aug 1-3
Sep 2-4
Sep 26-30
Oct 23-31
Nov 11
Nov 20-22
Dec 15-25, and your birthday! Take a guess at which dates match which icons.

Egg Hunt

Long before smart phones, the clever programmers who developed the Palm, embedded what is known as an Easter Egg on the hand-held device. The egg was invoked by drawing (with the stylus) a counter-clockwise circle in the lower right part of the screen. Sometime, later in the day, you would suddenly see a yellow taxi bounce across the screen. It would totally catch you off guard and actually make you smile or even chuckle. Obviously, programmers had too much time on their hands.

With that being said, let's see what this has to do with the Red Planet menu.

The first icon is the Red Planet logo. On specific days throughout the year, this icon will change to something like a Valentine, Tweetie Pie or Frosty. If you notice the icon has changed, click it to receive a message. Some messages will make you smile. Some will make you think. Click again for another message. (If you have entered your birthday in the Message Center, you will see a cake icon on your special day.)

Now, for the Egg Hunt part: Each Red Planet site gets loaded with a random number from 1 to 99 each month. If your click matches the random number, you are entered into a drawing. In December the Red Planet Martians draw from these entries and one person will win a $100 gift card to Amazon. Serious. Each user has only one chance for the whole year and must be a current employee at the site. Each site will have at most 12 different entrants. Oh, by the way, rapid repeated clicks won't improve your chances.

In years past, Valentines Day has been the most popular. (Hopeless romantics, we are.) Sit back, wait for the special event icon to appear, and don't forget to click!

More Menu Features

In addition the Red Planet icon, the other buttons perform additional features and functions.

The *rainbow* icon is used for changing your color scheme, window size and type of grid display. There are a total of 23 color schemes with a combined total of 239 color variations. The colors are meant to complement each other. Each color variation has 3 components that are used for the background (A), field (B) and banner (C). You can choose which of these three components are assigned to each by entering a choice of CBA, ACB, BCA, for example.

Additionally, you can select the font used for displaying the Red Planet screens. The normal font is a 10pt. This means that if your monitor is 27 inches (23 x 13), the Red Planet screen is about 13 x 8 inches. A 12pt font makes the screen 14 x 11 and a 14pt becomes 17 x 13. You basically decide how much of your physical screen you want Red Planet to cover. If you like to see things "big", try the 12pt or 14pt fonts. It is always easy to revert to a smaller size. The 8 pt is primarily intended for low resolution laptops.

Grid style is a Yes or No proposition. Some people like the grid style and others prefer the older style. The new grid style allows for more data to be displayed as well as having multiple colors in separate columns. You'll have to try it and see.

The *envelope* icon allows quick access to the message center. This utility is a great way to do inter-office communication but does require a new "culture" to be established.

The *dual-screen* icon allows you to launch another session of Red Planet. This is one of those good news/bad news things. The good news is that you can have totally independent sessions running. The bad news is that it does consume a Mvbase license. If your site has a limited number of licenses, this could block out other people from being able to log in. You can, of course, get more licenses, but there is a cost. Experience has shown that while we think we can manage multiple tasks, we don't. You have two sessions open, you work in one, dabble in the second and after a long period of time one of the sessions auto-closes because it just wasn't being used. But if your job requires you to cover scheduling and billing, for instance, having two sessions open becomes handy. It is easy to alt-Tab between each.

There is a solution to having multiple sessions but only consuming one license. This requires the installation of the Mvbase Workstation on a pc. The Wintegrate session is reconfigured to communicate with the Mvbase Workstation which is now configured to communicate with the server. This way the server only sees one license being used. The downside is remembering to restart Mvbase Workstation if you ever shut down your computer. If you think you're up for this, contact us and we can assist in getting it installed.

The *bar chart* icon gives you access to tools that show what's going on. **Screens in use** will show you which users are using which screens. It also shows which screens are being used by which users. (You'll have to see it to get it.) **Logon history** shows who has been logged on and for how long for a given date. It looks best if you are configured for "grid" mode as described under colors. **Data entry use** shows a grid of which files are updated by time. It's a handy of way knowing what time of day peak activities take place. Maybe appointments occur from 10 to 11 and 3 to 4. You'll get an idea of where extra people may be needed. **What did I change** allows you to see what files you've been updating. Sometimes this is handy when you just can't remember who/what you were fiddling with a couple of hours ago. Super users can look at other users, too. **Activity** is more fun than a barrel of monkeys—well, that's a stretch. It shows who is doing what second by second. **Button use** shows you which buttons or which screens are commonly used. Maybe you have more buttons than you ever use. If so, you can contact support to get things cleaned up. **Max users** shows how many users have been logged on for the past month day by day. This helps you get a good idea whether you need to add more data base licenses. **Print test** allows you to check out your local printer to see if it is a PCL compatible printer. **Help** just gives a brief overview of all these options.

The *key icon* is only visible if you are a super user. It allows you to have access to the **Company Builder** screen. This contains all the magic setup information that makes Red Planet behave. **File Builder** gives you access to how all the computer files are configured. This shows the underlying data base along with all data dictionaries. **List Builder** provides access to all the pull down lists. **Security Roles** controls which users have what type of access to each file. **Wintegrate Serial #s** controls the licensing for your business. **Password reset** allows you to temporarily set a user's password.

Red Planet 2.2.35 This button will display the documentation for recent updates to Red Planet