Full How-To including Pictures!

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Note: The websites and software referenced in these screens may have changed since this document was written.

A Website Can Bring Your Chapter into the 21st Century!

Last year, the Maple Grove chapter asked me to help them create a website. So, last July we got them started. At the end of the year, they were up in members after struggling with membership for years! They attribute part of their success to their new website. So, I wanted to write this article to get other chapters started on the web. It may sound like a scary or expensive endeavor, but once you get started, it is really as easy as editing some documents. The benefits of a website are many, but here are just a few:

- Prospective members can check out your organization at any time of the day.
- It is another way to get your information to the public (can link to your site from other sites for example).
- It is a good way to give directions to your meeting location (especially those that aren't easy to find).
- You can get more information to the public than you would in a flyer or brochure.
- It is a great way for members (even less active ones) to stay in the loop about upcoming events.
- It is a great place to store info for members (minutes, newsletters, forms, etc).
- It also makes your newsletters more accessible to the public since you can post them online.
- If someone happens to find the MNWT.org website, they can link right to your chapter's site from there.

Introduction

This document is meant to help you get started on your journey to create a website for your Women of Today website. This is not the only way to get a website online, this is just a recommendation based on what has been done for Eden Prairie and Maple Grove. Creating a website is a great way to move your chapter into the 21st century. Many young people are so used to the Internet that if your organization doesn't have a website, they may never want to find out more.

## To get started: Choose and Register for your Domain

A domain is the website address that people will be typing in to get to your site. You want to make it something easy to remember – such as your chapter's initials (epwt.org for example) or your city name with WT at the end (maplegrovewt.org for example). I recommend DotEasy.com for your website hosting. The charge is between $18 and $25 per year (depending on how many years you pay for at a time).

You may be asking about now, why wouldn't I just use one of those free websites rather than using chapter money to get our own website address? Well, here are just a couple reasons:

- Most free websites are full of ads that you have no control over. These may be ads you do not want associated with your chapter.

- Most free websites don't allow you to have your own domain. For example, if Eden Prairie decided to use a free site through GeoCities (one example of a free website), our website address would be www.geocities.com/epwt/ rather than just www.epwt.org. Which one is easier for you to remember?

So, assuming you decide to use DotEasy.com to host and register your website domain, this is an example if I wanted to start a website for a chapter in Stacy, MN. I start by going to www.DotEasy.com and clicking Sign-Up Now. Then I type in a domain name I would like for my website. I used stacywt.org below and then I clicked start. This does a search to see if someone else already owns that domain name.
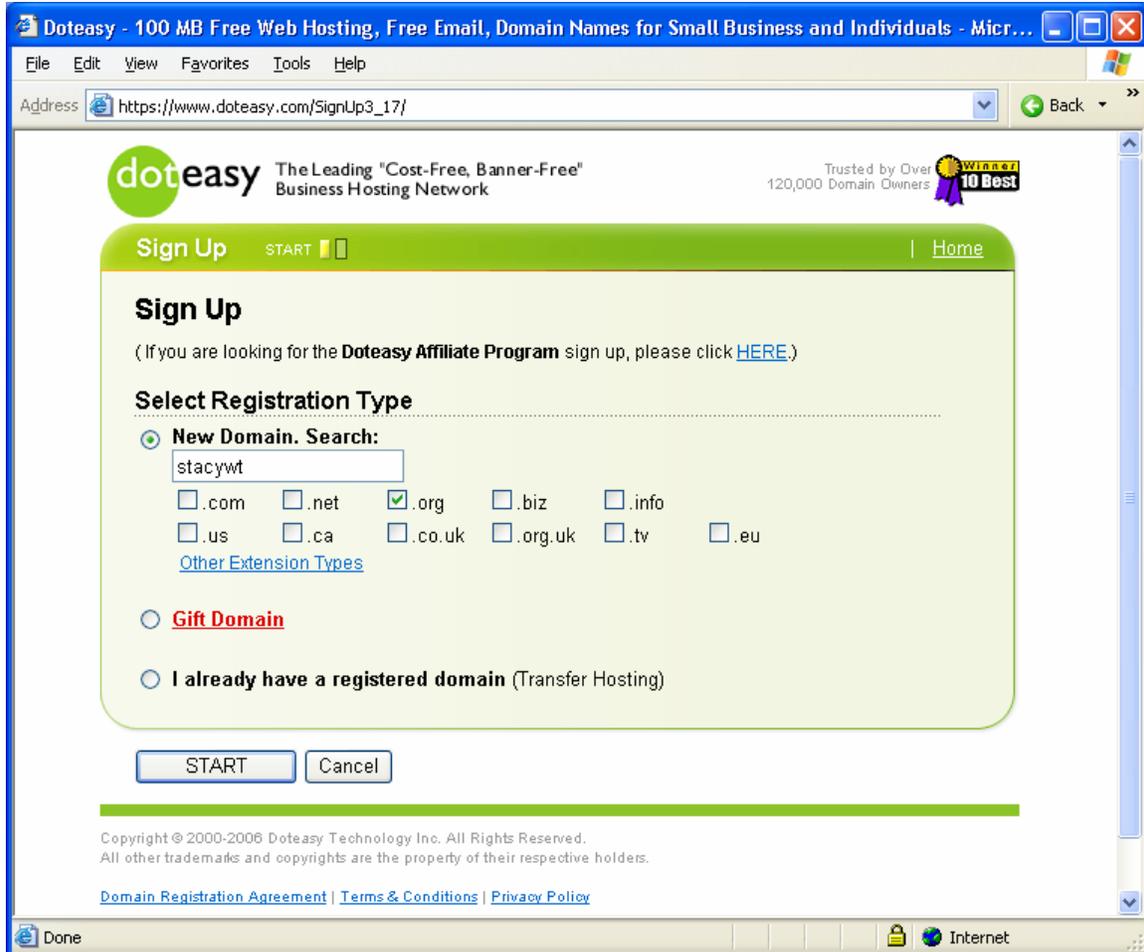
When the search is complete, it will show you what is available. Below it shows me that EPWT.com and EPWT.org are already taken, but my requested domain of stacywt.org is available. It remembers each of your searches and gives you this summary after each one.
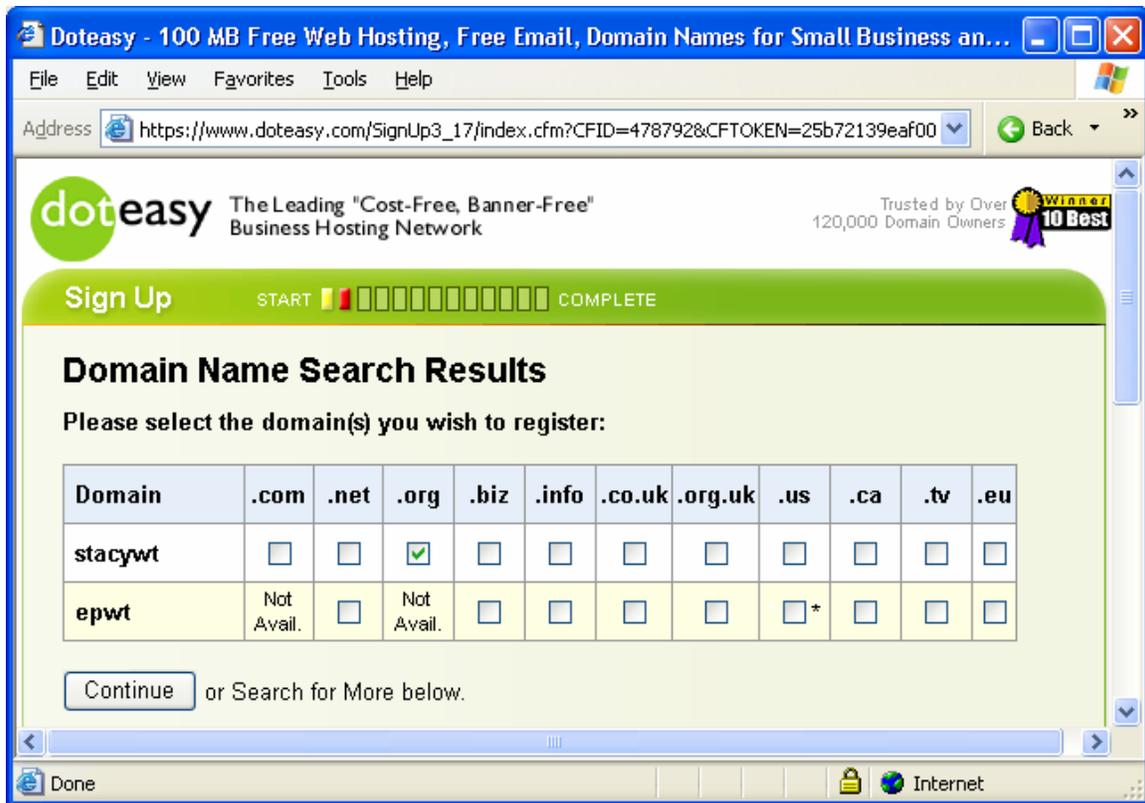
Once I am sure of the name I want, then click continue. It will ask you to select a term of 1, 2, or 5 years and if you want to protect your domain or not. There is additional information on the site about the protection option, but note that it does cost extra.
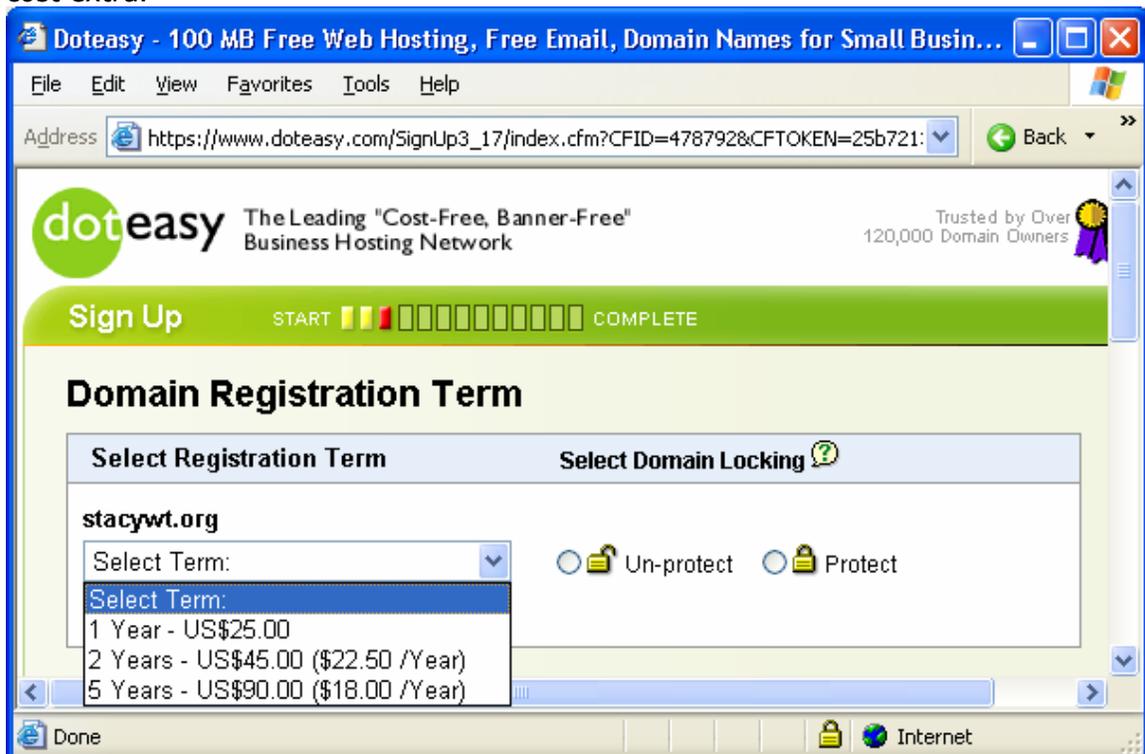
Next it steps you through some additional decisions. I recommend the $0 Hosting. This is what Eden Prairie uses for their site. You only need to add the FrontPage extensions option if you plan to use FrontPage to edit your website (this costs extra).

The next step is to enter in the contact information for the site. This is best if it is the person who plans to maintain the site. Then you will be creating your member id and password. This will be used anytime you need to log into the DotEasy.com website or when you publish new files to your website. I would recommend that this id and password be stored in the RAVE or President file so that the chapter has it.

If you already know someone who uses DotEasy.com for their website hosting, you can enter their website address. If you don't know anyone, you could always enter EPWT.org or MapleGroveWT.org.

The last step is to submit payment information for your site. You will need a credit card for this step.

For any DotEasy.com questions, you can take a look at the "Read My Setup Instructions" link on their site.


To Setup Your Page with the Doteasy Web Creator
If your chapter doesn't have anyone who is comfortable enough with technology to create the site from scratch, you can use the Doteasy Website Creator to help you with the process. This is as easy as picking a template, adding your details, and publishing your pages. This option is very easy and Doteasy has a great tutorial to help you through the process, but it is more limited than using your own editing software. To use this option, simply log into your Doteasy account and click Launch Doteasy Website Creator. Click on the help button and they will step you through the process. Once you publish you are done! If you choose this option you can always switch to the more technical option at any time and vice versa. Either way you go, read the tips for creating your site section below for some tips on your website content.


Installing the Web Editing Software
If you decide you want more options than the Doteasy Website Creator provides, then you will need to install some web editing software (unless you already have some). There are many tools out their to help you maintain a website. They range in price from free to several hundred dollars. Since we are a non-profit organization, I assume that most of you will want to take the free route, so that is what I suggest here. The software that I am recommending is called NVU and is available at www.nvu.com. These are the steps you can take to install this software. You can skip this section if you plan to use something else for maintaining your website.
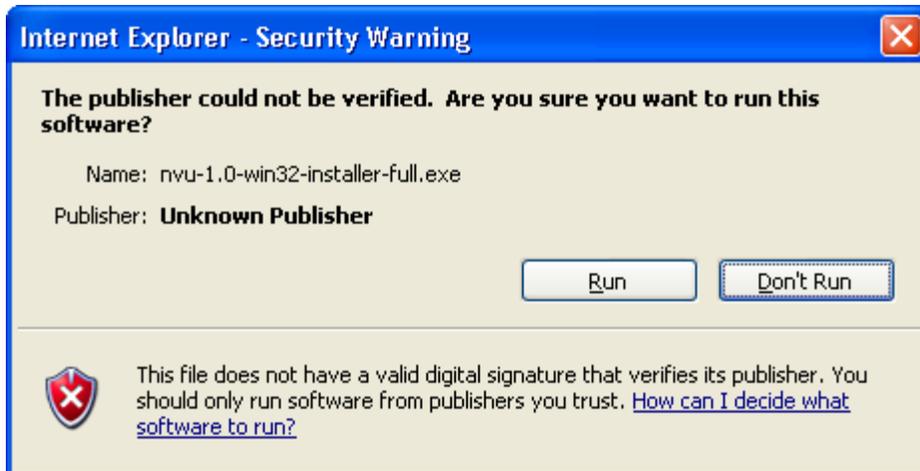
Visit http://www.nvu.com/download.html and choose the correct version for your computer.
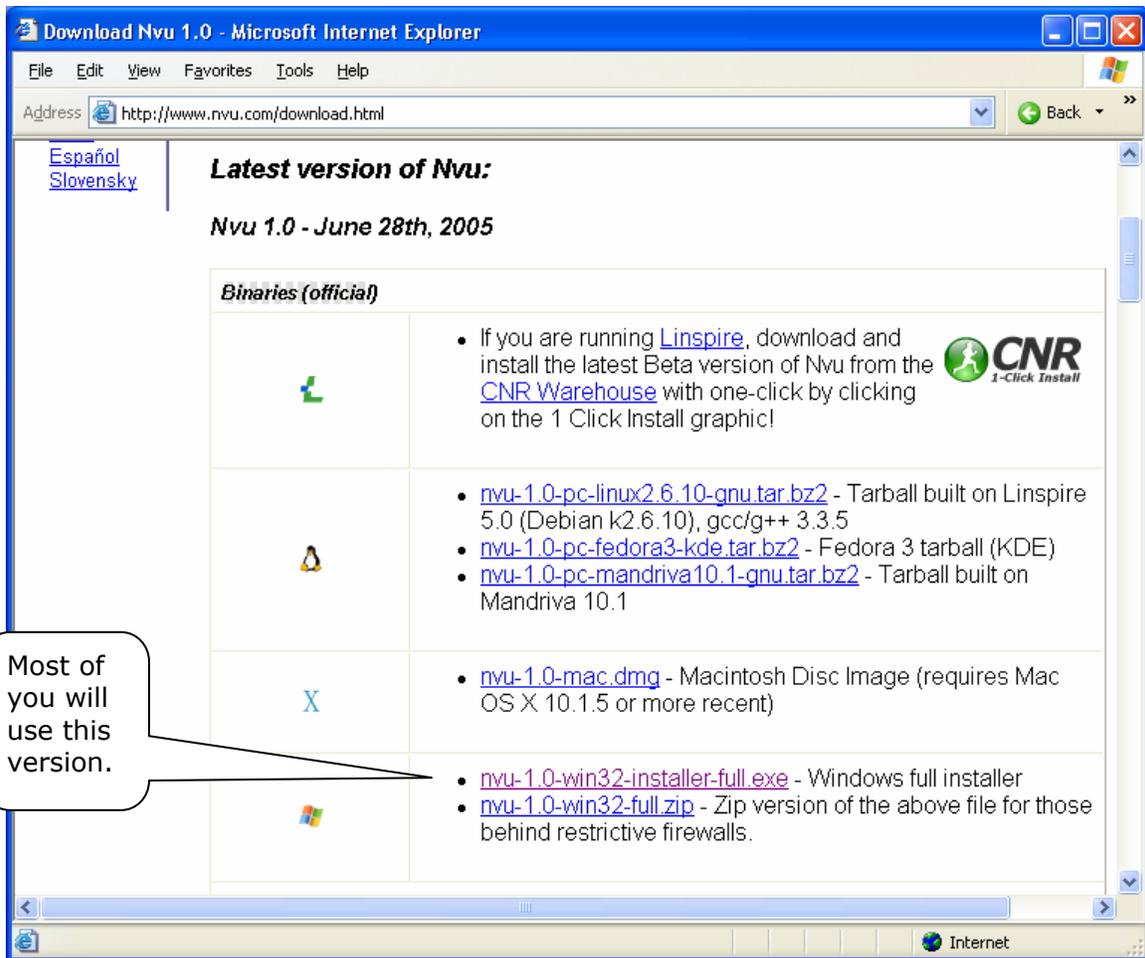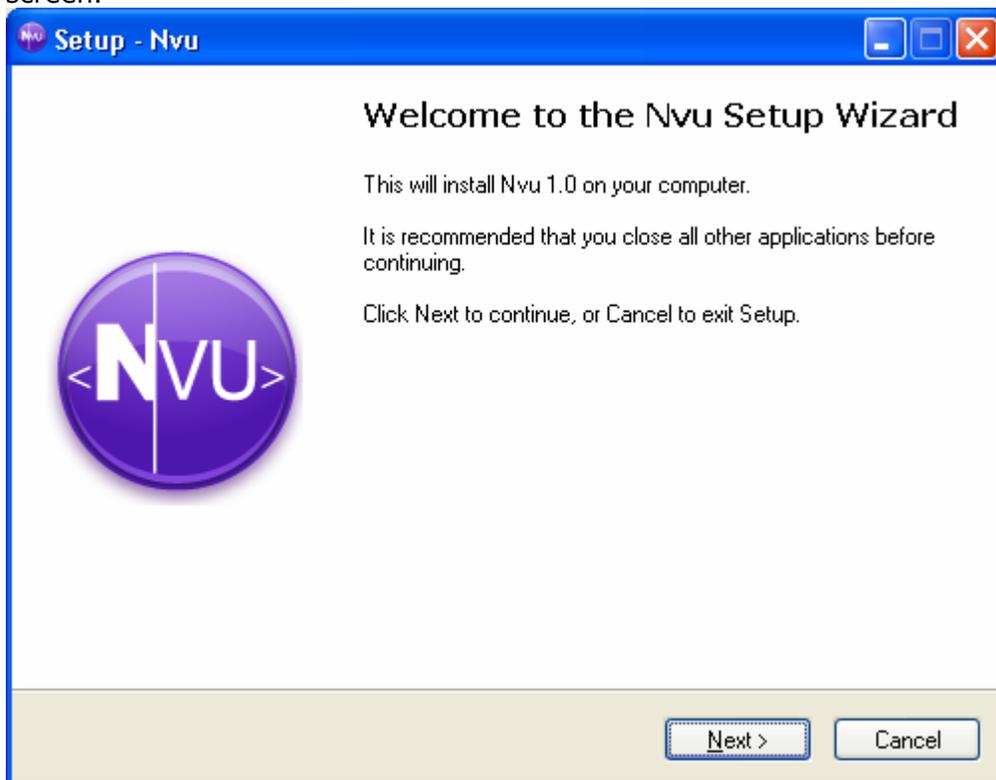
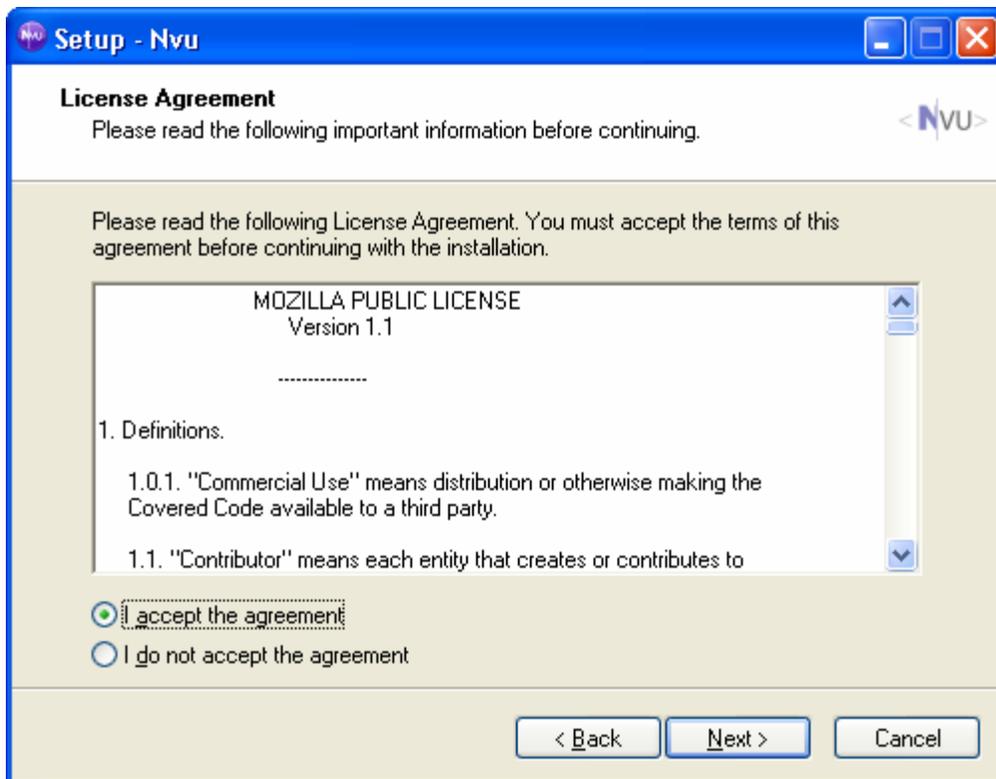After clicking on the link, choose Run. This will install this web editor on your computer.
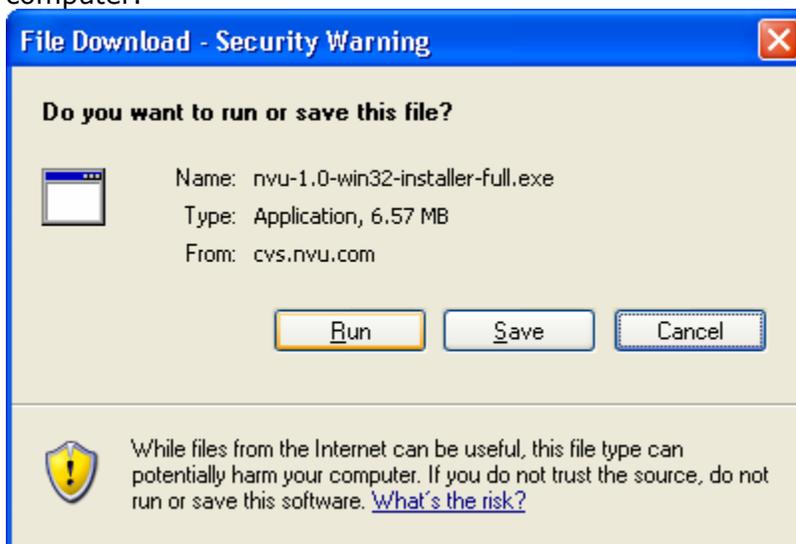
You may also receive a prompt like this, click run here as well:

Next, you will walk through a wizard to complete the install. Click next on the first screen.

On the second screen, choose "I Accept" and then click next:

Click next on each additional screen. On the second to last screen, you will click "Install" which will start the actual installation of the software on your computer.

Then on the last screen, you can launch the software or just finish the installation.

Getting Started
The first step to actually creating your site is to create a folder on your computer's hard drive to hold your website. All files related to your site should be stored in this one place to make things easier for you. All files or folders you store here will also need to be copied to the Internet when you publish your site. I will get back to that later.

Using the NVU Software
The main screen looks like this:
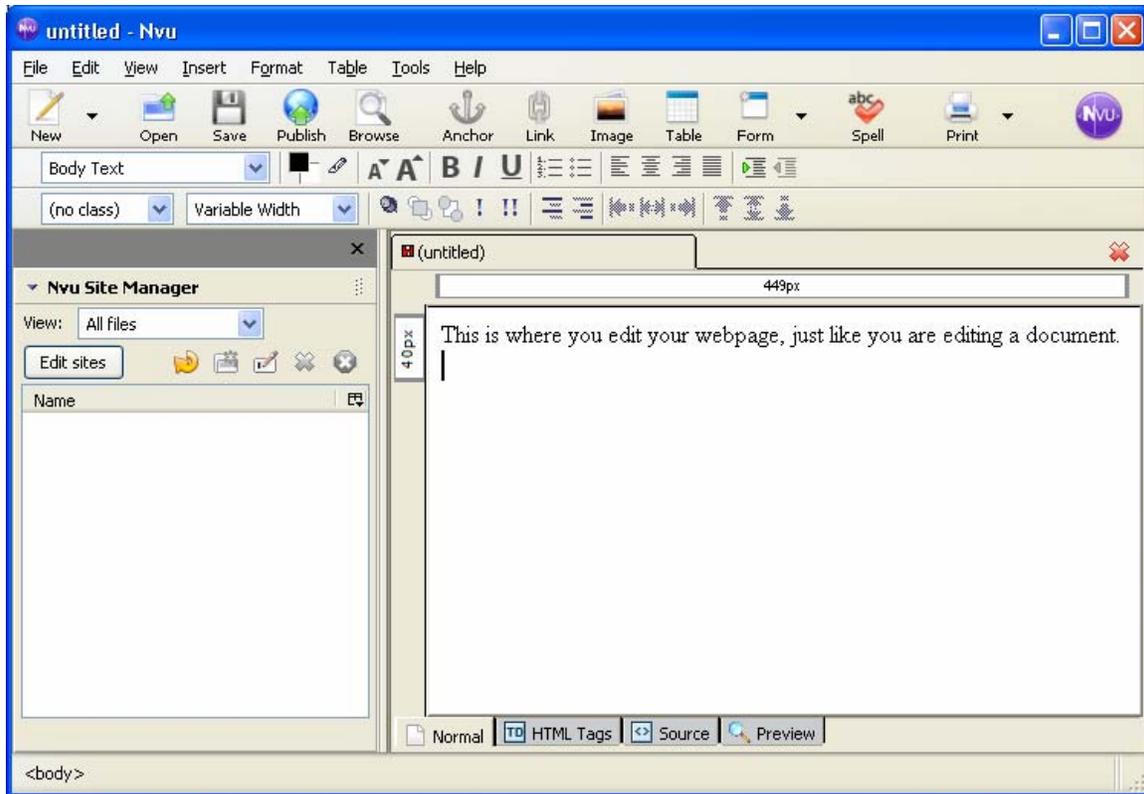
You can enter text on the right side of the screen, just like you are editing a document. This is what your website will look like.

I recommend the following links to help you get started with this software:
http://nvudev.com/guide/1.0PR/ugs02.htm
http://www.nvu.com/websitehelp.html
http://www.thesitewizard.com/gettingstarted/nvu1.shtml

Some Tips on Creating your Site
- The first page you want people to see when they visit your site should be named index.htm.
- All your pages should have a menu displayed to allow your visitors to navigate to other areas of your site. This menu should include a way back to the main page.
- When creating your website, remember your members will use it just as much (if not more) than prospective members will.
- Important things to include on your site:
    - If you only put one thing on your site – make sure it is contact information (including an e-mail address) for someone to talk to about your chapter.
    - Info about your monthly meeting including dates, time, location, and directions. If your meeting location changes, then either update your site each time or simply provide contact info.
    - A calendar of events section is important for members and prospective members.
    - Info about your chapter such as your favorite events, organizations you support, the makeup of your chapter, etc.

- o Pictures! These give good insight into what sort of members belong to your group.
  - o Resources for members. This can include your newsletters, meeting minutes, important forms, flyers to post, links to other sites, etc.
- Once you have your site created, it is a good idea to have some people look at it. You want to make sure the message your website gives matches your chapter. An little story to illustrate this point…shortly after one of our members joined the Eden Prairie chapter, she said that she thought we were a group of older church ladies based on our PR materials. She wasn't sure if she wanted to visit, but she did anyway. It was her feedback that led us to revamp our PR materials – including the website. None of our members thought about it that way because they all knew what Women of Today is all about. Who knows how many other visitors to our site decided not to check us out!
- I also feel that it is important that all your PR materials (website, flyers, etc) have similar themes. It makes you look much more professional and put together.
- Once you create your site, get the word out! Put the website address on everything – flyers, business cards, brochure, your e-mails sent to prospective members, etc. The website will be worthless to you if no one ever visits it.
- This one is important – keep your website up to date!!! I have visited sites in the past where the calendar of events was 2 or more years out of date. I would assume that the group is no longer active. You may also want to change your main page from time to time. Some people may check out your site several times before they even visit an event.

Publishing
When you get your web pages completed, you need to publish them to the Internet. This copies them from your computer to the Internet to make your pages available to the public to view. You also need to publish your pages after every change that you make.

If you are using the NVU software, then you can simply click the Edit Sites button. This brings up the following screen:

If you are using Dot Easy to host your website, you can take a look at the "Read My Setup Instructions" link on their site. In the uploading files section of this page, it will tell you the information to use for your publish (also called uploading) settings.

If you are not using the NVU software to maintain your website, one way to publish is to use a free version of FTP Explorer. You can find one at http://www.ftpx.com/.

Note: If you ever try out your site and you get the following message, it means that the page you are referring to is missing. Check to make sure you used the correct website address. If you did, they try publishing your files again.
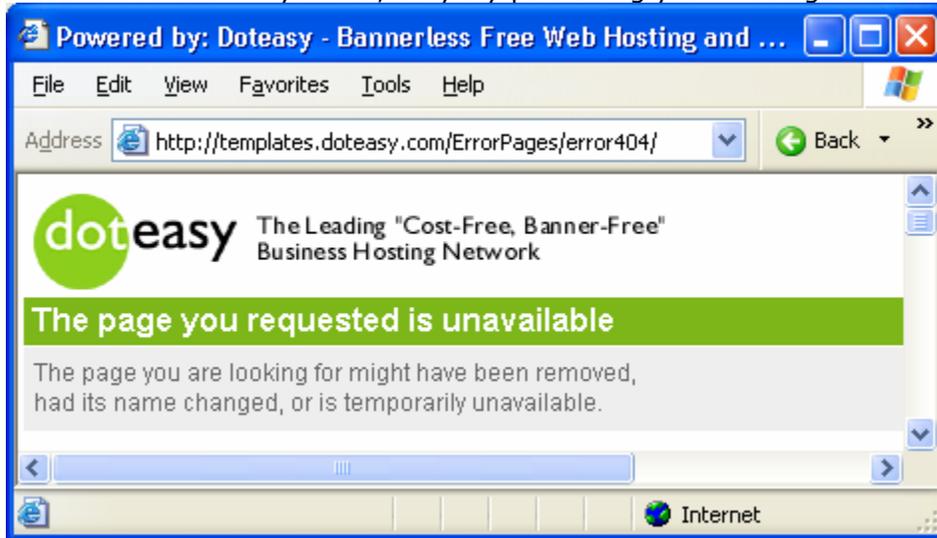
So, now what?
Just remember, your website will evolve as you learn more and as you receive feedback from members or guests. The hardest part is getting started! Once you have an initial site created, you will have learned how the process works and every update will go faster! Then, share your success stories about your website with other chapters in your district or state to help them take the plunge!