

WONDERLAND CHILD & FAMILY SERVICES: Finding New Efficiencies, Reach with Dedicated Internet Service

Wonderland Child & Family Services enhances its level of care and reaches more families by adopting Comcast Business Ethernet Dedicated Internet service. **BROADBAND COMMUNITIES** thanks Mary Kirchoff, executive director and CEO of Wonderland, and Mary Ashley Decato, enterprise account executive for Comcast Business, for help gathering information for this profile.

By Sean Buckley / *Broadband Communities*

Wonderland Child & Family Services in Shoreline, Washington, faced a common challenge when the COVID-19 pandemic hit: how to provide uninterrupted access to its critical services for children virtually and support its staff's need for bandwidth-hungry applications such as Zoom and Microsoft Teams.

Founded in 1969 by a local group recognizing a need for families with developmentally disabled children and incorporated in 1970, Wonderland originally worked out of church basements and daycare centers. Families of any income or ability to pay – whether insured or not – can benefit from the nonprofit agency's services, which include occupational and physical therapy, speech-language pathology, special education, mental health support, educational advocacy and family resources support.

Wonderland serves children with various disabilities, including speaking issues, brittle bone syndrome and other issues. Wonderland's Hope RISING Clinic in the nearby community of Bothell is the only facility in Washington that offers diagnostic and intervention services for children with prenatal substance exposure.

"If you are a family that needs support for a child that has challenges, help is out there," says Mary Kirchoff, CEO of Wonderland. "Our therapists are unsung heroes because you don't know about these services until you need them."

As Wonderland continued to grow, in 2005 there was a change in the characterization of the birth-to-three population.

"One of the biggest changes at this time was the ability to have a clinician or therapist come into a child's home to work with the family circumstance in real time," Kirchoff says. "This represented an increase in understanding the best practices for working with these children, and the government funding helped the ability to support that."

In 2015, King County, Washington, began doing prenatal substance exposure screenings. Wonderland knew it might serve children who suffered from prenatal substance exposure, so it researched programs nationally to understand best practices, then developed expertise at the Hope RISING Clinic.

VIRTUAL NETWORK DEMANDS

Kirchoff says that as the pandemic hit, Wonderland found that its bandwidth service configuration "was not cutting it." To alleviate the operational challenges Wonderland faced, it partnered with Comcast Business to upgrade the agency's existing network. The upgrade allowed Wonderland to keep up with what it said was a rapid transition to telework.

"To get the level of internet connectivity we needed – particularly during the pandemic when everyone was online – we realized we needed a higher level of service."

This required Comcast Business to rewire the suites in the medical building so Wonderland could have a dedicated connection. Specifically, the agency adopted Comcast Business SecurityEdge and Connection Pro. Connection Pro is a backup business internet service that connects a business for up to 16 hours with 4G LTE wireless. Comcast Business SecurityEdge helps protect all connected devices on a network from malware, phishing scams, ransomware and botnet attacks.

The new Ethernet Dedicated Internet service enables Wonderland's Hope RISING Clinic to provide high-quality care for children. "Our prenatal services are clinic-based," Kirchoff says. "That is why we needed our suite to be upgraded significantly."

Already, Wonderland sees benefits of the new Comcast Business dedicated connection. "Previously, calls got dropped, so key parts of conversations would be left out, but that does



The Comcast Business Ethernet Dedicated Internet at the Hope RISING Clinic has made it possible for Wonderland to provide telehealth services more effectively.

not happen anymore,” Kirchoff says. “The dedicated connection has made the few telehealth services we provide at the Hope RISING Clinic more effective.”

She added that the updated connection also comes in handy as therapists at the clinic “access diagnostic tools and other platforms that make clinic-based sessions with these children and families necessary.”

TELEHEALTH IS KEY

A key driver of the transition to Comcast Business Ethernet Dedicated Internet service was telehealth. The Comcast Business connection supported Wonderland’s expansion into telehealth during the pandemic, offering clients virtual support groups, educational programming and therapy appointments.

Wonderland continues to offer a hybrid of in-person and telehealth appointments three years after the start of the pandemic, which is a great advantage to its families and therapists who previously had to battle Seattle-area traffic even for small tasks, such as to receive simple signatures.

More recently, Wonderland used its new solutions to permanently expand its offerings and opportunities for regular visits to clients who may not live near its facility.

Brigette Quichocho, partnerships manager at Wonderland, said in a release that Comcast Business has changed how the agency operates. “Not only are we offering telehealth appointments, but

we can also support remote outreach and fundraising events,” she said. “Previously, we could reach maybe 10 people at a time via workplace giving events. Now we are seeing involvement from closer to 100 people during workplace giving activities.”

Though the pandemic initiated the clinic’s transition to virtual offerings, the realization that patients could secure support on their own time in their homes inspired a more permanent transition to hybrid operations.

Looking forward, Wonderland will look at other ways to use Comcast Business solutions to help current and future patients. Recently, the organization kicked off a webinar series designed to raise awareness among doctors and potential clients who could benefit from the clinic’s services.

Kirchoff says that a connection that supports telehealth sessions can alleviate the strain on families that must provide 24-hour-a-day care for children. “This group of families is looking for answers, so these sessions, whether telehealth or in-person, are a lifeline for them,” she says. “These sessions may be the only time during the day when they get a

break from the challenges, so they don’t want their internet service to break.”

A MULTISTEP MIGRATION

Wonderland’s migration to the Ethernet Dedicated Internet service did not happen overnight. “There were many steps and many people in our medical building we had to interact with, but every step of the way, Comcast Business was communicative,” Kirchoff says.

She adds that it was “seamless from my perspective, and also seamless for the people working with it in that I did not hear any complaints about internet disruptions.”

Earlier, Wonderland worked with another provider and then adopted a shared service from Comcast, but soon found this arrangement wasn’t sufficient to handle the needs of its business.

“When the other provider’s service was interrupted, we moved to Comcast’s shared service, which was better but not enough,” Kirchoff says. “When we decided to migrate to a dedicated line, Comcast Business made it easy.”

In addition, Comcast Business is helping Wonderland with its

PROPERTY OF THE MONTH HIGHLIGHTS

~ Wonderland Child & Family Services ~

- Propertywide Wi-Fi service
- VoIP phone service
- Ethernet Dedicated Internet service



Wonderland offers occupational and physical therapy for young children.

VoIP solution and Microsoft Teams integration.

VITAL STATISTICS

Wonderland Child & Family Services is a nonprofit agency in the Seattle area serving children with developmental delays, disabilities and prenatal substance exposure. It's dedicated to helping children meet developmental milestones and reaches hundreds of families every month through its early childhood programs and services and Hope RISING Clinic for prenatal substance exposure.

Property Description: Wonderland occupies two commercial site suites: one in Shoreline and the other in Bothell, Washington.

Demographics: Families with children with disabilities

Greenfield or retrofit? Retrofit

Style (High-rise/mid-rise/garden): Office building

Time to deploy? Comcast Business needed about six months to deploy the Ethernet Dedicated Internet service even though the building already had the fiber to expand it.

Date services started being delivered: Comcast Business finalized the

installation of Ethernet Dedicated Internet in February 2023.

Any special requirements: No

LESSONS LEARNED

What was the biggest challenge? The pandemic brought about seismic shifts in Wonderland's operations, not the least of which was a quick, organizationwide change to software for telehealth (Microsoft Teams and Zoom), which requires fast, reliable internet. Families needed support more than ever, which Wonderland had to provide virtually. Comcast Business helped overcome both challenges.

What was the most significant success? Wonderland is experiencing significantly improved business efficiency and quality of life for employees and families. It continues to offer in-person and telehealth appointments three years after the start of the pandemic, a great advantage for families and therapists. Now the agency can complete much of the paperwork and provide excellent services from the safety of offices and homes, which is also a great boon to its business. The significantly improved remote capabilities also help improve outreach and fundraising events.

Because the building was already occupied at the time of the deployment, what was done to limit disruption? Comcast Business technicians notified Wonderland about when they would do recabling work so the agency could notify staff and building management. Wonderland also could reschedule service to a day/time that worked best for staff and clients. The Comcast Business technicians constantly communicated with Wonderland's operations staff, providing daily updates.

What should other owners consider before they begin on a similar deployment? Businesses that use bandwidth-demanding applications such as telehealth that need to

access online diagnostic tools should look at the download and upload speeds providers offer. Having enough bandwidth is essential.

SERVICES

Comcast Business delivers an Ethernet-based dedicated high-speed internet connection so Wonderland can access a 2 Gbps/200 Mbps connection.

TECHNICAL SUPPORT

Is the point of contact for resident technical support the property manager, the service provider or a third party? Wonderland's IT department uses CMIT Solutions, a third-party IT company, as its point of contact.

BUSINESS

Which parts of the network are owned by the service provider, and which are owned by the property owner? Comcast Business owns all the lines. It then connects the lines to the company's switching equipment.

TECHNOLOGY

Comcast Business Ethernet Dedicated Internet and phone services

If not fiber to the unit: Service is delivered via Ethernet supported by Cat 5 and Cat 6 wiring. Comcast also made Wi-Fi available to Wonderland.

Vendors/products: Comcast Business (Ethernet-based internet service, VoIP) 📞



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