

Lutheran Home and Harwood Place

SUCCESS STORY

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- Mary Swoboda,
VP of Support Services for Lutheran Home
and Harwood Place



CHALLENGE: Older wireless technology required proactive, planned upgrade

Located in Wauwatosa, WI, Lutheran Home and Harwood Place provide a full continuum of care and services. The Lutheran Home provides rehabilitation services, skilled nursing, specialized memory care assisted living, adult day services, and child care. Harwood Place provides assisted living and independent living.

Creating a better wireless Internet experience for staff, clients, residents, and guests was a top priority for the facilities. Their existing service, based on older, warehouse-style technology, provided spotty coverage in limited areas. "We needed, among other things, wireless kiosk access for the main floors and charting for our skilled nursing area," said Mary Swoboda, VP of Support Services for Lutheran Home and Harwood Place. "Our technology was beyond capacity and was no longer being supported. It had been put together reactively and piecemeal, not as part of an overall plan."

Lutheran Home requested a wireless site survey and began to make changes. However, the initial survey did not account for modifications that were discovered and required once the process began.

SOLUTION: Outsourcing wireless to VCPI partner proved best resource investment

Lutheran Home teamed with VCPI to project manage a full wireless evaluation with increased scope to include new active areas in both facilities and coordinate the network cabling with a VCPI vendor. "During the discovery process, we had to stop and make assessments for additional work," Swoboda said. "We were already partnered with VCPI for our IT solutions so it seemed a natural fit to work with them on our wireless project. It was the right decision, since the project scope ended up being for more than just wireless. Rather than making the capital investment ourselves we knew it was in our best interest to outsource as much as possible to VCPI to manage."

With the help of its VCPI project manager, Lutheran Home completed the initial rollout of its wireless solution, which was successfully implemented throughout the Lutheran Home facility and in designated areas in Harwood Place. In addition, there were several unanticipated changes to the plans, to which VCPI suggested solutions. "Network configuration settings needed adjustments and the newly renovated chapel area was not in the scope of the original survey," said Nick Alesci, VCPI Manager of Network and Telecom Engineering. "Several new access points were recommended, including in the chapel. We also reviewed the network settings, cleaned up the network topology, and optimized the routing."

Lutheran Home
& Harwood Place
Going Beyond Care to Caring



IT Solved.
VCPI

However, there were some unanticipated network traffic issues that arose from increased access and usage once the system was in place. "Once they put the new wireless in place, Lutheran Home struggled for a while because it didn't initially have network bandwidth to support the increased traffic from staff, residents, and guests, which caused user access and business performance issues," said Michael Regione, VCPI Account Manager. "It took a couple of months before the Internet provider could deliver more bandwidth capacity. This was a big deal because Lutheran Home's goal was to provide a great wireless experience for everyone on the network, so it was a priority to get this fixed."



"VCPI did a great job communicating with us, and providing options and solutions," added Swoboda. "Based on discussions with Lutheran Home, VCPI separated guest from corporate traffic and created primary and backup Internet connections that can function independently in the event that maintenance must be being performed on one or the other. VCPI also upgraded the Ethernet line for greater capacity. "In fact," Swoboda noted, "our business line utilization is averaging only 5 percent, which is fantastic because it means we have ample room to grow as needed."

RESULTS: Better coverage, better capacity, better access

Lutheran Home is thrilled with its ability to expand Internet access throughout the facilities and can see the benefit across all user groups. "We have an area called the Café where staff, residents, and families can intermingle and are using wireless all the time," said Swoboda. "In rehab, maybe a third of the people are now on a tablet, phone, or computer. We recently had a little girl visiting her grandmother and when grandma was otherwise occupied she watched a show on an iPad. These people wouldn't have been able to do that before the wireless project."

The recreational therapy department and therapists from short-term rehabilitation now routinely access wireless Internet while working with residents and guests. They use handheld devices and point-of-care monitors for evaluations and can chart progress real-time. "We also use point-of-care wireless for medication administration in Memory Care Assisted Living," Swoboda added. "And as we expand wireless point-of-care elsewhere in the facilities, we know we'll now have the network and capacity in place to support it."

One of the substantial benefits of partnering with VCPI is Lutheran Home's ability to "spend our money and time more strategically," according to Swoboda. "For years we worked within a limited IT budget, often making decisions based on the most cost-effective rather than the best solution. This approach cost us dearly in being able to provide good IT services for our environment."

Through VCPI's recommendations, Lutheran Home has been able to upgrade its staff computer equipment from consumer grade to business-level and implement an aggressive equipment lifecycle management program. "With VCPI as our complete IT solution provider, we can spend our money on better equipment and technology and offer a more robust user experience for staff, residents, clients, and visitors. Through VCPI, we have access to resources that give us options and help us figure out our best path forward. They're not only just a phone call away, which I really appreciate, but they provide a level of expertise that we'd never be able to afford with an internal IT department. They help us make informed decisions so we can solve problems and position us for the future."

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ABOUT VCPI

Headquartered in Milwaukee, WI, VCPI's customized IT solutions solve business challenges inherent in the long-term and post-acute healthcare (LTPAC) industry and enable clients to focus on taking care of patients and residents. Our nationwide client base relies on VCPI (Virtual Care ProviderSM) experts to deliver innovative and LTPAC-exclusive solutions. Founded in 2000, VCPI is a wholly-owned subsidiary of Extendicare, Inc.



We focus on technology so you can focus on care