

BUSINESS connections

Baked Beads Calls Waitsfield the Home of Its Jewelry Business

Owner David Cohen





OFFICE LOCATIONS:

Waitsfield Business Office
3898 Main Street, Waitsfield

Hinesburg Branch Office
14 Thorn Bush Rd, Hinesburg

BUSINESS HOURS:

Monday-Friday, 8:00 a.m. - 5:00 p.m.

BUSINESS TEAM:

Kris Merchant, Sales Manager
802-496-8554, kmerchant@wcvt.com

Kurt Gruendling
V.P. Marketing and Business Development
802-496-8305, kgruendling@wcvt.com
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Editorial and Circulation Contact:
Kurt Gruendling, Vice President of
Marketing and Business Development,
Waitsfield and Champlain Valley Telecom,
PO Box 9, Waitsfield, VT 05673,
802-496-8305, kgruendling@wcvt.com.

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Postmaster send changes to:
Lorraine Keener
Waitsfield and Champlain Valley Telecom
PO Box 9
Waitsfield, VT 05673

BUSINESS connections

We wish you a new year filled with new opportunities.

Happy New Year from all of us at Waitsfield and Champlain Valley Telecom (WCVT). It's a great time to assess your current communications services to consider updates in 2018 to meet your changing needs.

Starting on page 4, you'll find a **Business Spotlight on Baked Beads**, a jewelry company located in Waitsfield. Owner David Cohen provides inspiration for this issue's "new" theme, given his willingness to start a new business 27 years ago, adopt new technology to increase efficiency, and bring new designs to the jewelry market. Baked Beads is enjoying WCVT's Hosted IP Phone Service, which offers new ways to save money and better manage calls.

If you're interested in adding new WCVT services, check out the articles on **Hosted IP Phone Service** on page 5 and **Business-Class Wi-Fi** on page 6. They provide key benefits of these services and tell you how to learn more.

What's new in terms of our community activities? Read page 7's **WCVT in the Community**, where we share highlights of how WCVT gave back in 2017.

Whatever the new year brings, know that WCVT is your local communications partner and ready to provide assistance. Contact us when you have questions or concerns.



Sincerely,

Gregg Haskin
President & CEO

Waitsfield and Champlain Valley Telecom



EMPLOYEE PROFILE: **Kris Merchant, Sales Manager**

Kris Merchant joined WCVT in 1997 as Help Desk Coordinator. He says, “My job was to help people with network issues or computer/software problems. It sometimes called for being a calm person in the midst of a crisis. I needed to convey an ‘I got this’ attitude.”

Twenty years later, Merchant is still helping customers with technology challenges, albeit in an expanded way as Sales Manager. “Because of my technology background, my Sales Manager position can sometimes morph into Sales Engineer. I’m always on the lookout for ways our services can be used to create the solution the customer is seeking. I have face-to-face meetings with many of our customers and see how they’re using tech to their advantage. I will often share that information with other customers looking for similar results. I’ve seen what works and what doesn’t, and can help the customer avoid any possible pitfalls,” notes Merchant.

What does Merchant find most rewarding about his job? He replies, “First, I love working with small business owners and entrepreneurs. They’re brave and industrious, and they risk it all financially to make their business work. I’ve found that most of them weren’t ever ‘lucky.’ Everything they’ve achieved has been earned by sacrifice and a desire to do their own thing. I also love the challenge of showing large businesses what a small tech company like WCVT can do for them. Many large businesses are used to working with big, impersonal telecom companies. When they partner with WCVT, they’re amazed at the responsiveness, knowledge, and talent of our technicians and central office folks. They can’t believe they get an actual person on the line when they have questions or a challenge to be solved.”

Despite Merchant’s extensive experience at WCVT, he continues to learn and reach out to others for help. “I may not personally have all the technical answers that a business is looking for to meet a particular challenge, but I guarantee I know someone who does. I love connecting customers with those people and hearing how much they appreciate it.”

You can contact Kris Merchant at 802-496-8554 or kmerchant@wcvr.com.



WELCOME NEW BUSINESSES

When you buy local (and dine local, play local, and give local), everyone benefits. It improves our local economy, creates more local jobs and opportunities, and retains the unique character of our local communities.

Please support these new businesses by welcoming them to your community and doing business with them whenever possible.

Bristol Village Co-Housing

Bristol - 453-7646

Dreamhouse Country Inn

Bristol - 453-2805

Nido LLC

Lincoln - 453-5912

**Sol Juice Bar
and Natural Foods**

Waitsfield - 496-5081

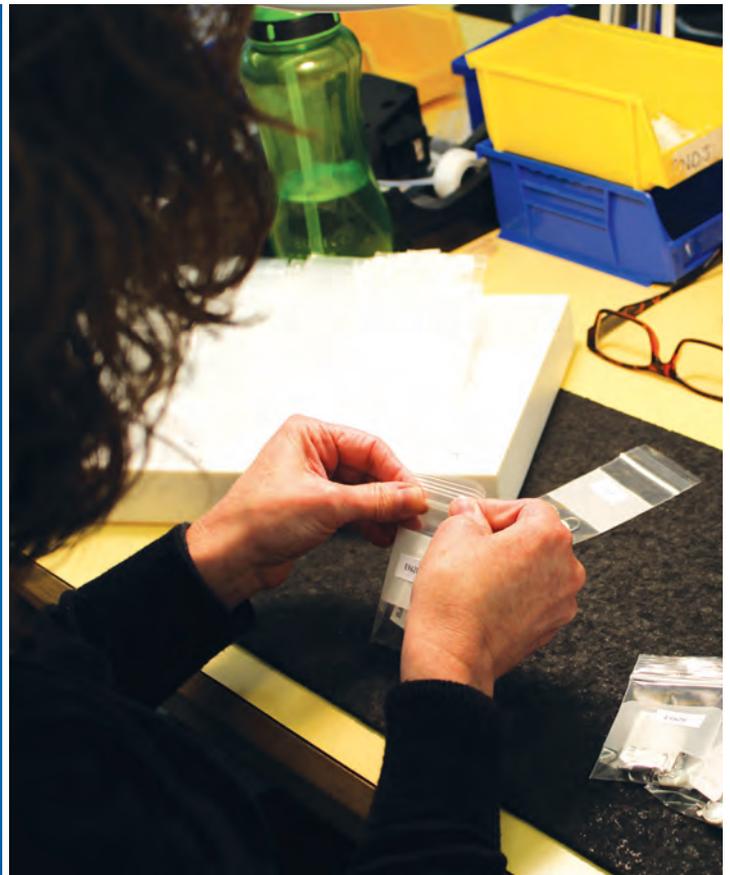
**Vee’s Flowers
and Garden Shop**

Waitsfield - 496-3334



Baked Beads by David & Robin

This Waitsfield jewelry company is a true gem



The Baked Beads story began in the East Village of New York City in 1991 when owner David Cohen—who left a career in hospitality financial consulting to travel the world for three years—bought a bag of beads from an African bead store and taught himself how to make earrings. A jewelry sales trip to the Mad River Valley started a new chapter for Baked Beads when Cohen decided to relocate to Vermont. Soon after, he met his wife Robin, who added her design and marketing skills to the growing company.

While Baked Beads initially specialized in beaded jewelry, it's since shifted to crafting pieces using frosted glass, crystals, and natural stones. The moderately priced jewelry (most prices are in the \$20 to \$30 range) and other accessories can be purchased online and at selected retailers across the country.

In 2002, Baked Beads moved to its current 4,000-square-foot building at 6973 Main Street in downtown Waitsfield. Notes Cohen, "We designed our building to enhance the quality of life for our eight employees and us as well as to create an uber-efficient space. It's handsome, clean, modern, and industrial with lots of windows for great natural light."

Design Quality and Customer Service

What's made Baked Beads successful? Cohen replies, "I think our success is due to a couple of things—design quality and customer service. As far as our design quality goes, we make wearable jewelry that's not trendy. Our pieces will last longer than mall jewelry which breaks in a few months, since we spend extra money for better, thicker wires and solder pieces together instead of gluing them. Each piece of jewelry is also inspected to see if it meets our standards. We're able to offer high quality at moderate price points because we work efficiently and pass these savings on to our customers."

He continues, “Baked Beads is primarily a wholesale business, and we deliver excellent customer service to our retailers. We offer exchanges for any reason, ship within a day, and offer new collections every six months so retailers regularly have new designs to sell. For these reasons, retailers like doing business with us.”

Strong Connections with WCVT

According to Cohen, excellent customer service is also something Baked Beads receives from WCVT. He says, “Having worked in the corporate world earlier in my career, I would come across unprofessional companies that didn’t treat customers well. My experience with WCVT is the total opposite of that. Their staff is incredibly professional and knowledgeable, and they keep their commitments to us. We’re so lucky to have such a great communications provider here in rural Vermont. By having access to high-speed internet, it enables this community to be in the forefront of changing technology.”

When I learned that Hosted IP Phone Service from WCVT would lower our monthly phone bill and pay for itself in less than two years, the decision to switch was a no-brainer.”

— DAVID COHEN, OWNER, BAKED BEADS

WCVT provides Hosted IP Phone Service to Baked Beads. It offers more flexibility and cost-efficiency than traditional phone systems. “Our general manager and I wanted to work remotely when we were on the road, which we couldn’t do with our old phone system. When I learned that Hosted IP Phone Service from WCVT would lower our monthly phone bill and pay for itself in less than two years, the decision to switch was a no-brainer,” Cohen explains.

In addition to sharing a commitment to customers, Baked Beads and WCVT also share a commitment to community. Baked Beads sells samples and previous season’s styles at its bi-annual tent sales, where a portion of the proceeds are donated to a local charity or organization. WCVT sees this as a beautiful program from a company that crafts beautiful jewelry.



HOSTED IP PHONE SERVICE IS FLEXIBLE AND AFFORDABLE

Our Hosted IP Phone Service is a powerful, business-class phone system with capabilities that will grow with you—all at a lower Total Cost of Ownership. Key benefits include:



- **Reduced Capital Investment** – Unlike on-premise phone systems, there’s no huge upfront investment in expensive hardware.
- **Low, Predictable Costs** – We maintain and enhance the service for you, so there are no surprise maintenance, upgrade, or replacement costs.
- **Exceptional Call Quality** – You’ll experience the amazing clarity of HD voice on calls within your office and to other WCVT Hosted IP customers.
- **Easy Self-Management** – Users have the ability to make changes via a web portal.
- **Flexibility to Meet Your Growing Needs** – Our solution can grow with you; there are no limits to adding users, additional sites, or features.
- **A Secure and Reliable Solution** – Our network will automatically handle calls and messages during power outages. In case of disaster, employees can forward calls to home or mobile phones.
- **Mobility Options for Remote or Home Workers** – Employees can easily and seamlessly connect to your Hosted IP Phone Service over their home broadband connection and enjoy the same features they’d use at the office.

To learn more about Hosted IP Phone Service, call Kris Merchant at 802-496-8554 or send an email to kmerchant@wcv.com.



Looking For a Better Wi-Fi Solution for Your Business?

We have the answers to your search for reliability and security

You may be so busy running your business that you don't have the time or energy to devote to managing your Wi-Fi network. That's why we offer Business-Class Wi-Fi.

What's included in Business-Class Wi-Fi?

For a monthly fee, WCVT will manage your Wi-Fi network for you. This service includes the selection and installation of the right Wi-Fi equipment for your space as well as ongoing maintenance and upgrades. You also get 24x7 Technical Support.

What are the benefits of choosing this service?

The key benefits include:

- **System is designed for a business environment.** We use commercial-grade access points, which provide stronger and more secure signals than the consumer-grade variety. In addition, the access points in a managed system are linked, ensuring that you always have the best possible connection.
- **Offers low, predictable costs.** There are no surprise maintenance, upgrade, or replacement costs. Plus, you have the option to lease or buy the Wi-Fi equipment.
- **Eliminates the hassles of trying to do your own installation, maintenance, and troubleshooting.** As a business owner or manager, you have enough on your plate. Your time is much better spent focusing on your core business activities rather than trying to be your own "tech support" whenever someone has a Wi-Fi issue.

- **Easily accommodates your growing needs.** The flexible infrastructure can grow as your business grows. Need additional coverage? No problem! We can easily add additional access points for a low monthly fee. We can also add a guest network to keep your business and customer traffic separate and highly secure.
- **Gives you peace of mind.** You won't have to worry about security, knowing that your wireless connection is professionally installed with all appropriate security measures in place.

What's the next step if I'm interested?

At Green Mountain Access, we offer a full range of business Wi-Fi solutions from leading manufacturers including Ubiquity and Ruckus starting as low as \$14.95 per month. To find out how Business Class Wi-Fi could work in your business and arrange a free on-site assessment, contact:



Kris Merchant

Sales Manager

802-496-8554

kmerchant@wcv.com

WCVT in the Community

Being a local business means that our customers are also our neighbors and friends. Waitsfield and Champlain Valley Telecom feels strongly that community involvement isn't just a nice thing to do; it's the right thing to do. Here are some highlights of our recent activities.



WCVT Employees Raise Over \$7,500 for Hurricane Relief

WCVT employees donated over \$7,500 to the American Red Cross to help with hurricane relief efforts. They raised funds through a company-wide raffle, individual donations, and WCVT's Contribution Committee.

"Our thoughts continue to be with the many people whose lives were so severely impacted by hurricanes in Texas, Florida, and Puerto Rico," said Gregg Haskin, President and CEO of WCVT. "We are extremely proud of our employees' generosity and willingness to help those in need."

Great job, Team WCVT!



Annual Giving Tree Helps Hundreds of Children

Each year, WCVT spreads holiday cheer across our service area through our Annual Giving Tree. Tammy Field, WCVT Administrative Supervisor, works directly with schools and other community organizations to fulfill the wishes and needs of 400-500 children. Gifts for the Annual Giving Tree are donated by employees, customers, and the WCVT Contribution Committee. Our thanks to Tammy and to everyone who participated this year.

WCVT provides each employee with 16 hours of community service time yearly to be used on local community service projects. If your organization has a project in the making and is looking for help, contact Lorraine Keener at 496-8379 or lkeener@corp.wcvt.com to discuss the possibility of WCVT participation.

WCVT LENDS A HELPING HAND

Giving back to the communities we serve has always been an important part of who we are at WCVT. In 2017, we contributed charitable donations and over 1,000 community service hours to many organizations including:

Bristol 4th of July Parade

Bristol's Better L8 Than NeverCar Show

Children's Bristol Halloween Party

Eunice B. Farr Incentive Award Scholarships

Fill a Backpack Program

Giving Tree

Hunter Safety Courses

Local Schools, Chambers, and Civic Organizations

Mad River Path Association

Mad River Valley Community Easter Egg Hunt

Mad River Valley Little League

Our Community Cares Camp

Red Cross Blood Drives

Richmond Area Little League

Three Day Stampede in Bristol

Vermont Festival of the Arts

Vermont Food Bank and Food Shelves in Service Area

Vermont Special Olympics

Vermont Youth Conservation Corps

If your organization has a project in the making and is looking for help, contact Lorraine Keener at 496-8379 or lkeener@corp.wcvt.com to discuss the possibility of WCVT participation.

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