

BUSINESS

# connections

Small Store,  
Small Town,  
Big Impact





To mitigate the spread of COVID-19, our business offices will be closed to customer access until further notice. Our Customer Service and Technical Support staff will still be available by phone, email, and online chat.

**OFFICE LOCATIONS:**

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3898 Main Street, Waitsfield

Hinesburg Branch Office  
14 Thorn Bush Rd, Hinesburg

**BUSINESS HOURS:**

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

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## BUSINESS connections

**In this issue, we think big and think small.** Waitsfield and Champlain Valley Telecom (WCVT) believes there's a place for both in today's business world.

Page 3's article, **WCVT Makes Record Capital Investments in Fiber Network**, is definitely in the "think big" category. In 2021, we'll invest almost \$9 million dollars to continue to convert as many customer locations to fiber optics as possible, which will have a big impact on internet speeds.

We shift the focus to "think small" for the **Business Spotlight on Lincoln General Store** on pages 4 and 5. This small store in a small town has been owned by Vaneasa Stearns for nearly 30 years, and visitors and locals alike appreciate its variety of products. WCVT is pleased to keep Lincoln General Store connected with reliable phone and internet services.

Both big and small businesses can benefit from our Hosted IP Phone Service, as you'll learn by reading **FAQ on Hosted IP Phone Service** on page 6. Then on page 7, we share **WCVT in the Community**, featuring our big response in 2020 to the big needs in our community as a result of the pandemic.

Despite the challenges we all continue to face, I encourage you to think big while you take small steps forward. If WCVT can be of assistance in any way, just ask.



Sincerely,

*Eric Haskin*

Eric Haskin

President & CEO

Waitsfield and Champlain Valley Telecom







# WCVT Makes Record Capital Investments in Fiber Network

*Internet connectivity has  
never been more important*

If ever there was a time when the importance of fast and reliable internet service became clear, it was 2020. The pandemic rapidly expanded the need for rural broadband and highlighted the critical role it plays for WCVT customers and the communities we serve. For many of us, our homes became everything last year—a workplace, school, library, movie theater, gym, shopping center, and location for accessing telehealth services.

## Committed to Rural Vermont

As a local, family-owned business in Vermont, WCVT believes it's our civic duty to do everything possible to maintain the connections between people and vital online resources. The internet is serving as a lifeline during the pandemic, and its usage will only keep growing in the years ahead. To meet this demand, we're continuing to make record capital investments in our fiber network.

In 2021, we'll invest almost \$9 million dollars to continue to convert as many customer locations to fiber optics as we can. WCVT is also aggressively applying for additional state and federal funds to augment our own investments in fiber optics. If your area is included in one of our 2021 fiber projects, we'll reach out to you to let you know the plans.

## More Than 4,600 Fiber Conversions

Every dollar we invest in fiber benefits our customers as well as the Vermont communities in which they live. To date, we've converted more than 4,600 of our customers to fiber service and that number is growing every day. This puts us ahead of the U.S.

average of customers having access to fiber optics and also significantly ahead of much of Vermont. It's important to note that fiber access is higher in more densely populated towns, since it's much easier, quicker, and less expensive to deploy fiber-to-the-home there than in sparsely populated rural areas.

Our employees have been doing an amazing job engineering, constructing, and converting customer locations to fiber on a daily basis. Their accomplishments are particularly impressive given the additional challenges associated with COVID-19 that led to many vendor and equipment delays. Despite all of these obstacles, WCVT was still able to convert a record number of customers to fiber in 2020.

However, our work is by no means complete. Building a fiber-to-the-home network in rural Vermont is not easy and takes time and extensive capital. We appreciate your continued support of our company, and thank you for your patience and understanding as we continue to evolve our network. We look forward to seeing what we can achieve together.





# Lincoln General Store

*This quintessential Vermont store is as eclectic as the community it serves*

Vaneasa Stearns grew up in Lincoln, Vermont, and went to Endicott College near Boston. After graduation, she was a buyer for a large department store in Burlington. When her husband asked what she'd like to do next, she told him, "I've always wanted to own Lincoln General Store."

The next time Stearns visited Lincoln, she spoke to the Lincoln General Store's owners and said, "If you ever want to sell, let me know." As it turned out, she was at the right place at the right time, since the couple was considering selling.

"I went to the bank and took out loans to buy Lincoln General Store and a house. The rest is history. In October, it will be my 30th year as the owner of Lincoln General Store. You can't put a price on the friendships and relationships I've made here. It's so sweet in Lincoln—people let you into their lives," Stearns said.

## A Little Bit of Everything

Lincoln is a unique and eclectic little mountain town with a population of about 1,200. It's situated at the foot of Mount Abraham with the village center resting on the banks of the New Haven

River—about a half-hour drive from the Mad River Glen and Sugarbush ski areas. Both locals and visitors frequent Lincoln General Store at 17 East River Road.

Stearns noted, "Our main focus is groceries. But we also have a little deli, and our sandwiches go well. We sell lots of beer and wine, too. In addition, customers can pick up fresh baked goods, local Vermont crafts and gifts, and hardware items. We're a true general store."

## Making Changes to Meet the Challenges

Like every business, the pandemic has greatly impacted Lincoln General Store. In addition to reducing store hours as a result of COVID-19, there have been other changes.



Stearns explained, “We’re not doing as much baking as we did before the pandemic, since people are staying home and doing their own baking. But we’re busy with curbside pickup and delivery of groceries. We’re also cleaning and sanitizing more stringently, and requiring masks for everyone who shops here. So far, Lincoln General Store is doing OK. It’s not ideal. However, I’m very proud of our community and state. We’re all doing the very best we can.”

### Enduring Community Connections

One thing that hasn’t changed is Lincoln General Store’s status as a business customer of WCVT, which has been the case since day one. The store uses WCVT’s landline phone and internet services.

“I’ve never ever had a problem with either of these services. And if I have a billing question, their employees are easy to deal with and will resolve things quickly. Occasionally I’ll have an email or spam issue. I’ll call WCVT, and they’ll patiently talk me through how to fix it. I wouldn’t dream of switching to another provider,” Stearns said.

*We’re not doing as much baking as we did before the pandemic, since people are staying home and doing their own baking. But we’re busy with curbside pickup and delivery of groceries.”*

— VANEASA STEARNS, OWNER, LINCOLN GENERAL STORE

What’s ahead for Lincoln General Store? She replied, “Winter is always slow, since the Lincoln Gap is closed January through March. We have few visitors during this time, meaning most all of our business will be from locals. But once the Lincoln Gap opens up, we’ll be much busier. There will be lots of visitors going to New Haven River in the spring and summer. Anglers love to fish there, and the Long Trail is popular with hikers. Lincoln General Store is the place to stock up on snacks and drinks before heading off to enjoy the outdoors. Then, of course, autumn brings the fall foliage season.”



Year after year and season after season, Lincoln General Store will no doubt keep making memories for its owner and customers. It truly is the heart of the community.



### IT'S EASY TO LIKE BUSINESS-CLASS WI-FI

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**It's also easy to find out more about Business-Class Wi-Fi. Contact Kris Merchant, Sales Manager, at 802-496-8554 or [kmerchant@wcv.com](mailto:kmerchant@wcv.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 area.

This commitment to supporting local businesses is especially important now, as owners struggle to meet the unprecedented challenges of the pandemic. To make it through the coming year and beyond, we all need to support and encourage fellow members of the business community.

Remarkably, the new businesses listed below were not deterred by recent challenges and went ahead with their plans to open a new business. Please welcome them warmly and patronize their businesses whenever you can.

**A Clover and One Bee**  
Richmond – 434-5143

**Aarow LLC**  
Charlotte – 425-5991

**Heavenscent**  
Warren – 496-5045

**The Bolton Country Store**  
Bolton – 434-3587

# FAQ on Hosted IP Phone Service

WCVT's Hosted IP Phone Service uses Voice over Internet Protocol (VoIP) technology that runs on our managed network.

## How does VoIP technology work?

VoIP converts the voice signal from your telephone into a digital signal that can travel over the internet.

## What are the benefits of replacing a traditional phone system with Hosted IP Phone Service?

They 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.
- **Easy Self-Management** – Users can perform their own Moves, Adds, and Changes (MACs) via an intuitive web portal, eliminating the expense of service calls when you have employee moves or changes.
- **Flexibility to Meet Your Growing Needs** – The infrastructure can grow as your business grows; there are no limits to adding users, sites, and 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 office features.

## Does Hosted IP Phone Service make sense for a small business?

With its flexibility and scalability, Hosted IP Phone Service works as well for a small "mom and pop" store as it does for a large company. WCVT has recently done installations for Maple Landmark in Middlebury, Neck of the Woods in Waitsfield, and The Warren Store in Warren. The Vermont Flannel Co. also uses our Hosted IP Phone Service.

## What can it offer to my employees working from home?

The Unified Communications features of Hosted IP Phone Service give remote workers the same phone capabilities they have at the office.



Sales Manager Kris Merchant pays a visit to one of our Hosted IP Phone Service customers.

To learn more about Hosted IP Phone Service, call 802.496.8309.



# 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.*



## We Donated \$50,000 in 2020

WCVT has a long and strong history of volunteerism and charitable giving in the communities we serve. Social responsibility has always been part of our company values starting with Alton and Eunice Farr more than 100 years ago. It's in our company's DNA to give back, not just with our checkbook but with our hearts, hands, and minds.

The year 2020 was like no other, with food banks and other nonprofits struggling to meet surges in demand as the economic impacts of the COVID-19 crisis began to hit home for our communities. It's with great pride we share that

WCVT was able to donate over \$50,000 to the following organizations in 2020 through our Contributions Program:

- Vermont Food Bank and local food shelves - \$12,000 during the holiday season
- Eunice B. Farr Incentive Awards – six \$1,000.00 scholarships awarded to graduating seniors at the six public high schools in our serving area
- Susan Haskin Simms Scholarship
- WCVT Giving Tree
- Central Vermont Humane Society
- Our Community Cares Camp in Richmond
- UVM's Children Hospital – Miracle Network

- Virtual Living Room in Bristol for Veterans
- Vermont Cancer Survivor Network
- American Heart Association
- United Way of Addison County
- Central Vermont Home Health and Hospice
- Vermont Special Olympics
- Prevent Child Abuse Vermont
- Volunteer Fire Departments
- Backpack Program
- ...and many more!

Thank you to everyone for helping make our communities a better place to live and work. If you know of an organization in need in our serving area, please tell them about the WCVT Contributions Program. Information and the application can be found on our website, or contact Lorraine Keener at 802-496-8379 or [lkeener@corp.wcvvt.com](mailto:lkeener@corp.wcvvt.com).

## WCVT WELCOMES NEW EMPLOYEES

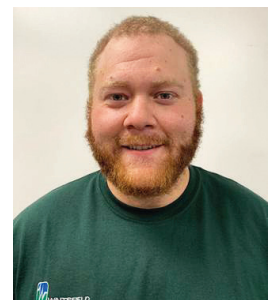
Our team is working hard to continue the evolution of our network, and we convert more customers to high-speed fiber optics each day. We know the need for additional bandwidth is real, as so many of us work and learn from home, access telehealth services, and use the internet to stay connected with family and friends. We're excited to welcome the following new employees to our team. They'll help us achieve our goals of providing exceptional customer service and the latest communications technology.



**Dustin Haselton**  
Service Technician



**Adams Haskins**  
Service Technician



**Ethan Vasseur**  
Service Technician Trainee





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