

# BUSINESS connections

## What Would Waitsfield Be Without Kenyon's?





#### 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@corp.wcvt.com

**Kurt Gruendling**  
V.P. Marketing and Business  
Development  
802-496-8305,  
kgruendling@corp.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@corp.wcvt.com

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**Variety is the spice of life.** I think we can all agree that doing the same thing over and over is the recipe for a dull existence. We need variety, not just in our personal lives, but in our businesses as well.

In this first *Business Connections* issue of 2023, we celebrate the value of variety. The theme was inspired by the **Business Spotlight on Kenyon's Variety Store**, which you'll find on pages 4 and 5. This family-owned business in Waitsfield offers a big variety of products and services, and owners Doug and Donna Kenyon want to spread the word that you can shop local and still enjoy variety.

Your business can benefit from accessing a broader variety of phone features and using them to their full advantage. On page 3, we ask the question, **Can Your Old Phone System Handle New Requirements?** and offer the alternative of our Hosted IP Phone Service. Then on page 6, we share **10 Tips for Better Video Conferences**.

There are always a variety of needs to be addressed in our community, and WCVT loves to give back in a variety of ways. Page 7's **WCVT in the Community** gives you updates on our contributions toward irrigation for recreational fields, broadband expansion, and community service.

Whatever challenges you face, WCVT has a variety of communications solutions to meet them. Please contact us to learn more.



Sincerely,

*Eric Haskin*

Eric Haskin

President & CEO

Waitsfield and Champlain Valley Telecom





# Can Your Old Phone System Handle New Requirements?



The workforce has changed significantly in recent years, and working remotely has become the norm for many companies. According to the 2022 American Opportunity Survey by McKinsey & Company, 58 percent of Americans reported having the opportunity to work from home at least one day a week, and 35 percent can work from home five days a week.<sup>1</sup> What's more, when a candidate is deciding between job offers with similar compensation, the opportunity to work flexibly can become the deciding factor.

Flexibility is key to successful remote work. Your company needs to have a phone system that can adapt to your changing needs—such as adding users, sites, and features—without requiring a hardware upgrade. It's also important for your phone system to have the capability to seamlessly integrate remote workers.

With WCVT's Hosted IP Phone Service, your remote workforce will have all the tools and flexibility necessary to function as a fully integrated part of your team. Employees can easily connect to your company's Hosted IP Phone Service over their home broadband connection and enjoy the same office features they could access at your company location.

## These features include:

- Remote Worker Support
- Voice Mail to Email Integration
- Wi-Fi Calling
- Conference Bridge Services

What's more, our Hosted IP Phone Service makes sense for businesses of all sizes—from a small “mom and pop” shop all the way up to a large enterprise. You'll have low, predictable costs, since WCVT maintains and enhances the service for you. There are no surprise maintenance, upgrade, or replacement costs.

To learn more about our Hosted IP Phone Service, including the variety of features and phones available, visit [www.wcv.com/services/telephone/hosted-ip-phones/](http://www.wcv.com/services/telephone/hosted-ip-phones/).

<sup>1</sup>[www.mckinsey.com/industries/real-estate/our-insights/americans-are-embracing-flexible-work-and-they-want-more-of-it](http://www.mckinsey.com/industries/real-estate/our-insights/americans-are-embracing-flexible-work-and-they-want-more-of-it)



(L to R) Kevin Davis, Business Systems Specialist II; Dan Fuller, Business Systems Supervisor; Trevor Gaylord, Business Systems Specialist I; Nick Sterner, Business Systems Specialist II; Jada Munro, Business Systems Administrator; and Kris Merchant, Sales Manager.

## MEET OUR HOSTED IP TEAM

When your business uses one of WCVT's Hosted IP products—such as Hosted IP Phone or Business Class Wi-Fi services—you benefit from an expert team behind the advanced technology.

The WCVT Hosted IP team includes:

- **Dan Fuller**  
Business Systems Supervisor
- **Nick Sterner**  
Business Systems Specialist II
- **Kris Merchant**  
Sales Manager
- **Kevin Davis**  
Business Systems Specialist II
- **Trevor Gaylord**  
Business Systems Specialist I
- **Jada Munro**  
Business Systems Administrator

They're responsible for the coordination of project resources in support of our Hosted products and wiring installations. They plan all aspects of complex projects from inception to conclusion. This helps to provide excellent customer service by building productive working relationships with WCVT's customers, suppliers, contractors, and vendors.

## Have questions or need support for your Hosted IP Phone Service?

Email the team at [HPBX@corp.wcv.com](mailto:HPBX@corp.wcv.com) or call 802-496-8309.



# Kenyon's Variety Store

*Buy what you need and  
get advice thrown in for free*



Kenyon's Variety Store has been a beloved fixture in the Waitsfield community since it began in 1971. You can buy just about anything there, or as some are fond of saying, "If Kenyon's Variety Store doesn't carry it, you don't really need it."

The family-owned business is located about a half mile north of Historic Waitsfield Village, on the site of the former feed store called Kenyon's, which Howard Kenyon operated. Howard's son Doug Kenyon and his wife Donna Kenyon now own and operate Kenyon's Variety Store, and six employees help them take excellent care of customers.

*"I give good old-fashioned advice,  
welcome or not."*

— DOUG KENYON, OWNER, KENYON'S VARIETY STORE

Donna said, "The store started in an old horse barn and grew from there as farmers would ask us to carry more items. When we bought the property, there was a vacant two-story square house on it that was well over 100 years old. Kenyon's Variety Store is in a building that's attached to that house."

## Lots of Variety

"Variety" is its middle name for a reason. Kenyon's Variety Store offers a large variety of products in categories including:

- Automotive
- Bird Feed & Supplies
- Christmas & Holiday Decorations
- Cleaning Supplies
- Pet Supplies
- Farm & Ranch Supplies
- Gifts
- Grills & Accessories
- Hand Tools
- Hardware
- Storage & Organization
- Lawn & Garden
- Electrical
- Plumbing

Customers can also stop by the store for specialty items and services such as chain saw sharpening, pipe cutting, propane, UPS services, gift certificates, pipe threading, special orders, and off-road diesel.



## The Problem-Solving Store

As a proud member of the True Value family, Kenyon's Variety Store provides convenient access to the advice, tools, equipment, and products that professionals or do-it-yourselfers need to get the job done. It's the first item on that list—advice—that Doug has earned a reputation for giving to customers.

"I give good old-fashioned advice, welcome or not," Doug remarked with a chuckle.

Donna agreed with Doug and added, "Kenyon's Variety Store is known as the problem-solving store. A lot of tradespeople come here to seek Doug's knowledge. He likes to help solve problems and will sometimes pitch in to fix things like broken shovel handles for customers. All of us at the store try to provide really good customer service. We'll even carry out bags of dog food to people's vehicles when we can, especially for our elderly customers."

Doug noted, "Some customers invite me to go home with them to unload their purchases. If I do, I may get a home-baked cookie out of the deal."

## Local Connections and Support

Kenyon's Variety Store gets its internet and phone services from WCVT to keep its team members seamlessly connected to each other and to customers and suppliers. How would they describe the customer service and tech support from WCVT? Donna replied, "Our services perform well, so we've never really had to use WCVT tech support. If I do have a concern, I call Kris Merchant, and he sends someone to the store right away to take care of it."

Doug and Donna appreciate that WCVT is a local business and are big advocates for the "buy local" movement.

Donna said, "Buying local is vitally important in any community. It keeps small businesses in business. Our store has seen a drop in sales due to online competition. I'd like to remind people that if they don't buy local and support our community, eventually businesses like ours won't be here anymore."

Kenyon's Variety Store practices what it preaches.

"We'll send a customer to another local store if we don't sell the item they need, just to keep things local. We'll also try to order an item through our store if a customer is willing to wait for it. That helps cut down on customers resorting to online orders from huge retailers and keeps more dollars in our local economy," explained Donna.

Clearly, Kenyon's Variety Store is helping this community solve problems one customer at a time.



## 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 newcomers.

**Emeraldrose Dispensary**  
Bristol – 802-453-2200

**Hanger Steak, LLC**  
Warren – 802-583-9499

**Thornton Investing**  
Bristol – 802-453-5432

**Valley Meade Dispensary**  
Waitsfield – 802-496-5344

Whether your business is just getting started or you've been in Vermont for years, be sure to take full advantage of the resources available from your area's Chamber of Commerce.

**Addison County  
Chamber of Commerce**  
[www.addisoncounty.com](http://www.addisoncounty.com)

**Mad River Valley  
Chamber of Commerce**  
[www.madrivervalley.com/about/chamber](http://www.madrivervalley.com/about/chamber)

# 10 Tips for Better Video Conferences

*What you do before and during the meeting can make a big difference*



With more people working from home, video conferences have become the go-to technology for meetings. To avoid common pitfalls, follow these best practices:

**1. If you're in charge of a video conference, send out an agenda beforehand.** Without an agenda, you may waste time and accomplish little. That said, plan for a few minutes of informal conversation at the beginning to help with team building and morale.

**2. Establish a system for asking questions.** Do you want participants to raise their hands or use the chat feature to write out questions? Video conferences will go more smoothly if your business figures this out ahead of time.

**3. Proactively manage potential technical difficulties.** Arrive a few minutes early to a video conference call, especially if it's the first time you're using a particular application. You may need to install something or address a microphone or camera issue.

**4. Place your camera at eye level.** A camera that's too high or too low can be distracting, not to mention unflattering.

**5. Sit in a well-lit space.** Use natural light from windows and/or a lamp in front of you or slightly to the side. If your room is too dark, fellow meeting participants will feel like they're talking to someone in a dungeon.

**6. Mute your microphone whenever you're not speaking.** Background noises—like coughs, sneezes, and pets—can be disruptive.

**7. Stay focused and pay attention.** Don't check emails or try to get other work done during a video conference. It's easy for other participants to tell if you aren't fully engaged in the meeting.

**8. Wait for an opportunity to talk.** During in-person meetings, you can pick up on visual cues to help find the right time to speak. Things are more challenging during video conferences. Wait for a few moments of silence before speaking up in case there's a sound delay.

**9. Prepare before you share.** If you need to share your screen, take a few seconds to prepare before you hit that share button. Clear your desktop of any extra tabs or programs you may have open and make sure any private or sensitive information is hidden.

**10. Don't pull a disappearing act.** You may need to occasionally step away from a video conference at home, perhaps to attend to a child or answer the door. When you do, notify the group by politely excusing yourself verbally or via the chat feature in the video conference application.

# 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.*

## \$9.1 Million Grant to Fund Broadband Expansion in Addison County

The Vermont Community Broadband Board (VCBB) recently approved a \$9.1 million grant to WCVT, in partnership with Maple Broadband, to expand fiber-optic broadband in parts of Addison, Bridport, Ferrisburgh, New Haven, Panton, Waltham, and Weybridge. The source of the grant funding is the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA).

This project will extend our fiber-to-the-home network to approximately 2,000 additional customers in parts of Addison County in the WCVT service area. The network is capable of delivering broadband speeds of up to 1 Gig (approximately 1,000 Mbps).

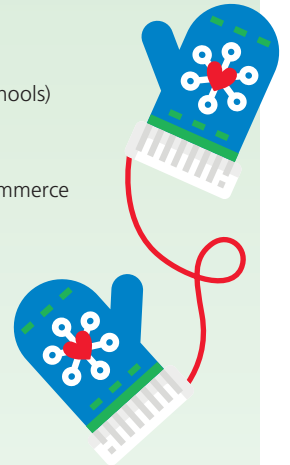
In August 2021, Maple Broadband and WCVT entered into a public-private partnership to bring high-speed fiber services to unserved and underserved residents in Maple Broadband's 20 member towns, some of which overlap with WCVT's existing service area. In terms of the partnership, WCVT will extend our fiber-optic network to customers in our service area, and Maple Broadband will build a fiber-to-the-home network across the remaining 20 towns.

WCVT will operate the Maple Broadband network, bringing its track record of service excellence to Maple Broadband customers. This arrangement will decrease the cost and accelerate the speed of broadband availability as both entities will build concurrently.

## WCVT Employees Shared Helping Hands and Warm Hearts in 2022

Giving back to the communities we serve has always been an important part of who we are at WCVT. We feel strongly that community involvement is not just a nice thing to do; it's the right thing to do. We wholeheartedly contribute to many community organizations and events including those listed here. Because you support us, we can support them.

- Addison County Chamber of Commerce
- Bristol Recreation Department
- Backpacks for Kids (money given to 25 schools)
- Giving Tree
- Hinesburg Recreation Department
- Lake Champlain Regional Chamber of Commerce
- Mad River Valley Chamber of Commerce
- Mad River Valley Recreation District
- Mad River Valley Rotary Club
- Our Community Cares Camp (Richmond)
- Special Olympics Vermont
- Vermont Chamber of Commerce
- Local Foodbanks
- Vermont State Parks Forever ... and more!



We also give each employee 16 hours of community service time yearly to be used on local projects. If your organization is looking for help, contact Lorraine Keener at 802-496-8379 or [lkeener@corp.wcvct.com](mailto:lkeener@corp.wcvct.com) for more details.



## Mad River Valley Recreation District Partners with WCVT for Grant

The Mad River Valley Recreation District (MRVRD) received a \$5,000 grant from the Foundation for Rural Service (FRS). The MRVRD worked in partnership with WCVT to qualify and apply for this grant. Its funds will help the MRVRD install an irrigation system on their recreational fields, used by thousands of kids and adults each year.

The FRS awards grants to rural communities served by members of NTCA – The Rural Broadband Association, which includes WCVT. These grants are designed to provide support to a variety of local efforts to build and sustain a high quality of life in rural America. WCVT provided the required matching funds contribution.

# Meet Our Business Sales Team

WCVT is committed to moving your business forward with a comprehensive line of communications solutions. Our Business Sales Team is ready to discuss your needs and recommend the right combination of services to help increase efficiency and productivity.



**Kris Merchant**

*Sales Manager*

*kmerchant@corp.wcvt.com*

*802-496-8554*



**Dan Fuller**

*Business Systems Supervisor*

*dfuller@corp.wcvt.com*

*802-496-8590*



**Jada Munro**

*Business Systems Administrator*

*jmunro@corp.wcvt.com*

*802-496-8302*

**Call 802-496-3391 to learn more.**

