

Long Island BUSINESS NEWS

Feb. 23 - March 1, 2007

Where Business Gets Down To Business

Vol. 54 No. 8 • \$1.50

Keeping Island schools ahead of the technology curve

Schools have trailed business in implementing new technologies, and Kevin Urso's firm is one of several working to change that.

Urso is the president of Great River-based Connected Technology, which fills in for or complements the technology departments of various school districts. The firm helps districts connect networks that consolidate storage of documents and allow all of a district's buildings to be on a single system.



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It also brings in new technologies, such as document imaging products that scan and store student and employee records to make them accessible to different users throughout a district.

"In the past, schools would keep boxes and boxes, and they'd store them down in the basement," Urso said. "When they needed to retrieve a record, someone went to the basement. Now they can call it up on their desktop."

Another challenge for schools is the sheer scale of implementing new systems. Districts can easily have 4,000 to 6,000 users between students and staff, Urso noted.

"When a kid comes in in first grade," he said, "they get an account they keep until graduation."

One of the districts that works with

Connected Technology is Plainview-Old Bethpage School District, where Guy A. Lodico is the director of technology. "We're probably the largest network in Plainview-Bethpage," said Lodico, who has 18 years experience in teaching and administration/supervision.

Schools traditionally rolled out computers without networks, using stand-alone computers in classrooms, he said. A lack of personnel meant those computers were hard to maintain.

To establish a foundation to build on, schools started with Local Area Networks in single buildings; later, they expanded to Wide Area Networks. Plainview-Old Bethpage School District now has all of its eight schools connected.

"We had to adopt best practices of the business model and fit them into the education system," said Lodico, who is also chairman of the Nassau Association of School Technologists.

The district places computers in standard classrooms, Lodico said, "because you want the tools of technology to be where the kids are." But it also uses computer labs in specialized content areas such as graphics, music, English and social studies. In foreign language classes, kids translate streaming videos.

The technology, Lodico added, is guided by needs of the curriculum. "That's key," he said. "It doesn't work any other way. Everything has got to be student-driven."

Lodico said a big issue facing schools is bandwidth. This is especially true for library media specialists, with things that used to be found in books migrating to the

Internet. "Schools need more bandwidth," he said.

In the past, districts found computer record-keeping systems too expensive, Urso said, but the costs have been dropping and the greater efficiency and long-term savings have made the systems viable for schools.

Connected Technology, which has 13 employees, started in 2001. The firm is hosting a seminar on Feb. 28 at the Hilton Long Island in Huntington on storage and disaster recovery for schools.

Device connects users to 911 in emergencies

A Long Island medical supply firm has won the rights to be the exclusive supplier in the New York metro area of a new emergency response device.

Prime Care Medical Supplies Inc. will carry the Guardian Alert 911, a pendant that users can wear to contact 911 in the event of a medical emergency. The pendant contains a miniature wireless speakerphone that taps into existing phone lines.

Most emergency response systems are designed to contact an emergency response center that contacts emergency agencies. Prime Care officials say that by eliminating the third party, their device will cut down on response times.

Prime Care has sold more than 100 of the devices in recent months, and expects to sell more than 500 this year.

Prime Care has offices in Holtsville and Lynbrook and has been in business since 1982.

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