

# Connecting to caring at Birch Haven Senior Living

## A modern, scalable and secure network enables exceptional healthcare in the Northwoods

After a 24-year career in the U.S. Army Reserves where he served as a combat medic, Dale Kelm retired and took a job in administration at Birch Haven Senior Living in Ashland, Wisconsin, just off the shores of Lake Superior. Here, in this scenic Northwoods location, he would continue his commitment to caring for others.

However, his career in healthcare started well before that, when he took a job in a group home with people who had behavioral issues. "I gave it a one month trial period, until I would go look for a new job," he says. "Instead, I got to see what a positive impact care and compassion can have and how rewarding that experience can be."

That sentiment has stayed with him all along the way. So in 2014, just three short years after accepting a position as administrator at Birch Haven Senior Living, he purchased the facility with the goal of building on its legacy of first-class care. But when his technology services started standing in the way of that goal last year, he knew he was due for an upgrade.

### Too much competition for bandwidth

Internet and phone services play a key role in running the business and providing care at Birch Haven — handling electronic medical records

(EMRs) and keeping the lines of communication open between staffers, residents and their families are key priorities.

The existing coax technology was fine at first, but voice and constantly expanding data needs were competing for bandwidth. With the existing network, Kelm couldn't easily or cost-effectively scale up to meet the increasing demands on bandwidth.

Specifically, the bandwidth issue was impacting the staff's ability to access and manage EMRs and provide care at the level needed in an increasingly digitized environment. Plus, they had difficulty making and receiving calls, which also affected the dependability of the automated fire suppression and alarm systems running off those same phone lines.

Keeping their services online became an issue. He only had access to one third-party tech who could troubleshoot some issues and there were two freelance technicians sporadically available to him in the neighboring small town. It was a complicated, time-consuming challenge to keep the network up and running, and cut into time allotted for his administrative duties. There was the operational side of it, but there were also complaints from the



Residents and staff can now confidently and securely access the internet for communication and entertainment.

### Client profile



#### Client

Birch Haven Senior Living

#### Industry

Healthcare

#### Services

Managed Network Edge  
Managed WiFi  
Fiber Internet Access  
PRI Trunking

## Overview

- As it expanded, a senior living facility outgrew existing internet and phone system capabilities.
- With their original coax network, internet and phones were competing for the same bandwidth, electronic medical records became harder to manage, and they had difficulty making and receiving calls.

## Outcomes

- Managed Network Edge provided a dependable solution with Fiber Internet Access, Managed WiFi and a firewall for security.
- Effective bandwidth ensured efficient recordkeeping and administrative capabilities

## Why it matters

- Electronic medical records are safeguarded and secure.
- Staffers can spend more time caring for patients instead of infrastructure.
- Residents, staffers, and visitors can use and enjoy WiFi without constant interruptions in service.

increasing number of residents who were using the internet. Their WiFi service would drop and Kelm would hear about it, as residents would let him know they were displeased.

“We had a lot of interruptions in service in different locations across four buildings, so we were running all over the place managing that,” Kelm says. “The problem was usually related to the bandwidth issues, but sometimes it was user error, or maybe a resident tried to fix something which then caused another problem. Because of the inconsistencies in the network, we didn’t always know where to focus — why one building was down, but not the other — so we had to constantly troubleshoot.”

He needed one single technology partner that could meet all his needs, and he found that one partner in Spectrum Enterprise.

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—Dale Kelm, owner, Birch Haven Senior Living

## Time for a modern, scalable and secure approach

Kelm reached out to Spectrum Enterprise, who provided his internet service and had proven to be a reliable and responsive partner. He explained to his account manager how the business had to support more applications and systems, and required a modern, high-bandwidth network that could easily scale across the operation. Birch Haven needed all of that, plus a significant reduction of the internal IT burden.

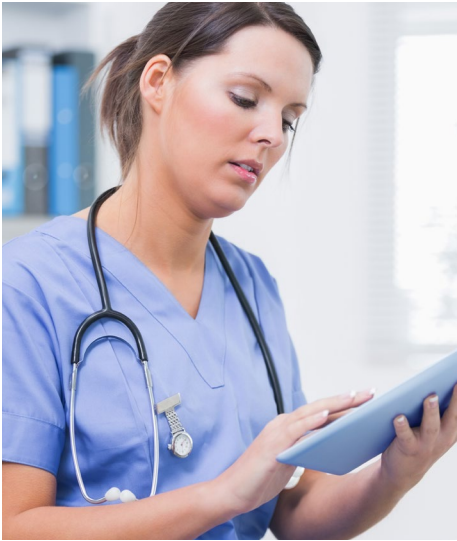


Staffers spend more time with residents, now that infrastructure issues no longer slow down processes.

Fed up with dealing with multiple partners, he also wanted to simplify his job by consolidating with one technology partner for internet, phone and cable. Kelm wanted one comprehensive resource, one contact, one bill.

After listening to his concerns, and learning all he could about Kelm’s objectives for Birch Haven so that he could think ahead and anticipate the facilities needs, The account manager proposed Managed Network Edge.

He explained how Managed Network Edge, delivered over the Cisco Meraki platform, would provide everything Kelm needed in one all-inclusive solution. They discussed how it could be fully managed or co-managed by Spectrum Enterprise and would include security, so Kelm would no longer have to be concerned about confirming his data was protected from constantly evolving security threats. Spectrum Enterprise Fiber Internet Access (FIA) service could be used for connectivity and would ensure access to EMRs. And, as Birch Haven’s needs changed in the future, other services such as Managed WiFi could be added — and that would soon follow.



Staffers can now quickly access Electronic Medical Records to deliver the care residents need.

For phone service, he explained they could run Spectrum Enterprise PRI Trunking over a separate fiber circuit from the data, which would address the bandwidth issues. Phones would now run off fiber and through a dedicated voice service, separate from internet, ensuring that Kelm and his team can once again place and receive calls consistently and remain confident in their fire suppression and alarm systems that also use those phone lines.

Birch Haven can also set up filters that limit web surfing to acceptable sites. That helps prevent issues from residents and visitors inadvertently accessing malware while they're here, for example, and it helps keep the staff focused on the business at hand.

"When I heard fiber was coming through this area, and we had the opportunity to get it, I wanted that right away for our facilities. 'Better internet, that's great!', I thought. It's where everything is going, access to the cloud for EMRs, and the Web for residents' entertainment is an absolute must-have in an assisted living facility," Kelm says. "And I have a new, younger management team

now and they're discovering more uses and services they'll be able to utilize with the upgrade."

Service used to just bog down for the staff and for residents and Kelm didn't always know why, he says. But with the higher-bandwidth service, the team can access EMRs and deliver the care residents need. And now they also have Managed WiFi, so there's been no complaints from the senior residents and their families who use the internet while on site.

### Enjoying the benefits of a consultative partnership

Kelm had indeed recognized the need for an upgrade, but at times the more technical aspects of the deployment left him a bit bemused. "I get the broad concepts. But when we get into industry terms, acronyms and specifics, I'm lost," he says. "The Spectrum Enterprise team really simplified a lot of things and was very patient with me. In our discussions, they would explain things thoroughly — the internet service, the firewall, and the phone service — so I could understand them."

**"When I heard fiber was coming through this area, and we had the opportunity to get it, I wanted that right away for our facilities."**

— Dale Kelm

With Managed Network Edge, they no longer have to drop what they're doing, troubleshoot, and attempt to fix problems. They get 24/7 IT support, which saves wear and tear on his on-site technician, makes work more efficient and the staff more productive, and he has the peace of mind about the security of residents' information. "We've had no outages, no breaches, no problems," he says.

Spectrum Enterprise has been the dependable technology partner Kelm can rely on. In turn, he can focus on fulfilling his goals of providing the best care and senior living experience possible for his residents, and growing his business.

"Spectrum Enterprise has the capacity to take care of all of the services I need. I appreciate supporting small business and local business because that's what I am. But when you have a big job, you get the big solution. A one-stop shop," Kelm explains, describing his partnership with Spectrum Enterprise. "The service has been great — handling electronic records, staying online consistently — we've had very few issues. And I have appreciated a lack of complaints from residents using WiFi. If there's ever an issue I will just call them. They'll fix it, they'll figure it out."

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### About Spectrum Enterprise

Spectrum Enterprise, a part of Charter Communications, Inc., is a national provider of scalable, fiber technology solutions serving many of America's largest businesses and communications service providers. The broad Spectrum Enterprise portfolio includes [networking and managed services solutions](#), [Internet access](#), [Ethernet access and networks](#), [Voice](#) and [TV solutions](#). The Spectrum Enterprise team of experts works closely with clients to achieve greater business success by providing solutions designed to meet their evolving needs. For more information, visit [enterprise.spectrum.com](https://enterprise.spectrum.com).

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