

St. Patrick School (Parnell)

This project, finished in April, 2002, involved providing Internet access for a Macintosh computer lab at a rural Catholic school. An expensive 64k connection to the Internet (\$200/mo for the line - not including the cost of the Internet account) had been provided by a Grand Rapids ISP in collaboration with Kent County. However, the performance was unacceptably slow, so the school discontinued the service in the fall of 2001, leaving a useless dedicated leased line that terminated at the Kent ISD Office.

The options were limited for St. Pat's. The CO had no BRI's available, but Ameritech/SBC offered to upgrade their facility to allow more ISDN connections if the School would pay them to do it at a cost of several thousands of dollars. Cable TV service was not available in the area, and the cost of provisioning a new leased line to an ISP was very expensive. A Satellite Internet Service from a Hastings reseller sounded promising. It was purchased and installed by the reseller in the fall of 2001. However, the reseller was unable to deliver on his assurances that he could integrate the product with the schools Mac network to provide access to each desktop. After many weeks of frustration and confusion, the reseller (already paid) dropped out of sight, and Kore / Hi Com, the Parish's technical services provider, stepped in.

Initial contact with the ISP/manufacture (Dish TV) revealed that the product was not intended to be networked into a Mac environment, and no known customer had done so. K/HC went to work researching the interconnectivity issues and came up with a solution involving the use of a product sold out of the Czech Republic. The trial version - limited to 5 users - worked very well after performance tuning. At that point, the unlimited user version was ordered and the school finally had the Internet connectivity it needed - running at 512 kbps and bursting to full T1.

It may seem ironic that a \$300 piece of software can make such a difference, but more often the not, the best solutions are a byproduct of careful planning, research and resourcefulness - rather than the result of big spending.