



Ascomnorth helps businesses communicate

By Al Parker

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ACME -- Owners of one of the largest communications firms in northern Michigan are hopeful about the coming year, despite the lagging economy.

"We're optimistic about the future," said Dave Barth, co-owner with Dave Wierenga of Ascomnorth, a full-service communications contractor in northern Michigan. "We're waiting for this economy to turn around, but there's business out there and people are still spending money."

Established in 1983, Ascomnorth is a supplier of communications products and services, including telephone and voice-mail systems, paging and intercom systems, clock systems, fiber optic systems, video systems, digital signage and professional sound systems.

Ascomnorth's major customers are schools, healthcare facilities and businesses in the service area from U.S. 10 to Sault St. Marie. The company provides school technology systems, including voice, video, telephone, voice mail, intercom and sound systems.

Ascomnorth's list of school clients includes Elk Rapids, Mesick, Suttons Bay, Frankfort, Indian River, Crawford-Au Sable, St. Ignace, Traverse City, Onekama, Mancelona, Kalkaska, Pellston and Alpena.

"Up until about 2000, schools were a large part of our business," said Barth, who joined the company in 1992. "With school funding issues, it's not as large as it once was."

The company also installed the sound system at Kresge Auditorium, a telephone and paging system for the Goodwill Store and Goodwill Inn, and a phone system for the Coldwell Banker real estate offices. Ascomnorth's health care clients include Munson Medical Center, Paul Oliver Hospital in Frankfort, Kalkaska Memorial Health Center and several nursing homes.

"We're also very active with churches," Barth said. "Most of them have sound systems and some need upgrading. We offer contemporary performance quality sound systems along with video capabilities."

Barth and Wierenga said many of the 15 employees have been with Ascomnorth for a decade or more.

"It's our personnel who really make this company successful," said Barth. "They really care what they're doing and that means a quality installation and a happy customer."

Ascomnorth was founded in 1983 by Dave's father Mel Wierenga, Fred Billin, and Larry and Starr Garter. In 2000, Barth and Dave Wierenga bought the company.

"I grew up in the business and have been working in it since I was 15," said Wierenga. "The technology

changes and it's a challenge to keep up, but I've always loved it. You definitely don't get bored."

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Photos



Dave Johnson, of Ascomnorth, measures part of a video screen he and Rick Gavitt are installing along with a video projector in Northport Covenant Church Tuesday morning. Record-Eagle