CareLink

BUSINESS
STRATEGY

INFRASTRUCTURE

PROACTIVE TECHNOLOGY
MANAGEMENT

NETWORK
ADMINISTRATION

REACTIVE
SUPPORT SERVICES

SUPPORT

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T E C H N O L O G I E S

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Contents

CareLink
Resources for Older People and Their Families

To connect older people and their families with resources to meet the opportunities and challenges of aging.

Profile

Central Arkansas seniors requiring day-to-day assistance—but not yet ready to uproot themselves from their homes—have an organization whose mission is to connect them "with resources to meet the opportunities and challenges of aging."

The nonprofit agency CareLink "helps homebound older people receive services that allow them to stay at home as long as possible, avoiding more costly care."

Perhaps best known for its Meals on Wheels service and home care program, the North Little Rock-based agency also offers a range of fitness and wellness programs in its associated senior centers. Its staff and volunteers help the region's older population to stay fit, healthy, and involved—resulting in seniors who are more active and independent as they age.

CareLink also helps family caregivers navigate the maze of available services and care for their aging family members. The organization offers one-on-one assistance to help caregiving relatives, providing them necessary information and resources to cope with challenges. CareLink also provides cash grants for respite care.

CareLink posts some impressive statistics:

- **$13.3 million**: Cost of support services offered each year, including homebound care; services for active older people; outreach and advocacy; and services for family caregivers
- **18,000**: people "CareLinked" with information and resources annually in Faulkner, Lonoke, Monroe, Prairie, Pulaski, and Saline counties
- **542**: hours of legal assistance provided as part of CareLink's advocacy services
- **30,000**: calls made to check in with homebound seniors
- **2,500**: meals served daily from CareLink's Meals on Wheels facility
- **65,000**: trips provided to transport seniors to senior centers and group shopping trips
- **$1 million**: value of volunteer hours every year as CareLink's volunteers brighten the lives of Central Arkansas seniors
- **523,000**: hours of home care services provided
- **6,400**: Medicare prescription drug assessments offered to area senior citizens

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> **"** I wouldn't want to find out we were using an unsupported software version if we missed an update.

Joy Scates
Vice President–Finance

Challenge

Founded in 1979, CareLink predates the explosive growth of information technology that is essential to successful charitable organizations today.

The organizations' vice president of finance recalls some growing pains as CareLink sought to enter the information age. Joyce Scates—Joy—remembers "a specific turning point for us. We realized that technology was going to be how we did business in the future. We had to get on board."

It was in the late 1990s. "We had some idea what software we needed," Joy recalls. "But we had no idea how to configure everything and set up communications so that all of us—in six counties, many working from home—could all access and enter information in the same system."

With a focus on providing senior care, rather than developing and maintaining the technology that exists in the background, CareLink's leaders recognized that "it was I.T. expertise we were lacking."

Joy enumerates "things I'd have no way to know." Her list includes "licenses that we need to update... whether we've installed the latest version of the software that runs our unified communications." She also cites HIPAA compliance as a commitment driving the nonprofit's I.T. concerns. CareLink prioritizes "the things we need to do to fully comply with all the regulatory compliance requirements of HIPAA. We need to protect ourselves, our network, our whole I.T. system from intrusions." Joy says the organization understood HIPAA compliance required an information technology roadmap including proactive management and maintenance.

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As CareLink's dependence on I.T. grew, the nonprofit began working with NetGain Technologies, initially on individual projects, in the late 1990s.

In 2002, NetGain Technologies introduced the managed I.T. services (MSP) model to CareLink. The nonprofit organization became an early member of Technology OneSource managed I.T.

"It was a hard choice [to switch]," Joy recalls. "There was some reluctance. Value for cost—how the investment could benefit us—and other reservations as well. But we knew we needed those kinds of services to operate and manage our programs how we wanted, without having to worry about the technology behind it all.

NetGain Technologies evolved from a "break-fix" vendor for CareLink, to a technology partner providing the organization full-time support and maintenance. During the transition, the MSP's I.T engineers evaluated CareLink's existing infrastructure and evaluated how the organization was utilizing technology to accomplish its mission.

The Technology OneSource team "figured out what we needed to do—you helped us look at and explore other options for utilizing technology that we hadn't thought about," Joy remembers. "Back then, we had just a couple of servers. We initially added servers, then with virtualization we've moved back to a smaller footprint. One thing that hasn't changed is our need for your expertise and help in doing what we need to do in I.T. so we can accomplish our goals for the senior community."

"One thing that hasn't changed is ... doing what we need to do in I.T. so we can accomplish our goals for the senior community."

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> **"**
> **During the course of our relationship, we've done due diligence to check out other MSPs—but all roads led back to NetGain Technologies. When all was said and done, NetGain provided the best value."**

Joy Scates
Vice President–Finance

Joy Scates affirms that the leadership team at CareLink values efficiency and forward thinking. The nonprofit meets with its Technology OneSource advisors for regular consultations—a quarterly review of the health and stability of the existing I.T. platform, along with budget planning and decisions about growth and planned hardware replacement.

"We're a nonprofit. We do set aside money every year for technology—but it's not as much as we'd like, so it's really important for us to make good decisions on where to put that money. Our account representative and the engineers make it easy for us to see where our real needs are." And just as importantly, "NetGain does it in such a way that I know the items at the greatest risk, and those that need attention but can wait while we focus on higher-priority issues. That's been great. It allows us to put our resources to their best use."

A telling indicator of CareLink's adept use of technology is the organizations' ability to grow to meet the demands of its community. Within a network of eight similar nonprofits providing senior care services in the state, CareLink is one that fully embraced technology. "Doing so allowed us to provide the most complete array of services and the highest number of seniors served annually," Joy says. "Technology is certainly not the only reason, but it's a factor. It gives us the information to make good business decisions."

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Raise the I.Q. of your **I.T.**

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