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A Service of The Repository, Canton, Ohio[Comment on this story.](#)[Go to Financial](#)**Cameras allow parents to watch kids' every move**

Monday, July 1, 2002

By G. PATRICK KELLEY Repository business writer

PLAIN TWP. -- It's probably appropriate that an information technology company gave birth to a company that helps parents keep an eye on their kids through the World Wide Web.



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Repository / Joy Newcomb

ABseeCams at 6316 Middlebranch Ave. NE is contacting daycare centers nationwide, offering its proprietary brand of what's become generically known as a babycam.

CONCERNED PARENT. Dr. Michael Brown can now check in on his son at For A Child daycare via the web.

The service lets parents drop in — via the Web — to their children's daycare centers without leaving work or calling the center on the phone.

ABsee is a subsidiary of Betterbuilt.com, owned by John Draggi. Betterbuilt, at the same Middlebranch address, provides information technology for companies that aren't big enough to have their own IT departments.

Draggi said Betterbuilt "incubated" ABsee, developing the software and the security systems for dealing with children.

For a Child daycare at 1300 S. Main St. in North Canton is ABsee's test site. The center has four cameras: one in the infant room play area, two in the L-shaped toddler area and one in the preschool room that shows the entire area.

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Some areas purposely not shown

Susan Altier, who owns For a Child with her husband, Tim, said the infant room camera purposely doesn't show the crib area or the changing area. That's just another of the security features that both the software developers and daycare owners are conscious of.

The Web cam is an added benefit to alleviate parents' fears, especially those who may be leaving a baby behind for the first time, she said. Although the Web cam is being offered to current parents at no cost, it's really geared toward prospective parents, she said.

"I feel that child care centers get a lot of bad publicity" from high-profile criminal cases, she said.

She believes other daycare centers will follow their example but even though she is confident of her staff, "Initially, I think we were all a little apprehensive," she said.

"This is a very high-stress environment. To know that you're going to be watched anytime during the day is more stressful."

She and her husband agreed to be a test site because "We thought it was a great opportunity for us and our families."

The four cameras and the package that goes with them costs For a Child \$408 each month.

The smallest package offered by ABsee is \$279 a month, for smaller centers, but a six-camera setup is the ideal for ABsee's system, said Carl Witt, technical administrator.

Center's package is different

Draggi and Witt believe their package separates them from companies on the two coasts that offer daycare Web cams. It includes the installation of all the hardware and software, support, and a Web site for the center.

The Web site has two sides: one is basically advertising for the center, Witt said. The other is protected by password and available only to parents.

That side of the site could list lunch schedules, other calendars, and even children's artwork, Draggi said. It also is the side where parents can look at their children.

The software protection requires a user name and password to see the camera views, and then the parent only has access to the room his or her child is in. The user names and passwords can be changed periodically for more protection.

That whole setup is further protected by a system designed to stop hackers. While the Web page is served through ABsee's servers, the streaming video from the daycare goes directly from the daycare to the parent's computer.

The video capability is 30 frames per second, which allows for real time viewing.

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“Everyone who has a picture of their family on their desk or a screen saver, this is perfect for them,” Witt said.

Draggi said there is no recording of the streaming video from the daycares, and there is no way to preserve images.

“The program won’t allow copying. We don’t want those images being saved at all,” he said. And, after a period of time set by the daycare, the software automatically shuts down the streaming video, also for security reasons.

A Web cam probably won’t be the main reason for choosing a daycare, but Witt said it gives a competitive edge in marketing.

“Most daycare centers will offer it as a free service to boost enrollment,” he said.

Some parents who are worried about their children call the daycare center every hour, Draggi said. He’s seen testimonials from employers who say employees are more at ease because of a Web cam setup.

Even companies who don’t want employees going to daycare Web sites during work time probably would allow it at lunch or other breaks, he said.

“It can add to productivity for (parental) first-timers,” Witt said. “If it brings them back to earth and they can perform their duties, it’s a benefit to employers.”

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