



Garden City-based Life's WORC provides comprehensive support to people with special needs, including intellectual challenges, developmental disabilities, and autism. Currently, the organization manages more than 40 homes and 12 nonresidential programs throughout Long Island, Queens and Manhattan.

We recently interviewed Kevin Lee, Life's WORC information technology (IT) director, about how the organization uses technology in its mission and other topics.

Q: What would you say is the mission of your organization?

Kevin Lee: Life's WORC provides comprehensive support to people with special needs including intellectual challenges, developmental disabilities and autism. In addition to having a great reputation of providing quality support to a special population, Life's WORC is also known for its efficiency. In fact, as cited in our most recent audited financial report, 90 percent of the money received by Life's WORC is spent directly on the individuals in our homes and programs.

Q: How does your organization use technology to accomplish that mission?

KL: Security for staff and individuals we serve is paramount. We have cameras and swipe cards at our facilities. We also implemented touch-based time clock solutions, which leverages photos for accurate capture of employee time entries, which will eliminate paper and error.

Q: How do the swipe cards help?

KL: You can't get into certain rooms and you can't get into buildings off-hours. So, the buildings automatically lock down and so do the stairwells. You need to swipe cards to use the elevator access. We can actually zone off parts of buildings.

Q: And what are the benefits of having a touch-based time clock solution?

KL: That eliminates a lot of the manu-

al punch time card, the buddy system, I would say ... and takes away a lot of the paperwork, because what it does is, you're assigned a personal PIN and you go in front of all the facilities and the way you clock in is it actually takes a picture of you and it does facial recognition.



Q: Cybersecurity is a big issue now. Is that an issue for your organization?

KL: It hasn't been an issue yet. But that doesn't mean we're not diligent on it. We are now asking for audits and penetration tests. All of our network is housed in a secured, hardened data center with multiple colocation to provide full redundancy—and they're all HIPAA [Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act] compliant. Our backend is secure and scalable to run Life's WORC workloads with the flexibility to deploy and manage our infrastructure.

Q: Have you used augmented reality, virtual reality (VR) or artificial intelligence (AI) yet, or do you plan to?

KL: We plan on exploring that — especially the AI. Augmented reality [or VR might be of interest] for marketing purposes.

Q: Please tell readers about what you do in your role as IT director.

KL: As a director of technology, my responsibilities include overseeing the infrastructure, technical operations and managing the IT team in order to achieve goals, meet quotas, eliminate security risks, increase user satisfaction, and maintain operations and systems.

Q: What is the biggest challenge of your job and why?

KL: Technology changes rapidly. Users, managers at all levels, and competitors pressure the IT department to implement new technology simply because it is new. The challenge is deciding which of these "new" technologies will work best in advancing the organization, and which are better off to avoid for the organization. You need to have a solid understanding of the organization prior to jumping into new trends in technology. You must always ask: "How does this new technology address our current challenges?"

Q: How do you work to overcome those challenges?

KL: Training. We are very proud of the fact that staff is trained often and frequently, but it can be challenging at times for staff to come to the training centers. We plan on overcoming these challenges with video conferencing, where staff can log in remotely and see a live presentation from their residences.

Q: The 50th anniversary of Life's WORC is coming up in only two years. Do you have any specific plans to celebrate that you can share with us?

KL: Life's WORC is establishing a special 50th Anniversary Planning Committee which is being chaired by Vicki Schneps-Yunis, the agency's founder [and *Long Island Press* publisher]. This committee will establish a schedule of activities throughout the year — 2021 — which will culminate in a 50th Anniversary Gala.