



the Wooden Wagon
TOYS & FOLK ART

Andrea and I moved to New Salem in 2008, thinking that it would be the perfect community for raising our three sons after the rush of suburban life. We own and operate The Wooden Wagon--an online retail business--and can work even in a rural location if there is high-speed Internet service. We were assured that satellite or Wi-Fi would be viable options to use.

But Wi-Fi was not an option for security reasons, and we quickly discovered that satellite was not sufficient, even after upgrading to the highest, most expensive level of service. The connection was too slow/intermittent to process credit cards reliably, or to maintain our website, or to do most of the other routine tasks that are part of our work. To keep the business running, we were forced to subscribe to a dedicated T1 line, with monthly charges of up to \$600.

Despite its cost, the outdated T1 line still gives us problems with up- and download times, line problems due to weather conditions, and lag times due to too little bandwidth. Teleconferencing is nearly impossible. And it takes hours (sometimes as long as a day) to make necessary software upgrades to our computer, now that this is mostly done over the Internet: I cannot imagine how it could be done with slower services. The lack of a 21st-century service makes us (and businesses like ours) less efficient, less competitive and less profitable.

Though The Wooden Wagon is a specialty business, our needs are not unique: pretty much any business owner or person hoping to telecommute has the same requirements. Businesses outside the region with whom we work expect us to be at the same level technologically as they: they will not make concessions just because our Internet service is outdated. We must keep up, or be left behind.

Broadband is not a luxury that only the top businesses need. Technology is marching on at a furious pace, and it is vital that we give the people and the businesses in this area the means to compete and succeed. Supporting the broadband warrant for New Salem is the first step towards doing this.

Adam Frost