

SATURDAY BUSINESS

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GRAND OPENING

The owner of Tiger Family Chiropractic & Wellness Center focuses on her patients' total well-being.

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THE ENTREPRENEUR NEXT DOOR

by Mary Paulsell

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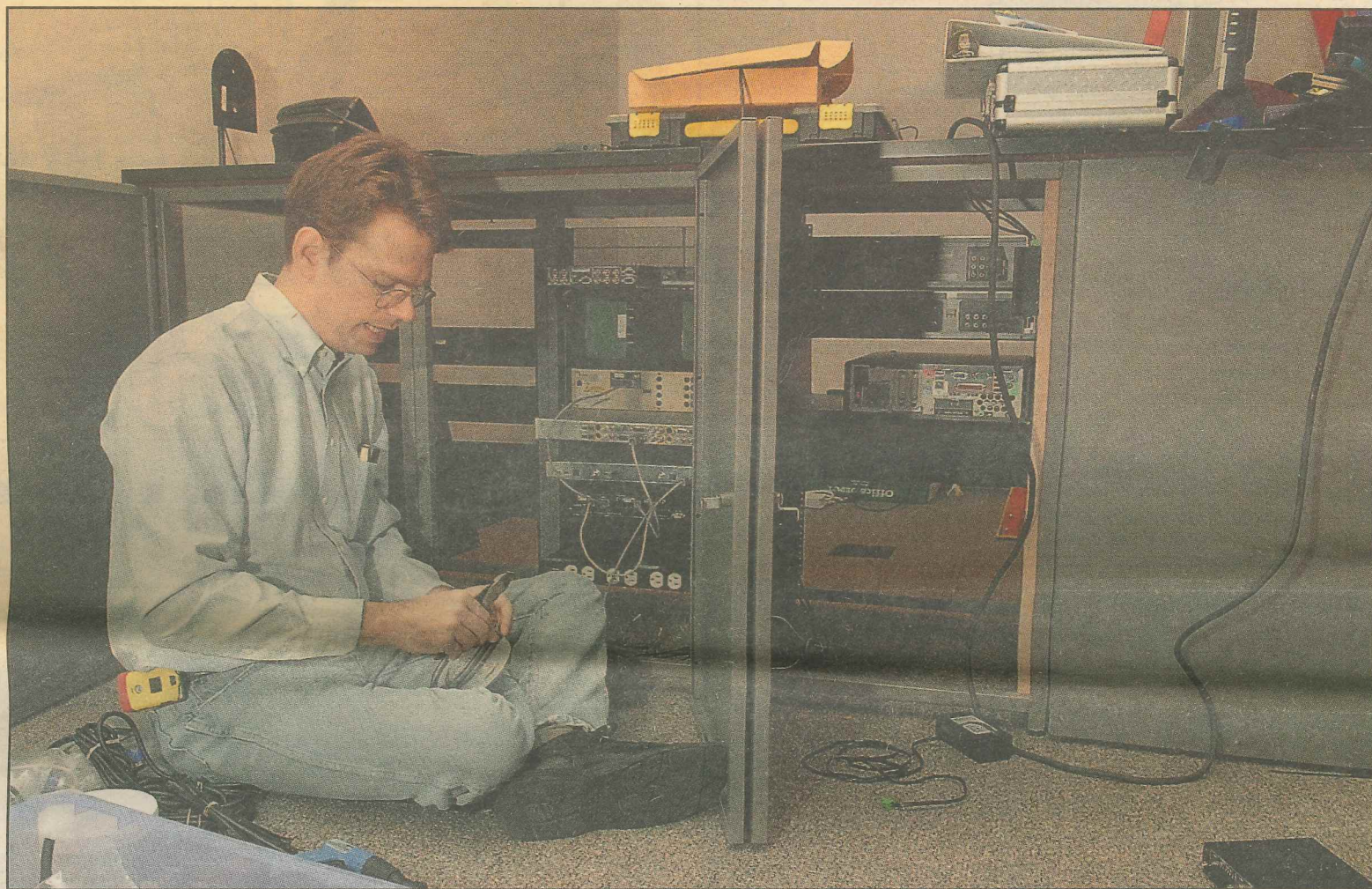
STREET TALK

by Kevin Coleman

A 70-unit condominium complex sprouting in south Columbia will feature a geothermal heating system.

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PROFILE: KALEIDOSCOPE VIDEOCONFERENCING



Don Shrubshell photo

J. Scott Christianson, owner of Kaleidoscope Videoconferencing, ties cables together as he installs the Columbia Area Career Center's new Polycom videoconferencing system, which will allow connection with as many as six other videoconferencing sites. Kaleidoscope Videoconferencing sells and services videoconferencing equipment and offers installation, training and troubleshooting support.

Envisioning the Future

J. Scott Christianson saw the potential of videoconferencing and started a company to help businesses harness the technology. Now his firm specializes in making the long-distance communications happen.

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THIS
WEEK'S
MARKET



+329.14

Dow Jones
13,442.52



+37.48

NASDAQ
2,602.18



+30.7

S&P
1,484.25



+0.092

10-year treasuries
4.462

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stock listings.

Envisioning the Future

Kaleidoscope Videoconferencing of Columbia is making it possible for individuals, companies and other organizations to make their communications more efficient.

By PAMELA A. MULUMBY
of the Tribune's staff

On a recent afternoon, five members of the Missouri Distance Learning Association board of directors settled into leather chairs at a boardroom table in a conference room at Kaleidoscope Videoconferencing in Columbia. They sat attentively, gazing up at a sophisticated camera and a 50-inch plasma screen.

The screen flickered to the commands of a wireless remote, and within seconds, the board members were talking face to face with colleagues in similar rooms in Springfield, Maryville, St. Louis, Kansas City, Warsaw and Poplar Bluff.

Welcome to the world of videoconferencing.

Ten years ago, J. Scott Christianson gave up a stable job to

launch Kaleidoscope Consulting with the aim of helping businesses increase productivity through videoconferencing. At the time, videoconferencing was reserved for top executives in large corporations, and there wasn't much local demand for it. Christianson took a chance and ventured into the business anyway.

Today, Christianson no longer just offers videoconferencing consultation; he has one of the most successful videoconferencing businesses in Missouri, he said.

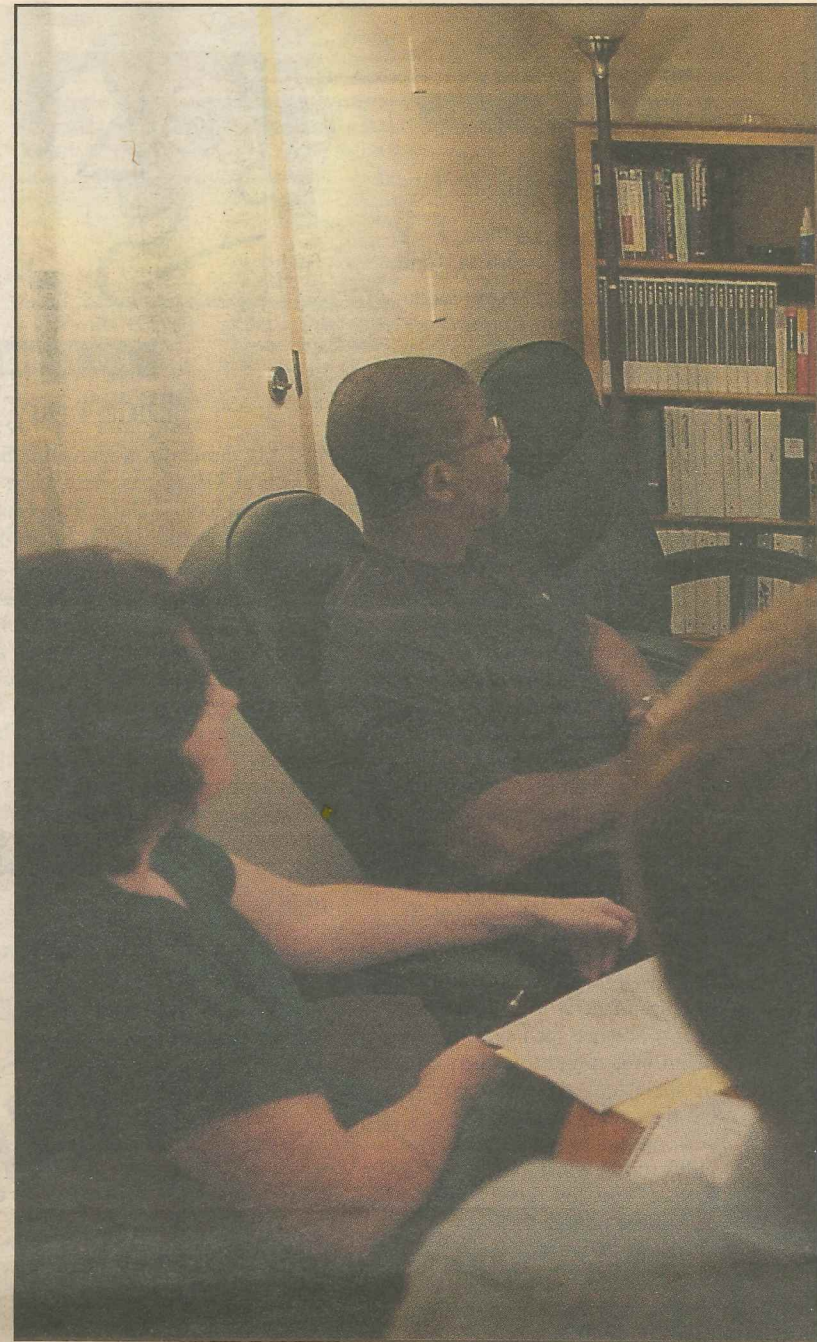
With several boardrooms in Mid-Missouri and the surrounding area now equipped with sophisticated cameras, multispeaker sound systems and large plasma displays that enable group videoconferences, Kaleidoscope Videoconferencing has found its niche.

Randy Bono, vice president of

information technology at Premier Bank, agreed. "Kaleidoscope does an excellent job in providing services and support in the state," he said. "We use them in all our locations, including Missouri, Illinois and Texas."

Kaleidoscope Videoconferencing sells and services an array of videoconferencing equipment from all the leading manufacturers to a clientele that includes banks, courts, schools and the military. It also offers installation, training and troubleshooting support to customers nationwide. Christianson said he and an employee, Del Miller, install and service all the equipment. Christianson's wife, Ava Fajen, manages the office, does the bookkeeping and runs the videoconferencing rental service.

Christianson is on the board of the Missouri Distance Learning



Members of the Missouri Distance Learning Association board of directors around Missouri during a videoconference at Christianson's business.

Association and is chairman of the city's Internet Citizens Advisory Group and the Boone County Industrial Development Authority. He also writes a weekly column on politics for the Tribune.

Christianson said Kaleidoscope Videoconferencing guides customers in the selection of equipment to meet their budgetary needs and every system he installs is customized.

"We are experts in engineering and installing videoconferencing systems for conference rooms, classrooms, courtrooms and training facilities," he said. "We can provide end-to-end solutions for different organizations and companies, from helping them to design their telecommunication network to installing equipment and training employees."

With Internet giants such as Yahoo, MSN and AOL offering simple Web conferencing as part of their online communication tools, businesses interested in reaching

out to remote customers and colleagues have many options. But Christianson said his business stands out because of its reputation and its state-of-the-art systems. Rather than participants gathering around a desktop with jerky video, Kaleidoscope Videoconferencing offers its customers custom-built rooms complete with high-definition displays, sound systems, sophisticated cameras and customized furniture and lighting.

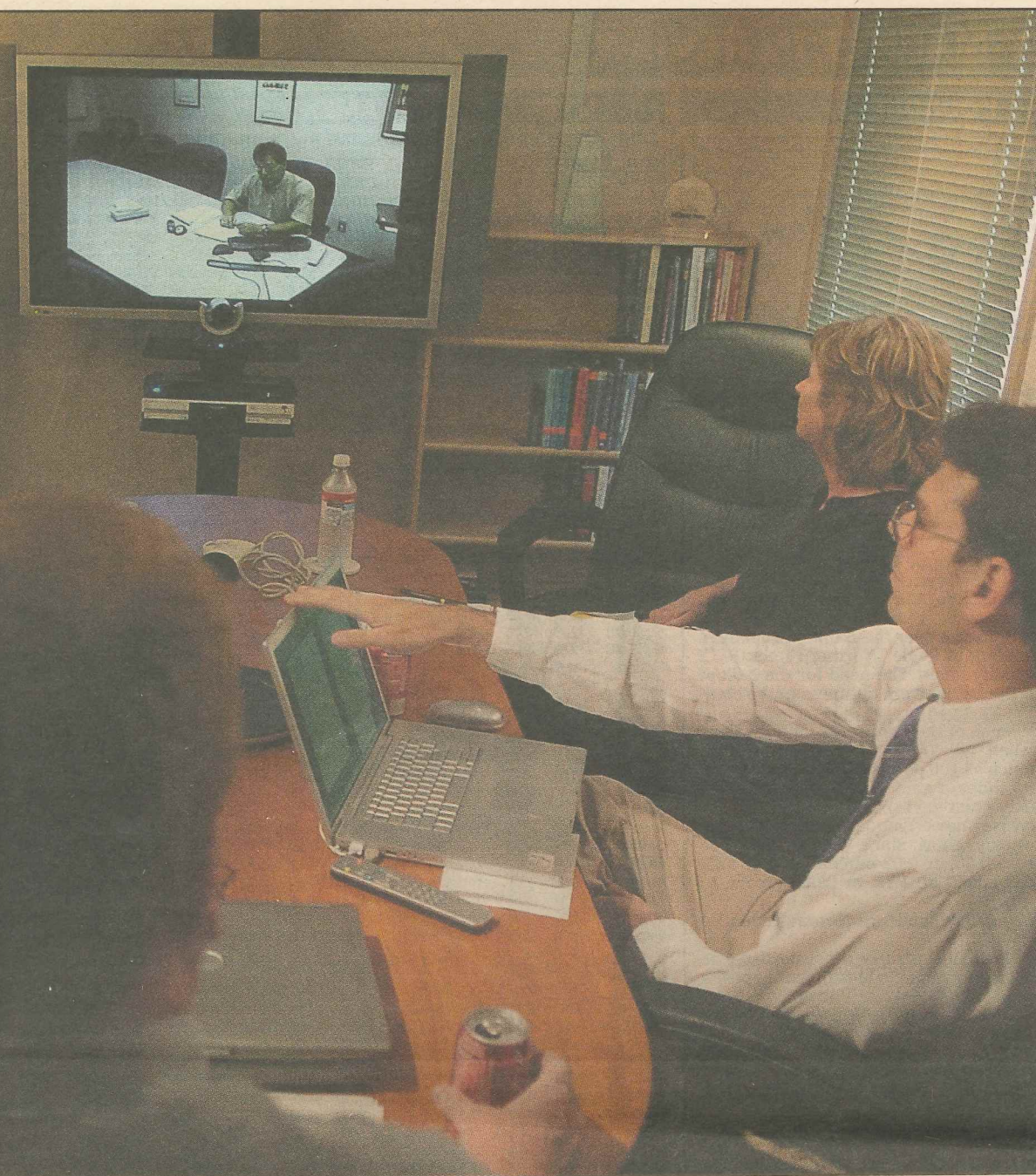
"Those services are fine for what they are, but our systems give customers a level of interaction that they don't find with online, Web-based services," Christianson said. "For example, the new high-definition videoconferencing systems that we are offering allow participants to combine face-to-face communications with their PowerPoint presentations and other multimedia as if they were in the same room. It's a system designed for conducting real business and for making money."



Christianson connects computer cable to videoconferencing equipment at the Columbia Area Career Center. A tracking camera will automatically focus on any speaker in the audience after hearing his or her voice.

Don Shrubshell photo

COLUMBIA DAILY TRIBUNE



Parker Eshelman photo

s, including J. Scott Christianson, right, conduct a meeting with colleagues located at different sites Kaleidoscope Videoconferencing.

Christianson said customers have the option of either purchasing the videoconferencing equipment or renting out a videoconferencing facility at Kaleidoscope Videoconferencing's office on West Broadway. Outfitting a videoconferencing facility, he said, can range in price from \$8,000 to \$100,000, depending on the facility and the desired features.

Kaleidoscope's rental facility has been fitted with the latest videoconferencing equipment and is ideal for job interviews, remote depositions, contract negotiations, mediation and arbitration, client meetings, medical consultations, company meetings and events, training and seminars, Christianson said. The facility can accommodate as many as eight people, and a customer can book a one-hour videoconferencing session for \$175. Total costs vary depending on the number of sites a particular customer wants to be connected with, he said. "For multiple sites, we charge for the multipoint device, which allows us to connect to three or more sites at a time," Christianson said. "The multipoint fee is usually \$50 per site."

Christianson said he can connect customers to more than 3,000 public videoconferencing rooms across the United States and in more than 70 countries.

"The way it works is fairly simple," he said. "Clients call us and tell us where they want to connect with and when. We will find a facility in that city or country that we can rent out and make the appropriate arrangements. Then all the customers have to do is to walk in at the appointed hour, and they'll be connected to their remote sites."

Thayne Barton, manager of administrative services at Three Rivers Electric Cooperative, said his company recently bought videoconferencing equipment from Kaleidoscope Videoconferencing. "Their equipment is top-notch," he said. "Videoconferencing has helped us in communication with our head office in Linn and our branch office in Brazito."

As a teenager, Christianson worked with his father, John Christianson, who owned Christianson Service Co., a Columbia business that installed and maintained pools and spas. "It was a great experience for me," he

said. "I got to learn a lot of new skills and see how a project goes from an idea to completion."

Despite having an early start in business, Christianson, 38, was uncertain about what career path he wanted to take.

"I remember being a senior at Rock Bridge and my parents asking me what I planned to do after graduation," he said. "I mentioned a list of projects that I wanted to work on. ... However, they quickly informed me that my options were to either move out and get a job, join the military or to attend college."

Christianson took the ultimatum seriously and pursued a degree in biology at the University of Missouri-Columbia. He graduated in 1991 and landed a job at the university as a research specialist in a biology laboratory. Christianson developed a passion for technology and began doing computer jobs on the side. "I got very interested in technology as a career in the early '90s as the Internet and other technologies started to open up new opportunities," he said.

In 1993, Christianson's passion for technology became stronger, so he left his career in biology and became



Don Shrubshell photo

Christianson and employee Del Miller run computer wire while installing videoconferencing equipment at the Columbia Area Career Center.

a technical coordinator for Missouri Interactive Telecommunications Education Network, or MITE, one of the first videoconferencing networks in Missouri. "Since the technology was so new, no one really had any experience with it," he said. "We were all learning as we were going along. It was very exciting to be involved with an emerging technology."

Christianson worked for the network for six years before starting his own business. With a \$40,000 startup loan backed by the U.S. Small Business Administration, he launched Kaleidoscope Consulting out of his Columbia home. The business remained there until 2004, when it moved into its location at 201 W. Broadway.

The business started out primarily as a consulting firm, but as he talked to clients, Christianson learned that a demand existed for videoconferencing services. With that in mind, he launched Kaleidoscope Videoconferencing as a division of Kaleidoscope Consulting in October 2004. Some of the company's clients include Premier Bank, Associated Electric Cooperatives, SEMCO Inc. and MU.

Experts say worldwide demand for videoconferencing has rapidly risen as more businesses look to increase efficiency by reducing the amount of time spent in meetings in a market dogged by high fuel prices. They predict that videoconferencing is going to revolutionize the business world and that by the end of next year, Web and videoconferencing will be available to most corporate users as a standard tool, sitting alongside e-mail and instant messaging.

Christianson said companies that have jumped on the

videoconferencing bandwagon have received enormous benefits. "By using videoconferencing, companies save thousands of dollars on airfare, hotel rooms, meals, rental cars and entertainment expenses — and that's just the direct costs," he said. "And every hour that an employee spends in the car, in the air or at the airport is time they could be spending on making money. Videoconferencing is a way for businesses to not just be more efficient but to make money."

Companies also are turning to videoconferencing as a means of helping the environment by reducing greenhouse gas emissions. According to a recent report by the videoconferencing company Tandberg, telecommunication giant Vodafone has eliminated 13,500 flights per year since committing to videoconferencing as a business tool. This has helped Vodafone reduce its carbon emissions by more than 5,500 tons annually and paid for its entire videoconferencing investment within one year, the report said.

Christianson said his goal is to continue providing customers with cutting-edge equipment and to keep saving them money. He said he likes the flexibility of being self-employed, and, even though his business entails a lot of traveling, he enjoys it. One of the most challenging aspects of the business has been keeping the sales cycle running while finishing other projects, he said.

"We are not like a retail business, and I can't tell you what we will sell three months from now and to whom we will sell it," Christianson said, "but somehow the future always comes, and there is always new business."

Reach Pamela A. Mulumby at (573) 815-1711 or pmulumby@tribmail.com.