



CASE STUDY

Creating smarter spaces removes complexity from building security



Highlights

- Reduced the number of cameras with higher-resolution technology to provide greater coverage
- Expanded camera locations and leveraged features to provide on-site parents with the ability to monitor child play areas
- Helped avert potentially catastrophic damage to a data center

1.4 million
square feet over
15 locations

Three cameras
replace eight in one
gymnasium

\$500,000
in hardware protected
by alerts

“Previously, unless a serious crime was committed, we wouldn’t pull video. With Meraki cameras, video is much more accessible and visually clear—we have been able to leverage it in many more instances.”

BRIAN POND

Vice President of Technology, Greater Wichita YMCA

LOCATION

Wichita, KS

INDUSTRY

Nonprofit organization

PRODUCTS

MV smart cameras

MT sensors

MG wireless WAN/5G

Overview

A local YMCA—or more simply, the Y—is a community hub that welcomes and supports all. The leading nonprofit provides opportunities for local residents to improve their health, offers after-school programs and team sports for school-age children, and gives the community a place to come together.

One of the top nonprofit organizations in the U.S. is the Greater Wichita YMCA, with almost 1,500 staff, ten traditional branches, and three large indoor sports facilities. The Greater Wichita YMCA is a prominent community presence, with staff members placed at nearly every school in the area to support in-school and after-school programs.

And where other Ys typically have community membership levels of up to 5% of residents, for Greater Wichita, that figure is a staggering 40%. It’s a measure of participation that makes them justifiably very proud.

Challenge:

Across their ten locations, the buildings are incredibly large, and it's difficult to cover everything with cameras. At the back end of their legacy cameras, a bank of DVRs in multiple closets was gathering footage, so retrieving video was complicated and very time consuming for staff. A technician would have to go to each DVR, plug into it, retrieve the video to see what was there, then move to a DVR in another area and repeat the process, and it was a huge drain on staff resources.

Staff could spend hours monitoring and reviewing video. When incidents were reported, staff could easily find themselves going down a rabbit hole to track related footage. The Greater Wichita YMCA needed a more effective and efficient alternative.

“ [The YMCA] buildings are massive and take a lot of cameras to properly cover.”

BRIAN POND

Vice President of Technology, Greater Wichita YMCA

“ One of the biggest problems was the difficulty in retrieving video. It took hours going to each DVR closet.”

BRIAN POND

VP of Technology, Greater Wichita YMCA

Solution:

When a new branch opened in the nearby city of Newton, the Y placed its first order for new Cisco Meraki MV cloud-managed smart cameras. Pond and his team were immediately impressed.

The cameras brought a new wave of future-proof technology with cloud management. A dashboard gave a centralized view of all the camera visuals, and the cloud-managed system meant new features were added to help streamline setup, management, and camera configuration. The higher resolution of these cameras also meant that a fewer number could cover the same area—a big win for an organization on a limited budget.

Pond pushed this idea further and tried different camera suppliers with 1080p resolutions, but found that the quality wasn't better than the Y's original DVRs. While video retrieval was via a network, the process was not simple. For Pond, the obvious answer was the Meraki dashboard for all of their infrastructure management.

The Y ordered a set of Meraki cameras and hardware that their technical team could install themselves. Additionally, fewer cameras were needed to cover large areas like basketball courts.



Results:

For Pond, the Meraki platform has more advantages because of new capabilities to expand coverage to additional areas. Now, children at play are also monitored. Parents using the Y's facilities can drop children at the Kids' Zone for up to two hours and view them on monitors while they are working out or in a class within the building. The monitors in the adult exercise areas live stream the video feed from the cameras in the Kids' Zone.

It's not day care, but most facilities have this offering and parents having provided a lot of very positive feedback.

The Meraki cameras and sensors also helped prevent a potential catastrophe at the Y's data center. Recently, an outage took down all power and air conditioning. The Y has an emergency generator, but the IT team quickly discovered thermal issues. The Meraki temperature sensors triggered alerts to Pond via the Meraki mobile app, email, and SMS texts, saving the Greater Wichita YMCA hundreds of thousands of dollars in what could have been damaged equipment, loss of data, as well as overall impact to facility operations.

"We were fortunate to have the early alerts provided by the Meraki sensor."

Meraki technology is indispensable for the Greater Wichita Y as it touches every aspect of operations, including Wi-Fi access, switchboards, and all of their transactional business. Up to 30,000 unique wireless devices are supported at the Y with Meraki each week.

For the small technical team, Meraki allows the Y to run lean and not worry about a thing. That becomes even more important now as the Greater Wichita YMCA and the YMCA of Hutchinson & Reno County have joined together to better serve their communities.

With the Meraki portfolio, it will be a straightforward expansion to add sites and Meraki cameras. The benefits of selecting future-proof technology with cloud management are already scoring results.



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