



## The weNetOK Story

weNetOK was created to solve a problem at the St. Francis House Youth Center in Odell, Oregon. Now it is available to solve this problem in classrooms, youth centers, and homes.

St. Francis House offers hospitality to 25-50 young people, ages 4 to 15, on weekday afternoons and Saturday mornings. There are seven computers in the center and the computers are a popular attraction; the young people like to surf the Internet.

A pressing problem was that some of these young people were browsing inappropriate websites. The volunteer staff spent much of their attention looking over kids' shoulders to assure that the content was OK. Inevitably, disagreements arose about what was appropriate content. Volunteers disliked the "police" role. Young people disliked having their judgment questioned. Volunteer time was being taken away from other activities, taking attention away from the kids who weren't using the computers.

We tried filters, but there were always websites that could slip through the filters. We looked at some other "white-list" Internet browsers, but they didn't fit our need for several reasons.

- Some programs were too cartoonish — fine for a 5 year-old, but insulting to a 12 year-old.
- Some programs required each user to be enrolled and have a separate login. This requirement was unworkable for a drop-in center, staffed with non-techie volunteers.
- Some programs required that the white-list be updated on every computer. Also unworkable.
- Almost all of the programs were promoting commercial websites. The constant pressure to buy a product or subscription didn't fit our vision (or pocketbook).

weNetOK solved the problem.

- The website list prevents young people from browsing inappropriate sites.
- Arguments about what is OK or not OK don't happen. The only websites available are pre-screened ones.
- A staff member can change the website list for all computers at once. This allows flexibility: kids can request a website and, if a staff member approves, it can easily be added for all of the computers.
- The signal image allows the staff to see that the users are looking at a safe website. The image is large and bright; it can be seen from across the room, allowing staff members to work at other activities and still keep an eye on the young people using the computers. No more need to constantly watch over shoulders. The atmosphere around the computers is relaxed and free.