

Kitchener startup develops tool to help parents keep an eye children's browsing

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KITCHENER — Alerted by the giggles and stifled laughter of his two young boys, Antoine Boucher bent down to see his offspring huddled under the table and looking at the screen of a tablet.

"It was a shock to me," Boucher said. "I find the Internet so important. I wasn't born with it. My children were born with it, but here I am in that situation, which I didn't really think about before that."

His sons were viewing the contents and pictures of a website that was completely inappropriate. That moment a few years ago inspired Boucher to create Kindera, a wireless device that allows parents to control what their children are watching and reading on the web.

During the first 12 years or so of the searchable web, parents were advised to keep desktop computers in a shared space in the home — the kitchen, living room or dining room — so they could keep an eye on their children's browsing. With parents a few steps away, children were unlikely to start watching porn and chatting with sexual predators online.

But that parenting advice was rendered as obsolete as punch cards once laptops, tablets and smartphones became commonplace. Now, children, tweens and teens can browse the most questionable content on the web in the most private rooms of the home.

"I said to myself, 'I have to do something,'" Boucher said. "I am an engineer so I researched everything for three months, spent some money, tried different things."

He found nothing that is easy to use and can be employed as a parenting tool.

So two years ago he started developing Kindera, (www.kindera.com), which was recently launched for sale. Simply put, it is a wireless access point that connects to the router in your home. Any traffic going through the router is supervised by Kindera.

"It is sort of this intelligent home firewall," Boucher said. "It allows me to monitor what my children are doing. It allows me to set filtering on content based on the different ages of my children."

At the Boucher home on school nights, Kindera shuts down all access to the web after 8:30 p.m.

"After I caught my sons doing this, I realized I was oblivious to many issues surrounding it, and the level of anxiety jumps up," Boucher said. "At the end of the day the product gave me the ability to manage that a lot better."

Unlike other devices, Kindera does not require a user to download software to his or her laptop, tablet or smartphone. There is a cloud-based platform that users access to control the settings from their smartphone or other devices.

"We want to make it as easy as possible for people," Boucher said.

The Kindera device sells for \$199 from the product's website. For the first year there are no fees. After one year there is a monthly fee of \$9.

The product motto: Protect, teach and support. It protects children from inappropriate content, it teaches them how to use the web responsibly, and it supports parents trying to teach their children in the age of the Internet.

Boucher is a veteran technologist who founded BluePoint Technology, a startup in the Communitel Hub at the Tannery in downtown Kitchener. Up until a few years ago he had spent decades working for others, and felt it was time for his own startup.

BluePoint Technology is a small, self-financed startup and its sole product is Kindera.

"I have been in high tech all my life," Boucher said. "But my true passion is the one we are doing today."

Boucher graduated from McGill University with a degree in electrical engineering and computer science. He worked for a startup in nearby London called CableShare that was doing interactive television. Later, he moved to Kitchener and worked for Kaleidscape, a BlueRay and DVD movie server.

Then Boucher was at BlackBerry, doing research and development for five years as vice-president of advanced accessories. Then, he found his boys hiding under a table, snickering at the tablet screen in front of them.

"In a lot of startups I believe I made a lot of money for other people, perhaps I was unwilling to go on my own, for a while," he said.

"When I left BlackBerry, everything sort of came together and I said, 'If I don't do this now I will never be able to do it,'" Boucher said.



Antoine Boucher, President and CEO of BluePoint Technology, holds a Kindera system that allows parents to supervise their children's activity on the internet.

David Bebee, Record staff