

# New leadership roles announced at The Korte Company

Todd Korte has begun his role as executive chairman of The Korte Company after serving 21 years as the company’s president and CEO, the company announced.

Brent Korte, The Korte Company’s former chief operating officer, was named the company’s new president and CEO. In the 63-year history of The Korte Company, Brent is only the fourth to hold this title. Ralph Korte, Vern Eardley, and Todd Korte preceded Brent in this position.

Todd Korte is the son of Ralph Korte, the company’s founder. Brent

Korte is a second cousin to Todd.

Brent Korte has been part of The Korte Company for 26 years and has nearly 28 years of construction experience. Prior to serving as president and CEO, Brent Korte has served The Korte Company as chief



Todd Korte



Brent Korte

operating officer, executive vice president of construction, project executive, project manager, project superintendent and as a member of the Quality Assurance Team. The Korte Company, founded in 1958, is

headquartered in St. Louis with offices in Highland; Norman, Okla.; and Las Vegas. The company manages, on average, an excess of \$400 million in annual construction volume.

The Korte Company’s project expertise includes building for federal, state and local government agencies as well as the design and construction of school, healthcare facilities, medical office buildings, warehouse/distribution centers, religious facilities, commercial buildings, recreation centers and office complexes.

# R.P. Lumber marks 45 years, 2,000-plus employees

On a frigid Jan. 17, 1977, R.P. Lumber Co. Inc. opened its doors for the first time in Staunton. The young entrepreneur that opened the doors that day didn’t see a customer for three days and battled a bitter winter, but today the company operates 81 lumberyards, two components manufacturing facilities, a farm and ranch retail subsidiary with 22 locations, and is involved in numerous other business and civic ventures. Most importantly, perhaps, the company provides good jobs to over 2,000 families across the Midwest.

Edwardsville-based R.P. Lumber is celebrating 45 years since Robert and Donna Plummer – school teachers at the time – took a big risk and put everything they had into a rough, vacant property in the small Illinois community of Staunton.

“When I was growing up my family did not have much. I always dreamed one day I would be able to build a business that would help provide for others. The number of jobs we provide is a metric that matters to me. When I was a young kid, I always said I wanted to create 1,000 jobs. The fact that we have met and surpassed that number means so much to me. It’s not always just a business’ top line and bottom line, it’s what I believe our company means to a lot of families and a lot of communities,” said Robert Plummer, who

still serves as R.P. Lumber’s chairman and president. “We’re in it for the long haul because we want to have a positive impact on families and communities.”

Since its humble beginnings in 1977, R.P. Lumber has slowly expanded, bringing jobs and its industry-leading “Best Service” to communities. In the mid-1990s the company added locations in Illinois and entered Missouri for the first time. In the early 2000s the company expanded into Northern Illinois and deepened its reach across Central and Southern Illinois. In the 2010s the company added locations throughout Missouri and Illinois and, most recently, in 2021 and 2022 the company added locations in Wyoming, Iowa, and Wisconsin, while pursuing thoughtful expansion opportunities in its original two states of Illinois and Missouri.

Through the years, the company has added components to the business such as kitchen design, retail showrooms, manufacturing, and e-Commerce, while constantly trying to improve the product selection, delivery capabilities, and overall company focus on “Best Service” to its core pro customers.

“We have worked hard, of course, but our real focus is on gratitude right now,” said Robert Plummer. “You can only



Robert and Donna Plummer

build a durable business in our industry if you work hard, stay focused, and have good team members, good customers, good vendor relationships, and good bank relationships. We’ve been tremendously blessed that we have those four things. So, what today is really about

is saying ‘thank you’ to them. Donna and I want to thank each and every one of our great team members, customers, vendors, bankers, and other partners that work with us every day and helped us grow this company for the last 45 years.”

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# State announces \$47 million in broadband capital investments, largest ever

SPRINGFIELD – Gov. JB Pritzker and the Illinois Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity Office of Broadband have announced \$47 million in funding for 22 projects in every region of the state through the second round of Connect Illinois, the state’s broadband expansion plan.

To promote broadband access, the Illinois Office of Broadband is making \$350 million in funding available through a third round of grants, which will be accepted and awarded on a rolling basis through 2024, or until funds are depleted. Funding for Connect Illinois is made possible by Pritzker’s bipartisan \$45 billion Rebuild Illinois capital plan, the first comprehensive infrastructure program in Illinois in nearly a decade, as well as federal broadband funding available through the American Rescue Plan Act.

Round Two funding includes \$23 million in Connect Illinois grant awards matched by \$24 million in nonstate funding for a total of over \$47 million, with plans to expand broadband access to approximately 13,000 homes, businesses, farms, and community institutions across Illinois – through 22 new projects, with at least one in every region of the state.

“Thanks to these investments, thousands more families and businesses will have access to the economic opportunity, education, and healthcare that come with 21st century connectivity,” said Governor JB Pritzker. “Connect Illinois is all

about opening doors and closing gaps for our residents, delivering demonstrable change to people’s lives and real opportunity for new business development and new jobs. I’m grateful to our partners in making this round of projects possible – and with another \$350 million already available for the next round, this impact is just the beginning.”

The second round of Connect Illinois grant awards includes 14 different internet service providers, rural cooperatives, and local governments– a diverse group of recipients representing every region of the state, with projects supporting fully scalable broadband infrastructure that will serve these areas for decades into the future.

Round Two Grant Awards in Southwestern Illinois include:

Charter Spectrum - Bella Vista, \$29,555, Madison County

Charter Spectrum – Briars (Millstadt area), \$99,556, St. Clair County

Charter Spectrum - Equus Lane (Jarvis Township), \$109,320, Madison County

Charter Spectrum – Huey, \$107,416, Clinton County

Charter Spectrum - New Minden, \$250,198, Washington County

For more on Round 3 Connect Illinois, and Round 2 awards and other grant programs, visit DCEO’s website, [IllinoisDCEO.com](http://IllinoisDCEO.com).

To complement its historic \$420 million broadband capital investment, the

State of Illinois has introduced a portfolio of programs focused on local capacity building and planning (Illinois Connected Communities and Accelerate Illinois), regional engagement and resource integration (Broadband READY), digital literacy and skills building (Digital Navigators), and used computer refurbishment and distribution (Connect Illinois Computer Equity Network). These programs often combine state grant funding with stakeholder collaboration and expert consultation to put Illinois communities, organization, and households in a strong position to benefit from historic state and federal investment in broadband infrastructure and digital equity.

Grant applications were reviewed and evaluated on a competitive basis, with proposals evaluated in seven categories: project impact; nonstate match and demonstration of need; community support; project readiness; project viability and sustainability; affordability and adoption assistance; and open access, shared use and business strategy.

“We are very excited about the state’s continued commitment to broadband expansion throughout Illinois, especially in the southwestern region,” said Gary Hoelscher, president, Leadership Council Southwestern Illinois. “Increasing equity in access, adoption, and use is an important step in ensuring people can pursue work and education opportunities

despite other challenges they may face. Broadband growth also spurs economic development, which is a win for all.”

“I couldn’t be more thrilled for the 400 households in the Village of Flanagan who will be connected to essential, high quality broadband,” said Rep. Tom Bennett. “This Rebuild Illinois investment is making an incredible impact on the everyday lives of families in my district.”

“We all know about children who are unable to complete schoolwork because internet access isn’t widely available,” said Rep. Mike Halpin, D-Rock Island. “Rebuild Illinois’ investment in East Moline School District to install a network of 985 wireless Wi-Fi access points will go a long way in making sure that a relic of the past.”

The \$350 million available through the third round largely mirrors requirements of the first two notice of funding opportunities, with the exception that grant matching minimums will no longer be a requirement for applicants. The program’s merit review process places value on qualified projects that also include significant nonstate match, thereby incentivizing applicants to contribute as much nonstate match as possible. To promote program efficiency and effectiveness, the maximum grant award will increase from \$5 million to \$10 million, with applicants invited to seek multiple grant awards over the next several years.