

2022 YEAR IN REVIEW

We grow forward as we reminisce: Welcome to a new year

By **MELISSA CROCKETT MESKE**
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As is the tradition, the start of a new year causes most folks to take some time to reflect on some of the milestones experienced in the year that has just passed. The Illinois Business Journal has taken this cue, sharing now what we pulled from our 2022 headlines:

In January, new leadership roles were announced at The Korte Company. Todd Korte began his role as executive chairman of The Korte Company after serving 21 years as the company's president and CEO. Brent Korte, The Korte Company's former chief operating officer, moved into the position of the company's president and CEO.

Todd and Julia Kennedy were in the midst of rebuilding Eastgate Shopping Center in East Alton. Becoming the owners of Eastgate on Dec. 31, 2017, they were now four years into a major transformation of one of the region's

older shopping plazas. The renovated shopping center would have the capacity for 31 tenants, and Kennedy predicted it would be full by May 2022.

In February, Kyle Anderson, of Wood River, formally fulfilled the position of executive director for the Leadership Council Southwestern Illinois on Feb. 1. Anderson had most recently served as CEO of the Glen Carbon-based Greater Gateway Association of Realtors, overseeing and managing the day-to-day operations of the association and its more than 1,000 members.

Madison County officials recognized an Alton woman as a "Living Legend" for her contributions in the community at their February 2022 County Board meeting. Maxine Jackson Caldwell was presented with the 8th annual Madison County Living Legends Community Service Award. The county presents the annual award during Black History Month to a resident who makes extraordinary contributions in the community. Caldwell is the owner/op-

erator of Maxine's Daycare Inc. in Alton.

In March, a pilot project in East St. Louis to help guide Ameren Illinois in its pursuit of solar-generated power got underway as construction began on the \$10.2 million East St. Louis Solar Energy Center. With completion expected by year's end, the 6,000 solar panels would generate wattage to serve almost 500 homes from its site on 17 acres next to East St. Louis Senior High School in the 4600 block of State Street. The center was anticipated to be operational by early 2023.

In April, an effort seven years in the making culminated this month with a plan to establish a training school for drone users and entrepreneurs throughout the Metro East. CEO Carla Rose of Aerial Sync Education had met with business leaders, community officials and others in the preceding months. In the previous month, she had been invited to make a presentation to Leadership Council Southwestern Illinois, a key economic development organization in Metro East.

OSF HealthCare Saint Anthony's Health Center in Alton and SSM Health announced a strategic affiliation that would allow SSM's network of specialty and subspecialty physicians to be available to OSF patients. SSM Health is a Catholic healthcare system based in the St. Louis area.

In May, Granite City rolled out new, long-term homebuyer incentives with officials hoping to spark a major housing transformation in the city. This newly piloted program was intended to incentivize homebuyers and investors to increase home ownership and community pride in the historic neighborhoods of Lincoln Place, West Granite and the downtown area.

In June, Holland Construction Services began construction on Keystone Place at Magnolia Commons, a new senior living community in Glen Carbon. The 180,000-square-foot project is located at 245 Magnolia Ave., just off Illinois Route 157 in an area known for its medical, senior living, and professional service facilities. The project was expected to be completed in spring 2023.

In July, Eckert's debuted multi-million-dollar location renovations in Belleville, officially opening two new attractions. Located between Eckert's Country Store and Country Restaurant, Eckert's Cider Shed serves as a beer garden and lounge as well as a space for concerts and private events. Mr. E's Cider Donut & Custard Shop, formerly the indoor Cooking Classroom connected to Eckert's Country Store, offers a selection of sundaes and sweets made with Eckert's seasonal produce and baked goods.

Temperatures continued to rise as tempers flared with U.S. Steel's announcement on June 28 that it had signed a Non-Binding Letter of Intent calling for Chicago-based SunCoke Energy Inc. to buy and repurpose two blast furnaces at Granite City Works. The potential loss of up to 1,500 jobs at Granite City Works as part of a proposed plan had prompted fiery reactions from all corners of the community.

In August, the Illinois Business Journal's print edition was published this month with a new leader at the helm. With the announcement at the end of July of long-time editor Dennis Grubaugh's retirement, Melissa Crockett Meske stepped into the editorial management role, becoming the third editor in the IBJ's 22-year history.

Ameren Corporation announced that

Leonard "Lenny" Singh, an executive with more than 30 years of utility experience, had been chosen as the new chairman and president of Ameren Illinois. Singh joined Ameren on July 1 and assumed the role on Aug. 1 that former chairman and president Richard Mark vacated with his retirement.

With the announcement of the potential job loss and shutdown at Granite City Works, Mayor Mike Parkinson shared plans for a new event venue as part of a four-block renaissance of Granite City's downtown into an arts and entertainment district known simply as "The District." The new event venue, known as "The Mill," at 1311 20th Street, is the former site of the Niedringhaus United Methodist Church. A \$2.2 million project, The Mill would be transformed into a multi-use 220-seat venue, designed to host nearly any type of event.

On Aug. 15, AltonWorks CEO John Simmons and President Jayne Simmons were joined by Illinois Gov. JB Pritzker and several other special guests at their headquarters to announce the establishment of the Wedge Innovation Center. This \$21 million revitalization project would transform Alton's former Wedge Bank and Elfgren buildings in the 600 block of East Broadway into an entrepreneurial and business accelerator, incubator, co-working space, and digital hub. The governor announced the project's receipt of \$3 million in funding support through the state's Rebuild Illinois Downtowns and Main Streets Capital Program. Construction was to start in October 2022, with a projected opening in the second quarter of 2024.

At the start of a new academic year for Belleville Township High School District 201 came the debut of its newest innovation in teaching and learning known as "The CAVE." The Center for Academic Vocational Excellence broke ground in March 2022. Just five months later, the brand new vocational and alternative education center welcomed faculty and students into the halls of this former Kings Point Sports Club off Route 15.

In September, Madison County Transit honored the work of the late Senator Bill Haine and his surviving wife Anna for their lifetimes of public service with the dedication of its new bus terminal plaza at the Alton Transfer Station as the "Senator Bill & Anna Haine Plaza." Located at 6th and Piasa Streets, the brick-curved structure includes a trail marker that shares their story with all who visit. A bench has also been placed where visitors can rest. MCT also announced that a \$5,000 annual scholarship had been established in honor of Sen. Haine and his family, to be awarded each year to Madison County high school juniors and seniors.

In October, Glen Carbon resident Marsia "Marsie" Geldert-Murphey was sworn in as president-elect of the American Society of Civil Engineers for the 2023-2024 term during October 2022 annual convention ceremonies in Anaheim, Calif. In October 2023, she will be sworn in as president at the convention to be held in Chicago. With a three-year obligation on the board, she will then serve the last of the three years as past president.

A merger was approved between the REALTOR® Association of Southwestern Illinois and the Greater Gateway Association of Realtors by members of both groups on Oct. 12. The former REALTOR® Association of Southwestern Illinois has 1,000-plus members on its roster.

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This is a photo collage of the 2022 Justine Petersen award recipients recognized at the organization's annual holiday party on Dec. 8. Among the honorees was recently retired IBJ Editor Dennis Grubaugh, pictured at the far right, recipient of a Lifetime Achievement Award from JP. (Photo courtesy Justine Petersen)

Former IBJ editor among those recognized by Justine Petersen for lifetime of work

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Retired Illinois Business Journal Dennis Grubaugh was among five recognized individuals, small businesses and partners receiving special awards from Justine Petersen during their annual holiday party held on Dec. 8, 2022.

JP's Galen Gondolfi said that Grubaugh was presented with a Lifetime Achievement Award for "his steadfast dedication to objectivity in journalism." Gondolfi further noted that Grubaugh was recognized for "raising a voice in the business community in southwestern Illinois, from mom and pops to large scale corporations and for his visionary journalism that exposed the IBJ audience to the work of community development financial institutions (CDFIs) and community development finance as a whole."

Following his receiving of the award, Grubaugh shared, "I was very honored to be given a Lifetime Achievement Award from Justine Petersen. Working with lenders and other partners, the organization has realized many success stories in our area, assisting people with credit building and financial education, home ownership, and micro-enterprise lending and training." He further noted that he was humbled to be a part of a celebration "where numerous people were honored by an auspicious organization."

Other award recipients recognized during the celebration included Gazella Jefferson and Chatnee Patterson (mother and daughter) as Family of the Year; Lindsey Wold of Amygdala Co. as Small Business of the Year; Paramount Bank as Lender of the Year; and Sandy Stammer, retired from FCB Banks, who also received a Lifetime Achievement Award.