

PEOPLE ON THE MOVE

Tulsa City-County Library names COO

TULSA - Kimberly Johnson has been promoted to chief operating officer for the Tulsa City-County Library.

Johnson, from the Bronx borough of New York, is a graduate of the University of Tulsa and earned her master of library and information science degree from the University of Oklahoma.

She joined the Tulsa City-County Library in 1998 as the first coordinator of the African-American Resource Center. She has served as manager of the South Broken Arrow Library, manager of Hardesty Regional Library, regional director with responsibility for 11 of the Tulsa City-County Library's 24 public locations and as deputy director, chief innovation officer.



Kimberly Johnson

Architecture promotes two

TULSA - Architecture has promoted Kevin Hale and Nick Denison to associate principals.

Hale is a graduate from the School of Architecture at Oklahoma State University and the Kendall College of Arts & Sciences at the University of Tulsa. He has been with the firm since 2008.

Denison graduated from the University of Oklahoma School of Architecture.



Kevin Hale



Nick Denison

Cyntergy promotes Jason Mills

TULSA - Cyntergy has promoted Jason Mills to director of architecture.

Mills has been with Cyntergy for 16 years. He is a graduate of the University of Arkansas.

Blue Bell working to get past listeria contamination scare

AUSTIN, Texas (AP) - Blue Bell Creameries will survive the crisis caused by a recent recall of products prompted by a finding of bacterial contamination in some of its products, but it will take a lot of work and a lot of money, experts said.

The U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention reported this month that three people in Texas had the same strain of listeria bacteria linked to some Blue Bell ice cream products previously found in five others at a Wichita, Kansas, hospital. Three of the five in Kansas died. That prompted the first recall in the family-owned creamery's 108-year history, and some major retail and customer clients pulled all Blue Bell products from their offerings until they could be assured those products were safe.

Consultant Gene Grabowski, who has been a "crisis guru" to food manufacturers in about 150 recalls, has been advising the Brenham, Texas-based creamery, Blue Bell, he said, has worked around the clock since the listeria concerns arose to identify and correct any contamination sources.

"This company cares more about the health and well-being of consumers than any company I've ever worked for," he told the newspaper. "This is a company that's always trying to do the right thing. This has been embarrassing for the family."

The cost of the recall and sales losses has not been tabulated, but it will likely total several million dollars, Grabowski said.

"The company hasn't even had a chance yet to turn its attention to the possibility of litigation," he said. For now, the company's sole focus is "protecting consumers and taking care of our employees."



Blue Bell delivery trucks are parked at the creamery's location in Kansas City, Kan. AP PHOTO/OLIN WAGNER

The company continues to pay 230 employees at its Broken Arrow, Oklahoma, creamery that was shut down for sanitizing after contaminated ice cream was traced to the plant. No date has been determined for production at the plant to resume.

For now, a previously unimpeachable reputation is helping Blue Bell, said James Moody, co-founder of Austin, Texas-based advertising firm Guerilla Suit.

"I think they're in a better spot than most. They've got a pretty good reputation. It's a great Texas brand," Moody said. The recall, he added, gives Blue Bell officials a pause to "re-evaluate everything."

Blue Bell products are gradually returning to supermarket shelves. San Antonio-based H-E-B, which was one of the first chains to pull Blue Bell, is now one of the first to restock.

"Blue Bell is a brand Texans know and love," H-E-B spokeswoman Leslie Sweet said. "We don't relish impacting access to this important product, but H-E-B is committed to absolutely safe food and we needed to ensure we were standing tall in this promise."

Grabowski said the push to restock retailers demonstrates the creamery is likely to survive this crisis.

"Brand loyalty for this company is as great as I've ever seen. Consumers trust Blue Bell, they like Blue Bell, and they want to see the company succeed," he said.

USDA, Pine bring broadband to tribal lands

BROKEN BOW (JR) - Pine Telephone Co. said it will soon complete four projects totaling \$56 million to deliver mobile and fiber-optic broadband services in nine southeast Oklahoma counties.

The nine counties - Atoka, Bryan, Choctaw, Coal, Latimer, LeFlore, McCurtain, Pittsburg, and Pushmataha - are in the tribal lands of the Choctaw Nation.

The projects were funded by \$27.91 million in grants and \$21.79 million in loans from U.S. Department of Agriculture Rural Development and \$7 million from Pine.

The USDA funding represents four stimulus grants through the American Recovery and Reinvestment Grant in 2009 and 2010. One grant was to deploy fiber to homes in the area already covered by landlines and the other three grants were for advanced wireless systems.

Installation of the mobile broadband projects began in 2010 and includes installation of 103 cell tower sites. Two of the three wireless projects have already been completed and serve 2,649 broadband customers. The third project is expected to be operational within a month.

When combined, the mobile and fiber broadband projects have already stimulated economic growth, said Ryan McMullen, state director for USDA Rural Development.

"Businesses around Broken Bow and Hochtown are using their new broadband service to greatly improve their marketing online," McMullen said. "Five years ago, there was one canoe rental location on Broken Bow Lake. Now there are 12 and all are thriving. There are more than 150 cabins available for rent, as well as over 100 vacation homes, with the number rising weekly."

All schools in the Pine Telephone service area are connected with fiber broadband, Whisenhunt said. "The system is built looking to the future, as we know growth will continue to come to southeast Oklahoma," Whisenhunt said.

"The towers for the third wireless project are erected, and the equipment is turned on, working and being tested with customers," said Jerry Whisenhunt, Pine Telephone general manager. "We expect to quickly pass the 3,000-customer mark when this final geographical area is opened up commercially."

The fourth USDA award was to build fiber-optic lines to the homes and businesses previously in the Pine Telephone serving area. Pine has installed 5,084 fiber drops and 399 miles of main line fiber, and has activated service to 2,327 business and residents. Upon completion, which is anticipated in May, Pine fiber broadband will be available to 5,500 potential customers.

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