

## Barbara J. Kniff McCulla BIO

Barbara J. Kniff McCulla is the owner of KLK Construction and ViewPointe Development in Pella, Iowa.

KLK is a contractor involved in the telecommunications industry and was established in 1979. This company is known as a leader in cable placement within the utility construction market and is recognized in the industry as a firm that provides its customers with excellent service. KLK Construction works in a seven-state area in the North Central part of the United States with a heavy concentration of work in Iowa.

Barb became active in KLK in 1995 due to the untimely death of her husband, Kevin Kniff, who founded the business and was President at the time. Barb had no experience in this industry and knew very little about the business. But due to her concern for the employees at KLK, a commitment to what her husband had developed and her passion for taking on new challenges she decided that she would become involved in KLK. This decision was even more remarkable as this was an industry and business that was dominated by males and not to mention that it came within one week of her husband's death.

The results of this decision have been remarkable. Since 1995, sales have continued to grow. The sales growth is unparalleled in an industry where several companies have had to close their doors due to the downturn in the telecommunications industry in the late 1990's and early 2000's. She retained all of her key employees during this transition and has added several more key positions increasing the employee base. KLK has grown their operations through acquisitions and laying of cross-country fiber optic lines with rural independent telephone companies and RUS programs including the use of wind generators and other utility work.

Barb has established herself within this industry and is well known due to the success of her company and her ability to connect with new people that she meets and how she can immediately establish a common bond. Her personality is warm and sincere and her networking skills allow her to continually meet new people inside the industry and beyond. Barb feels communication—especially listening—is a key business element that applies not only with customers, but also with employees.

Some of the awards she has won include:

- 2016 - Barb was named one of the Women of Influence for 2016 by the Business Record of Iowa. *"This awards honors women who have devoted their lives to doing things most wouldn't. They've spent countless hours on various boards and they've blazed a trail either personally or professionally for other women to follow."*
- In 2014 Barb was nominated and won the city of Pella, Iowa's "Hall of Fame Excellence Award" for her contribution to the community.
- 2008 and 2009 Solveras Award - Small Business Champion of the year by the National Federation of Independent Businesses
- 2004 Pioneer Award with the National Association of Women Business Owners, which recognizes individuals that provide innovation, creativity, inspiration and vision for their organizations.
- 2002 Dale Carnegie Achievement Award given to the top individual in the class.

She has also served on the following work related association committees:

- Rural Iowa Telephone Association Expo Board
- Strategic Planning Committee for the National Power Communications Contractors Association
- Chairman of the Leadership Council for the State of Iowa for the National Federation of Independent Businesses (NFIB)

In addition to KLK, Barb also became a partner in starting a commercial development project in Pella (ViewPointe) with a small group of investors. They purchased a tract of land on the outskirts of Pella and are currently in the process of developing this property. Again, Barb has had no experience in any type of land development, but this has not deterred her from “taking on a new challenge”, which is something she loves to do. Her role in this partnership, as you can well imagine, is to be salesperson and also the contact person for potential clients.

Outside of her work, Barb has been an extremely active member in the community and with various local, state and national organizations and associations. She is currently serving or has served on the following boards and committees:

- 2010 - 2016: Board of Directors – Midwest One Financial Group – a publicly traded company on the New York Stock Exchange – press release:  
IOWA CITY, IA (December 14, 2010) – Barbara J. Kniff-McCulla, owner and CEO of KLK Construction of Pella, was elected to become a member of the Board of Directors of MidWestOne Financial Group, Inc. (MOFG) at the company’s Board of Directors meeting held on December 14, 2010. Kniff-McCulla also serves on the board of MidWestOne Bank.  
“We are excited that Barb will be increasing her role with our organization,” said Charles N. Funk, President and CEO of MidWestOne Financial Group. “Her integrity, her business acumen, and her leadership skills will help us as we strive to become an even stronger banking organization.”
- 2016 to present: Board of Directors - Marion County State Bank. A privately held bank in Pella, Iowa.
- 2019 - to present: Barb was nominated (by Iowa's US Senator Joni Ernst) and elected to serve on the Board of the National Women's Business Council in Washington DC.
- 2015 - 2018: Barb was elected to a position on the Board of Directors for the National Federation of Independent Businesses (NFIB) in Washington DC. She had previously been President of the Iowa Chapter of NFIB for over 8 years and continues her leadership role in the Iowa Chapter.
- In 2010 – Barb was appointed by the Governor of Iowa to the Workforce Investment Board for region 11.
- Board of Trustees – Central College in Pella, Iowa
- Royal Resorts Advisory Board
- Christian Opportunity Center in Pella, Iowa. A local organization providing housing, employment and support for handicapped individuals:
  - Board of Directors
  - Special Events Planning Board

- ▶ Golf Fund Raising Board
- Mid Iowa Small Business Development Center Advisory Board through Iowa State University
- PADCO (Pella Area Development) committee for the city of Pella, Iowa
- Marion County Development Board
- Leadership Council - National Federation of Independent Businesses for the Iowa Chapter
- Past President's Club - Central College in Pella, Iowa
- Chairman of the Pella Community Foundation Board
- Past Pella Day Care Center Board
- Past Friend's of Des Moines Area Community College
- Assisted in establishing a Teen Challenge for women home in Pella
- Marion County Republican Party
- TTT - Civic Organization
- PEO - Civic Organization

But there is more. Barb went back to school to obtain her BA degree in Business Management in 2001. She did this through the adult education program at William Penn University in Oskaloosa, Iowa. She completed her degree taking a full load of classes while working full time at KLK, staying active in all of her organizations and committees and raising two daughters at home. She had a 3.9 grade point to boot.

Most importantly, and Barb will attest to this, she is a Christian. She is actively involved in her local Church and has served on several committees, been a part of Sheltering Tree (a ministry team that provides visits to the members of the church family who are in need of care), taught Sunday School, involved in a cell group, assisted as an adult advisor for Calvinettes, chaired the decorating committee as well as a greeter and usher. Barb helped launch a women's ministry group (Uniting Sisters) at her church and is still in a leadership position with this group. She was a part of the steering committee responsible for a \$5 million dollar new building expansion on the church campus. Her faith is obvious by what she has taken on. She has placed her trust in the Lord Jesus and knows He will provide what is needed and trusts Him for the ability to overcome any obstacle. She approaches the day by saying a prayer each morning to thank the Lord for the new day and ask for His guidance through the day."

Barbs' gifts are many. She is an extremely high profile member of the community that she lives as evidenced by her involvement in the committees and organization that she is involved in. But what elevates her most is her personality and ability to meet with and connect with any person on any level. She has stated many times that her most favorite thing to do is to "meet new people". She has the ability to make anyone feel valued and welcomed and will make them feel at ease even in an unfamiliar setting. People will "seek" her out in a social setting just for a chance to visit with her. Her smile will light up a room when she walks in.

She also a very generous and giving person and likes to help assist others in realizing their own gifts, goals and dreams. She has been very instrumental in assisting several individuals who have expressed interest in starting their own business by providing encouragement, mentoring and financial support. Each of these individuals got the needed support or "gentle push" from Barb to start up these new ventures and realize their personal dreams. Of course, she downplays her involvement for each of these, but she was an integral in all of these changes. In addition, she has many times worked behind the

scenes to help elevate others to achieve their dreams and goals or to support ministries or organizations she believes in.