

# Southwestern Illinois Commercial Real Estate Transactions

The Illinois Business Journal is proud to publish commercial real estate transactions recently completed by commercial brokers across Southwestern Illinois.

## ◆ BELLEVILLE

- Celeen, LLC sold a 4,281-square-foot office building at 325 E. Main St. to Joel and Shawna Holtman. BARBERMURPHY represented the seller in this transaction.

## ◆ DUPO

- C.H. Briley Properties, LLC leased a 17,460-square-foot office/warehouse space at 731 Prairie DuPont Drive to Winning Streak Inc. BARBERMURPHY represented both parties.

- C.H. Briley Properties, LLC leased a 5,605-square-foot office/warehouse space at 731 Prairie DuPont Drive to Comro Products, LLC. BARBERMURPHY represented both parties.

## ◆ EDWARDSVILLE

- Cuttler Apartments, LLC sold a 6,500-square-foot retail building at 2511 S State Route 157 to Elevation Development Partners, LP. Kunkel Wittenauer Group represented the purchaser.

## ◆ FAIRVIEW HEIGHTS

- Finkelstein Limited Partnership leased a 3,362-square-foot retail space at 2067 U.S. Highway 50 to Mohammed A. Reyahi. BARBERMURPHY represented both parties.

- Marxer Family Trust sold a 1.1-acre site at 27 Marxer Place to The Teat Group Inc. BARBERMURPHY represented both parties.

## ◆ GRANITE CITY

-FOD, LLC sold a 2,791-square-foot, five-bay carwash at 387 West Pontoon Road to Gravanna, LLC. BARBERMURPHY represented both parties.

## ◆ GREENVILLE

- Greenville College sold a 16,800-square-foot, 24-unit apartment complex at 513 Beaumont Ave. to Tut and Tut Properties, LLC. BARBERMURPHY represented both parties.

## ◆ MARYVILLE

- DMG Real Estate Investment, LLC sold a 6,600-square-foot retail build-

ing at 6725 State Route 162 to Belle Cheveux, LLC. Kunkel Wittenauer Group represented the seller and purchaser.

## ◆ O'FALLON

- Tejcek, Reichert, Dugan, Schwarz sold a 2,226-square-foot professional office medical building at 793 Sunset Blvd. in O'Fallon to POCO Properties, LLC. Kunkel Wittenauer Group represented the seller.

- 784 Wall Street, LLC leased an executive office space at 784 Wall Street in O'Fallon to Connor Klein. Kunkel Wittenauer Group represented the landlord and tenant.

- Micharlee Holdings, LLC leased a 1,220-square-foot professional office suite at 640 Pierce Blvd. to Plateau Software, Inc. Kunkel Wittenauer Group represented the landlord.

- Franklin Healthcare Consultants Inc. sold a 4,000-square-foot office building at 125 Springfield Court to Mother Mary Real Estate, LLC. BARBERMURPHY represented both parties.

- RSD, LTD sold a 2,226-square-

foot Medical Office Building located at 793 Sunset Blvd. to POJO Properties LLC. BARBERMURPHY represented Buyer in this transaction.

- Brad Mcmillin Realty Inc. leased a 1,300-square-foot retail space at 1407 West Highway 50 to White Haze Exclusive, LLC. BARBERMURPHY represented both parties.

- Greg Muren leased an 815-square-foot office space at 1115 Frontage Road, Suite B to Emily Miller. BARBERMURPHY represented both parties.

## ◆ SWANSEA

- NR&W Partnership sold a 8,640-square-foot professional office investment building at 5 Park Place/ 500 Fullerton Road to MacDrew Properties, LLC. Kunkel Wittenauer Group represented the seller.

- CBW Property One, LLC sold an 11,200-square-foot retail building as a True Net Lease Investment Opportunity to Footnote 20, LLC. The property is at 129 Corporate Drive. BARBERMURPHY represented the seller in this transaction.

## BANNER

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"My dad worked for his uncle, Robert Benker, in the city of Chicago for what was called Able Fire Equipment," Benker said. "Able had a branch in Collinsville and sold it to my father, who rebranded it as Banner Fire in 1986."

Benker's dad, Mike Sr., and his mother, Mary, owned the company from 1986 until 2019 when they sold it to their son Mike Jr. The parents are still semi-active with the business but working toward full retirement.

Banner Fire Equipment provides Illinois, Missouri, and Arkansas fire departments with equipment, parts and service. In 1989, Banner became the exclusive dealer for Florida-based Emergency One (E-One) in Southern Illinois and Eastern Missouri. E-One has been a force in the fire apparatus industry for nearly four decades, pioneering the use of aluminum in the construction of emergency apparatus.

The original Banner location was in the 300 block of Main Street in Collinsville. In July 2002, the company built and moved into a new location in the 4600 block of Hedge Road in Roxana. Mike Jr. joined the company one month later and went on to run the parts and service departments.

"That was a big expansion for us back then. That new shop was 7,500 square feet," Benker said.

The space was an improvement over the Collinsville location, but business kept growing.

"By around 2010 we were starting to bump into capacity issues. Seventy-five-hundred square feet wasn't a big enough shop for us," Benker said.

After the son bought the company from his parents in 2019, he negotiated a lease/option with Thiems Construction for a building down the street at 4289 Industrial Drive.

"We moved into it in October 2019," he said. His parents soon after sold the site on Hedge Road to a bus company.

Banner's current location is newer and does not bear much signage, but it has plenty of room to service trucks.

The new location is 39,000 square feet. The shop part in the back is 36,000 square feet — almost five times bigger than the earlier shop.

Two big signs are still planned for the building, which has 12 private offices, a showroom, conference room, basement for storage and sizeable space for parts.



A drone photo of Banner Fire Equipment Inc. at 4289 Industrial Drive in Roxana.

"We do everything for fire departments, but we don't do fire suppression and sprinkler systems," Benker said.

Anything a firefighter would wear, and all related gear like hoses, extrication tools and compressors are available.

Benker's great uncle, the forebearer of what was to come, got his start in the trade when he was selling fire extinguishers, hose, and lighting to the city of Chicago. He had a contract to do lighting repairs on apparatus and some service work, but most of his business dealt with fire equipment.

Neither Mike Benker Sr. nor Mike Jr. has served as a firefighter, but Junior's brother Joe years ago left to become a full-time firefighter in Collinsville. Benker Jr. estimates 75 percent of his employees have such experience. He has some area fire chiefs working for him now.

"My dad went to work for his uncle's company, and I went to work for my dad's company. That's how it played out. Dad was more of a businessman. I came up through the parts and service side. I never did too much work physically on the trucks, but I was always leading a team.

"When I took over the shop, I had four gentlemen who were very experienced, and I picked their brains a lot. We introduced a lot of younger people so they could pass that knowledge on."

Banner now employs 33 people, about 10 of them technicians. Most employees work in Roxana, but there are sales representatives who work in the field in Arkansas, Missouri and Illinois.

Banner's client base is mainly municipalities and corporations, companies like Boeing and U.S. Steel, which have their own fire departments.

The firm also repairs older vehicles that are being passed down from larger communities to smaller districts, a longtime tradition among municipalities when they are upgrading.

Banner will test such vehicles to make sure there are compliant and service ready.

"We do a lot of refurb work," Benker said. "Signal Hill (Fire Department in Belleville) has got a truck with us right now. It has been repainted. A 2002 truck. Some people have mistaken it for a new truck, it looks so good right now."

Fire departments do not buy trucks often, sometimes holding on to them 20 or more years. Many communities just can't afford it.

"They find that when they go to marketplace the sticker shock is overwhelming. Lease-purchase and financing is becoming a bigger part of our game," Benker said.

The firm recently quoted a price of \$1.7 million for an aerial vehicle.

"The pumpers in St. Louis County probably will fetch in the mid-\$500,000s up to the mid-\$800,000s. You put a ladder on it and you're putting a bigger price tag on there," he said.

Many of the standard features of today's fire apparatus are the result of E-One's history of product innovation, he said. Benker calls the company "the Cadillac of fire trucks." The partnership between Banner Fire Equipment and E-One has resulted in the sale of more than 300 emergency vehicles in the firm's sales territory. Banner has received several E-One awards for dealer excellence and has been a consistent member of the multi-million-dollar sales club.

E-One has recently worked on

developing affordable options on vehicles to make them accessible to a broader clientele, he said.

While most of the apparatus is sold for E-One, Banner also deals with two other companies, CET out of Canada and Weis Fire and Safety in Kansas, which specialize in smaller specialty trucks, essentially pickups converted for fire-fighting use, a less-expensive option.

Several companies provide the gear for materials that are worn or needed when firefighters heed the call. A team of workers at Banner deal with is called "loose equipment" and includes the helmet, the gear from head to toe, the SCBA breathing apparatus, etc.

About 500 to 600 square feet are devoted to parts storage for new and aftermarket parts.

"Every fire truck is unique into itself," said Terry Lammers, the company's chief financial officer. "The parts business for Banner is unique. It's a very strong growth area, and we'll have an online store starting in March as well. There are people all over the United States calling and looking for this stuff."

Banner has perhaps fewer than 10 regional competitors in its territory, but it is by far one of the largest for servicing firetrucks in the three-state area.

"Based on regular pumper size, we estimate we could get 30 or 35 inside, but we haven't filled it yet," Benker said. "I think the record was when we had 29 trucks here so far."

Some vehicles need routine maintenance and testing while others could have problems brought on by fire service, which can often be brutal in terms of conditions. Ladders, hydraulics and pumps can all be affected.

Last year, the company had sizeable growth in all areas but new apparatus.

"In 2020, a pandemic year, our parts and service departments were up 12 percent, our loose equipment was up over a million dollars in sales and we topped off with revenue (overall) at \$13 million," Benker said. "We are just getting started."

The company's goal is summed up on its website:

"Banner's personnel share our customers' desire to serve our communities. Because our customers have to get the most reliable performance from their apparatus and equipment, service capabilities are more important than ever."