

Foundation Recipient

Richard Sakalas



Richard & Debi Sakalas In Their Newly Renovated Bathroom

Richard's Story

For 33 years, Richard was a member of United Ironworkers Local 1, starting off as a connector. After about six years, he moved up to a foreman position, and over the years worked on a number of signature projects. Some of these included The First Baptist Church in Hammond, Indiana, and Salem Baptist Church in Chicago. He was part of the raising gang for the University of Chicago Duchossois Center for Advanced Medicine Building. He even worked on a project erecting a steel structure inside an Armory in Chicago that was used as the construction site scene in the movie, "Baby's Day Out." Rick was an avid mountain bicyclist, and for about 25 years this was one of his favorite forms of exercise. On June 3, 2018 Rick was riding his mountain bike in the Palos Forest Preserves.

An accident threw him over the handlebars, causing cervical level paralysis!

As a result, Rick has limited movement of his hands and legs, and his vertebrae was fused from C3-C7. The accident came one month before the date of Rick's official retirement.

When Rick's wife Debi contacted the foundation, they had two pressing needs they were contending with. The first was the need to take two small bedrooms and a small bathroom, and retrofit them into one larger bedroom and bathroom that could accommodate a wheelchair. The second was the need to replace their 25-year-old furnace and air conditioner. They were planning to pay for the furnace and air conditioner with a home equity loan, but now these dollars would be stretched because of the need for the bathroom remodel. Complicating all this was Debi's cancer diagnosis in June, 2019. Any help from the foundation would allow Rick and Debi not to have to dip so deeply into their home equity account, saving some of the money for the future, while decreasing the stress level of everything.

Rick and Debi live in Crest Hill, Illinois, (just outside Chicago) and as luck would have it, the foundation had worked with a nearby grant recipient less than a year earlier. The foundation helped provide a wheelchair accessible minivan for the daughter of the brother-in-law of the owners of Just in Time Heating and Air Conditioning of Sandwich, Illinois – only 35 miles from Crest Hill. Joe contacted Janeen Norquist, co-owner of Just-In-Time, and she jumped on the opportunity. Just-In-Time is an Armstrong Air dealer, and Berkheimer is the Chicago area distributor for Armstrong Air products. Both Berkheimer and Allied Air Enterprises (parent company for the Armstrong Air brand) have been strong supporters of the Joseph Groh foundation for many years. Janeen contacted Al Koman, Area Sales Director for Berkheimer, and like Janeen, he was immediately onboard. Berkheimer donated the furnace, air conditioner and related supplies, while Just-In-Time donated their labor. This allowed the foundation to make a significant contribution toward the cost of the home and bath remodel.

When Debi was informed of all the help coming her way, she said, "Such great news, best thing for sure that we have heard in a while! I initially did not know of the connection with the HVAC industry until I read your story in more detail last week. There are truly no words for this unexpected news, other than we feel very blessed and grateful to have found your foundation. God bless you, your foundation and your sponsors"

See pictures below of the finished project.



Start of remodel, joining 2 bedrooms



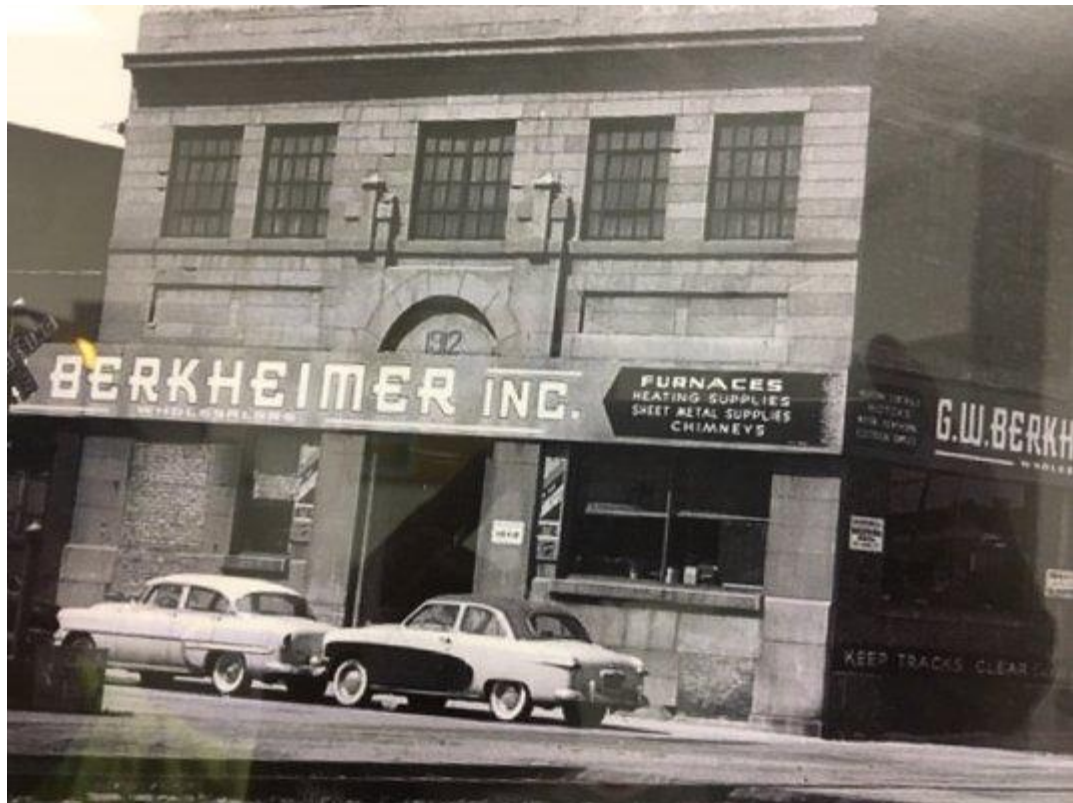
New entry into bath from renovated MBR



New Armstrong Air Furnace



New Armstrong Air Condensing Unit



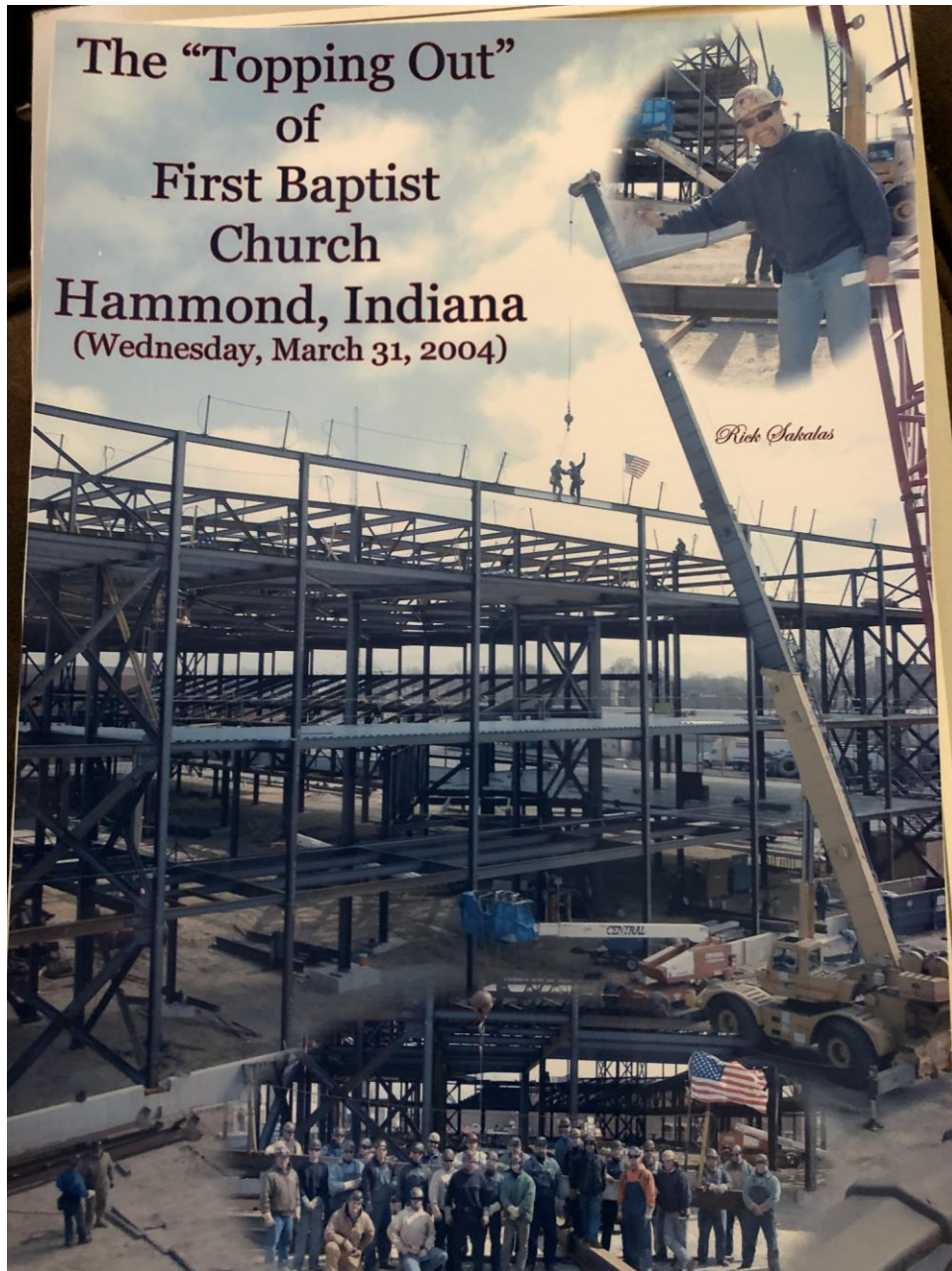
Founded in 1937, Berkheimer has 21 locations throughout Chicagoland, Indiana and Kentucky



Photo courtesy of Fontanez PHOTOGRAPHY

Just-In-Time, Heating, Air Conditioning, Plumbing, & Remodeling Services of Sandwich, Illinois

The "Topping Out"
of
First Baptist
Church
Hammond, Indiana
(Wednesday, March 31, 2004)



Rick Sakalas

Rick Sakalas On-The-Job