

Spinal implant maker sets up shop in airport terminal

New Triplett Road headquarters will give the three Theken companies room to grow

By CHUCK SODER

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To help his orthopedics companies take flight, Randy Theken bought an airport terminal.

Three companies owned by Mr. Theken moved into the former airport terminal next to the Akron Fulton International Airport three weeks ago. The move gives the companies — Theken Spine LLC, Theken Disc LLC and Therics LLC — some much-needed yet highly stylish space as they prepare to add employees and new products to straighten and support the spine.

The fully restored building at 1800 Triplett Road dates to 1929 and is marked by a sign reading "Theken Terminal." It measures 15,000 square feet, which is twice the size of the companies' previous 7,000-square-foot headquarters at 283 E. Waterloo Road in Akron.

Many of the companies' 59 employees shared offices at the old headquarters, and some worked from the conference room, Mr. Theken said.

"Inventory was racked in the hallways when we moved out," said Mr. Theken, who about 18 months ago moved his office into another building he owns on Nola Avenue in Akron.

If the Theken (pronounced "tay-ken") companies need even more room, they have the right of first refusal on 17 acres to the east of the new headquarters. Mr. Theken said there is a 60% chance he'll build a larger structure, which would be 38,000 to 40,000 square feet, on that land within the next 18 months, depending on how much the companies grow. If he does, the building would match the Art Deco

design of the new headquarters, which Theken would continue to use. Mr. Theken plans to add 38 employees next year as the companies add products and expand their network of distributors. Most of the expanding is taking place within Theken Spine, which has 48 employees and is the largest of the three companies. It makes screw-based systems to straighten the spine as well as other spinal implant products. Theken Spine so far this year has received Food and Drug Administration approval for five products, most of them for the upper spine, and it expects to win approval for another by year's end. It previously focused on products for the lower spine. A complete product lineup will help the company woo distributors, who don't want to carry several different brands, Mr. Theken said. "In order to obtain that distribution, you need a full product portfolio," he said. Mr. Theken expects revenue to grow as well. Revenue should hit about \$42 million this year, according to Mr. Theken, who expects that number to jump to \$58 million next year. He did not have a revenue figure for 2006 available last Thursday, Oct. 11, but a Crain's story from July 2005 said the Theken companies had sales of about \$26 million annually. The figure excluded Therics, a maker of synthetic bone products that Mr. Theken had not yet bought.

Ready for takeoff

Mr. Theken gained more than extra space when he bought the headquarters property for \$750,000 from Piscitelli Enterprises Inc. in September 2005, according to records from the Summit County Auditor Division. The building's location by the Akron Fulton airport provides easy access for the companies' corporate jet, which they will use to fly distributors and surgeons right up to the back of the building. Other new amenities include a permanent showroom for the companies' products, a bar and seating area that could be used for catering and training, an inventory and distribution center, and a testing lab. The building also gave Mr. Theken a chance to have some fun. The Northeast Ohio native, with help from architects AA Luketic & Associates Inc. of Rootstown, spent two years restoring the ornate terminal, which has drawn attention from architectural magazines. The Theken companies were more spread out before the move to the new building. Mr. Theken moved the headquarters of Therics to Akron from Princeton, N.J., this spring, and moved his companies' distribution center to Akron from Morgantown, W.Va., in June. Mr. Theken also owns Theken Orthopaedic Inc., which conducts regulatory testing for medical device companies and is housed on Nola Avenue.