

## Realty Executives heads to Battlefield Mall

By Tiffany Kelley - 5/14/2007

Springfield Business Journal Staff

Shoppers at Springfield's Battlefield Mall can now find real estate in addition to the latest fashions, electronics and other goods available for purchase at the Simon Properties shopping venue.

The Republic franchise of Phoenix-based Realty Executives opened a kiosk May 2 at the mall, near the north-court entrance to J.C. Penney.

David Sekunda, president of Realty Executives in Republic, which opened in December, said the kiosk will be staffed during mall hours by at least one of the company's 14 agents.

"Our objective is to create more awareness of our listings," he said. "We'll be handing out information about homes that are for sale, and we'll give people information about selling their homes."

According to Battlefield Mall Marketing Manager Christine Moses, the presence of a real estate company is an added benefit for mall visitors, in that it will provide shoppers, "already in a decision-making mode, a way to get information about available housing in a nonpressured environment." Moses said mall traffic consists not only of local residents but also tourists who may want to move to the Ozarks.

Both Moses and Sekunda declined to disclose the kiosk's lease terms, but Moses said prices are negotiated based on the length of the lease.

### Marketing methods

Sekunda said the idea for having a local mall kiosk came from other Realty Executives franchisees throughout the country.

With the real estate industry's increasing competitiveness, Sekunda said, agencies must look beyond conventional advertising.

Realty Executives agent Al Boyer, who worked at the kiosk during opening day, said he believes a presence in the mall has potential to increase his business.

"I think it's a great thing and will gain exposure for us," he said. "The kiosk is a user-friendly place for people to get information about listings for homes or selling their homes."

Scott Rose, president of the Greater Springfield Board of Realtors, believes the high traffic at the mall could be beneficial to real estate companies, but he noted that Realtors use several marketing methods, including flyers, billboards, print media and the Internet.

"The Internet has probably led the way," Rose said. "It lets people be able to sit in their own homes and check out the qualifications of Realtors, plus be able to view properties."

Housing market conditions fuel the need to reach customers.

"I think it is more of a buyer's market than it is a seller's market at this point," Sekunda said. "That's one of the reasons we went out to the mall. The days are gone when you put a sign out in the yard and put the (house) on the (multilist service) and hope for the best. I think a lot of sellers are asking for accountability, and they want results."

### **Franchise growth**

Realty Executives was founded in 1965 by Dale Rector, and the company began franchising in 1987. There are now more than 800 offices worldwide, including 32 openings this year, which added 1,100 agents.

Among the new Realty Executives offices to open this year is the Lebanon branch, which opened in January.

Sekunda said Realty Executives has 17 offices in Missouri, including locations in Branson and Joplin.

Although Sekunda declined to share any sales figures for his franchise, he noted that it is meeting the expectations set forth by the company's business plan. He said his service area reaches from Marshfield to Monett.

"I do not infringe on Branson, because (Realty Executives has) an office there, but we get down toward Highlandville," Sekunda said. "We don't put restrictions on where the agents can engage in real estate activity. We let them make that decision because they are independent contractors, but we do discourage them from engaging in business in places where they would have a hard time giving good customer service."