

Loading up: Jerry Damico, an employee of Parks Moving and Storage of Pittsburgh, loads the Rigerts' belongings for the move.



Corporate transfers give families big dose of stress

BY AILEEN WINGBLAD
STAFF WRITER
Anyone who has been through a family move knows that resettling can be unsettling, with stress likely to be high on family members.

With real estate experts reporting a steady stream of incoming and outgoing corporate transferees in the suburban market, relocating is a fact of life for many families.

One source, for instance, relocation director Linda Scope of Century 21 Town and Country, Troy, says that her business is up 25 percent from last year. Her company services about 1,000 transferees annually.

Her colleague, Patrick Murphy, also of Century 21, agrees that a "certain percentage of business is because of 'corporate gypsies.'"

"To help clients ease into the transition, Realtors typically offer community information and resource referrals. But what about the children in these families? How do they deal with uprooting, what dilemmas do they face and what can parents do to help them?"

"The more secure and rooted a person is in a community, the greater the loss is when they move. The more invested, the more lost," says psychologist Sarah Raffe, who works with the Rochester School District.

"And my hunch is the younger the child is and the more frequent the moving, the worse it is. These kids are much more at risk educationally and psychologically. They won't necessarily have more problems, but they are at a greater risk."

Cheryl Clements, currently of Farmington Hills, knows first-hand what "corporate gypsies" face. Her husband, Chris, a designer for Ford Motor Company of Great Britain, is transferred often.

His job assignments have resulted in four international moves in the past nine years, taking the family — which includes daughters Hayley, 11, and Samantha, 17 — to Japan, Australia and twice to Farmington Hills.

"Of course, the family returns to its native Great Britain between

'I know to the average citizen, we're just getting a new city manager. Frankly, I'm disturbed about what could happen. These are big shoes to fill.'

James Pogue
plan commission chairman

each move. "Sure, it can be difficult for them. Once they've made friends and have settled in at schools and all, they have to move and start all over again," says Clements, adding that with her kids, the uprooting tends to be more difficult for her older daughter, a student at Oakland Community College.

Of course, Clements does point out that all the moving has had its benefits to her daughters as well. "They have had to be sort of outgoing. When you move a lot, you can't hide in your shell. If you want friends, you have to go and make them . . . and once you are settled in, it's really not that bad," she says.

Like the Clementses, the Rigert family is also familiar with moving. They recently left their Farmington Hills home for a new start in suburban Chicago.

Donna Rigert explains that the career path of her husband, Michael, a district manager in the mainframe software market, has led through five moves since 1986.

"They've tried to prepare their 5-year-old son for the move by letting him visit his school early and by introducing him to the next-door neighbors before they actually relocated."

Their other two kids, a 3-year-old girl and another son who is almost 2, hopefully will adjust, she says.

And, Rigert adds, she and her husband already anticipate another move in the next few years. It's the "nature of his business," she says.

"We're hoping to learn from this experience . . . to better prepare the

kids next time," she says. "We'll know what to expect and they'll know what to expect."

Farmington Schools social worker Kathleen Holleran explains that it's important to understand that how a child reacts to moving depends greatly "on family dynamics and the individual personality of kids. Some kids are more equipped to deal with change."

She compares children of today's corporate transferees to those of military families of yesteryear. "We used to hear a lot about 'army brats' — those families moved a lot. Some of the kids were flexible, usually those with strong personalities, and did OK if the move was handled in a nontraumatic way and the family as a unit was not stressed out."

"But if the tone in a family is stressful or negative, it's more difficult to separate from friends. If there are arguments in a family about the move, such as if the mother isn't happy about the situation, this will filter down to the kids. A child is usually a mirror of the stresses that go on at home. Children start to show free-floating anxiety," Holleran explains.

Adjustment problems often show up as behavioral difficulties in school, she adds. Indications that a youngster is having trouble dealing with a move can include unexplained crying (showing sadness) or "acting out" (showing anger).

To help the kids along, Raffe and Holleran emphasize that communication within the family is essential.

"Kids need to talk of the experiences they are having. It's not always easy because some kids don't talk," says Raffe.

"And a lot depends on how parents react. If parents express fear or shock about what a kid is saying, the kid will clam up," he says. "Parents need to listen. And siblings can be a network of support. Family support at this time is really critical. Siblings and parents are the common denominator. If those stay constant, the kid has an anchor."



Call me: On her last day in Farmington Hills, Donna Rigert gives her Chicago-area address to friends over the phone.

STAFF PHOTO BY SHARON LEWIS

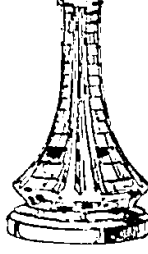
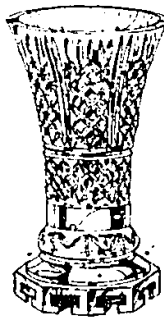
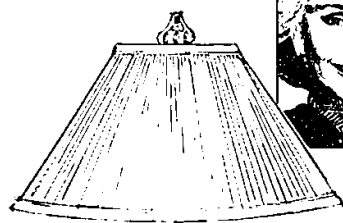
WATERFORD LIGHTING COLLECTION SHOW

With Jean Moss, Waterford National Tabletop Director.

Wednesday, September 30, 10 a.m. to 1 p.m., Rochester and 3 p.m. to 6 p.m., in Birmingham. On Thursday, October 1, 5 p.m. to 8:30 p.m., Livonia. In the China Shop.

A visually dazzling collection of the many ways Waterford can light your home. Every crystal piece is hand-cut and mouth-blown in Ireland to exacting standards. Lamp bases are solid cast brass. There will be many new, exciting and unique designs on display to be purchased or specially ordered. As a bonus, you will receive a Waterford video with your purchase at the show.

Jacobson's



Sept. 29 session tells about Odyssey of Mind program

An informational meeting for parents, students and teachers interested in the Odyssey of the Mind program will be held at 7 p.m. Tuesday, Sept. 29, at O.E. Dunkel Middle School, 32800 12 Mile.

The meeting will last until 8:30 p.m. and will include a hands-on creativity session to acquaint people with the program.

This is the 10th year the extracurricular program has been offered through Farmington Public Schools. It is open to students in all grades and is designed to foster creativity, problem solving and focus on a multitude of skills that are important in preparing children for the 21st century.

Teams of between five and seven students choose either a dramatic or technical problem to solve for the Oakland County competition in March. Various age groups compete among their own divisions.

Winners in regional competition have a chance to move on and compete at the state level.

This year's competitive problems, which all have an eight-minute presentation limit, include:

- Pit Stop — A team designs, builds and drives a vehicle powered by one or two mechanical jacks. It will travel a course and make pit stops. At some point the vehicle will travel in reverse. It's physical

This is the 10th year the extracurricular program has been offered through Farmington Public Schools.

● Folk Tales — The team must create a performance that includes a team-originated folk tale, one or more legendary of mythical characters and two or more quotes from a given list. One or two of these characters will be portrayed as the originators of the quotes. Materials cannot exceed \$80 in value. This is for grades kindergarten through eight.

● The Old Man and The Sea — This team must create a present an interpretive performance based on Hemingway's classic, "The Old Man and the Sea." The performance will also include a conclusion. Materials cannot exceed \$80. For grades kindergarten through 12 and also includes a collegiate category.

● For younger students who wish to participate but not to compete, a problem called "L'il Gourmet" is being offered for those in grades kindergarten through two. This non-competitive problem offers teams the opportunity to create and perform a skit about a well-balanced meal. The skit will include costumes and feature an original song. Materials cannot exceed \$50 in value.

● Which End Is Up? — The team problem is to design and build a balsal wood structure to balance and support as much weight as possible. One end must fit entirely over a 66x1 block and the opposite end must fit entirely within a 4x4x1 space. This is for grades kindergarten through 12.

● Materials cannot exceed \$100 in value. This is for grades six through 12 and there is also a collegiate competition nationally.

● Dinosaur — The team creates and presents a story about dinosaurs including team-made dinosaurs of which one or more will perform technical tasks. Teams will also make a new dinosaur discovery that will be called a "creative saurus." Materials cannot exceed \$90. This is for grades kindergarten through 12.

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For more information about the program or Tuesday's meeting, call Sylvia Cambouris at 478-1977 or the district's DELTA department at 489-3399.

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