

THURSDAY, OCTOBER 24, 1996

# COMMUNITY LIFE

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IRVING MOROF

## Consider corporate package carefully before leaving firm

It's been called de-selection, an involuntary offer, the pink slip. By any term, it means someone is taking away your source of income. Most companies cautiously dodge laid off and are using more appropriate terms, such as reducing an imbalance of forces and skills. Call it what you will, loss of income is number four in the top ten stress points of life.

Many companies are taking pains to escort employees gently out the door. They may also provide detailed outplacement manuals, distributed to department heads and employees alike.

In addition, some companies also provide resource centers where the newly unemployed receive office space, telephones, computers and career counseling.

If your company is paring down, or even bulking up through mergers, you can offset the de-selection blues with a little pre-planning. One possibility is to wait and see if you are handed a pink slip then negotiate a deal. Or, if you suspect you're one of the chosen, bring together your team of advisors to help compile your offer. Then, take the package to the corporate chiefs after they come to you, if their offer falls short of your acceptance.

If you've spent a large part of your professional life with the company, you're probably fairly well known among management. Anyone who presents you with a letter is generally not happy about doing so. Acknowledge the letter, but do

See BUYOUTS, B2

## Hills house is ha-ha-haunted

Halloween has become second only to Christmas in home decoration sales, and one local family leads the pack.



BY MARY RODRIGUE  
STAFF WRITER

Jeremy and Kim Ruckhaber are Halloween enthusiasts to the max. The Farmington Hills couple has spent about \$500 and countless hours grooming their front yard into a frightful yet delightful panorama of ghouliah scenes.

Each night, a stream of cars pass by their home at 2370 Peppermill, west of Farmington Road and north of Twelve Mile, to view the tombstones, gruesome monsters, miles of cobwebs and pumpkin orange lights strung everywhere.

"We do it for the kids," said Ruckhaber, who moved to Farmington Hills just last June from Redford Township. "This has been a good way to get to know the neighbors faster."

In fact the subdivision, Kendallwood, is hosting its annual Halloween parade this Saturday afternoon and the Ruckhaber house will be front and center on the parade route. Jeremy Ruckhaber and neighbor Jeff Burke will provide hayrides for the children. The party will run from 3 to 6 p.m.

With all the costume parties and funny or scary decorations, storekeepers say Halloween is beginning to rival Christmas in its commercial appeal. For the past month, shoppers have been buying plastic lawn ornaments, ceramic witches, skull wreaths and strands of pumpkin orange lights.

Americans will spend \$2.5 billion on Halloween items this year, with



STAFF PHOTO BY SHAWN LACKMILL

Nightmare on Peppermill Street: Jeremy Ruckhaber, dressed as movie character Freddie Krueger, says he takes off his mask for anyone too scared.

candy sales accounting for only one third of that, according to the National Retail Federation in Washington D.C., which has recently started keeping statistics on Halloween. It has replaced Easter as the second biggest home decorating holiday after Christmas.

Other ditties: more than \$150 million in advertising is tied to promotion of Halloween products; about 66 percent of Americans will decorate their home for Halloween; one in three adults and 90 percent of families with children younger than 13

will take part in celebrations related to the holiday.

Ruckhaber's yard is a blend of store bought and homemade displays. The tombstones are pieces of cardboard hand lettered with epitaphs like "here lies Fred who got hit in the head." There's an aquarium with red food coloring treated water featuring a variety of floating doll parts.

O.J. Simpson's bloody gloves lay on the ground. Yellow police crime scene tape is stretched across the property. There's a homemade cof-

fin, a mummy costume, and a skeleton hanging from a large tree. At night eerie lighting enhances the scene, which includes a witch stirring a cauldron and a giant spider in his web.

"It's goofy but clean," said Ruckhaber, who began decorating almost a month ago. He spends several hours daily in his yard. "It's a lot of work. I take things in every night because of the weather. I've never had any problem with vandalism."

See HALLOWEEN, B2

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