

Working to organize his sub

Mini-city head mixes business, creativity

By LOUISE OKRUTSKY



RAY OKONSKI

After Ray Okonski became president of the Lincolnshire East subdivision in Farmington Hills, his predecessor, Frank Pyko signed in relief. "Thank God you came along."

Six months later, Okonski has adapted a businessman's approach to the needs of a neighborhood organization. Besides giving his community its own newsletter, he is in the process of dividing the neighborhood into sections to make it easier for residents to settle local problems involving noise, dogs and unruly children.

"It's like living in a little city except they're called subdivisions," he said. "Unlike in other cities, people here identify with the subdivisions. The subs are physically set up like estates. There are markers that lead into the main entrance in a subdivision.

"When people walk in, they can say this is ours."

This planned spirit of togetherness is fostered by Okonski through seasonal newsletters that he sends to each subdivision member.

The leaflets tell Okonski's neighbors the latest news about such non-con-

"It's creative communications," he explained.

Each activity draws a different crowd. The person who volunteers to clean up the wood lot is likely to sit out the flower planting campaign. A turnout of 25 volunteers makes a project a success, according to Okonski.

"About half of the residents who show up for one event will show for nothing else," he said.

Volunteers have their names printed in the newsletter after the event. Okonski learned through stints on the Wayne State and University of Michigan student publications that everyone likes to see their names in the newspapers.

This summer, Okonski plans to invite Lincolnshire East to a Great Garage sale and a decorated bike parade.

"If you find the right things people will show up," he said. But she shies away from taking credit for an original philosophy.

"Nothing is original. I'm just doing it in an original manner with a little extra effort to spearhead it," he said, tapping a copy of his newsletter with the hand that bears his University of Michigan class ring.

His business experience as the vice president of Oakland Electronics Data Processing Corporation, led him to view his subdivision presidency as a corporate post.

He's given \$20 annually from each household to run the subdivision's affairs. Through his newsletter and annual budget, he reports to the residents, who are in essence shareholders, his accomplishments with their money.

He employs a system similar to a magazine collecting funds for subscriptions to convince residents to pay their subdivision dues.

Each household receives a bill for \$20 with a cheery holiday greeting printed under the amount owed. The next letter is a gentle reminder and the third employs a brass tacks approach. It usually enumerates the benefits of belonging to the association. Residents who decline to pay their dues are ignored by the association.

Okonski's approach is based on the theory that appearances are important. If his dumpling notice looks like an official bill, chances are it will be stacked together with other debts and eventually paid.

"We have a few hermits who haven't paid their dues and don't care, but they're in every group," he said.

OKONSKI PLANS to divide the subdivision into smaller areas he calls mini-subs. Each mini-sub will have its own coordinator who will handle problems in the area.

"Fences, dogs, kids and loud music

are the typical things that create havoc in a subdivision. I encourage three or four people to get together and ask their neighbors if they can work on the problem. It avoids a one-to-one confrontation with neighbors who are creating a problem," he said.

Problems with noise and neighbors are the sort of difficulties that Okonski hopes his co-ordinators can handle in their own sections. He believes that the subdivision is too unwieldy for one person to handle everyone's problems.

Each corner of the subdivision has problems which are unknown to other areas.

"Let's say the section of Lincolnshire East neighboring Eleven Mile has problems with their cul de sac. How do you solve it if I'm down on the opposite end of the sub? It's like the 48 states. So, I've used the natural geographical barriers to section the sub into small cohesive geographical discreet groups," he said.



Fern H. Kutt (left) of 36821 Blanchard, Farmington and Fred J. Floied, of 25661 Skye Drive, Farmington Hills, will receive Scottish Rite Freemasonry's 32d degree at Detroit's 282d Scottish Rite Reunion at the Masonic Temple on Saturday, April 30.

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