



MCANULTY/NORTHWEST SPORTS PHOTOGRAPHY  
 a senior on the Clackamas High  
 performance last week at the state  
 team won first place in the show  
 me of breaking up. Colton High  
 in the 3A/2A/1A division. Other top-five  
 nam, which placed fourth in the show  
 etition two years running; Gladstone,  
 Milwaukie, fifth in the 6A small division.

during a Meet & Eat presenta-  
 tion Wednesday at Willamette  
 Falls Hospital Community  
 Health Education Center.

The free presentation, titled  
 "Oh, My Aging Feet," will be  
 from 4:30 to 5:30 p.m.

The health education center  
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# Milwaukie pair scores with scare

**Halloween** | A couple's  
 award for best yard  
 haunt propels plans for  
 an even bigger display

By **DENNIS MCCARTHY**  
 THE OREGONIAN

MILWAUKIE — The first time  
 they laid eyes on their future  
 Tudor-style cottage perched on  
 a half-acre lot and surrounded  
 by a 5-foot black iron fence,  
 Chris and Jeff Davis thought to  
 themselves, what a lovely spot  
 for a graveyard.

Morbid, you say?

Not really. This Milwaukie  
 couple just have a flair for spe-  
 cial, er, haunting effects. Every  
 October for the past eight years,  
 Chris and Jeff Davis — with a  
 little help from their friends —  
 transform their well-kept land-  
 scaped yard into an ersatz burial  
 ground infested with Styrofoam  
 tombstones, and a creepy cast of  
 ghosts, witches, goblins, skele-  
 tons and giant spiders.

It's become a Halloween tradi-  
 tion for the Davises, also  
 known as the "Head Gravekeep-  
 ers" by friends and neighbors.

Just kind of a "neighborhood  
 thing," as Chris Davis calls it.

But last year, all that changed.  
 The couple decided to go public,  
 big time.

They sent out press releases to  
 the local media. TV newscasters  
 and their camera crews showed  
 up on the Davises' front door-  
 step to record the weird goings  
 on.

Hundreds of curiosity seekers  
 from all over the Portland area  
 flocked to the spooky little  
 makeshift cemetery at the cor-  
 ner of Southeast Johnson Creek  
 Boulevard and 43rd Avenue to  
 catch a peek.

Over a two-week period, Jeff  
 Davis estimated, as many as  
 1,500 people filed by their home.

But Jeff and Chris Davis didn't  
 stop there. Convinced their  
 graveyard display was as good as  
 or better than any others they  
 had seen, the couple entered a  
 DVD of their nightmarish crea-  
 tion in a nationwide contest,  
 sponsored by an organization  
 called Haunt X.

At the fifth annual Haunt X  
 Awards Pageant, dubbed the Os-  
 cars of the Haunted Commu-  
 nity, held recently in Los Ang-  
 eles, the Davises' yard display,  
 competing against some 200 en-  
 tries nationwide, won second



COURTESY OF CHERYL AUSMANN-MORENO

**The iron gate leading to their makeshift "Halloween graveyard" frames Jeff and Chris Davis in October at their home in Milwaukie. The couple won a second-place trophy for best yard haunt in a nationwide contest sponsored by Haunt X, a Los Angeles-based organization.**

place in the best yard haunt cat-  
 egory.

They received a bronze statu-  
 ette of a decapitated body hold-  
 ing its skull-like head — a sinis-  
 ter spinoff of an Oscar.

"The winners (owners of De-  
 vious Concoctions, a Southern  
 California company) make their  
 living making props for other  
 people," said Jeff Davis, 44, a  
 computer programmer who  
 works out of his home.

Davis calls upon his experi-  
 ences in stage and theater pro-  
 duction in creating his annual  
 graveyard displays. At Santiam  
 High School in Mill City and at  
 Whitworth College in Spokane,  
 he constructed much of the  
 stage props for plays and mus-  
 icals.

He later worked as stage man-  
 ager at the Idyllwild School of  
 Music and the Arts in Idyllwild,  
 Calif., where he met Chris. They  
 have been married 23 years.

Chris Davis, 42, marketing  
 manager for a Vancouver credit  
 union, started out buying the  
 traditional Halloween decora-  
 tions from local stores, adding a  
 new piece or two every year.

But before long, she and her  
 husband were designing and  
 building more elaborate props,  
 fashioning tombstones, large  
 grave markers and spooky crea-  
 tures out of Styrofoam, drywall  
 mud and latex paint from Met-  
 ro's recycled paint program.

Over the years, blue flood-  
 lights, a fog machine and mov-  
 ing, mechanical creatures were  
 installed to add a little more  
 fright to their nighttime callers.

Last year, the Davises, piecing  
 together carefully cut Styrofoam  
 panels like a jigsaw puzzle to  
 cover doors and windows, turned  
 their garage into a haunted  
 cathedral.

"We probably spent about  
 \$6,000 on our display last year,"  
 Jeff Davis said. "Normally, it runs  
 about \$1,500 each year."

But if 2006 was a howling suc-  
 cess for the Davises, this year  
 promises to be even better. On  
 the heels of their Haunt X award,  
 the couple are planning to write  
 a "how-to" book, showing read-  
 ers how they can build their own  
 spooky Halloween creations.

And they've already begun  
 planning for their 2007 yard dis-  
 play.

"We're thinking of inviting the  
 Milwaukie High School Dance  
 Team to perform a Michael  
 Jackson-type 'Thriller' dance  
 routine," Jeff Davis said.

Although they have never  
 charged people to view their dis-  
 play, Davis said this year there  
 will be a drop box for people to  
 donate money to the high school  
 drama department.

The couple also hope to gain  
 the city's permission to block off  
 43rd Avenue for a few hours Hal-  
 loween night for the safety of  
 spectators and to ask the  
 Ardenwald/Johnson Creek  
 Neighborhood Association for  
 volunteers to provide traffic con-  
 trol.

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