

THE MOUSE SEARCHES FOR FRESH MAGIC

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Impact on workers Hourly pay scale holds down region's average

The millions of tourists who visit Walt Disney World each year will never see Chris Saffran.

He washes park pathways from 11 p.m. until 7:30 a.m., after the theme parks close.

His pay: \$8.87 an hour. Saffran lives paycheck to paycheck.

"Anything goes wrong, and it's all over," said Saffran, 25.

Disney's theme parks and hotels — as well as outside businesses that serve tourists — draw thousands of low-wage workers to the region.

Disney's entry-level jobs pay \$6.80 an hour — well above the federal minimum of \$5.15, and the new Florida minimum of \$6.15 — and the median wage for a full-time job is \$11 an hour,

or about \$22,000 annually. Full-timers get benefits.

But the average yearly salary at Disney is about \$25,000 — about \$7,000 below the average for metro Orlando, according to the most recent numbers from the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics.

Although Disney pays comparatively well for hourly tourism jobs, it has helped hold down the average for area wages, keeping Orlando well below the national average of \$36,520, said University of Central Florida economist David Scott.

"We are paying a competitive wage in the Central Florida marketplace," Disney World President Al Weiss said.

(Note: From a more lengthy article beginning on page A1.)