

No place like home for some high-flyers

Leaving big money for better lifestyle

LEAVING behind a \$150,000-a-year job with a top accounting firm in Chicago was predominantly a lifestyle choice for James Alexander.

The 34-year-old accountant was content to quit the fast pace of handling multimillion-dollar projects to return home to Adelaide with his wife Kylie, 33, and children Luke, 6, Tessa, 4, and Benjamin, 11 months.

While the family had always intended to return to Australia one day, the events of September 11 prompted their early move. The family arrived back in Adelaide late last year and Mr Alexander found a job as financial accounting supervisor with JP Morgan within three weeks.

"The decision to stay in Adelaide (and not interstate) was based on a combination of career and cost of living," he said.

"The JP Morgan offer also allowed me to move into commerce rather than stay in public practice." Mr Alexander had worked for public accounting firm Crowe Chizek in Chicago for two years.

During that time he oversaw a \$US5 million United Nations contract to assess compensation claims arising from Iraq's invasion of Kuwait.

By BELINDA HEGGEN

TOP Adelaide expatriates are giving up well-paid careers in the United States and United Kingdom for the security of their home town.

Some recruitment firms have reported a "significant" increase in the number of professionals who, in the past six months, have either returned home or expressed a desire to return.

They say the tragic events of the September 11 terrorism attacks in the US are among the main reasons for the move.

City-based human resources firm Entree Recruitment says 11 per cent (212) of its applicants in the past six months have been expatriates who have returned from working in New York, Chicago and London.

That is at least double the firm's usual number of expatriate applications.

"In the uncertain global environment, they are choosing to make a lifestyle decision and in the process bringing a new set of skills to Australian employers," Entree's general manager, Nicole Underwood, said.

"Most said they had intended coming home eventually, but I think the events of September 11 certainly made them bite the bullet."

Most of the expatriates were finance and accounting professionals, executive assistants and secretaries previously employed by such companies as



Turner Entertainment, the BBC, MTV Networks, Lloyds Bank, Southern Star and Natwest. Speakman and Associates and Hender Consulting are other firms that have recognised the trend, particularly a "substantial increase" in Internet job applications.

Other agencies contacted said they had not noticed the trend. American Chamber of Com-

merce chief executive Greg Keeley said it was not unusual for some professionals not to seek an extension of their overseas employment term.

However, he certainly had not noticed a mass influx. "Generally, someone will go and work for a big firm for a set period and rather than extend that period they're opting, in many instances, to come back," he said.

GOOD TO BE BACK: James Alexander with his wife, Kylie, and children Luke, Tessa and Benjamin.

Picture: RUSSELL MILLARD

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