



BUSINESS LIVES

86%

of U.S. workers feel
the economy is still
in a recession

Source: Staffing Industry Analysts

GARDEN PARTY:
Tom Reilly maintains
the 80,000 to
100,000 tulip bulbs
planted on Park
Avenue's median
malls.



BUCK ENNIS

GOTHAM GIGS

Paying Tulip Service

**'Here,
I'm at
peace
with the
flowers'**

WHEN TOM REILLY RETIRED from his 21-year job as a corrections officer at Rikers Island three years ago, he returned to his roots, literally. Now the 48-year-old father of three, who grew up in Flushing, Queens, works as an urban landscaper. And each spring, he maintains the 80,000 to 100,000 tulip bulbs planted on Park Avenue's median malls. ¶ "Duke and Vinnie Sofield, owners of City-Scape Landscaping, gave me my first job when I was 14," Mr. Reilly explains. "I'd plant flowers in the city on the weekends and during the summer." ¶ The trio have remained close. Upon Mr. Reilly's retirement, the partners asked if he wanted his old job back. "It was a little strange," he admits. "Once I was in the truck and touring around the city, I felt like a kid again. I even saw some of the same customers." ¶ The tulip display, running from East 54th to East 86th streets, is all white this year—symbolic of pearls—to celebrate the ritual's 30th anniversary. ¶ "When the flowers are dead, people often ask if they can keep the bulbs," Mr. Reilly says. "I don't mind. Trying to keep the peace at my old job was close to impossible. Here, I'm at peace with the flowers."

—ALIX STRAUSS