

New members . . .

Haas looks to find 'creative ways to do more with less'

The school children's chalk sketches of ancient cave drawings and colorful paper designs that adorn the walls of Rep. Bill Haas' office attest to the first-term member's value of creativity.



Rep. Bill Haas

But while Haas readily concedes his limits as an artist, he said creativity is central to his approach to politics.

In a state where government "has gotten out of control," Haas said, finding creative ways to do more with less will be the key to solving problems the Legislature faces.

"You've got to run government like you run a household or a business," he said. "If you're short on money, you cut back and find new ways to accomplish what you have to get done."

Haas won election to the District 48A seat in 1994 by defeating Rep. Brian Bergson (DFL-Osseo) in a rematch of the 1992 race.

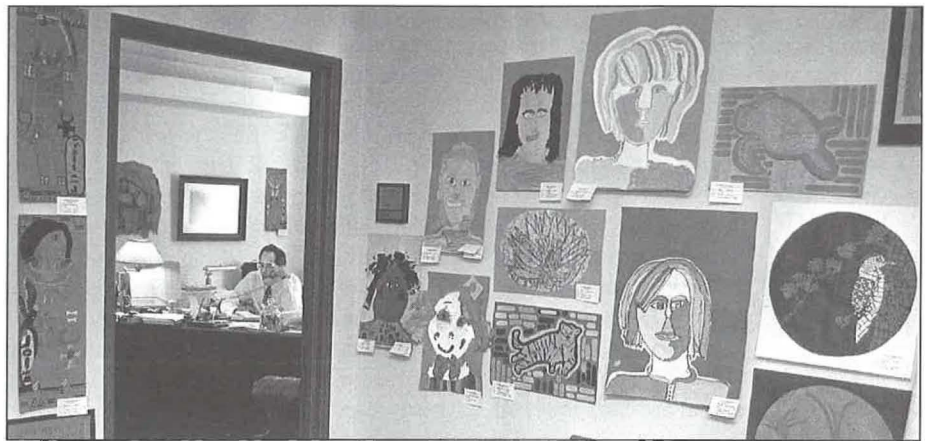
The Champlin resident owns an employee benefits brokerage and consulting company and likes to spend much of his free time outdoors.

He enjoys hunting, hiking in the woods, and downhill and water skiing. Haas also is an avid fresh water and salt water angler who finds tying flies to be a creative outlet.

He and his wife, Joenie, have two children: Rishia, 21, and Graham, 18.

Haas comes to the Legislature with strong roots in local government. He served on the Parks and Recreation Commission in Champlin for eight years before being elected mayor of the north metropolitan area city in 1984. He also has served on the District 11 Boundary Committee and as president of the North Metro Mayors Development Association.

He said his involvement in local government and decision to seek state office are the result of a basic philosophy that guides his actions in life.



The usually bare walls of the State Office Building were enlivened by the works of first-through fourth-graders from Oxbow Creek Elementary School in Champlin. They decorated the walls both outside and inside the office of Rep. Bill Haas in whose district the school is located.

"I made a promise to myself a long time ago that if I saw something that needed to be changed, I would do what I could to change it," he said.

During his eight years as mayor of Champlin, Haas put that promise to the test on more than a few tough issues. He was a leader in successful efforts to improve the city's housing stock and to ensure commercial growth in Champlin best fit its needs now and in the future.

"We turned that whole city around," he said.

Throughout his time as mayor, Haas worked to alert members of the community to the issues at hand and to include their opinions in the process of finding solutions.

"The biggest thing we did for the community was to bring the voice of the people back into city government," he said. "The one thing I believe in most is government by the people because they're the ones [who] elected me and they're the ones I represent."

As a legislator, Haas aims to make state government more accessible to his constituents. He plans to use their input and "a common sense approach" to make "effective change."

He campaigned on an agenda calling for

welfare reform, tougher criminal penalties, cuts in government, and reductions in the state's health care costs.

Haas also wants to put more control in the hands of local governments by doing away with unfunded state mandates, and to reduce the regulatory and tax burdens on Minnesota businesses.

"The way we ran government yesterday, we cannot do today and tomorrow," he said. "We have to make changes. That's what I was elected to do."

— Nick Healy

District 48A

Population: 33,322

Distribution: 100 percent urban

County: Hennepin

Largest city: Brooklyn Park (portion)

Location: north metro

Unemployment rate: 3.19 percent

Residents living below poverty level: 2.73

percent

1992 presidential election results:

Bush/Quayle 32.64 percent

Clinton/Gore 39.03 percent

Perot/Stockdale 27.62 percent

Other: 0.71 percent