

A "Gustie" blows in

Johnson gets to the heart of education issues

By RUTH DUNN

She didn't know it back then, but being the daughter of a Lutheran pastor turned out to be good training for political life, according to Rep. Ruth Johnson (DFL-St. Peter). The formation of the weekly messages, the commitment to public service and the interactions with people are important with pastors and also with politicians, she said.



Rep. Ruth Johnson

Johnson was re-elected last fall to her third non-consecutive term. She was first elected in 1996, after a former Gustavus Adolphus College classmate, Rep. Mindy Greiling (DFL-Roseville), urged her to run when an incumbent decided to retire. A whirlwind first term picked up speed when a tornado cut a 1.25-mile swath through St. Peter in March 1998.

Johnson was the House sponsor of a \$27.6 million tornado relief bill, which moved through the legislative process with bipartisan speed and showed public and private partnerships at their best, she said. "It was a united Minnesota effort to get the job done and help people at the worst moments of their lives."

Her efforts caught the attention of 1998 gubernatorial candidate Mike Freeman who selected her as his running mate for lieutenant governor. The team was not successful, but the experience gave her many memories, like the overwhelming response when she spoke to DFL state convention delegates in four languages: English, Spanish, German and Ojibwe.

Gustavus has always been a special place to Johnson. She was a "Gustie" baby when her father was a student at the college. Later, she attended the college and majored in religion. She completed a career in college administration by returning to Gustavus in 1982 and eventually became associate dean of students

DISTRICT 23A

2002 population: 36,889
Largest city: North Mankato
Counties: Nicollet, Sibley
Top concern: Education

Rep. Ruth Johnson didn't know it back then, but being the daughter of a Lutheran pastor turned out to be good training for political life.

before she retired in 1999 as a consultant.

"Schools are the heart of rural communities," said Johnson. That's why education has always been one of her legislative priorities. She believes education is a basic Minnesota value that has helped provide a high quality of life in the state.

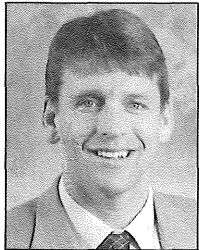
"There's a wonderful quality of life in small communities," said Johnson. She enjoys the quieter pace and how people know each other. She loves opera, classical music and dance and finds plenty of arts events near her home because there are four colleges and universities in the area.

Solution seeker

An avid outdoorsman, Moe comes inside for session

By RUTH DUNN

The best Friday night stress buster is a moonlit ride on a dog sled over snowy trails through the woods, according to Rep. Frank Moe (DFL-Bemidji).



Rep. Frank Moe

It's also the time he puts the challenges of the week behind him and reminds himself why he's serving in the Legislature and what he's working to accomplish in St. Paul.

Running for office was not an item on his "to do" list for life. He lived for sports and, growing up, dreamed of playing professional football.

College friends would jokingly introduce him by saying, "This is Frank Moe and he's running for president in 2020," only because he was so social.

While studying at Carleton College, Moe had a professor named Paul Wellstone who had a big influence on his life. "We didn't always agree on issues, but I was inspired by him," says Moe.

Moe was motivated to run for the House two years ago after hearing a speech by then-Rep. Doug Fuller (R-Bemidji). "He was not fighting for the things I thought were important, like education, health care and the environment," said Moe. "I wanted to become more a part of the solution." Last November he defeated Fuller by 7.1 percent.

To win the seat, he pulled together a coalition of supporters that included college students, American Indians and "others who wanted change." Moe says he won because turnout was 3,500 voters greater than the previous presidential election and those new voters were his supporters.

Moe teaches physical education at Bemidji State University, including outdoor education, first responder training and environmental studies.

DISTRICT 4A

2002 population: 36,727
Largest city: Bemidji
Counties: Beltrami, Cass, Itasca
Top concern: Education

"We all have different ideas and priorities, but it's important we come to consensus on how to accomplish things. We were elected to do the job."

— Rep. Frank Moe

Besides being an avid dog sled musher, Moe is a triathlete, rock climber, fishing guide and camper.

Moe has family roots in southern Minnesota, graduated from high school in Bloomington and now lives in northern Minnesota with his wife, Sherri, and their nine dogs.

Moe said his faith helps him see that all legislators share a commitment to public service. "If they didn't have that commitment, they would not be here away from their families, working long hours for peanuts."