

Whirlwind campaign helps Storm touch down in House

By Jon Fure

When new Rep. Julie Storm (R-St. Peter) began campaigning for the 1998 House election, she told people she had "more energy than a spring thunderstorm."



Rep. Julie Storm

to haunt her.

"I was fearful that it would work against me, but it worked for me," she said.

She said she attended as many public meetings and events as possible and knocked twice on every door in her district — which includes parts of Nicollet, Le Sueur, and Blue Earth counties. She said several people she met on the campaign trail made comments such as, "Storm — from St. Peter — I can remember that."

The destruction in Storm's district attracted media attention from around the country. Many volunteers helped the communities clean up the damage, and state and federal governments sent millions of dollars to help pay for rebuilding efforts.

The publicity also brought a few onlookers to check out evidence of the power of Mother Nature. At least one visitor decided that a Storm campaign sign would make a good souvenir.

Storm said she received one telephone call

from a man who wanted a new yard sign because he had given his to a passerby who asked for it. Although Storm was happy to replace the sign, she told the man if anyone else asked for the sign, he should ask if they wouldn't mind waiting until after the election.

The outside assistance and the residents' working together were among the positive outcomes of the disaster, Storm said. The neighborly climate was apparent in many ways, including two churches — one Lutheran and one Catholic — sharing a sanctuary while repairs were made to one of the buildings. Neighbors were often seen talking and lending each other a hand.

"It really brought the town together," Storm said.

Many homeowners have been repairing their houses with an eye for restoring historic character, Storm said. Open front porches and other vintage features are re-appearing on homes that have been modernized over the years. Storm predicts St. Peter will soon look better than ever.

Her love of historic architecture is apparent in her business, the Engesser House bed & breakfast. The Victorian-style home was built in the 1880s by Joseph Engesser, she said. The Engesser family came from Germany to start a brewery, which they operated in St. Peter from 1857 to 1942. Storm and her husband restored the home and converted it into a bed & breakfast in 1994.

Storm has been active in the St. Peter Chamber of Commerce and served three years as chair of the area's tourism bureau.

Gustavus Adolphus College is St. Peter's

main attraction, and the city also includes the Treaty Site History Center, where the Treaty of Traverse des Sioux and other historic treasures are on display.

Storm has also been president of the Minnesota River Valley Scenic Byway Alliance, a group made up of volunteers and local government representatives that promotes sites along much of the river valley. The river scenery includes everything from rolling farmlands in southern Minnesota to rocky areas near Granite Falls, and there are many tourist attractions and recreational areas, she said.

Before moving to St. Peter, Storm owned and operated her own interior design business in Florida for 10 years.

Her business background led to her being chosen as vice chair of the House Jobs and Economic Development Committee. In that role, Storm said she hopes to advocate tourism as a way to promote jobs and economic development, especially in Greater Minnesota.

Her primary concerns include returning the state tax surplus to residents, reducing class sizes in elementary schools, and increasing state assistance for agriculture.

District 24B

1995 population: 34,922
Largest city: St. Peter
Counties: Blue Earth, Le Sueur, Nicollet
Location: south-central Minnesota
Top concern: "Returning the tax surplus to residents and increasing the budget for agriculture at a time when it is needed so much."

— Rep. Julie Storm

Frequently called numbers

(All numbers are area code 651)

Secretary of the Senate
 231 Capitol 296-0271
 Voice mail/order bills 296-2343
Chief Clerk of the House
 211 Capitol 296-2314
Index, Senate
 110 Capitol 296-2887
Index, House
 211 Capitol 296-6646
Information, Senate
 231 Capitol 296-0504
Information, House
 175 State Office Building 296-2146

Committee Hotline, Senate 296-8088
Committee Hotline, House 296-9283
Sergeant at Arms, Senate
 Senate Chamber 296-7159/6-1119
Sergeant at Arms, House
 45 State Office Building 296-4860
Legislative Reference Library
 645 State Office Building 296-3398
Revisor of Statutes
 700 State Office Building 296-2860
Governor's Office
 130 Capitol 296-3391

Attorney General's Office
 102 Capitol 296-6196
Secretary of State's Office
 180 State Office Building 296-9208
Capitol Security
 B-4 Capitol 296-6741
Emergency 296-2100
TTY*, Senate 296-0250
 Toll free 1-888-234-1112
TTY*, House 296-9896
 Toll free 1-800-657-3550