

Careful observer

Jordan brings local government experience and concern for public safety to Legislature

By **Theresa Stahl**

Before February, Rep. John Jordan (R-Brooklyn Park) had not considered running for state representative.



Rep. John Jordan

"I had zero intention, zero desire to do it," he said.

But encouraging phone calls and e-mails from friends and business ties made him think twice. After receiving his family's blessing and his

company's approval, he decided to campaign.

"It's humbling," Jordan said. "Almost a feeling of being drafted."

The seat for District 47A opened when Rep. Darlene Luther, who served five terms in the House, died Jan. 30 after a battle with stomach cancer.

If the Legislature fulfills its goal of adjourning by the Easter holiday, Jordan will only spend three weeks of his 9-month term in session. He said he won't begin campaigning for the November election until the session is over.

Born in St. Paul, Jordan has lived in Brooklyn Park for 17 years. He and his wife Michelle have two children — Erik, 15, and Allyson, 10 — one dog, and three cats.

Jordan, 41, believes residents deserve from their legislators "someone who will read about the issues, listen to constituents, learn what they can before voting, and make the best decision for residents."

Key issues in Jordan's campaign were equitable funding for education, public safety, transportation, and wise use of tax dollars.

In terms of education, he said it is unfair that Minneapolis schools receive \$2,000 more per student than schools in his district.

He also wants better roads and better transit opportunities, particularly Highway 610 and a busway on Highway 81.

"We need a balanced approach (to transportation) ... and we have to do it without raising taxes," he said. He does not support light-rail transit because it is being forced into developed areas. But he thinks commuter rail proposals, such as the Northstar Corridor plan, are good solutions to congestion because the infrastructure is already built for high-speed trains.

He didn't offer specific ways taxpayers' money was being unwisely used, but he said there are ways to streamline what the state does.

"What are we doing here that we could do better?" he said. "I intend to look for ways to economize. Now is the time."

Jordan said his city government experience is part of what may make him a good state representative. He has spent two years on the Brooklyn Park Planning Commission, served as vice chair on the Brooklyn Park Long-Range Improvement Committee, and sat on the board of directors for his local chamber of commerce.

His community involvement started when he formed a neighborhood watch group after his house was burglarized.

Another injustice, on a much greater level, sparked the business he runs today, an Internet-based business devoted to crime prevention.

In December 1999 the mother of a friend of Jordan's was shot by her estranged husband. She survived, and to track down her husband her son posted photos and information on a Web site, using a domain name of Jordan's.

The site first received local, then national media attention and then started receiving 1 million hits a month. The accused was arrested one year after the crime, convicted, and sentenced to 20 years without parole.

Jordan wondered, "What can we do with

this momentum?" So he met with police chiefs and crime prevention groups to determine what was needed, and then raised money to build a Web site. CitizenObserver.com was launched in August 2001. Currently 70 police departments use it to post information and rewards about their fugitives, missing persons, and unsolved crimes.

The Web site also caught the eye of the Bush administration, and Jordan recently traveled to the White House to discuss his venture with the Office of Homeland Security. He said their support will allow the company to move significantly faster than in normal business operations. Jordan said they have a three-year plan to expand nationally.

From his business to community work, Jordan follows through on his word, said Brooklyn Park Mayor Grace Arbogast.

Jordan asked that Arbogast hold the Bible when he would be sworn into office March 8.

"I really wanted to make it a Brooklyn Park affair," Jordan said.

Over the six years Arbogast has known Jordan, she said she's learned how he will be a representative who is going to carry out what is best for his region.

"He will be in touch with and working with residents of Brooklyn Park that he serves," she said.

"I will have an extremely open door policy," Jordan said. If someone leaves a message he said he will always return the call.

"It's a legacy that Luther left of really good constituency, and I intend to continue that."

DISTRICT 47A

1998 population (estimate): 39,552

Largest city: Brooklyn Park

County: Hennepin

Location: northern Minneapolis suburbs

Top concern: "Education, safe neighborhoods, good transportation, and wise use of tax dollars."

— Rep. John Jordan