

One on one

Art teacher looks to paint good picture for constituents

By Mia Simpson

Rep. Robin Brown (DFL-Austin) said she knocked on approximately 9,000 doors during her campaign for a simple reason: She wanted to get to know voters one-on-one.



Rep. Robin Brown

“When I talk about knowing the district, I mean that I know the stories of my district,” she said. “I know what they want, and it’s basically what everyone wants: to have a good job and be able to raise a family and to live in a safe community.”

Up until recently, Brown had never considered an election run. Her husband, Joe, served as a state representative in Iowa, their home state, in the 1980s before they married, which made politics common conversation,

but not necessarily a quest for her. Brown credits several factors – grown children, shifting national politics and a passion for education – as the impetus to her decision to run for a seat in the House.

“I still haven’t gotten it down to a 30-second sound-bite,” she said. “I just thought, ‘You know, I can do that.’”

One of seven children in a farming family, Brown spent her childhood riding horses before entering Minnesota State University, Mankato to major in art education. After working nine years as a teacher, she enrolled in a master’s degree program in education at St. Mary’s University, where she graduated last year.

For the last five years, Brown has taught art and photography at Albert Lea High School. She’s also an artist herself. The artwork – paintings of horses in vibrant tones of blue, black and red – around her sparsely-decorated

DISTRICT 27A

2002 population: 36,705
 Largest city: Albert Lea
 Counties: Freeborn, Mower
 Top concern: Education

office is hers. Brown appears introverted, quiet and thoughtful — though she professes that she experienced a metamorphosis of sorts while campaigning.

“I learned that I am much stronger than I thought I was,” she said. “I don’t have to be the shy, quiet person I always was. ... There’s not much to be afraid of.”

Brown said she’ll focus on education this session, as well as other issues relevant to her district, including agriculture and taxes. She’ll also hold fast to advice her husband gave her as she took her oath to office. “He said, ‘Take care of your constituents,’” she said. “I want to represent them in a way that makes them proud.”