

# Activism in a new place

## In St. Paul, Madore to fight for familiar issues

By **MIKE COOK**

Like many parents with school-aged children, Rep. Shelley Madore (DFL-Apple Valley) has purchased enough wrapping paper to last for a few years.



"I'd really like to see my families not have to have another fundraiser next year to pay for a teacher," she said.

One of her goals this year is to increase special education funding, an

**Rep. Shelley Madore** issue that is especially important to her family. Her 16-year-old daughter, Erica, has spina bifida and her 13-year-old son, Jason, has autism.

She also hopes to work on ways for businesses to partner with schools for special needs students, such as through mentoring programs.

"A lot of our kids need pre-employment

experience, and maybe working through a mentorship program with the businesses will help them to learn there is a reason to stay in school," she said, noting that for every regular education student that drops out of school, three special education students leave. "These kids are already having a tough enough time without a high school diploma."

Madore started the first Cub Scout pack in the country for boys with autism. Although the pack has since disbanded, she is proud that four boys earned the "Arrow of Light," the highest rank in Cub Scouts.

"I was a Girl Scout leader for seven years, and then I wanted my son to have that experience," she said.

After years as a community activist, including stints with city and school committees, Madore knew it was time to be of assistance on a larger stage. "I just said, 'You know, I can really make an impact at the Legislature given my knowledge base.'"

## DISTRICT 37A

2002 population: 36,915

Largest city: Burnsville

County: Dakota

Top concerns: Transportation, property tax relief and education

Madore represents two communities for which transit is a key issue. Cedar Avenue is on the west side of her district; Interstate 35W is on the east. Commuters often face congestion on both roadways.

"We need to look at the cost-effectiveness between (bus rapid transit) and (light-rail transit) to bring down Cedar," said Madore, who serves on the Transportation Division of the House Finance Committee, and is vice chairwoman of the Transportation and Transit Policy Subcommittee. Additionally, she would also like to see funding available to increase routes for the Minnesota Valley Transit Authority, which serves both communities.

# Fixing health care

## Murphy mixes passions for health care, politics

By **NICK BUSSE**

Ask Rep. Erin Murphy (DFL-St. Paul) why she ran for office, and you're likely to get a very specific answer: "to fix health care."



To be sure, Murphy has other issues on her agenda: education, the environment, global warming, renewable energy, mass transit and civil rights, to name a few.

**Rep. Erin Murphy** But for Murphy, a registered nurse and current executive director of the Minnesota Nurses Association, health care is her bread and butter.

"When I door-knocked this summer, what I heard from people was that health care was getting so expensive they're worried they're

going to lose their coverage," Murphy said. "That lack of security is really worrisome to people."

Born and raised in a working-class Wisconsin household, Murphy said she inherited her politics from her parents.

"I grew up in a family that talked politics," she said, adding that she worked on her first political campaign while she was in the eighth grade. (Her candidate won a seat in the Wisconsin State Senate.)

But the idea of entering politics didn't occur to her until much later in life, when she saw how great a role public policy played in her chosen profession.

"When I started studying nursing, I was very content with the idea of working in a hospital and for a few years, didn't even think about politics," Murphy said. "But it doesn't take long to see that the reach of a practicing

## DISTRICT 64A

2002 population: 36,752

Largest city: St. Paul

County: Ramsey

Top concern: Health care

nurse ... is limited by policy."

She spent several years lobbying on behalf of the nurses association, and when her predecessor, Rep. Matt Entenza, announced he was stepping down to run for attorney general last year, she knew the time was right to run for office.

Murphy said her No. 1 priority is to work toward universal health care coverage for all Minnesotans — a step she believes is necessary to help control the rising cost of health care.

"If we were able, through policymaking, to put more order to it and stretch the dollars so more people could get covered, then I think we would actually have the leverage to be able to ratchet down costs," she said.