

Reporting for duty

McFarlane is first female House member from her district

By Mia SIMPSON

Destiny implies a special power, even a certain magic, that brings a person to a particular place in space and time where he or she is meant to be.



Rep. Carol McFarlane

Rep. Carol McFarlane (R-White Bear Lake) may have been destined for her House seat.

"It's like my husband says, 'Carol, you've been preparing for this your whole life, and you didn't even realize it,'" she said.

"All the opportunities I've had, all my experiences, have prepared me for this."

A mother of three and grandmother of three, McFarlane spent the past seven years on the White Bear Lake school board, where she said she earned a reputation as a collaborator,

listener and consensus builder. Early on, she was assigned the position of legislative liaison, which made her responsible for, among other things, connecting local constituents to their state legislators.

"I embraced it," she said. "I was bringing parents down [to the State Capitol] and providing tours. I think this is the people's place, and that everybody's opinion matters here."

She decided to run for office after being approached by former Rep. Doug Meslow, who retired from the seat last year. She is now the first female House member elected from her district and the only Republican representative in Ramsey County.

McFarlane, who owns a local tire company with her husband of 35 years, Patrick, said her 25 years of experience as a community leader and volunteer offer her broad access

DISTRICT 53B

2002 Population: 36,699
Largest city: White Bear Lake
County: Ramsey
Top concerns: Education, small business, fiscal responsibility

to issues and an important, sometimes rare, perspective in politics.

"[Issues] don't exist in silos," she said. "They are interconnected."

Her plan is to "learn, listen and conserve" as she navigates the corridors of the Capitol. McFarlane said she'll focus her energy on supporting small business and education, promoting sound fiscal management and introducing issues raised by a group of local citizens she plans to convene and meet with in her district.

"I believe in people, and I believe in fairness, and that's why I want to represent the people," she said. "Life has led me this. How lucky am I that I get to do this at this point in my life?"