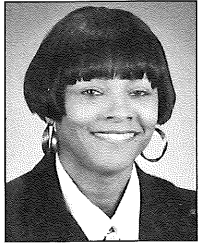


Going from homeless to the House

Moran used hard work to improve self, wants to help others

BY PATTY OSTBERG

Ten years ago Rep. Rena Moran (DFL-St. Paul) arrived at Sharing and Caring Hands homeless shelter after moving from Chicago



Rep. Rena Moran

with six of her seven children. Now, she's a legislator.

"Anything is possible if you work at it," she said.

Moran moved to Minnesota because she had heard it was a "family-friendly state"

with the best school systems and was supportive of women, children and families. "I thought it would be a good place to raise my kids," she said. When she arrived at the shelter with a bachelor's degree in early childhood education she immediately wanted to find employment but had little resources to help.

Without a job and depending on public assistance, she found it was her "quest to be independent and self sufficient" that

connected her with support groups. The relationships she established over the next several months paved her way to success. "Everything is about relationships, building good relationships is critical," she said.

Once employed in her community, Moran soon found herself advocating for the paving of the street in front of her home she purchased in 2006. Before that she was in a community action partnership class discussing policies that affect families depending on public assistance.

"It's really important to me to get to know who my community is. ... I want to be a community of people where we're all concerned and connected with each other," she said.

The issues most important to her district include job creation.

"I have knocked on thousands of homes and regardless of color, circumstance, age, people wanted to work," she said. "We need jobs, not just minimum wage jobs, but livable wage jobs," she added.

DISTRICT 65A

Population (2009 est.): 36,674

Largest City: St. Paul

County: Ramsey

Top Concern: Jobs. "We must get our community back to work."

Creating jobs helps provide for a safe community and environment for children and families, and also leads to good education, she said.

When she looks at the \$6.2 billion projected deficit facing Minnesota, she doesn't see statistics. "I see people. I see children. I see an obligation to the state for us to realize that it is about getting people to a place where people can be self sufficient." Once people are up on their feet, she said, they can contribute to the economy so the burden is not on the Legislature to cut programs.