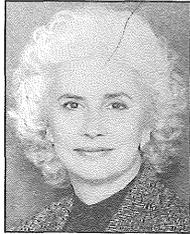


New members . . .

Evans rekindles friendships, focuses on education

Rep. Geri Evans (DFL-New Brighton) is a newcomer for a second time. She served in the House during the 1992-94 session in District 52B, which includes parts of the Twin Cities' northwest suburban area, and regained her seat this year.



Rep. Geri Evans

Evans said her attraction to public service may have originated during her childhood in Blue Earth, Minn. "I grew up in a home where people were always dropping over and talking all the issues — world affairs, religion — everything," she said. "And, even as a child and a female, my opinions were taken seriously. I didn't realize then how unique that was."

A former St. Anthony-New Brighton school board member, Evans said her first priority is quality in education. Part of her commitment comes from her firsthand experience with the difference schools and teachers can make.

Evans' son, Jim, now 32, has a hearing disability. "Back when he was in school, there weren't as many proactive programs as there are now. I had to do very heavy-duty advocacy to make sure he got the services he needed." It would have been easy for teachers to consider him learning disabled, Evans said. "We all have to continually check our assumptions. It's so important to treat all kids fairly. Many deaf people have been sent to institutions for the mentally retarded."

Today, Jim is a magna cum laude graduate of St. Cloud State University and works for Hennepin County as a senior financial worker. Evans' younger son, Andrew, 26, works in landscaping.

"What I want is for all kids to get a high-quality, well-rounded education," Evans said. "I'm motivated by my experiences on the school board, which I really enjoyed." The school board experience also led her to what became one of her favorite legislative accomplishments: keeping open an environmental center which was threatened with closure. Evans authored the bonding legislation, which

provided funds to renovate the Mounds View School District's Laurentian Environmental Center, she said.

"I've always been a negotiator and coalition-builder. I listen to diverse points of view." Evans said that the skills she developed in that position also are useful at the Legislature.

In her nonpolitical life she's an educational trainer and researcher, which, she said, means providing information and research for staff training and curriculum development for K-12 education and higher education organizations.

District 52B

1995 population: 33,290

Largest city: New Brighton

County: Ramsey

Location: northwestern Metro

Top concern: Adequate education funding. It's an important issue in every district. We did some polling in mine and it ranked highest. A related issue is environmentally safe schools, due to the air-quality problems experienced at Pike Lake Elementary school in New Brighton.

— Rep. Geri Evans