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FAMILY VALUES IN ACTION:

The Candidate's Son Hits the Campaign Trail



Whether he's riding his 2005 Honda motorcycle or driving whatever car is available in the family, John Motsinger, Jr. -- youngest son of Elisabeth Motsinger, the Democratic candidate for U.S. Congress -- is logging miles for his mom this summer. And the campaign trail does not end for the college senior until after the November election. John Jr. is taking the semester off from the University of North Carolina at Greensboro to devote all his time and attention to his mother's campaign.

"Our country is at a crossroads politically," John Jr. says. "If I am not putting everything I have into the political arena right now, I am hurting myself in the long run."

The 22-year-old theater technology major is passionate about politics. "It's the conversation of our social structure," he says. "I've always been a social activist. It's in my blood."

Elisabeth Motsinger has a long history of being active in her community, and she instilled in her son a deep need to be involved in the world around him. "The moral principle that I learned from her is that society demands action and we must look out for our neighbors," he says.

John Jr. learned that principle by watching, listening, and joining the conversation. Growing up, he accompanied his mother to important meetings in the community. He watched her serve her community on the School Board and through various volunteer efforts. He listened to her conversations as she sought to address complicated local issues. "There was a real focus on finding the truth. She made sure I learned to question everything. If I held a position, she challenged me about why I felt that way. I had to know all sides of the issue."

Mother and son talked about their mutual dissatisfaction with the political process. "There was no conversation taking place," he explains. "Everyone was shouting their positions without listening to the other viewpoint."

"We just kept saying that someone needs to start a conversation," he continues, describing how discussions around the kitchen table became campaign dialog.

"I think it's me," Elisabeth Motsinger said to her son. "I think I want to run for office." And her son replied, "Absolutely! What can I do to help?"

Help he has. From passing out flyers at Appalachian State University to speaking on his mother's behalf at Democratic events to phone banking at campaign headquarters, he's been a fixture in the campaign. And although he won't attend classes this fall, John Jr. will spend lots of time on campus. As campus director and deputy field director for the campaign, he is organizing the dozen or so colleges and universities in the 5th District.

John Jr.'s duties include recruiting students on each campus to register voters and get them to the polls; planning campus events and candidate visits; scheduling debates; and coordinating distribution of campaign materials. "Whatever it takes," he says. "Students love my mom. I just need to make sure they get out and vote for her."

For John Jr., the campaign has become an outlet for his passion to be involved and make a difference. "What better way than to help your mom?"