

# The Community Page

## Mayor Fuhriman Not Your Typical Politician

One may well ask why anyone would wish to be the mayor of a city such as Idaho Falls. Why take upon oneself the complicated problems associated with such a responsibility?

A desire for such a responsibility never entered Jared Fuhriman's mind. He enjoyed his work with the Idaho Falls Police Department. He worked there for 18 years, achieved the rank of Lieutenant and had plans to retire in uniform. Although he had been active in supporting local politicians and in donating his time to his chosen political affiliation, he held no political ambitions.

The demise of his plan began one day when a local citizen asked him if he was going to throw his hat into the ring since Mayor Linda Milam had decided to retire and not seek re-



Mayor Jared Fuhriman

election. His surprise added emphasis to his very quick refusal, but he found over the next few weeks that the idea wouldn't go away. More and more people approached him, even offering financial assistance where needed.

But finances weren't his only concern. After all, he would be forsaking his retirement with the police department and would have no guarantee that the job would continue after the first four years. This is no small consideration to a father of seven children.

As time went by, the increasing pressure to change his mind led him to have private conversations with a handful of people he knew who had political savvy, assessing their responses to the idea. When their reactions consistently went from surprise to contemplation and then to encouragement, he reluctantly decided it was time to discuss the idea with his family and with his own "Higher Power."

His seven children voted 6 to 1 to support his idea. The dissenting vote came only because of what had been seen in other campaigns and the dissenter didn't want people to say bad things about their dad.

To decide whether Mayor Fuhriman's decision was right or wrong, one needs only to ask the people he serves and works with each day. They applaud his decision to seek the office, and highly approve of the work he does, pointing out his strengths in office.

Paramount to his ability to serve effectively



Constituents of all ages receive the Mayor's undivided attention.

is his talent of gathering and uniting people to work together for the common good. He recognizes people's strengths and invites their participation in helping to solve problems. He has appointed great department heads, he listens to them, trusting their abilities. They bring professionalism and dedication to their work. "I've seen over and over again his ability to bring people together, plant a seed or provide a clear direction for that group to follow, and then stand back and watch them go to work," says one city staffer.

Mayor Fuhriman always adheres to accountability and transparency in his administration, having put into place the mechanism for a yearly efficiency audit, with the potential of saving the city significant amounts of money into the future. This openness is merely a part of the Mayor's personal behavior. He has been applauded for his unique ability, perhaps developed over his years as a police officer, to be able to assess people and to see them clearly. He presents this same demeanor himself, always honest in his dealings with the public. If blame is to be placed for whatever reason, the Mayor takes what he believes is essentially his.

He has been tagged as "not your typical politician," wanting to do what is right even if it isn't popular. As with nearly everyone who runs for office, Mayor Fuhriman reports that meeting people has been the most satisfying part of running for or fulfilling his office. When among his constituents of any age, he shares his time fully and genuinely.

The people of Idaho Falls have been the happy beneficiaries of good men and women who have served as past mayors. The first mayor, Joseph A. Clark began when the city was organized. Respected names are among those who

have served since: Barzilla Clark, Chase Clark, Tom Sutton, Ed Fanning and Eddie Pedersen to name a few. Since 1978 only three people have served: Thomas Campbell, Linda Milam and Jared D. Fuhriman. Citizens seem to have selected good people and have then hung onto them.

Mayor Fuhriman fits well into this category. It is interesting to discover that his greatest satisfaction comes from bringing new people into the process of governing the city by forming advisory councils and coalitions such as expanding the Eastern Idaho Legislative Forum of Regional Mayors, partnering with Grow Idaho Falls, Inc., to convene an Economic Summit, holding Idaho Falls' first Strategic Planning Summit, and participating first hand in encouraging the welcome to Areva in finding a home in Bonneville County.

Foremost among these groups is the formation of the Mayor's Youth Advisory Council, a group of 45 students from all four high schools and the Idaho Virtual Academy. Other mayors have also been invited into this council. After 18 years of working closely with youth in the DARE program, as a school resource officer, organizing the police cadet program and law clubs, Mayor Fuhriman continues to relish the opportunity to involve young people in governance and self-determination.

All this enjoyment of "gathering" good people around him is also what fellow workers see as his greatest strength. He is a man who, though feeling the stress of the position and adding a few grey hairs to the perfectly combed dark hair, truly loves his work, his city, and the people he serves.

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## A COMMUNITY OF COMMON GOALS

To better understand Jared Fuhriman, one must look briefly at his background. He was born in Ogden, Utah, and is the oldest of four children. He has lived in Idaho Falls since he was nine years old and is a product of local schools, graduating from Idaho Falls High School.

Jared served a mission for the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints to Ohio and has now been married to his wife Karen for 26 years. They are the parents of 7 living children and now first-time grandparents.

During Jared's service on the police force, the Fuhrimans also provided room in their home as foster parents, eventually adopting some of the children they have thus welcomed. Their joint love and concern has always been for the youth this beautiful city, and they have not shirked a deeply held sense of duty to them.

Mayor Fuhriman loves the fact that so many people of

this community step up to make it a great place to live and to work: "There is a spirit of volunteerism, an outpouring of community service, and people who see the bigger picture, the community spirit." He also shares those desires, and is perfectly suited to lead a community of common goals



Left, Mayor proclaims 'Paint the City Purple' to kickoff the Relay for Life fundraiser. Right, Mayor at the ribbon cutting for the Sunnyside Road extension completion.