

Knollenberg rolls the road for U.S. House votes

BY GREG KOWALSKI
STAFF WRITER

This is the first in a series of stories about candidates in the 11th U.S. House District.

Joseph Knollenberg is a conservative Republican, but he doesn't rule out trying some fast-action campaign techniques — like having campaigner strap on in-line skates and hand out literature door-to-door.

"I think it's very effective," said Knollenberg of his walking and rolling campaign.

"People do want to see candidates," he said as he visited houses in Birmingham one morning last week. Accompanying him were his wife, Sandie; son, Marty; and volunteers Dan Kowal and Brian Theis.

Although speaking and fund-raising commitments keep Knollenberg from doing daily door-to-door campaigning, he has supporters out almost every day pounding or rather rolling over the pavement, passing out fliers and talking to residents.

Knollenberg has a campaigning strategy. He doesn't visit every house, but concentrates on people who have voted Republican in past primaries.

Knollenberg, an Allstate Insurance agent with an office in Troy, is running against state Sen. David Hontela and former Oakland Circuit Judge Alice Gilbert on the Republican ticket, and Novi teacher Michael Meyer and Birmingham accountant Walter O. Briggs IV on the Democratic ticket for the newly

'It's hectic. But this only goes on for a short period of time.'

Sandie Knollenberg

created 11th U.S. House Congressional district.

Knollenberg has the endorsement of William Broomfield, who has held the post for nearly 40 years.

"It's hectic," said Sandie while on the campaign trail. "But this only goes on for a short period of time."

Sandie teaches aerobics courses, which are broadcast locally on cable TV. When not doing that, she helps her husband of 30 years campaign.

"Most people are very receptive," she said.

People like to meet with the candidates even when the homeowners are dressed in robes, nearly undressed and with tousled hair at a visit at 9:30 a.m. on a Saturday.

Don Jones of Birmingham was up and about at that hour Saturday, taking his infant daughter for a morning stroll when Knollenberg came calling.

"Sure it makes an impression (to actually meet a candidate)," he said. "But what really makes my decision on how to vote is what he stands for."

Neighbor Bob Crink met with Knollenberg at Crink's door on Mohegan St.

"At least I met him," Crink said. He added he hadn't made up his



Walk and roll: Congressional House candidate Joseph Knollenberg hits the campaign trail in Birmingham with the help (from left) of volunteers Brian Theis and Dan Kowal, his wife Sandie and their son, Marty.

mind on how to vote yet, but he was aware of who the candidates are and knew that Knollenberg had gotten Broomfield's endorsement.

"I keep up with things. I like to vote intelligently," Crink said.

"It's great to have one of our guys running for office," said Neil Minnich, spokesman for Allstate Insurance Companies.

Minnich said the firm has no policy regarding people seeking public office, although Knollenberg would have to resign if elected. Individual insurance offices operate pretty much independently, he said.

Knollenberg has been with the insurance company since 1962. A graduate of Eastern Illinois University, Knollenberg, 58, served in the

army then went into the insurance profession.

"He's always been involved in politics," said Sandie. Knollenberg worked on Broomfield campaigns in the past. It was at Broomfield's endorsement that Knollenberg decided to run for office, Sandie said.

Knollenberg was born on a farm in Illinois and was the fifth of 13 children. He worked as an agent for New York Life Insurance Co. in Chicago but switched to Allstate

when he was transferred to Detroit and his boss left the company.

Knollenberg said he is not a "lawyer or career politician," but wants to go to Congress to help clear up the "mess of things in Washington."

Sandie said that, with their two sons now in their 20s, she is willing to make the career move to high-level politics.

"I'm real excited about the opportunity to make some changes," she said.

Garden City Roma's to stay open

BY TAYLOR LINCOLN
STAFF WRITER

Although Roma's of Michigan has been converted to Chapter 7 bankruptcy, requiring the corporation to either find a buyer or liquidate its assets, the Garden City business is planning to keep the doors open.

"Contrary to what they say, the Garden City location will remain open. The sale is imminent and will occur in the next week or so," said

Bill Frankowski, the general manager of the Garden City business. Frankowski said the Garden City will operate separately from the Roma's of Michigan corporation and that the current staff will remain. He declined to identify the new owners.

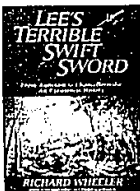
"The building will be renovated but there will be no stoppage of service and we will honor all contracts from the Bloomfield Township store."

Earlier, a Roma's of Michigan employee confirmed that the business is now under Chapter 7 and will close down Nov. 1, unless a buyer is found.

She blamed "competition and the times" for the company's demise.

"Everything's up in the air right now. Bloomfield and Garden City might get new owners and operate just the same for another 45 years — that's what we're hoping for," she said.

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