

Karen Caldwell – new reeve with new ideas

by Cindy Miller, Communications Coordinator

Karen Caldwell isn't your typical municipal official. Besides being one of only nine women in Manitoba who were elected as heads of council in the last election, she is also probably the youngest reeve to ever serve in the Province of Manitoba.

In last year's October municipal elections, Karen Caldwell, a 28-year old mother of two, ran and won the position as the reeve of the Rural Municipality of Pipestone. Although Karen never thought she would want to be involved in municipal politics, she found herself drawn into it through the lack of economic development in her own community.

"Initially, I wasn't interested in politics at all," Karen commented. "My background is in business and computers. But, when my husband and I moved to Reston in 1999, I realized that there was nothing to involve and keep the youth here in the community. I wanted to do something about that, for my own children and for the rest of the community."

Born in Barrhead, Alberta, Karen met her husband (who was born in Reston) when they were both attending Medicine Hat College. They married in 1995, the weekend before final exams, and both graduated with diplomas in Business Administration; Karen majoring in microcomputers and her husband majoring in accounting. Before moving to Souris, the two lived in Winnipeg where her husband went to school for collision repair and refinishing. Shortly after their move to Souris, the couple moved to Reston and to her husband's family farm.

"Sometimes you never know where your life will lead you. I would never have guessed that my husband and I would end up farming. When we started talking about it, I had some real reservations about moving." But Karen adds, with a smile, that she and her husband are building towards a cow/calf operation and admits she's "really enjoying it."

Once elected to Pipestone's council, she wasn't sure what to expect. She knew what she wanted to do for the community, but she also knew that she'd be working with six other elected officials who had their own ideas about what was good for the area.

"You have seven different people, with different ideas and different life experiences



Karen Caldwell

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at different times in their lives. All those factors can sometimes make it hard to make a decision. But, I also believe that with that kind of a mix – fresh ideas and long time experience – it can only benefit our community in the long run.”

In regards to economic development, Karen has some definite ideas. "I really want to work on developing community pride. I want our youth to be proud of where they come from. One idea I have is an essay contest on what our municipality can do for the young people living here and what will make them want to return after their education. The winner will then receive a cash prize and a prize for their graduating class."

Karen is currently working on getting the local economic development board together to do asset mapping, which assesses what your community currently has to offer. "Sometimes you don't realize what amazing things your community has to offer until you see it on paper. Once the assessment is done, we then can take a look at aggressively pursuing companies that complement industry that

we already have," Karen adds. She also wants to develop a partnership with the local school board, a relationship that has been lacking in the past. "It only makes sense to have the two biggest players pulling together for the benefit of the community."

"I'm excited to be in a position where I can affect some positive changes in my community. I'm very much looking forward to the next four years."

AMM Calendar of Events

<i>Convention</i>	
2003	November 24-27, Brandon
2004	November 22-25, Winnipeg
2005	November 21-24, Brandon
2006	November 27-30, Winnipeg
2007	November 26-29, Brandon
2008	November 24-27, Winnipeg
2009	November 23-26, Brandon
2010	November 22-25, Winnipeg

Municipal Officials Seminar (Keystone Centre, Brandon)

2003	February 24-25
2004	February 23-24
2005	February 28 – March 1
2006	February 27-28
2007	February 26-27
2008	February 25-26
2009	February 23-24
2010	February 22-23

Manitoba Good Roads Association Banquet (Royal Oak, Brandon)

2003	February 23
2004	February 22
2005	February 27
2006	February 26
2007	February 25
2008	February 24
2009	February 22
2010	February 21

AMM Education Seminars

September 6, 2003	– "Board of Revision" (Brandon)
October 10, 2003	– "Labour Relations for Elected Officials" & "Developing a Long Term Plan" (Portage la Prairie)