

Republican Convention to focus on service



Holly Hughes

BY DEBRA CARTE

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Holly Hughes, local political and environmental activist, has been spreading compassion around the White Lake area for some time.

Now, as a newly elected Republican committeewoman for the State of Michigan, she'll take it to the streets of New York City as part of "Compassion Across America," President George Bush's challenge to Americans leading up to the Republican National Convention August 30 through Sept. 2.

For the convention, Republicans in each of the 50 states are working on community service projects. In Michigan, that's being spearheaded by Hughes. Michigan, Ohio and Florida, considered the three "battle-ground" states, are collaborating on state-wide blood drives, food drives and organ tissue registries.

"Each state picked different projects," Hughes said. "We have no budget, no staff, we're just doing it the old-fashioned way."

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Hughes: making a difference

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For Hughes, that means down in the trenches giving your all until the work is done. She'll officially assume the duties of state Republican committee-woman on Sept. 2, but the work has already begun. With those additional responsibilities, her work on behalf of Republican primaries, and presiding over the community service projects, she's getting little sleep, but said it's all worth it knowing lives are being saved.

"The hard part is trying to work it (the service projects) in because of the primaries, but the cool part is it's actually saving lives. Every blood donation saves up to four lives," said Hughes who gave blood for the first time just this year.

"I felt fine afterwards," she said. "People have a lot of questions about can I or can I not give blood."

The answer is, according to Hughes, most people can with few exceptions. A blood donor should weigh over 110 pounds and can not have been a visitor to some foreign countries. Aspirin and certain other medications can not have been within 36 hours of giving blood.

Hughes and her family, husband Rick Hughes, and daughters, 17-year-old Taylor and 19-

year-old Morgan, will be going to the state Republican convention in Plymouth Township on August 27. From there, they'll head to New York City for the national convention from Aug. 30 to Sept. 2.

Once in New York, the Hughes family and some 80 others from Michigan will be taken on buses around the city to work on service projects there that will include painting and assembling playhouses for children in rehabilitation and child abuse centers.

Ed Gillespie, chairman of the Republican National Committee, and Mark Wallace, Bush-Cheney '04 deputy campaign manager, announced last Thursday that Senator Zell Miller (D-GA) will deliver the keynote address at the convention on Sept. 1.

On Monday, Aug. 30, Rudy Giuliani, former mayor of New York City, and Arizona Senator John McCain will address the topic of courage.

On Tuesday, Aug. 31, First Lady Laura Bush and California Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger will focus on the compassion of the American people.

In addition to Miller on Wednesday, Vice President Dick Cheney is scheduled as the featured speaker. And on Thursday,

President Bush will lay out his plan for four more years in office.

Hughes, who's attended her share of Republican conventions, said this convention will be different.

"9/11 has changed how conventions will be run forever," she said.

Passes to the floor of the conventions were once handed out freely, Hughes said. Now, tightened security will require photo identification badges.

Hughes has played an active role in the Muskegon County Republican party since 1989. She's served as chairperson in the 2nd Congressional District for two terms and has been a trustee on the White River Township board for eight years. Her activism locally on behalf of environmental issues has brought her recognition statewide.

"Working on issues you care about leads to political involvement," she said.

What's in her political future?

"I want to do a good job this year," she answered. "You don't know where your path is going to take you ... Whatever you put in front of you, do the best you can with it. You can make a difference if you make an effort."