

Political action a bright spot this season

Although I've voted in every state and national election since I turned 18 (Hint: My first presidential vote went to Jimmy Carter), until this year I've never been active in politics. My profession—journalism—held me back. Despite the popular rhetoric used to characterize the media as “liberal,” no journalist I've ever worked with or for discussed their political convictions in the office, displayed a candidate's sign or bumper sticker, or in any way worked to elect a particular candidate. We all believed—rightly—that allegiance to a particular candidate or political cause would poison what we contributed to the news.

That changed for me this summer. More than six years out of the daily news business, I went to work for my state representative's re-election campaign. Why? Like so many others have reported, I felt completely disconnected from the lawmakers deciding life-and-death issues on my behalf. That frustrated need to play a bigger role in civic life—whether it came from the left, middle or the right—moved me and millions of other people this fall to leave the comfort of the our living rooms and find our places in public life.

Wheaton alumnae/i have played significant roles in public political life this year. For some, their most recent leadership is just a small part of a lifetime of work; for others, they are just beginning to find



Jared Duval '05 (left) and Genevieve Scoville '08 (right) talk with a St. Anselm College student in Manchester, N.H., days before the November election.

their voices. Longtime Westport Selectwoman Diane Farrell '77 ran a close race in Connecticut's Fourth Congressional District against incumbent Rep. Chris Shays, losing by a slim margin. Former Environmental Protection Agency administrator and New Jersey Gov. Christine Todd Whitman '68 led her state's delegation to the Republican National Convention, and has scheduled a January release for *It's My Party, Too: How the Radical Right Is Undermining America*. Shawn Boone '00 just announced his bid for city council in West Hollywood, California. And Barbara Richardson '71, first lady of New Mexico and wife of Democratic National Convention Chair and Gov. Bill Richardson found her voice in her adopted state's most urgent needs, such as literacy educa-

tion and domestic violence prevention. Read more about her work on page 18.

It's Wheaton students who make me most optimistic about political discourse and action, however. Buoyed by the excitement of last winter's presidential primaries, the campus experienced a revitalization of political awareness. No matter what their party affiliation, students groups sponsored voter registration drives and campus debates. Democrats and Republicans squared off each week in the pages of the student newspaper, the *Wire*. Speak-ins became a regular part of the Dimple landscape. The Wheaton Nonviolent Coordinating Committee, a group of students, staff and faculty, brought renowned speakers to campus—political columnist Molly Ivins was here just after the election—and

staged protests (see the photo on page 5). And students traveled across the country to support their causes. Sara Lonardo '06, for example, spent the fall working for John Kerry in Florida and filed regular reports from the field to the *Wire*. The public policy major recently wrote from the campaign trail: “I guarantee you that if students voted in the same numbers as our grandparents, politicians would be talking about Pell grants and federal work-study as often as Medicare.”

Amen, Sara. 📍

Letters to the editor: The *Quarterly* welcomes letters to the editor on topics you've read in these pages or on other topics concerning the Wheaton community. Please address your letters to:

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