



## Democratic women honor Boosalis with 'inspiring women' tribute

By JoANNE YOUNG / Lincoln Journal Star | Posted: Friday, September 18, 2009 7:40 pm

The women said they felt it.

The inspiration of former Lincoln mayor and political pioneer Helen Boosalis was just as powerful three months after her death.

"Helen took risks. And because she succeeded, all women have succeeded," said former lieutenant governor and lobbyist Kim Robak.

Eighty women and men gathered Friday to honor her and inspire each other as they said she did for so many women over the 50 years she was involved in public service.

A simple centerpiece of Colorado blue spruce saplings wrapped in burlap decorated the dozen tables at The Knolls restaurant. She loved trees, politics and the restaurant, owned by her nephew, George Boosalis.

Rebekah Davis, congressional candidate in Nebraska's 3rd District, was 4 years old when Boosalis and Kay Orr competed in 1986 in the first governor's race in the country in which the candidates were two women.

The inspiration Davis has carried with her from that time, she said, is this: If your heart is in the right place, don't let the odds deter you; don't let the naysayers dissuade you.

One aim of the event was to raise money for a scholarship to encourage young women to become politically active.

Mary Herres, who helped organize the luncheon, said quite a few Democratic women are going to be seeking elected office.

Nebraska ranks 35th in the nation in the number of women serving in the state Legislature. Ten of 49 senators are female.

In the past 25 years, the state's highest ranking was as high as 12th - in 1997 and 1998, when voters sent 13 women to the unicameral Legislature.

Nebraska has no women in Congress or in statewide elected executive offices at this time.

"We look forward to making some changes in that landscape in the next few years," said Jane Raybould, with the Democratic Women's Caucus.

She said fewer Nebraska women may have run for office in the past because politics is a little tougher and women are busy pursuing other careers in law, medicine, business, construction and the arts.

"I would love to run for a political office," said Raybould, who is director of buildings and equipment for B & R Stores. "Like so many people, I feel like I could make a difference."

The caucus presented its first annual Inspiring Women Award to Boosalis, which was accepted by her daughter, Beth Boosalis Davis.

As she was working on the book, "Mayor Helen Boosalis - My Mother's Life in Politics," Davis said, she often wondered if it would make it harder to lose her when that time came.

But she came to know her mother - all facets of her - so well from her research and writing, she feels she is carrying her close.

"Continue to call on her for inspiration," Davis told the group gathered Friday. "She's right here."

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