

spotlight



# What you see is **What** you get

Patrick Murphy's constituents and his family know right where he stands

*By Brenda Lange*

**A**SK MAGGIE MURPHY WHERE HER DADDY, CONGRESSMAN PATRICK MURPHY, WORKS, and the three-year old will answer, “Washington. With Barack Obama.” Although Murphy tries to separate the public and private parts of his life as much as possible, Maggie spent time in New Hampshire with her parents and the Obamas during the primaries, and more recently has relaxed with the first family at the White House. Not your typical toddler experience.

But little about Congressman Murphy can be labeled “typical.” The third child of a former nun turned legal secretary, and a Philadelphia police officer, Murphy was born in Northeast Philadelphia 36 years ago. “My mother took me to 6:30 mass every morning, but I guess it’s good for me that she left (the religious order),” he says with a chuckle.

“They are quiet working-class Americans who you don’t see news stories about,” Murphy says about his parents. “They are amazing examples of people who value hard work, faith and family, and they’re my role models.”

Only five years ago, Rep. Murphy was a captain in the US Army, leading men and women in precarious situations in Iraq. Now he faces different challenges. As Democratic congressman from Pennsylvania’s 8th district, and the first veteran of the Iraq War to serve in Congress, he works hard to rebuild the nation’s economy and create jobs for his constituency—his number one priority.

Whether he is meeting with residents of Bucks and Montgomery counties, promoting green industries, fighting for and obtaining funding for police and first responders and flood relief for Delaware River towns, or repainting the family’s home in Bristol Township, shuttling his daughter to preschool, helping out with two-month old Jack or being husband and partner to his wife, Jenni, he takes the time needed to do the job right.

“I look to John Kennedy and his book “Profile in Courage,” which I’ve read several times, and reference a lot,” he says. “(It encourages) you (to) stand on two feet, doing what you think is right.”

### **Balancing act**

Being away so often can complicate Murphy’s home life, but his pragmatic approach helps to make it all work. “It’s a balancing act. Jenni and I have a partner-



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ship. We’re supportive of one another, of our jobs (Jenni is an attorney with Fox Rothschild), as parents and as husband and wife. Although I’m the Congressman, I am definitely not the boss in my house.”

So what are his parenting philosophies? Setting boundaries, sometimes saying “no” and demonstrating a lot of love are tops on his parenting list, along with a healthy dose of fun. “When we clean up, I sing the *clean up* song with Maggie,” he says and sings a few bars. “I say just be there for your kids and your wife. Every day.”

#### Division of labor

The second-term congressman does everything possible to keep his public life separate

from his personal one, asking people to respect the division he has created for family time on Sundays, and at other times so he can do normal, family things.

“We like to do the little things together, make popcorn and watch movies, go to church on Sundays, and then I do the things on my honey-do list,” which is where the painting comes in, although he allows himself breaks to watch the Eagles. They also love to share Chinese food and listen to Bruce Springsteen. “He’s the man,” says Murphy, “but if Jenni hears *Thunder Road* one more time while we’re driving ...”

Always an avid Eagles fan, Murphy wanted to be a team member when he was a child, but later decided on a career in law instead.

He held two jobs in high school, which seemingly tied these two loves together—as a security guard at Veterans Stadium on weekends and a messenger at a law firm, where he worked for two attorneys who encouraged him to attend law school.

His only life regret is that he didn’t get the opportunity to realize his dream of becoming an Army Ranger, volunteering to deploy to Iraq instead, after the attacks of September 11, 2001. He feels that in Iraq he learned to truly appreciate everything life has to offer and developed the resources to provide advice to other soldiers.

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His main goal as a Blue Dog Democrat is to be fiscally responsible, even though that means he sometimes opposes the wishes of others in his party. His biggest frustration is trying to get things done and build a consensus within the extremes that exist in government. “I just wish Washington and the media weren’t so partisan,” he says. “Fostering extremes is frustrating. The shock and awe part of the invasion was sexy and got covered, but rebuilding schools and hearts and minds wasn’t.”

The congressman also looks toward President Obama and Michelle as a couple to emulate. Calling Obama a “funny, easygoing, regular guy...and great basketball player,” Murphy remembers days on the campaign trail and downtime at the White House. “They’re a great First Family...they’ve fostered such a loving relationship and family, and I really respect how hard he works and what he’s doing to get the economy back on the right track,” he adds.

And what would he most like people to know, to recognize, about him?

“What you see, is what you get with me,” he replies. “I’m pretty straightforward. It’s pretty clear what I stand for...even if people disagree on the issues, at least they know where I stand on them, and know I do what’s needed.” ▼

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