

# Sharp seeks international diplomacy through education

**Stephanie Sharp,** Lenexa, public relations officer, CommunityAmerica Credit Union, took on the role of JCCC trustee because of her enjoyment and calling to public service.

Not quite 34 years old, Sharp already has a distinguished political career, elected to three terms to the Kansas House of Representatives and working previously as a legislative aide in the U.S. Senate. Now with a daughter, born October 2008, and a full-time career, she's decided to focus on serving her local community.

"I like working with and serving constituents. I believe that education has an impact on the health and well-being of a community. Johnson County Community College is a good fit for me," Sharp said.

Sharp has bachelor's degrees in French and international politics from Southwestern College, Winfield, and a master's degree in international affairs from George Washington University, Washington, D.C. In college, Sharp had opportunities for studies abroad, including a scholarship from the National Security Education Program to Ifrane, Morocco. During graduate school, she was a full-time legislative aide in the U.S. Senate working on foreign affairs, defense, international trade and agriculture issues. At that time, her career goal was to work for the U.S. Department of State as a foreign service officer. But then she found herself missing family and friends.

Sharp came back to Kansas City with Sen. Ashcroft's office, and after his unsuccessful bid for re-election, went to work for the American Cancer Society as Kansas government relations director. That's when she got interested in Kansas politics. During her Kansas legislature terms (2003-2008), she was selected to participate in American Council of Young Political Leaders exchanges with China, East Timor and Indonesia. On Aug. 8, she traveled to China after being selected to join a delegation marking the 30th anniversary of ACYPL exchanges.

"I loved, loved, loved my job in the Kansas legislature. I hated to leave it, but I didn't want to miss out on the job opportunity at CommunityAmerica," Sharp said.

During her time in the Kansas House, she became known for her e-newsletter and realized she had a knack for explaining complicated issues in uncomplicated ways – something she does with economic matters for CommunityAmerica. She and her husband, Dan Bruyn, were also ready to start a family, so she didn't want to be in Topeka for six months out of a year. Familiar with the legislative needs of community colleges in



On July 1, Stephanie Sharp joined two other new trustees, Dr. Bob Drummond and Dr. Jerry Cook.

general and JCCC in particular during her legislative years, Sharp was familiar with JCCC's challenges.

She says the obvious short-term challenge to JCCC is the budget.

"My main concern with the budget is how it affects learner engagement," Sharp said. "I am not worried about quality of education. Our concern is that with increased enrollment we maintain small class sizes. We will have to open more class sections rather than making class sizes bigger."

Long term, the challenge is flexibility.

"In theory, as institutions get bigger, it becomes harder for them to remain flexible. Long term we need to maintain agility, because once you stop changing and reacting to the needs of the community, your programs become less relevant and you lose students," Sharp said.

Sharp is a member of the Lenexa Chamber of Commerce and United Methodist Church of the Resurrection and volunteers for community charities. **lm**