

5 Questions: County GOP honors volunteer with Kutulakis award



**5 QUESTIONS
WITH ...**

Article written about first Jason Kutulakis Memorial Award Winner, JoAnna Cameron in Cumberlink.com

Nearly a year after it lost one of its most dedicated supporters, the Cumberland County Republican Committee honored a volunteer in his memory.

JoAnna Cameron was honored with the Jason Kutulakis Memorial Award Jan. 28 during the Cumberland County Republican Committee's Endorsement Meeting.

Jason Kutulakis, a Carlisle attorney known for his work with child advocacy, died unexpectedly on Jan. 31, 2016, at his home of an apparent heart attack. He was 47. County GOP Chairman Greg Rothman said Kutulakis was "a long-time dedicated supporter and leader of the party," who served as deputy chairman of the Cumberland County Republican Committee.

"His death shocked us all, as we had been together for the annual meeting all day on the night he died," Rothman wrote in an email. "We wanted to honor him with an award recognizing the work of a volunteer who is living up to his example. JoAnna Cameron was a friend of Jason's and he admired her dedication to the county Republican committee."

Cameron is vice-chair of the Cumberland County Republican Committee and the elected committeewoman in Silver Spring's third precinct. She also serves as regional director for the Pennsylvania Federation of Republican Women, as well as secretary of that statewide organization. She spent more than 10 years working in the Pennsylvania House of Representatives, most recently for Mike Turzai, who was majority leader at the time. She also served as the Agriculture Marketing Division chief at the Pennsylvania Department of Agriculture. JoAnna holds a B.A. in history and political science. She is a lifelong Republican and the married mother of three children, ages 16, 5 and 4.

Q. How have you volunteered with the Cumberland County Republican Party and in the community?

A. I have been a Republican County committeewoman since 1998, and have held that position in Cumberland County since 2009. I'm one of many

volunteers who work every election cycle to support our candidates. We circulate nominating petitions, take candidates' literature door-to-door, deliver and place yard signs, make phone calls, plan and execute fundraising events, and work all day at our respective polling places on primary and general election days. I'm in no way unique in this involvement; I'm one of 166 Cumberland County Republicans who volunteer in this capacity. I have had the honor of managing countywide campaigns and organizing many events through the county party, our Republican women's groups and individual campaigns. As vice-chair, I assist our chairman and the executive committee with communication —both internal and external — as well as with planning and organization.

Q. Did you know Jason Kutulakis? If so, can you share a story about him?

A. I consider myself incredibly fortunate to have known Jason and to have been one of his friends — and he had many. He was a respected leader in a number of different realms — from the legal community, to his statewide work in child advocacy and, of course, the political world. I met him through politics and was immediately impressed by his passionate advocacy for candidates, causes and our Grand Old Party. Most of the time, Jason and I were working alongside each other for the same candidates. However, there was one primary election where we found ourselves at odds, running campaigns for dear friends who were vying for a single seat. Of course, Jason lobbied hard and repeatedly tried his very best to talk me (and my candidate) out of the race, but he never stopped being my friend. One week prior to this hotly contested election, Jason saw a frantic post on my Facebook timeline about my elderly dog running away. He called me almost immediately and offered to come help look for her. The compassion and sincerity he demonstrated in my time of need was beyond all expectation. He had a

million other things to do, both professionally and politically, but he was willing to drop everything to help me.

Q. What does winning this award mean to you?

A. It means the world to me. It's certainly the honor of a lifetime because of who Jason was and what he meant to so many people.

He was an outstanding litigator, a tireless advocate, a savvy strategist, a selfless giver and a formidable opponent, but he was truly a great man and the most loyal friend anyone could hope to have. I'm incredibly humbled and feel entirely unworthy.

Q. What role do you see yourself playing in politics in the future?

A. On many occasions, Jason interceded — for me and others — in what could have been unpleasant or uncomfortable situations. He was quick to come to our defense or put himself in “the line of fire.” He would say “I have a strong back. I can take it.”

Jason once paid me a tremendous compliment by telling me I was “the female version” of himself because I wouldn't back down on a particular issue. We would jokingly argue about which one of us was more stubborn, each making our own case. We shared a mutual respect in this area as we knew neither of us would waiver on the things we firmly believed in.

Jason had so many qualities that I don't possess, but I've come to the conclusion that I can honor Jason by being a strong-backed intercedent and by continuing to hold firm on things I truly believe in.

I plan to keep working behind the scenes for Republican candidates and the party itself, as Jason did.

Q. As divisive as politics can be, what draws you to it?

A. The political process doesn't have to be divisive. Disagreements on issues or candidates are inevitable but should be handled with civility and respect for the people and the process involved. That's the way Jason operated. He wouldn't let even the most competitive political campaign threaten a friendship.

My first political mentor was Pennsylvania state Rep. Fred McIlhattan. I spent eight years working for him in Clarion County. He was the nominee of both political parties three times, which is a testament to his ability to reject divisiveness and unite a very diverse constituency. He was fair, respectful and kind to absolutely everyone — whether they agreed with him or not — and sincerely valued everyone's point of view. He was a consensus builder and a problem solver — like Jason in a lot of ways.

Both Jason and Fred demonstrated time and again that politics can be unifying when the focus is on service, rather than ego. I'm incredibly fortunate to have had such great mentors.

I've always loved politics because it's how change is affected. It's how good government is achieved. Over the course of my 20 years in the field, however, I have to say it's the amazing people who keep me coming back for more.

Source: http://cumberlink.com/news/local/questions-county-gop-honors-volunteer-with-kutulakis-award/article_6790ba54-7d2f-59bc-8913-e4eb2d1025ea.html