

# PATTY KIM

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## quering the Political Arena



By Mikell Worley

**H**arrisburg Councilwoman Patty Kim is the epitome of poise and confidence. She laughs easily and has a pleasant mix of humor, sophistication, and warmth. For a number of years she worked as a successful news anchor. So it comes as a surprise when she admits to not always feeling a sense of self-assurance. In a heart-felt conversation, Patty expressed a passionate and sincere desire to instill hope in people who suffer the same discomfort she agonized under because of low self-esteem. In what follows she willingly exposes her vulnerabilities for the benefit of others.

Patty is of Korean descent, born and raised in San Diego, California. She is the middle child of three daughters. Her father earned his management degree at the University of Southern California and went to work for the federal government. In 1985 when Patty was 12 years old, her family moved to Washington, D.C., where her father took a different job within the government. Her mother opened a flower shop, and when I remarked that sounded delightful, she laughed, “Not if you’re cheap – no, free – labor.”

Before the move to Washington, D.C., “I was used to being in a school where everyone had blonde hair and blue eyes. Now I was attending a school with ambassadors’ sons and daughters from all over the world. I was amazed to see such diversity,” Patty recounts. “I was an average student and an above average athlete. One day I was offered an opportunity to try lacrosse. I picked up the stick and found I was a natural. It came easily to me, I excelled and it became my identity.”

In high school, Patty dreamed of becoming a doctor, but it was the late 1980s and women who wanted to enter the medical profession were encouraged to study nursing. Patty complied, and in 1991 she graduated from high school and was accepted into the nursing program at Boston College. “I

wanted to help people, but this didn’t seem to be the best way,” says Patty. To save money on tuition, Patty decided to change her course of study to communications. “I chose a major that I could easily graduate in the least amount of time.” She didn’t realize it then, but her decision would open up all kinds of opportunities.

In 1996 Patty received her degree in mass communication and found employment behind the scenes at a television station in Washington, D.C. She enjoyed the research and writing. Two years later, she accepted a job as an anchor in Hagerstown, Maryland, but she was not comfortable in front of the camera.

“I hated being on the air. I liked the writing and video editing part of the job, but I was never a natural on air. One of my coworkers was the main anchor. She was a [former] beauty queen in her hometown. I used to laugh at ‘beauty queens’. But I was secretly jealous of her, because she always seemed so comfortable and projected such confidence. I never had that.” Patty anchored the NBC morning show for two years, and during that time she won an award from the Maryland Department of Education for a report on innovative teaching.

Patty then moved to Harrisburg in 2000 to work for WHP-CBS 21. Her insecurities stayed with her. “Every time there was a live shot, I quivered. I was so nervous. I wanted to be certain that I had all of the facts right, and I prayed to pump myself up every time I had to go on the air.”

While her professional life continued to cause stress, her personal life dramatically improved when Patty met John Sider in a local Bible study group. They couple married in February 2003. Their daughter, Brielle, was born in June 2004. Patty resigned from Channel 21 the following fall to raise her daughter, and then later, her son Ryan.

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Being a supportive mother to her children is important to Patty. “When I was growing-up I never heard my parents say I was smart. I am so into helping my kids with their homework so they will do well in school and have confidence and high self-esteem. We don’t have any choice about our past, but we can change our future.”



In 2004 a friend approached Patty about running for city council. “My head said ‘no’, but in my heart it made sense,” recalls Patty. “I had name recognition and lots of contacts from having been a reporter. Putting my hat in the ring in a campaign or getting into politics for the first time felt like jumping off a cliff and not knowing if my parachute would work,” she says. “Fortunately it did, [because] there was support for me in the community. I did get verbally attacked, but the majority of people who heard about my intentions were supportive. The hardest part were the debates.”

On November 8, 2005, Patty won a seat on the council. As a council member “I started out quiet and shy. The first time I put my hand over my heart for the Pledge of Allegiance, my heart was pounding,” she remembers. “Now I’m more relaxed and much more vocal and I can say the Pledge of Allegiance without the pounding.”

In 2008 Patty decided to take action and get help with her nerves and self-esteem issues. She approached Jewel Cooper, senior executive at Graystone Bank, who had mentored her husband when the two of them had worked together at Fulton Bank. Patty asked Ms. Cooper if she would consider being her mentor. Jewel agreed. “My whole world changed,” Patty recalls. “We spent our first meeting together looking for my positive qualities, finding my strengths, and discussing ways to celebrate. Working with her makes everything more fun.”

Jewel comments, “I am so proud of Patty. She actively sought out mentoring with a focus and determination. One of her primary goals was to actively use her talents for the betterment of herself, her family, others, and her beliefs. Our first course of action was to determine what those talents were, and I must tell you that she was fully engaged in the process. She was willing to ask herself the hard questions and willing to do the work behind it to move forward.”

Jewel adds that once Patty realized what her strengths were, there was no stopping her. “Patty is putting those talents to work for the benefit of many folks in our community. She has such a bright future, and I’m just glad I could play a little part in it.”

Patty is fulfilling her dream of helping people, not as a nurse as she had originally planned, but by serving her community. As the first female Asian-American elected official in Pennsylvania, she is a role model who is giving a voice to people throughout the community, a voice that resonates with reason and compassion. ❁



Mikell Worley is the founder and president of Mikell’s Treasures. She has spent more than 20 years designing and delivering self-improvement trainings, has had several cover stories in various magazines, and recently illustrated her first children’s book. She is an advocate for women and children.