



LOUDOUN COUNTY
REPUBLICAN WOMEN'S CLUB

CANDIDATE SPOTLIGHT

JONATHAN MARK ROGERS

HOUSE OF DELEGATES DISTRICT 29

CANDIDATE: **JONATHAN MARK ROGERS**

OFFICE: **HOUSE OF DELEGATES, DISTRICT 29**

WEBSITE: **ROGERSFORVA.com**

How long have you lived in Loudoun County?

I first moved to Loudoun County in 1999. After I was married, we moved to the historic town of Leesburg in 2003.

What do you like about Loudoun County?

Before moving to Loudoun County, I was a professional actor in NYC and that's where I met my wife. We loved the hustle and bustle of Manhattan, the bright lights of Broadway and the shopping in midtown. After we were married and decided to start a family, we shifted our focus on the American dream of a house with a yard and a picket fence. I was raised in open spaces with a country feel, so we moved to historic Leesburg because it had all those things.

What I love most about where we live is its proximity to everything. It's an hour from Maryland, an hour from the nation's capital and the mountains of West Virginia, and only a couple of hours from the beaches of the Atlantic.

Where are you from originally?

I am originally from South Carolina. I was born and raised there, and my father was a Baptist minister. I was a preacher's kid on the road to becoming a minister as a teenager. I lead the youth group and loved reading the Bible. When I was 14, I got a part in the church Christmas play and I caught the acting bug; but because there were no opportunities in South Carolina I went to Virginia Commonwealth University, which has one of the best acting schools in the mid-Atlantic. From there I went to NYC and eventually toured the country with various productions.

Not long after that I moved to Hollywood, but after living in California for a while I decided to move back to the east coast.

During my time in NYC, I performed in many plays and musicals. However my most successful play was the theater version of the movie "Tribute". I had a successful run at the Equity Library Theatre and even got a good review in the New York Times. After my good notice it wasn't long before a top Broadway agent signed me. Before I knew it I had landed my first TV job on the soap opera "Another World". After a successful three months on the show I started a theater company and began teaching acting and directing.

What is your current job?

I oversee all theater arts for Loudoun County Public Schools. I was first hired by Fairfax County Public Schools in 1999 then moved to LCPS in 2010 as the Theatre Arts Director at Freedom High School. In 2017 I was hired for my current position as Theatre Arts Specialist for LCPS. During my time as Performing Arts Specialist I've helped create some of the best programs in the state of Virginia.

How did you get interested in politics?

When our youngest son was born, we learned that he had Down Syndrome. From that moment I saw things in a different way, and I started looking at life through other people's eyes; especially my son's. I started to contemplate how my neighbors experienced life and how can I be a working partner to make things better for all of us.

Being an actor, you tend to bring a lot of attention to yourself. However, when you have an event in your life like mine all the attention goes to your child, as well as to the people who interact with your child. Through the course of his life, I have seen some great progress in our community, but there is much more progress to be made for young people and adults with learning and intellectual disabilities. And that's what drove me into this. We all get caught up in national issues, but those issues get solved at the county and state level. Politics begin at the county level and affects the state which impacts the nation.

A good politician should be connected to the town council, school board and board of supervisors. When you get to the capital and start working on the budget and legislation, you should be reflecting the needs of your community. I believe the needs of the community drives the conversation at the state level. There is a broader conversation that needs to be had and the place to have that conversation is in Richmond.

What are your top 3 issues?

Education is at the top of everyone's list, and we need to continue to focus on the best education possible with the highest academic standards, providing a world class education for all students. However, it's really important to include our special education students, and neuro-divergent students like those on the autism spectrum and students with physical challenges. In education the word inclusion gets thrown around a lot, but the true meaning of inclusion is to bring ALL students in the classroom by engaging them and allowing them to fully participate in classes. The one classroom that does it better than any other is our theater arts classroom. I want to take that model and use that to better classrooms across the state through legislation.

Second is public safety. We need to support our police and first responders. They need to be well trained and well-funded.

The third issue is the cost of living and a great economy. We must keep taxes low!

Who is your favorite political or historical figure?

I am a fan of superheroes and not just the ones from comic books. George Washington was a real life superhero. He was a master of critical thinking. His life was full of every kind of challenge and in every one he was able to overcome the odds against him. Brian Kilmeade's book "George Washington's Secret Six" recounts the many dangerous situations he was in where critical thinking helped him outmaneuver the British and every obstacle.

What is a word your friends and family would use to describe you?

Collaborator. One great thing we do in education, and teachers do this every day, is work together to find the best possible way to engage. We go into any situation by asking how we can make this work for everyone. This collaboration is missing in today's politics.

When you aren't running for office, what do you like to do?

One of my favorite things is movies. I am a big film buff, and I taught film at Northern Virginia Community College for ten-years. I love movies and the way they can address social issues and promote positive ideas. Going to the movies or the theater brings people together as a community to share a common experience.