

## Monday profile: Bill Brockmiller: From economic adviser to decision-maker

By REID MAGNEY | La Crosse Tribune

Whenever questions about the economy and wages come up at the

La Crosse County Board, Supervisor Ralph Geary says, "Let's get Bill Brockmiller in here."

Bill Brockmiller, with his son Tanner, 13, and fiancée Natalya Kuzmina, was recently elected to the County Board. Erik Daily

Starting Tuesday, Geary and the rest of the supervisors won't have to ask for Brockmiller, because he'll be one of them.

Brockmiller, a labor market analyst for the Wisconsin Department of Workforce Development, easily won the open seat created by longtime District 13 supervisor Bernie Maney's retirement from the county board. He came in first in a four-way primary, and defeated Carl Viner in the general election April 1.

Board Chairman Steve Doyle said recent surveys of local voters showed their top two concerns are property taxes and jobs.

"Bill is an expert on jobs," said Doyle. "He understands the situation with jobs in the La Crosse area better than anybody."

"I'm not the end-all expert," Brockmiller demurred. "The economics department at UW-La Crosse ... does wonderful work, but might take a little higher-level view. I've always tried to take the very ground, right-on-the-street view of the economics in the area."

Brockmiller's been studying local jobs and economics for nearly 15 years. Before moving to the La Crosse area, the Madison native worked in state government for the Department of Revenue and as an unemployment claims adjuster in Waukesha.

"I'm a cheesehead all my life," said Brockmiller.

Since 1994 he's been quoted regularly in the Tribune when the monthly unemployment numbers come out, commenting on what they mean for the local economy.

"From where I sit, that's really the tip of the iceberg," he said. "That's the quickest snapshot of what's going on, but so much of the economy, like an iceberg, lies below the surface."

Brockmiller spends a lot of time figuring out how many people are working in different local industries and occupations, "seeing which ones will grow, which will decline."

Jim Hill, executive director of the La Crosse Area Development Corp., said that in the 1990s, Brockmiller was "one of the early voices" of people concerned about labor shortages in the area.

Hill said that in recent years, Brockmiller was especially helpful in putting together a list of the top 30 jobs that will be in demand in the next decade.

"It's very useful to parents and kids," Hill said, especially when there are misconceptions that manufacturing jobs are disappearing.



Bill Brockmiller, with his son Tanner, 13, and fiancée Natalya Kuzmina, was recently elected to the County Board. Erik Daily

Brockmiller will be one of eight new faces on the board when all 35 members are sworn in at 6 p.m. Tuesday. In addition, Audrey Kader is returning to the board after a two-year hiatus.

Brockmiller said as a county supervisor he wants to work on economic development issues, helping to create jobs.

"It seems to me that every issue's going to trace its roots back to economic development in some way or another," he said.

"There's certain services people have come to expect and need from their county government. At the same time, the coffee can that the money's taken from seems to be getting smaller and smaller. And the demand for services isn't getting smaller," he said.

"Individuals are putting enough in the coffee can, and they can't put any more in. To carry my analogy to the end, I'm trying to find more people to put money in the can instead of each person putting more of their own money in the can."

When he's not working, Brockmiller enjoys spending time playing computer games with his 13-year-old son, Tanner. Summers they enjoy attending La Crosse Loggers baseball games together.

In recent weeks, Brockmiller said he's been learning more about Eastern European cooking from his Ukrainian fiancée, Natalya.

Brockmiller met her online in August 2006 and went to meet her in person in February 2007 in Yalta. In April 2007, they decided "to spend the remainder of our lives together," he said.

In February, Natalya was approved to come to America after an interview at the U.S. Embassy in Kiev, and in March, Bill and Tanner went to Yalta to spend some time with her family and bring her back to Wisconsin.

They're planning a wedding in late April or early May, Brockmiller said.

Despite being out of the country just before the April 1 election, Brockmiller got 63 percent of the vote, which Doyle attributed to Brockmiller's labor on the campaign trail.

"You won't find anybody that works harder than him," said Doyle, who supported Brockmiller's candidacy. "He just spent hours and hours and hours. He has a mind that never stops working."

Brockmiller said he and Carl Viner have been playing phone tag since the election. He wants to thank Viner for a "very fair and honest campaign. I really appreciate that from him."

### **The Brockmiller file**

**Name:** Bill Brockmiller

**Age:** 43

**Address:** 1418 10th Ave. S., La Crosse

**Family:** Son, Tanner; fiancée, Natalya

**Occupation:** Labor market analyst/economist, state of Wisconsin

**Community Activities and Memberships:** Sons of the American Legion, Delegate to the Western Wisconsin AFL-CIO, AFSCME 2748 Chapter 10 vice-chair

**Notable:** Brockmiller has spent several days a week in Madison, the last several months helping his union negotiate a new contract with the state of Wisconsin.

*Reid Magney can be reached at (608) 791-8211 or [rmagney@lacrossetribune.com](mailto:rmagney@lacrossetribune.com).*

Source Date: Monday, April 14<sup>th</sup>, 2008

Source: La Crosse Tribune Online

Source Link: <http://www.lacrossetribune.com/articles/2008/04/14/news/z02profile14.txt>