

'An inspiration'

Love of community, politics motivates newly elected teen treasurer

It's one thing to be the new guy in a township office where most other officials have served for years.

It's another when you're 18 years old.

Nolan Kinder was fresh from high school when he was elected treasurer of **Marathon Township** (Lapeer Co.) last November. Not only was he brand-new to the job, he was also a good three decades younger than the other officials.

Some might have been intimidated. Kinder saw it as an opportunity to learn. Now 19 years old, he's dedicated himself to being the best treasurer possible and serving township residents with everything he has. He's stayed at work way past closing time to make sure the first tax bills he prepared were on time and done correctly. He read the entire township master plan before his first board meeting. He's studied up on the duties and responsibilities he is now required by law to fulfill.

'Giving this job my all'

He may be young, but Kinder won't let that stop him from doing his job. He is fully committed to his elected position, even delaying starting college until he has a firmer grasp on his work. The job is his top priority. It has to be, he said.

"I'm giving this job my all because I do have a lot to prove," Kinder said. "I'm from a generation that's considered lazy and entitled. I fight for everything I do in this office. I come in every day with a good attitude and do the job to the best of my ability."

Running for treasurer wasn't a spur-of-the-moment decision for the Marathon Township teen. He's had his eye on a career in politics since the 2008 election caught his attention in the fifth grade. Even though he toyed with the idea of other careers, he always came back to politics. He often found himself talking about the issues with his teachers and standing up for his beliefs.

He realized he could voice his opinions and respectfully argue in a way that many other young people could not.

Kinder got his first taste of real-world experience after a chance encounter with a candidate for state representative, Jake Davison. Kinder was working at a restaurant when the bartender pointed out Davison to him. "Hey, you like politics," the bartender told him. "This guy's running for state rep."

The two sat down and talked, and before long, Kinder became Davison's campaign manager. Kinder threw himself into the election, knocking on at least 1,000 doors over the



Nolan Kinder (right) is sworn in as the newly elected treasurer for Marathon Township (Lapeer Co.).

course of the next few months. “We lost by a landslide, but I took a lot of pride in that election,” Kinder said.

Kinder and Davison remained friends even after the election was over. And when Kinder decided to run for treasurer, Davison was the first person he called. True, the office of treasurer wasn’t overly political, but it was a job he knew he could do well. He believed the office was his chance to not only start his career but also serve the township where he grew up. Davison was completely supportive of the campaign, Kinder said.

His parents were shocked when they learned of his plan. They asked him, “Are you sure this is what you want to do?” Kinder reassured them it was what he had always wanted, and they gave him their blessing.

While Kinder was confident he could do the job, he never actually thought he could win. He knocked on a few doors and shook hands on Election Day, but he figured someone older or with more experience would carry the day. So when the results came in and his name was on top, he was stunned. Taking the oath of office on Nov. 20, 2016, was surreal.

“It was a shocking experience,” Kinder said. “This was something I had always wanted, and now it was real. I felt like an inspiration, that maybe other young people will take politics more seriously, voice their opinions and vote. That, to me, would be huge.”

Kinder is by far the youngest person in the township hall, and his fellow officials on the township board have held their positions for multiple years. The previous treasurer

had been in office for seven terms, and everyone in the community was used to seeing her. He came to the office on his first day knowing there would be a transition period. But in just a matter of weeks, he’s already made friends with his co-workers and called the transition seamless. He’s also actively working to build relationships with the community and introduce himself to as many people as he can.

The first board meeting was an intimidating experience. Though he enjoys speaking up and expressing himself, he knew he needed to learn how meetings worked and about township operations before he spoke up too much.

A sense of pride

Then there was the matter of preparing tax bills. He had just barely settled into his office before he learned tax bills had to be sent the next week. “That was wild to say the least,” Kinder said. He worked a minimum of 12-hour days working to print, fold and stuff every bill in time to send to taxpayers by the deadline. While it was stressful, he left the office that night with a sense of pride in what he’d accomplished.

Every day and every learning experience has helped to build his confidence. He’s growing in his understanding of the job and is getting more and more comfortable with each day that goes by. His responsibilities are huge, but at the heart of it is serving the people in the township he loves.

“The people are my favorite thing,” Kinder said. “When people walk in and I can have a good conversation with them and get them taken care of, it feels great.”

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