

Massad's family lived American dream

By Dan Linehan

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MANKATO — Najwa Massad says her family's story of hardship, hard work and eventual success is in many ways the classic story of the American dream.

In 1960, she emigrated from Lebanon with her brother and parents in search of a better life. After decades of struggling, Massad says she found it.

"I now want to give back to the place I call home," she wrote. "I am someone who knows what it's like to come into Mankato with nothing, work hard and achieve it all."

Massad is vying with three other challengers — Tim Adams, Karen Foreman and Cynthia

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Mankato Council Primary

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MASSAD: Wants to give back to the community

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Frederick — to represent Ward 1 on Mankato's City Council. The 1st Ward covers the southeast portion of Mankato, atop the hill and generally east of Minnesota State University and south of Fair Street. The Aug. 10 primary will cut the field of four in half.

Massad is visiting Lebanon and answered questions via e-mail. She also wrote a story about her life in the United States.

She wrote she's running for office to "give a strong business perspective to the council."

"I will give my constituents an ear as well as a voice."

Massad wrote that her 15 years on the Mankato Planning Commission as well as her experience as chairwoman of the Multimodal Committee "gives me an edge in understanding the process of how decisions are made."

She said her experiences as a business woman "has made working with a budget second nature to me."

Najwa and husband John opened their first restaurant, Meray's, in 1984. In 1995, "we were asked to be the exclusive caterers in the new Civic Center" because of their reputation in the business community, she wrote.

Family members also sell their locally famous schawarmas at Massad's in the River Hills Mall and operate the restaurant Olives in the Hilton Garden Inn.

When asked about current events such as the council's vote on a two-year test period for backyard chickens, she wrote: "If or when that issue comes back before the council I will look at the results, talk to my constituents and then give an opinion."

Because she may be making decisions that affect her catering business in the Verizon Wireless Center, Massad was asked how she would navigate that potential conflict of interest.

She wrote, "If I am sitting on the City Council I will be as qualified as every member to make decisions regarding the city or its properties. If the issue brought before the council concerns me or my catering business directly I will recuse myself from the decision but will offer an opinion."

Massad writes her success in Mankato makes her want to give back.

"It (Mankato) believed in me and gave me the chance to live out my family's dream."

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