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Jeff Cardwell will bring cooperative spirit to City-County Council

Businessman aims to bring cooperative spirit to council

By William J. Booher

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Southside businessman and civic leader Jeff Cardwell can add something else to his list of accomplishments -- elected City-County councilman.

"I've been training for this opportunity for more than 30 years," said Cardwell, 47, a Republican. "Now it's time to bring all those life skills together to serve others in an official capacity as an elected official."

He said he's "really blessed and very grateful to all the volunteers who supported my campaign."

Cardwell got 4,810 votes (73.6 percent) to 1,723 votes (26.4 percent) for Democrat Earl E. Williams in the race for council District 23.

The 73.6 percent is the highest of any candidate in a contested race Tuesday in Marion County, according to unofficial results.

Cardwell, a Perry Township resident, is president and chief executive officer of Cardwell Do-It Best Home Center, 3205 Madison Ave. He is widely known on the Southside for several reasons, including his devotion to promoting volunteerism efforts to help those in need.

He is founder of "People Helping People," a weekly radio show championing volunteerism. He is co-founder of World in Need, which also encourages volunteerism.

He's an international board member of the Fuller Center for Housing, which is Habitat for Humanity founder Millard Fuller's expanded vision of eliminating substandard housing worldwide.

On the Southside, Cardwell is co-founder and president of the Gateway Business Alliance, which is focused on economic development initiatives along the Madison Avenue corridor, and he is vice president of the board of directors of Friends of Garfield Park.

He said he intends to bring the cooperative spirit to the council.

"We all have a role to play," he said, emphasizing how the city and its neighborhoods can be improved through positive interaction of business and community leaders, resident volunteers, faith-based organizations and others.

"I believe we live in one of the greatest cities in the nation. I feel very blessed to be in this city. We can make the best even better."

He said one way is to go back to the basics.

"I think the sense of community policing speaks for itself," he said. "For years in my business, I knew the officers on every shift by name."

Cardwell said he isn't too surprised that Greg Ballard won the mayor's race and Republicans won 17 council seats to the Democrats' 12, ending the Democrats' 15-14 council control.

He said that late in the campaign, he felt Ballard could win.

"I heard many stories that went way beyond taxes. There was concern about the direction of our city," he said.

Cardwell also credits someone for a legacy of leadership -- Phil Borst.

Borst, who is concluding 28 years as District 23 councilman, decided not to seek re-election.

He became Cardwell's campaign chairman. Cardwell had served in some of Borst's campaigns as his campaign chairman.

"Phil Borst's legacy will be a great blueprint for all of us to follow," Cardwell said.