

Patrick Testin: Lessons my father taught me

Posted on Monday, Jun 19, 2017

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Father's Day is here, and I want to take a moment to thank the men who helped give us the gifts of life and guidance. A caring and involved father can have a profoundly positive influence on the lives of his children. I know that I've learned a lot from my own dad – Matt Testin – and I'd like to share two of the most important values that he taught me – respect for work and respect for my country.

From my earliest days, my dad instilled in me a belief in the power of work. Growing up in a blue collar home, he showed me that there is both dignity and value in labor.

Since I started working as a teenager, I've been a wine salesman, a line cook, a campaign staffer, a groundskeeper, a tank cleaner, and now a State Senator. My dad always told me that every job deserves my best effort, and that's a lesson that sticks with me.

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It's part of the reason I started my monthly "On the Job" series where I work a day with a business in Central or Western Wisconsin. So far, I've harvested minnows at Gollon Brothers Live Bait in Stevens Point, worked maintenance at Unimin's sand mine in Tunnel City, erected the exterior walls of a building with a crew from Wisconsin Rapids based Altmann Construction, spent a day on the road in the Sparta area with folks from the non-profit Riverfront Inc., and harvested greens at Nelson and Pade's aquaponics center – a joint project of the company and UW Stevens Point. Next month, I'll be bartending at the Sky Club in Plover. Every job

has a story, and those stories fit together to tell an even bigger narrative about who we are as Americans.

This of course brings me to the second great value that my dad has passed on to me - a love for America. He taught me to salute the flag, say the pledge of allegiance, and appreciate American history.

Our country is still the only one in the world that was founded on an idea, instead of an arbitrary set of geographic boundaries or a shared ancestry. The idea that all men are equal and are free to live and pursue their aspirations is a powerful force. As a country, we have set a high standard - one that is not easily reached, but we have still continued moving forward, reaching for equal opportunity and a free society. It is these principles that imbue our work with real meaning. When we go to work, we not only create a product, we also hold in our hands the keys to advancement and a better future.

America values freedom, freedom leads to opportunity, opportunity leads to progress. That's our story as Americans - it's one that my dad taught me, and it's a story that I'll pass down when I have children of my own. So thank you, dad - and thank you to all the dads out there who keep us moving forward.

— *Testin, R-Stevens Point, represents the 24th Senate District.*