

A portrait of Jaclyn Rohaly, a woman with long dark hair, smiling. She is wearing a maroon blazer over a black top and a pearl necklace. The portrait is set against a dark blue background with three overlapping circles in teal, lime green, and yellow-green.

Latino Community Highlight

Ohio | Latino Affairs
Commission

Jaclyn Rohaly

December 5, 2019

[Jaclyn Rohaly is taking action]



Meet Jaclyn Rohaly, a first generation Cuban who was recently appointed to the Pickerington City Council. Because this is such a great accomplishment for Latina women and the Latino community as a whole, we decided to conduct a brief interview with Jaclyn to discuss her new role and to learn about her goals for this position. We hope you enjoy her story.

1.

Tell me a little bit about yourself

I'm originally from New Jersey. I graduated from the University of Pittsburg with a Bachelor's in Psychology. I just received my Master's through Southern California University in law. I currently work at Nationwide Children's Hospital. I've been here going on twelve and a half years and I am their International and Immigration Resource Manager. I handle all the immigration cases for the hospital: all of the employment visas, student visas, scholar visas, permanent residency cases. I also assist families that come from other countries when their children are sick and they need to come here for treatment; I assist with their medical visas.

2.

When did you join City Council?

I was appointed for the Pickerington City Council in February and then I ran to maintain my seat. I was appointed mid-term to the seat I have now and there's two years remaining on it. I had to get on the ballot and run to maintain my seat, which I did, so now I'm elected which is pretty cool. I'm still really excited about it. In two years I'll be able to run for a full four year term.

3.

What inspired you to run?

I really wanted to give back to my community. I do not have any family in Ohio other than my husband and my two kids. The rest of my family is either in New Jersey or in Florida. The Pickerington Community has been so great to me and this is an opportunity for me to serve my neighbors and friends that have helped me out so much along the way. My ultimate goal is to serve. It's something that I've always wanted to do. I used to work for the Ohio Republican Party for President Bush's second term. I was the Hispanic Outreach Coordinator for the state, so I've always had this political aspiration to run. I wanted to be the person not just behind the scenes, but to be the person out front actually being able to do the work, to help those who need it and to serve my community.

What impact do you hope to have?

I have three goals. One, is to continue to assist with improving our infrastructure in our city because we are growing by leaps and bounds, there's no question about it. Our city is getting bigger and I would like to make sure that our infrastructure is there to support the rapid growth we're receiving. Two, is public safety. I'm definitely behind our men and women that serve and want to make sure they have all the resources they need to do their job in order to keep us safe. I also have two smaller children in our school system in Pickerington. It's very important that our community always feels safe and I think our Chief and his team do a tremendous job in doing so. The third is workforce development. I believe in small business and I think they're the backbone of our economy. I think it's important to make sure our entrepreneurs and our small family owned businesses are well supported so they're able to grow. I want to make sure we're there to support them. Additionally, I want to ensure we're assisting folks that want to work and ensuring that we have jobs ready and available. We need to work with our chambers, bring in new businesses and assist those entrepreneurs that want to grow their businesses.

4.

What do you think a Latina perspective brings to the Council?

In that aspect, it will bring diversity. I currently work with all these different people from around the world and our Hispanic community here. I think I make a good asset by navigating that area. I can promote diversity by knowing our culture. It's also essential that there's someone offering other representation sitting in council that can address issues regarding our Hispanic community. I also speak Spanish fluently, write it and read it, making me another communication resource for reaching out to the community.

5.

“I wanted to be the person not just behind the scenes, but to be the person out front actually being able to do the work to help those who need it and to serve my community.”

6.

What are your plans for you political career?

I would love to continue. I'm loving sitting on City Council and I think the best impact you can have on a community is at the local level. You have that personal touch with everyone that surrounds you. Now that I'm building my political foundation this way, I do someday aspire to achieve higher office. But for now I absolutely love being on City Council and plan to run to maintain my seat in two years.

7.

What advice do you have for other Latina women interested in running for an elected position?

Don't give up. If it's something you're passionate about and want to do, I would say pursue it. It took me two years to get to where I am but it's because you have to continuously network; you have to let everyone know that you're interested. It's about making those right connections. I made a relationship with our Mayor and County Chairman, who I think are both great. If you want to be a part of City Council, for example, make sure you know the council members so that they know you're interested. That way, they can keep you updated if a seat does become open. Get to know other local candidates because they'll be your support system because they're going through the same thing. Let your other constituents know this is an interest of yours and don't be afraid to talk. Get out there and put yourself out there. I really believe it's all about networking. You have to walk into a room of new people, take a deep breath, start shaking hands and introduce yourself. Even if it's just asking how the day is going. You're out there and you're talking and making yourself visible.

“Don't give up. If it's something you're passionate about and want to do, I would say pursue it.”