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- **AMERICA**
- **NEW YORK**
- News
- Politics
- Sports
- Showbiz
- Opinion
- Living
- Photos
- Video
- Services

## Politics

# Paul Ryan is the is toast of his hometown

In scenic Janesville, where Mitt Romney's running mate spent most of his life, Paul Ryan's friends and neighbors described him as a warm and down-to-earth family man who shuns politics at social gatherings.

BY [KAY NOLAN](#) AND [RICH SCHAPIRO](#) / NEW YORK DAILY NEWS

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ANDY MANIS/ANDY MANIS

Wisconsin Rep. Paul Ryan's home on Aug. 11, 2012, in Janesville, Wis.

JANESVILLE, Wis. -- Even before he was old enough to ride a bike, [Paul Ryan](#) seemed destined for a career in politics.

Growing up in a well-to-do neighborhood in southern Wisconsin, a young Ryan displayed leadership skills that awed his preschool teacher.

"I remember kids playing on the floor with blocks," recalled the former teacher, Susan Barton. "Paul would be saying — and this is unusual for a kid that age — he'd say, 'Okay, now you man the catapult, now you go over here and do this.' He kind of organized the other kids."

Ryan made such an impression on Barton that she wrote on his report card: "I promise to vote for you when you run for president."

"It's a funny coincidence," Barton said.

Ryan rose rapidly from a precocious preschooler to GOP powerhouse. In scenic Janesville, where he spent most of his life, Ryan's friends and neighbors described him as a warm and down-to-earth family man who shuns politics at social gatherings.

"He's the kind of guy you can sit down and have a beer with," said Rick Riley, who lives down the street from the Ryans' stately mansion. "He's not arrogant or stand-offish. When he can, he comes to soccer practice and he's out there chasing balls. He's just a dad who wants to help out. I think that's kind of different from the image you see on TV."

Jackie Wood, a 25-year resident of Ryan's Courthouse Hill neighborhood, said the congressman showed an endearing brashness when he first ran for office. After knocking on Wood's door during his first campaign for office, Ryan asked for a \$1,000 donation. "But he didn't ask anyone who couldn't afford it, so it wasn't offensive," said Wood. "We thought he was maybe too young, so we told him maybe just \$500."

But not everyone in Ryan's neighborhood is a fan. Paul Power, 82, described Ryan as "a little nutty. ... Nobody has taken his budget seriously. I mean, it was a joke to begin with."

*Rich Schapiro reported from New York.*

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