

[http://www.omaha.com/index.php?u\\_page=2798&u\\_sid=10229127](http://www.omaha.com/index.php?u_page=2798&u_sid=10229127)

Published Friday | January 11, 2008

## **Job especially meaningful for Christie Vilsack**

BY ELIZABETH AHLIN

WORLD-HERALD STAFF WRITER

Christie Vilsack has spent much of her career as a teacher, reflecting a drive to work with young people.

But when she thinks about family planning, her own husband's humble beginnings play strongly in her mind.

During former Gov. Tom Vilsack's brief run for the presidency, he was contacted by a nun. The woman was an administrator at the Catholic orphanage where he spent the first few months of his life, before he was adopted.

She couldn't tell him the name of his birth mother, she said, but if he wanted to know more about where he came from, she was willing to talk to him.

The Vilsacks traveled to Pittsburgh to see the orphanage where he was left after his birth.

During that trip, the Vilsacks learned that their assumptions about his mother were wrong.

"We had created in our own minds a scenario of who she was," Christie Vilsack said. "We jumped to the conclusion that his mother was a young teenager."

In fact, she was 23, unmarried and the oldest of five siblings in a Catholic family.

"It really helped focus for me as I tried to think of what her life was like," Christie Vilsack said. "I like to keep her in mind as I start this job."