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DEGREESEARCH

## Kevin Riordan: Save Jersey, a website that's red and well-read

April 10, 2012 | By Kevin Riordan, Inquirer Columnist

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Matt Rooney's goal is nothing if not grand. Consider the website he founded as a Rutgers-Camden law student in 2008.

He named it "Save Jersey."

"I love my state, and I was disgusted by what I saw the party bosses doing to it," Rooney, 28, explains.

Whether New Jersey requires salvation due to the depredations of Democratic "party bosses" is debatable.

What's undeniable is that Save Jersey.com has become a must-read among Republicans, Trenton-watchers, and even Democrats. Reading its savvy, sassy coverage of the Rutgers-Rowan merger, I enjoy the combative Jersey-ness that defines the site.

"I'm very much a Jersey guy," says Rooney, who lives in Oaklyn, where he grew up. "That's one of the first things I identified with Chris Christie about. And why I love Bruce Springsteen, even though I don't agree with a darn thing he says, just what he sings."

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I meet the "blogger-in-chief" and his managing editor, Brian McGovern, 25, at Rooney's office in Haddon Heights, where he practices family law. McGovern is a third-year law student at Rutgers-Camden aiming for a career in the corporate world. He reports and writes stories, and also edits posts submitted by the network of contributors he recruited to keep an eye on issues statewide.

Although Save Jersey attracted 115,000 unique visitors during the elections last fall, it's a part-time operation. No one is paid, but they do have fun, as is evident in the site's appealingly low-tech graphics, cheeky headlines ("Chris Christie Flies Flag Half Mast for Whitney, and You Should Get Over It"), and in-your-face tone.

The homophobia, obsession with contraception, and blather about presidential birth certificates that stain much of the right-wing blogosphere seem blessedly absent from Save Jersey.

But visitors in search of kind words for Democrats amid stories with headlines such as "Obama Can't Avoid Culpability for Jobless Nightmare" will leave disappointed.



"We call it a conservative blog [because] Brian and I happen to believe that most of the ways to Save Jersey are conservative," Rooney explains.

"The site came about before the tea party movement started," says McGovern, a longtime Voorhees resident, who, like Rooney, is single.

"We don't always agree with the New Jersey GOP," he adds. "We don't always agree with Chris Christie either, although we probably do most of the time."

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