

# ANNA MARIA FOLMAR



On November 9, 1959, a baby girl was born in Rochester Hospital who would grow up to leave an indelible impact on the Freedom Area School District. Her journey to induction into the FAEF Hall of Fame was much different than that of many who attain such recognition. She never threw a game-winning touchdown pass or hit a walk-off homerun; she never became a corporate executive, an attorney, musician, doctor, journalist, or educator. Rather, Anna Maria's selection to the Hall of Fame is a result of her gift for inspiring the individuals who are the heart and soul of any school district – its students.

Anna Maria graduated from Monaca High School in 1978. She developed a love of the arts at a young age and participated in a number of musical productions at Monaca, where she also honed her leadership skills as editor of the school's yearbook. In 1980, she earned an Associate Degree in Business Administration from Robert Morris College and took a position as an Administrative Assistant with Green International in Sewickley. It was there that she met Dave Folmar, whom she married in 1982. A son Jason soon followed in 1983, and shortly thereafter they moved to Conway, where Anna Maria's long association with the Freedom community began.

Anna Maria's faith and outgoing personality initially led her to share her talents at Our Lady of Peace Church in Conway, where she quickly became a cantor, choir member, and chairperson of the decorating committee. She and Dave worked together to help grow the parish fish fry into the parish's largest fundraiser. When Jason came of school age, she was called to share her faith and love of children as a CCD teacher, where she helped launch the parish's Vacation Bible School program, which still thrives to this day.

In 1985, Anna Maria combined her business training with her love of decorating to become a sales representative for Home Interiors and Gifts. She later gravitated to the Beaver County Times, where she held several different positions selling advertising for the local newspaper. Her people skills were the perfect complement for the personal interaction required of a successful salesperson, and she was regularly named the top salesperson of the month. The Times offered the ideal work schedule to help support Jason's many extracurricular activities at Freedom while also helping to prepare for the financial impacts of his upcoming college education.

Anna Maria's introduction to Freedom Area's parents, students, and teachers began at Conway Elementary in 1988, when Jason entered kindergarten and she attended her first PTA meeting. That first meeting started an association that extended through Jason's time at Freedom and continued long after he graduated, until her untimely passing in 2015. During Jason's time at Freedom, Anna Maria supported the students by serving on the PTA and the cross-country boosters. She was president of the band boosters and was actively involved in every aspect of Freedom Drama's musical productions. During football season, Friday afternoons after school would find a large group of band members gathered on Chaplin Street. Each Friday, Anna Maria happily prepared a feast for them before they returned to the school to play their halftime show and cheer on the Bulldogs.

The last couple weeks before the school musical production are typically long and exhausting days for the actors, the orchestra, the stage crew, and the directors. Rehearsals continue late into the night and all day on weekends. When Jason was in high school and an active member of the Drama Club's productions, Anna Maria developed a way to help make those days a bit easier by engaging the parents to prepare and serve potluck meals during these long rehearsals. In 2005, Anna Maria achieved a long-held goal of obtaining her realtor's license and left her position with the newspaper to sell real estate. Although she pared back her involvement with the school when Jason graduated, she remained involved with the Drama Club by lending support for fundraising and ticket sales.

In 2009, an administrative assistant's position became available in the middle school and Anna Maria actively pursued, and ultimately accepted, the position. For the next six years, she reveled in working among the district's students, first in the middle school then in the high school. Besides her official role in supporting the school principal, she served as the Athletic Director's secretary; expanded her involvement with the Drama Club; served as sponsor for the homecoming court; helped with the institution of the homecoming weekend that began in 2015; started a program in 2014 for freshmen to help them develop the academic, personal, and professional skills necessary to prepare them for their chosen careers; was a founding member in 2012 of the Freedom Cares Foundation, which has raised over \$200,000 for the district's Arts and Athletics programs; and was a team leader for the school's Relay for Life Program in 2015.

Anna Maria would have been honored and humbled to be inducted into the FAEF Hall of Fame. One of her favorite ways to encourage the students to aspire to achieving their goals was to challenge them to make each day great. There is no better tribute to her memory than for each of us to do our part each day to "Make it a Great Day!"