

# *Robert G. Gallagher*

The third of five children, Gallagher was born July 7, 1952 to John Edward and Mary Ellen Gallagher. His father was a long-time Freedom fire chief, his mother a homemaker. Together with his older brothers, John and Glen, and his younger sisters, Deborah and Rosemary, Gallagher spent his formative years in the Freedom Area school system, a system he would return to following college graduation to carve out a long and distinguished career in education and athletics.

During high school, Gallagher first made his mark as an extraordinary athlete. He earned letters as a member of the cross country, basketball, and track and field teams. In cross country he placed 5<sup>th</sup> in the WPIAL. But it was basketball that made him the sports star. His team earned the title of section champs in 1970. He was named honorable mention on the all-state teams during his junior and senior years. He was the first player in the school's history to score more than one thousand points per season. His record as leading career scorer was not broken until 1984, when Tony Williams, younger brother of Hall of Fame honoree Chuck Williams, surpassed it.

Gallagher continued to soar in college basketball when he played for Robert Morris, then a junior college. As a freshman, Gallagher was fifth in the country in junior college foul shooting in a single season, claiming a 90% success rate. In his sophomore year, he became team captain. Gallagher left Robert Morris to complete his degree work at Slippery Rock College, earning a bachelor of science in education.

After college commencement, Gallagher returned to his roots, finding employment at his alma mater, the district he would call home for his entire professional career. In 1975, he started as a fifth grade teacher in what is now Freedom's middle school. Early in his career, he spent one year teaching second grade in Unionville Elementary School before moving back to the middle school, where he taught seventh grade reading for ten years. At that point, Gallagher moved into the position of IST coordinator. After earning his administrative degree, he served as assistant principal at the senior high school and principal at Conway Elementary School. From Conway he returned to the middle school, this time as principal, the position he still holds today.

During those years Gallagher continued to pursue degrees in higher education. He earned his masters' degree in education administration from the University of Dayton and his principal's, assistant superintendent's, and superintendent's papers at Franciscan University of Steubenville. He also taught reading at the college level for two years at Franciscan University.

Gallagher's thirty-six year career as a vital teacher and administrator was not his only contribution to the Freedom Area School District. He also enjoyed triumphs during his respective tenures as boys' and girls' basketball head coach.

Gallagher's coaching career began when he was hired as an assistant to the late Jim Irons, a Beaver County Hall of Famer who had coached Gallagher in high school. He coached the junior high school team for two years, leading them to the junior high championship in his second year. After that, Gallagher moved to assistant varsity coach. Two years later, when Irons left Freedom to continue his coaching career in East Liverpool, Ohio, Gallagher stepped into the position of head coach. Beginning in 1979-80, for the next ten years he led six of his teams to the playoffs. In 1983,

his team was the WPIAL runner-up and quarter-finalists at the PIAA level. It was the furthest any basketball team has gone in the history of Freedom's program.

After a short hiatus, Gallagher returned to coaching, this time taking on the girls' team, a team he worked with for eight years. In six of those eight years, he led the girls to WPIAL and PIAA state playoffs. Under his coaching, they earned two section championships.

Gallagher married Freedom native Maria Bovalino and made his home with her in their hometown. They have two children, Robert Gallagher, an attorney who resides with his wife Stephanie in Freedom, and Cara Gallagher Schlie, an accountant who lives with her husband John in Seven Fields. They have one grandson, Carter Gallagher, as well as a granddaughter on the way.