

## Popular YMCA fitness instructor remembered

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Wendy Fandre's upbeat attitude kept drawing people back to her fitness classes at the Andover YMCA.

by Eric Hagen

Staff writer

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At the young age of 35, Wendy Fandre died Jan. 19 at Mercy Hospital after suffering a heart attack at her home Jan. 12. Her glowing energy and positive attitude made her fitness classes at the Andover YMCA extremely popular. She loved the '80s and on Feb. 14, some Andover YMCA instructors and members dressed up in garb from that decade during the classes she used to instruct. Photo courtesy of Clay Fandre

A tribute video to Wendy Fandre can be found at [www.youtube.com](http://www.youtube.com) . Enter her name in the search engine to find the video.

To watch footage of the Feb. 14 event at the Andover YMCA, click here .

Her Caring Bridge Web site is <http://www.caringbridge.org/visit/wendyfandre> .

During the afternoon of Feb. 14, employees and members of the Andover YMCA remembered the former instructor, a Coon Rapids resident, who died from a heart attack last month at the young age of 35.

Class instructors and some members dressed up in '80s clothing and danced or cycled to music from that era, which was a fun time for Wendy when she would go out dancing with friends, her husband Clay Fandre said.

The Andover YMCA was like a second home to Wendy. Every day of the week she there, her husband said.

"She loved teaching classes," he said. "She had an energy to her that was infectious. People would just love going to her classes. She loved motivating people, getting people to better themselves, to really do their best."

Jennifer Williams said Wendy could light up a room with her energy.

After taking one of Wendy's cycling classes, Terra Crawford was motivated to start instructing cycling classes three years ago.

Michelle Berg started working out at the Andover YMCA and taking Wendy's fitness classes a couple of months after the facility opened in 2005. Wendy's personality kept drawing Berg back to her classes.

"She was very funny and motivating," Berg said. "She'd work you hard without realizing you were working hard because you were having so much fun."

Each of Wendy's classes lasted an hour. Clay said members have told him the classes were so fun that it only felt like 15 minutes.

Clay heard that his wife was such a popular instructor that members would work their schedules around Wendy's, so they could get into her Zumba, cycling, step aerobics and body pump classes.

In her cycling classes, there was sometimes one more person than the number of bikes available, so she would let somebody use the instructor bike in the front of the room.

"Her greatest quality was making the class fun, so you don't realize how much pain you're in or how hard it is," Clay said.

Clay and Wendy met when she was a freshman and he was a sophomore at the University of Minnesota-Duluth. They were both power forwards on the basketball teams and wore jersey number 34.

One year after they graduated in 1997, they wed June 20, 1998.

Instructing fitness classes was not Wendy's original career path, according to her husband.

She earned a teaching degree at the University of Minnesota-Duluth, and after graduating she worked for four years as a fourth- grade teacher at Sunnyside Elementary School in the Mounds View School District.

Their oldest son Carter was born in 2000. When he was one year old, she decided she wanted to be with her son more during the day, so she resigned from her teaching job in 2001.

She stayed home for a year and to stay in shape and get out of the house, she took fitness classes at the Coon Rapids

Lifetime Fitness close to where they lived.

After a year of not working, she wanted to get out of the house and try something new. She loved the fitness classes and she was a people person so it seemed like a natural fit, Clay said.

She started teaching fitness classes in 2002 at the Coon Rapids Lifetime Fitness.

“She wasn’t really a homebody type person,” Clay said. “She needed to get out, had a lot of energy, needed to be with people, be in front of people and that was kind of right up her alley where she could take the class that she would have taken anyway and be in front of people and motivate people.”

“She was a really big people person, loved to talk and gossip, so that really fit her.”

When the Andover YMCA opened, she went to work there full-time.

“She said the YMCA had such a great family of staff and members from top to bottom,” Clay said.

“Everybody was so nice and family oriented. The kids (Carter and Lily) were welcome here all the time. All the members were just really good people and she just really loved that about coming here.”

Since Wendy died Jan. 19, Clay said friends have been very supportive. They have brought over meals, watched the kids and donated money to eight-year-old Carter’s and five-year-old Lily’s college fund. Many of their neighbors who are YMCA members have also shown a lot of support.

For three hours Feb. 14 during the special ’80s theme classes at the Andover YMCA, friends dropped gift cards or money into baskets to help the Fandre family and to donate to Y Partners for a memorial tree to support Carter and Lily’s involvement in the YMCA.

“It’s such a great family,” Clay said. “Everyone kind of came together for me and the kids and even Wendy’s family to help out when we were going through some tough times.”

Without warning

Wendy was sleeping early the morning of Jan. 12 when she suffered a heart attack, Clay said. Before paramedics arrived, she went without oxygen for about 10 minutes, he said.

Doctors at Mercy Hospital conducted tests and diagnosed her with cardiomyopathy, which is a serious disease that causes the heart muscle to inflame.

Wendy's mother and sister also have cardiomyopathy, but caught it earlier and are both on medication, Clay said.

She was tested a few years ago, but the tests came back negative, so everything seemed fine, Clay said.

One week after being taken to Mercy Hospital, Wendy died Jan. 19 with her family at her side

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