

# 'She was always willing to help people'

By Cyril T. Zaneski and Mark O'Keefe

Staff writers

VIRGINIA BEACH — A teacher in Christian schools for 15 years, Karen H. Farley considered it her mission to help troubled and problem students. On Friday, a troubled student allegedly shot and killed her.

"She was burdened by anybody who had a bad time," said her long-time friend and pastor, the Rev. Carlton E. Smith. "Her heart went out to anyone who was troubled."

Farley died after a 10th-grader shot into three portable classrooms at Atlantic Shores Christian School in Kempsville, police said. The student also allegedly shot and wounded Assistant Principal Samuel M. Marino.

Smith and Farley's husband, William J. Farley, who lives in Chesapeake's Forest Hills section, said they were not certain if she had taught the suspect.

"We were trying to figure that out. We're not sure," Smith said. "He was a sophomore, a 10th-grader. She didn't teach 10th-graders."

Farley, 41, taught elementary and junior high school math and was yearbook adviser at Atlantic Shores, which has classes from kindergarten to high school. It was her second year at the school after teaching for 13 years at the now-closed Faith Christian School.



**The 1984-85 yearbook at Faith Christian was dedicated to Karen Farley, who had taught there.**

"She said the Lord had called her out to Atlantic Shores," said Wanda Hatley Winslow, 21, a former student of Farley's at Faith Christian. "No matter where he called her, she would go."

And she devoted herself to service, said Sandra Barker, who was Farley's neighbor for 10 years on Hydenwood Crescent in Chesapeake.

"She really loved people at the church and school," Barker said. "All her life was church, family, school."

The Farleys attended Faith Baptist Church in Chesapeake. William Farley, an engineer for a computer company, is an officer for the church's 300 members. Karen sang in the choir, worked in the church office, hosted a weeknight Bible study and taught Sunday school.

The Farleys' two children, Lora, 13, and William, 14, are students at Atlantic Shores.

"Karen Farley was devoted to Christian education," Smith said. "She could have taught in public schools and gotten a big salary."

A 1966 graduate of Great Bridge High School, Farley began teaching in Norfolk public schools. Fresh out of James Madison University, she taught for three years at Booker T. Washington High School, Smith said.

"There were a lot of what you would call 'street kids' there," Smith said. "Not that there aren't problem kids in Christian schools. Just putting a child between four walls that's a Christian school doesn't change the child."

Winslow described Farley as a soft-spoken woman who made a point of trying to change children for the better. She was Winslow's after-school tutor when she was failing first grade and taught her later in seventh, 10th, 11th and 12th grades at Faith Christian.

"She was the perfect teacher. She was strict, but she wasn't mean strict," Winslow said. "She would say I hate to take you to the office but you know I have to."

"She was always willing to help people at all times," said Mark Shallenberg, 12, who was in Farley's math class. "She was always treating everyone equally. She didn't have teacher's pets. She didn't favor one student over another."

"Of all the teachers to be killed, I don't know why (God) would call her."

But Smith said he considered that question Friday as he mourned Karen's death and counseled her family. "She was ready. She was one of his saints," he said. "God will use her in death the way he used her in life, as testimony to us. There will be always a part of her that goes on for us because of the life she lived."

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Staff writer Rose Ellen O'Connor contributed to this story.