

## Rita Haggerty

June 23, 1972 ~ November 12, 2021 (age 49)



Rita Lynne Haggerty passed away peacefully at home on November 12, 2021 at the age of 49 years surrounded by loving family. Born in Hoopeston, IL on June 23, 1972, Rita grew up in Hoopeston, IL. Rita is survived by her loving children, Chip and Cydney; her mother, Janet; siblings Joseph, Jr. (Karen), Barbara (Daniel), Jean, Elizabeth (Todd), Mark, Michael (Gina), Alice (Roger) and Linda (Brian), along with 30 nieces & nephews, followed by 14 great nieces and great nephews. She was preceded in death by her father, Joseph, Sr. and infant siblings Karen and Patrick. Rita was proud of the huge Haggerty clan to which she belonged, one of 78 grandchildren of Richard and Alice Haggerty!

Rita attended Hoopeston-East Lynn (IL) schools, graduating in 1990, then traveled to Danville (IL) Area Community College, where she graduated in 1993. Following graduation, she spent eight cherished years working with the Ravens family at Ravens Trucking. She moved on to a long career with Blue Cross Blue Shield, working a total of 13 years while developing deep friendships. She took a five year break from BCBS with the Allen family, working with East Lynn Fertilizer. Mixed amongst a busy life of family, work and church, Rita fulfilled her passion of becoming a nail technician, taking care of many loving friends and family! Rita was no stranger to hard work and sacrifice.

Rita made the world more beautiful. She worked with artist/horticulturist Molly Culbert in Hoopeston, developing a beautiful art of bow making and decorating. She created beautiful Christmas trees for local businesses and her home. They were stellar! Her love of all things happy was seen in her love of all things Disney, making the annual trek to Walt Disney World with her children. But, a beautiful voice is what many will remember when thinking of dear Rita. From her little days, Rita would be found twirling around, singing and dancing day and night. Throughout her school years, Rita was deeply involved in music which followed into her adult life, leading the choir at her Hoopeston parish, St. Anthony along with regular cantoring. Upon relocating to the Champaign area, a member of St. Patrick Parish, Urbana, IL, Rita was a cantor at St. Matthew Parish, Champaign, IL. Rita was beautiful inside and out.

Rita had a three year fight the dreaded disease of systemic scleroderma. Her scleroderma was discovered by a caring doctor who was treating her for carpal tunnel syndrome. In the fall of 2018, Rita began experiencing a tightening/numbness in her fingertips and toes. She first tried fighting with natural remedies and diet. By December, her disease had progressed quickly and she was working to find a specialist who understood this rare disease. After connecting with Northwestern Medicine early in 2019, she began medical interventions and was recommended for a stem cell transplant. While only considered an experimental treatment at the time, it was approved as best course of treatment only days before her treatment began in January, 2020. While great hope laid in this treatment, it was not successful. Rita spent March 2020-November 2021 in steady decline as the systemic scleroderma ravaged her body, overproducing collagen in her cells-most pronounced in her skin and other organs. Rita never gave up...she was a fighter.

Thanks to Presbyterian-St. Luke's Hospital (Denver, CO), Dr. Richard Nash's Stem Cell Transplant Team(PSL, Denver), Transitions Hospice (IL), Angel Flight (Tulsa, OK), Kindred Pulmonary Rehabilitation (Peoria, IL) Accolades Healthcare (Peoria, IL), Dr. Chase Correia (Northwestern Medicine, IL) the plethora of friends and family who supported Rita in prayer and thought. More than anyone enough thanks cannot be expressed to, her sister, Alice, her steadfast caretaker—lovingly nicknamed as "Angel Aly".

Praying for a day we see no other person ravaged by this dreaded disease, memorials are requested in Rita's honor to the Scleroderma Foundation at [www.scleroderma.org](http://www.scleroderma.org).

Mass of Christian Burial will be held at 1:00 P.M. Saturday November 20, 2021 at St. Anthony Catholic Church 423 S. Third St. Hoopeston, IL. With Fr. Ted Pracz presiding , Fr. Thomas Gibson and Fr. Bowan Schmitt con-celebrating. Burial will be in Floral Hill Cemetery, Hoopeston. Visitation will be at the church from 10:00 A.M.-1:00 P.M. on Saturday.

Freese Funeral Home 302 E. Grand Ave. St. Joseph, Il is assisting the family with arrangements.

Condolences may be made at [FreeseFH.com](http://FreeseFH.com)