



Colleen Anne Medinnus

October 17, 1929 - January 15, 2015

Colleen Medinnus (née Kulzer), beloved San Jose Unified School teacher for 50 years, dies peacefully surrounded by family.

Our loving Grandma, dedicated teacher, and best friend passed away January 15, 2015 in the simple beauty and warmth of her son's farmhouse in Etna, California. She was 85.

Born October 17, 1929 in the small farming town of Owatonna, Minnesota, Colleen was a brilliant student and, rare for the time, she was a stand out in math and science. While Colleen had hoped to become an engineer, that field was largely closed to women in the 1940s, and so she became a teacher. Far from an unwanted fallback, however, teaching would become her passion, and lifelong calling.

Lured by abundant sunshine and endless orchards, Colleen moved from the Twin Cities to San Jose as a young wife and mother in 1959. That same year, Colleen joined San Jose Unified as a special reading and math teacher. Featured in the San Jose SUN newspaper in 1965, and Named Outstanding Elementary Teacher of the Year in 1974, Colleen dedicated her life to children.

Over the course of a 50 year teaching career, Colleen taught, tutored, and mentored thousands of children from all walks of life. All children were her

angels, she would say, and reading was the gift she most wanted to give them.

A talented educator, Colleen was also a committed mother, grandmother, and friend. With far more strength and energy than her tiny stature would suggest, Colleen helped however, whenever, and wherever she was needed. Selfless in her devotion, Colleen packed and unpacked houses as her children moved over the years, changed diapers, shopped for groceries (along with special treats), and, of course, read to her grandchildren.

Colleen gave her children, grandchildren, and all who knew her something even more precious than her time: unwavering and unconditional love. Colleen finished every note, letter, and card with her signature smiley face, and closed every conversation, visit, or gathering by saying expressly how much she loved us.

Colleen spent her last years volunteering at Willow Glen Elementary School, helping in the kindergarten, and sharing her energy and enthusiasm for teaching that time and age never diminished. Her family is grateful for the friendship and welcome offered to her by the teachers, children, families, and staff at that wonderful neighborhood school.

Colleen would want a special word of thanks to be given to Dr Efren Rosas, his assistant Yolanda, and the nurses and staff of Kaiser San Jose Medical Center. Through their dedication and care, Colleen enjoyed the gift of nearly two more years of life, allowing her to see her granddaughters married, and to anticipate with tremendous joy the birth of her first great grandchild in August 2015.

Colleen is survived by her children Mark Medinnus, Lisa Rodgers, Laura Grant Van Camp, and David Medinnus, and grandchildren Kelsey Seidell,

Katie Ryan, Cameron Grant Van Camp, Daniel Grant Van Camp, and Anthony Medinnus.

A gentle, humble person, Colleen asked that there be no formal service. Instead, her family held a celebration with close friends, toasting Colleen with peach Snapple, her favorite drink, and dining on a sampling of pastries from Dick's Bakery, a local treasure Colleen had frequented since 1959.

For those who wish to honor her memory, Colleen hoped her commitment to reading might continue on through support for the San Jose Public Library Foundation <http://www.sjplf.org>.

Tribute Wall

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“ 1 file added to the album Memories Album



Sara Colodny - February 23, 2015 at 01:23 PM

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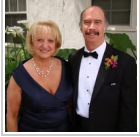
“ Colleen was an inspiration to many. Her boundless energy and enthusiasm provided support and learning opportunities for young and old. I am sad to learn of her passing.

Lydia Schott - January 23, 2015 at 09:48 PM

DR

“ I was in awe of Colleen. She had an abundance of energy, determination, and love. Colleen loved children, teaching, and animals. Colleen was an excellent teacher and mentor. She volunteered regularly in my classroom and others for many years. She was a most dedicated and kind person. Colleen was a great friend and I will miss her.

debbie robertson - January 23, 2015 at 07:14 PM



“ Colleen was such a wonderful teacher and friend. She loved her family and shared all the wonderful stories. She was proud to be a mother and grandmother. She wrote about how wonderful Mark's place was with cats and chickens. She will be deeply missed and always remembered.
Marlene Mattoon

Marlene Mattoon - January 23, 2015 at 04:45 PM



“ 8 files added to the album Memories Album



Girdner Funeral Chapel - January 21, 2015 at 04:54 PM