

First Lady of Lower School

Mary Lynn Coleman, who taught Saint George's primary students in the 1980s and directed the Lower School during the 1990s, passed away on May 1, 2019 in Spokane at the age of 70. "The Lower School Coleman House is aptly named to honor Mary Lynn Coleman who was the epitome of an educator, administrator, and avid Dragon fan," says current Head of Lower School Kathy Johnson, who taught Kindergarten classes under Mary Lynn.

Raised in Missouri, Mary Lynn earned a teaching degree from the University of Missouri in 1970, the same year she married Bill Coleman. According to her obituary, after their marriage the couple moved to St. Louis where Mary Lynn received the first of her many accolades for teaching. "She developed an early learning program that helped children learn about their 5 senses and their interaction with the world around them. The program was such a success that it caught the eye of the Rockefeller family and she was given a grant from the Rockefeller Foundation to further develop and continue her work. This also led to Mary Lynn's work being exhibited at the Smithsonian Museum in Washington DC as well as a national appearance on NPR."

Moving to Spokane, Mary Lynn began assisting Saint George's teachers in 1981, becoming a primary teacher in 1983. She was passionate about guiding children in the joys of learning, says Kathy. "Mary Lynn was a master in creating experiential-learning opportunities for her students inside and outside of the classroom. For example, she paid for her 2nd grade kids to take the bus to the Spokane Arts School and work with two artists there."

"Before global education, Mary Lynn recognized the significance of connecting classroom learning to that of the community and world. She invited Japanese students at Mukugawa to join her classroom up in the woods to write Haiku poems," says Kathy. "She was a pioneer in education, and our

school community was the benefactor of that vision. Adored by her students, Mary Lynn's Saint George's legacy will be long-remembered."

"No Saint George's game was complete without the sight and sounds of Bill and Mary Lynn cheering the Dragons on from the bleachers," says her obituary. "Scores of lucky children were educated and loved by her in the Coleman House, dedicated to Mary Lynn in recognition of her remarkable career in the Lower School. To this day, many of these now grown children reach out to the Colemans to acknowledge and thank the family for her positive influence on their lives."

Her love and support of children was not limited to her role at Saint George's. "When she wasn't at school, she volunteered with children's charities, sat on charitable boards focused on children's issues, and advocated for children to government," notes her obituary.

Mary Lynn is survived by her husband, Dr. William Coleman ("Bill"); her son Seth Coleman '92 (current SGS Biology teacher) and his wife BriAnne "Bri" Coleman; her son Benjamin "Ben" Coleman '93 and his wife Jasmina Coleman; and five grandchildren, including current SGS students Sarah and Daniel Coleman.

"As I look upon the sign bearing her name outside my office window, I feel blessed to have known such an inspiration to students, colleagues, and parents," says Kathy. "Mary Lynn was a true, unforgettable SGS Dragon."

— John Carter, SGS Communications



Mary Lynn Coleman with a Hannukah display that she used in her classroom



The Lower School and Coleman House sign in her honor