

The Power Of One: Dr. Coleen Grissom

*“I’m not a rich woman.
But doing the little things can mean so much to someone.”
~ Dr. Coleen Grissom,
Author, Speaker, Teacher, Guide*



Books can open your mind to new possibilities. They show you the world in all its beautiful, screwed up, haphazard ways. They introduce you to new thoughts. Freshen up old ideas. Challenge what you “thought” you believed.

Books hold a mirror to your world, and force you to face it. They ground you and send you soaring – all at the same time.

The love and appreciation of books can tug at your heart, get your mind whirring and tickle your funny bone.

That is the beauty of the San Antonio Express-News Book & Author Luncheon.

That, and Dr. Coleen Grissom.

It Started With An Idea

In 1991, three of the women in Dr. Grissom's self-described "Little Old Ladies Class" – Caroline Walker, Karen Norman and Terry Walder - had attended a book fair in Florida, and returned with the idea of doing something similar in San Antonio. They asked her to emcee the first event, as a fundraiser for the [Cancer Therapy & Research Center \(CTRC\)](#).

The [San Antonio Express-News Book & Author Luncheon](#) was born.

"I never assumed they'd ask me every year, but they said, 'As long as you're willing, we'd love to have you.'"

20 years later, at this year's Book & Author Luncheon scheduled for November 14, she'll be back.

"Nobody told me it was going to be for 20 years," she deadpans.

In those 20 years, Coleen has seen the power a small group of people has to change our community. After all, it all started with three women.

"I'm very much a supporter and believer in the CTRC; it does remarkable work."

Words to Live By

***"Figure out what you care about and
live a life that shows it."***

~ John Hoyt, President Emeritus, Humane Society

That quote by John Hoyt pretty well sums it up for Dr. Grissom.

"Doesn't that just say it all?" she asks.

So, what does she care about?

"This earth. I do not believe we have been good stewards of this earth."

But she believes we all have the power to create a better world, one kindness at a time.

“I always valued that I could do something that made someone feel better” she says.

A lifelong writer, she knows the power of the written word to heal.

“I love to write letters, even condolence notes. I love to call people who are helping me in a store by their names. That’s important to people, to recognize them as human beings.”

Values & Valuables

Watching the wildfires that have been consuming parts of our state, Coleen started reflecting on what is valued and valuable in her own life.

“If we had a fire here, all I would want to get out of my house are four poodles and three indoor cats.”

And what about the stuff?

“I have memorabilia of Bette Midler all over the walls of my study,” she said. “I would miss her face if those things were gone, but I would get over it. It’s just stuff.”

Happiest Times

Coleen Grissom may not sweat the small stuff, but she believes in the power of the little moments; the ones that matter. She keeps a record of those little nuggets that are most dear to her in her journal (She just started on Volume 66).

“Each night before I go to bed, the last thing I write in my journal is a list of my happiest times of the day.”

“That might be seeing the deer take a drink of water, a bird in a tree, my poodles chasing one another around the yard. I think it comes from those days long ago when I would put my nieces and nephews to bed at night,

and I would always ask them to tell me about their happiest times that day. Simple moments are often happiest ones, I've found."

What's Next?

Dr. Grissom says, "I'm about to be 78, way beyond the usual age of retirement, but I still love what I do and do what I love. I didn't realize until I was 50 that this wasn't true for everyone – that many people spend their lives in careers that bring them no joy.

I continue to love teaching, both "more mature" students at Gemini Ink and the undergraduates at Trinity; I relish the process of preparing, organizing, and leading bright adults of all ages in literary discussion. With each passing year, I realize what a rare blessing it is to do what I love and to love what I do. I wish those who didn't would find something else to do!"

When asked, "What's next?" Coleen replied, "I hope to have the mental and physical health to continue to teach, to serve as ms. of ceremonies for this CTRC event which does so much good in our community, to support the Cibolo Nature Center, Wildlife Rescue & Rehabilitation, and Gemini Ink, the literary arts organization – all of which focus on much of what I value."

There's a lesson in there for all of us... (ever the teacher).