

WASHINGTON STATE SCHOOL RETIREES' ASSOCIATION

The Journal

Affiliated with the National Retired Teachers' Association (NRTA)—AARP's Educator Community



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Pacific Beach, Grays Harbor, Washington

WSSRA At Work For You



A message from the president

Leadership, Scholarships, Communication, Legislation



by Bruce Boyer, president

On June 9, 2021, the WSSRA Executive Board met to finalize its' current yearly business. The board meeting was followed by a Zoom Delegate Assembly. With COVID -19 still being an issue, this Delegate Assembly was a shortened version of last year's meeting, with mostly business and election items.

Serving as your president-elect this past year, I was able to attend many unit, coordinating council, and WSSRA state committee meetings via Zoom. What I witnessed during those meetings is a large group of members willing to serve our organization with their variety of talents. This is so good to see, as we have many different "irons in the fire" during any particular year. There is always a need for someone to take a small but defining role in each of our units, as well as on the variety of state committees.

At the end of this past Delegate Assembly, I gave a short acceptance speech, which I am going to share parts of now for those that were not able to attend.

You will note that this year we are celebrating the 75th anniversary of WSSRA. Take time

to reflect on what our organization has accomplished during that time. Circling the center of the logo (*see below*) are Leadership, Scholarships, Communication and Legislation. These categories are encompassed within our mission statement and help identify our goals.

WSSRA shows leadership through our advocacy for retired school employees in a variety of outlets, and works to develop additional skills within our organization.

Scholarship is listed to remind us of the numerous scholarships that we distribute each year to those entering college in the field of education. Coincidentally, many local units, as well as the WSSRA Foundation, increased the numbers of scholarships and the amounts awarded this year.

As you already know, our Legislative Committee through the continuing efforts of Alan Burke, Peter Diedrick and our two lobbyists made significant progress this year during the Zoom legislative session. See Peter's article (*page 4*) on how successful our advocacy was for retirees this year.

*President, continued on
page 6...*



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Upcoming JOURNAL
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September 5, 2021
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WSSRA At Work For You



A message from the executive director

Paying Down TRS Plan 1 Unfunded Liability



by Alan Burke, Ed.D., executive director

\$800 million?? Whoa! That is a big pile of money, and is exactly the amount the 2021 legislature earmarked to pay off the TRS Plan 1 unfunded liability—what is actuarially owed Plan 1 retirees less what the state has in its pension bank. To be sure, we are grateful for the leadership of Senate Ways and Means Chair Christine Rolfes (D-Bainbridge) and Senate Majority Leader Andy Billig (D-Spokane) in moving the appropriation through the legislature, but why now, and why the \$800 million?

The “why now” is linked to the inflow of state and federal revenue over the past several months that turned a deficit-dominated legislative session into an exercise in how to prioritize spending an astonishing amount of cash. The unique circumstances of significant COVID-19 relief and a tech-based economy pushed state revenues to unprecedented heights—which was fortuitous for organizations like WSSRA that support a liability pay-down.

The \$800 million is another matter. With a TRS Plan 1 deficit standing at \$2.5 billion, and a multi-year plan to address it in place, long-time Olympia observers were surprised not so much that a liability problem fix was included in the final budget, but more so by the size of the commitment.

The reason that Senators Rolfes and Billig, along with a bipartisan group of their colleagues, pushed the TRS 1 pay-down is linked to the financial advantages of paying off debt sooner rather than later. The \$2.5 billion in TRS 1 unfunded liability, added to the \$4 billion for PERS 1, are obligations that must be addressed either now or in the future. The “now” option is cheaper, and financially much better for the state.

By moving money from the state’s general fund (earning about 3% interest) to the pension account (serviced by the Washington State Investment Board that has returned an average of 9% annually over the past decade), the state can “book” \$600 million with increased investment returns and, when added to the \$800 million initial payment, take care of more than half the unfunded TRS 1 bill.

For school districts, this means that the TRS 1 six percent salary pension payment (employer share) that is sent to Olympia each month for every active K-12 employee will go away two years sooner (now 2024; was 2026) than was the case before the 2021 plan was approved by the legislature. Think about those numbers: currently six percent of every current teacher and administrator salary—statewide that covers over 58,000 employees—is allotted to pay pensions for retirees long since departed from the district. That’s a lot of money that eventually can go to school programs and kids—but only after the TRS 1 bill is paid.

For retirees this also is good news. To secure a permanent Plan 1 COLA it is imperative to get unfunded liability at or near zero. If not, legislators argue that granting a COLA actually increases unfunded liability, thus making the unpaid bill grow. This is true, and presents a substantial firewall to penetrate when attempting to convince legislators of the need for a COLA. Once unfunded liability goes away, a window to securing permanent Plan 1 COLA opens.

So, was the \$800 million unfunded liability pay-down a big deal for K-12 retirees? You bet it was! One caveat: the actual transfer

Executive Director, continued on page 6...

Legislative News



2021 Legislative Session Review



by Peter Diedrick, legislative director

END OF SESSION UPDATE

WSSRA had a good legislative session. Not every goal was achieved, but school retirees landed \$1.2 billion in non-contractual appropriations. Other organizations were surprised and envious.

Last autumn, our political team prepared WSSRA for potentially disastrous budget cuts. The state was billions of dollars in the hole and raising taxes on shutdown businesses is not a big revenue driver. Fortunately, in March, state economists forecasted the worst of COVID-19 to be behind us and projected a sustained economic recovery. That news came on top of billions in federal stimulus payments. In the eyes of budget writers, Washington had gone from feast to famine, and then right back to feast.

When the extra money appeared, WSSRA was able to capitalize. All current benefits were maintained. Our team also asked budget writers to put a large share of money towards paying off the unfunded pension liability in the PERS 1 and TRS 1 pension plans. The Senate liked the idea and assigned \$800 million to be paid to the TRS 1 fund in 2023. This move will speed up the TRS 1 unfunded liability payoff by two years. Please see the Executive Director's report on page 3 for a full briefing on this payment.

SENIOR CITIZEN BILLS

WSSRA participates in political coalitions to support other legislation benefiting seniors. This year was no exception. While many bills did not pass, the following five WSSRA supported bills did get signed by the governor:

- **House Bill 1218** (Rep. Bateman – Olympia) created a bill of rights for long-term-care (LTC) patients. It would affect residents in nursing homes and group home situations. The legislation would ensure patients have access to a telephone, personal protective equipment, and daily personal contact with one outside caregiver or family member.
- **Senate Bill 5021** (Sen. Hunt – Olympia) protects school employees who were furloughed due to COVID-19. Furloughs would normally affect pension credits, but SB 5021 keeps those credits whole.
- **House Bill 1438** (Rep. Orcutt – Kalama) helps retirees qualify for property tax exemptions. Currently, lower income retirees – income eligibility depending on the county of residence – can qualify for a property tax deferral, freeze,

or exemption. HB 1438 allows retirees to deduct medical expenses and insurance premiums from their income, and thereby make it easier to qualify.

- **Senate Bill 5203** (Sen. Van De Wege – Port Angeles) lowers generic prescription drug prices. It would allow the state to contract directly with prescription drug manufacturers to negotiate bulk rates, thereby bypassing pharmaceutical distributors. It would also allow the state to manufacture drugs with open patents like insulin.
- **House Bill 1336** (Rep. Hansen – Bainbridge) spreads high-speed internet across the state. The bill would allow public utility districts and local governments to manage broadband internet like a utility.

THE LEGISLATIVE INTERIM

The WSSRA political team will ask the Select Committee on Pension Policy (SCPP) to recommend Plan 1 COLA legislation for the 2022 legislative session. The SCPP is responsible for making pension recommendations to the full legislature, so their blessing matters. You can also write to the SCPP and make a formal request – address is in the box below.

**Select Committee on Pension Policy
PO Box 40914
Olympia, WA 98504**

email at:

State.Actuary@leg.wa.gov

For the first time since 1991, there are no legislative elections this summer. No legislators have left office in an unscheduled manner – death or resignation – so the next legislative elections will be the August 2022 Primary Election.

The WSSRA State Legislative Committee and Executive Board will be working over the next few months to determine the organization's agenda for 2022. Obviously, maintaining medical benefits, obtaining a Plan 1 COLA, and improving Plans 2 & 3 will be on the list. Future editions of this publication will lay out next year's agenda.

Thank you to those who have been contacting legislators. It makes a difference!

WSSR-PAC News



WSSR-PAC: Can You Spare \$3 a Month to Protect Your Pension?

 by Edith Ruby, WSSR-PAC vice president and Mary Wallon, WSSR-PAC secretary

The purpose of WSSR-PAC, our political action committee, is to raise money for political contributions so we can get the attention of legislative candidates and make appointments to see them. Every year WSSRA's volunteer legislative team meets with legislators to advocate for making the full payments to the state pension funds recommended by the state actuary. We shouldn't have to speak for this. It's the fiscally responsible decision, but from 2001-2011, legislators deposited less than the recommended amount. This is one reason that TRS 1 funds are only 66% funded and Plan 1 retirees have no annual COLA. We need to remind legislators to do their duty!

WSSRA must continue to work hard to ensure the state's contributions to our pension funds and to restore a Plan 1 COLA as well as to maintain retiree medical benefits. We need legislators who understand and support our needs. Getting elected to the legislature is expensive. Candidates struggle to raise campaign funds. They remember those who help them. Before the 2020 elections, WSSR-PAC contributed \$26,500 to 39 candidates, a mix of Democrats and Republicans. All but 3 were elected. During the 2021 session, legislative team members met virtually with most of the legislators we supported. We are delighted that the Senate proposal to allocate an additional \$800 million to assist in paying down the Plan 1 deficit is included in the biennial budget. The House COLA proposal was lost in the final budget process, but we will be back in 2022 seeking the help of legislative friends to put this in the supplemental budget.

We need to continue to support our friends in their election campaigns. In past years, we have been successful in raising funds at the convention PAC table and units have helped with low-cost fundraisers. This year without opportunities to get together, our coffers are low. Fortunately, there are no legislative elections this November, but a year from now all House members and half our senators will be on the ballot. Without additional help from

WSSRA members, we will be able to make only fewer and smaller contributions.

Thank you to the 50+ convention delegates who attended our virtual PAC membership meeting on June 9. Questions were raised about how to encourage contributions. At present, only 2% of WSSRA's 17,600 members contribute to the PAC. Legislators check Public Disclosure Commission (PDC) records to see how many members support an organization and its goals. Those contributing more than \$25 are listed, so contributing \$3/month puts you on the PDC list. It's easy to contribute online at WSSR-PAC.org. Or put a check and this form (*see below*) in an envelope and mail to our treasurer. If you check "publishable," your name will be published on our PAC Wall of Support in the January *Journal*.

Support the WSSR-PAC — Contribute Today!

Contributor Name and Spouse (*if applicable*):

Address:

City, State, Zip:

Unit #/Name:

Contribution Amount \$

In memory of (*if any*):

Can we publish your name on the WSSR-PAC Wall of Support list?

Yes No

I certify that this contribution is not organized under the laws of and does not have its principal place of business in a foreign country. This contribution is not financed in any part by a foreign national, and foreign nationals were not involved in making decision regarding the contribution in any way.

Signature: _____

Mail Form & Contribution to:
 WSSR-PAC
 125 West 11th Street
 Port Angeles, WA 98362

Online:
 WSSR-PAC.ORG

2021 Convention

2021 Convention Update

On June 9, the WSSRA Executive Board voted to cancel the October 4 – 6, 2021 Pasco convention due to lingering concerns over COVID-19 and an expected low turnout given COVID-19 worries. Specific information on the rationale for this decision is posted on the WSSRA website. In the place of the Pasco gathering, a virtual awards/recognition convention event has been scheduled for September 15 beginning at 9:00 am.

That event will celebrate the organization's accomplishments over the past year. It will include recognition for unit and state level leadership, scholarship award recipients, and the announcement of winners of WSSRA's two major accolades: the Stanley O. McNaughton Outreach Award and Patrick T. Hoban Meritorious Award. All WSSRA members are invited to the recognition event through use of a Zoom link that will be posted on the website.

Also on June 9 was the virtual WSSRA business meeting that announced 2021-22 additions to the executive board. They are: Brad Beal – President-Elect (Spokane); Patricia MacGowan – NW 2 Representative (Seattle); Linda Marler – E 7 Representative (Pullman); and Kay Andersen – Foundation Trustee (Clarkson). Congratulations and best wishes to Brad, Patricia, Linda, and Kay!

In addition, on June 9, delegates approved the 2021-22 budget, and ratified five Bylaw revisions, all of which were summarized in the Spring 2021 *Journal*.

...President, continued from page 2

I see communication as an important focus to a successful WSSRA as we work together this year. We have discovered the many benefits of using Zoom this past year and we will continue to use it in an effort to make sure everyone can attend meetings and contribute their ideas. Along this line, you may have already discovered that Alan Burke has been putting in new information on our WSSRA site (wssra.org) that should be of interest to everyone. It not only gives current legislative needs/actions, but also has given updates on COVID-19 vaccinations and many other timely topics.

One other constant will be our need to enroll new members. With our ability to talk to public school employees in their buildings this coming year, we should be able to approach the 18,000 membership again.

Leadership, scholarships, a strong legislative presence in Olympia and Communication define our core goals and inspire my focused attention as I advocate for you this year. I would encourage you to contact me personally with your concerns and ideas. Remember, communication is a key component to any successful organization and is a two-way street.

...Executive Director, continued from page 3

of the \$800 million from the state's general fund to the pension fund was delayed until June 30, 2023. That means that both the 2022 and 2023 legislatures will have an opportunity to "repurpose" the money if economic conditions worsen or political necessities emerge. That would be an awful development and one that we will resist with all of our advocacy power. On that front, we have powerful supporters in Senators Rolfes and Billig, and in many other forward-thinking legislators on both sides of the aisle. You can rest assured that our legislative team will be monitoring all of this closely as the legislative sessions unfold.

Finally, unfunded liability is a rather geeky concept that is hard to explain quickly and concisely. To help in that effort we have prepared an extensive unfunded liability Q and A that can be found on our website (www.wssra.org) and hit the "legislative" tab).

\$800 million . . . Yes, that is a lot of money!

Membership: Strength In Numbers



Get Ready to Build this Fall

by Don Parks, state membership committee chair

In my last article, I was happy to report our membership levels as mostly steady for the year in spite of conditions totally surprising and daunting to most of us.

Our membership, as of June 1, stood at 17,588, down some from 17,617 on May 1. When we compare with 17,963 on June 1, 2020, we can see a decrease of almost 400.

I applaud those in local units who are working to attract and keep new and continuing members. It's not easy these days. Some

locals have been discussing in-person luncheon meetings but many are still understandably squeamish about that possibility. Hopefully, by the fall, things will be better.

In terms of scheduling fall/winter staff meeting presentations, perhaps an effective strategy might be to wait until mid-summer, and then call building principals and/or district admins to attempt to get on an agenda for the 2021-22 school year.

In conclusion, membership has slipped a bit but is mostly holding up well. Enjoy the summer and let's build, build, build next fall.

WSSRA MEMBERSHIP ENROLLMENT FORM

Do you know a school retiree who should be a member? Clip this form and ask them to complete and return the form today!

DUES DEDUCTION AUTHORIZATION FORM
WASHINGTON STATE RETIREES' ASSOCIATION
PO BOX 5127, LACEY, WA 98509

Please Print

Name _____ Phone _____

Mailing Address _____ City _____ St _____ Zip _____

SS Number _____ - _____ - _____ Home/Personal Email Address _____

Retirement Plan (CIRCLE) TRS1 TRS2 TRS3 PERS1 PERS2 PERS3 SERS2 SERS3

Name of WSSRA Unit (or school district last employed) _____

I authorize the Washington State Department of Retirement Systems to deduct the following dues and any future increases as voted by the membership, from my monthly retirement allowance and to pay such deduction to the Washington State School Retirees' Association.

Should I wish to cancel ensuing deductions I will send a written notification of cancellation to Washington State Department of Retirement Systems and WSSRA.

DUES DEDUCTION: \$7 per month or CASH DUES: \$84 per year

Date _____ Signature _____

- 01-Clerkston/Asotin/ Pacific 11-Lewis County 19-Renton-South King 25-Spokane 31-Walla Walla-
Pomeroy 06-Southwest King 12-Lower Columbia 20-Seattle 27-Pierce County Columbia
02-Chelan/Douglas 07-Jefferson County 14-Mason County 21-Skagit/Island/San 28-Thurston County 32-Whatcom County
03-Clallam County 08-Kitsap County 15-Okanogan County Juan 29-Benton-Franklin 33-Whitman County
04-Columbia Basin 09-Kittitas County 16-East King 22-Sno-Isle 30-Southwest Wash- 34-Yakima County
05-Grays Harbor/ 10-Columbia Gorge 18-Pend Oreille 23-Sno-King ington

Contact WSSRA for membership information: Michele Hunter, michele@wssra.org or 360-413-5496, ext 116

Supporting Future Educators



WSSR Foundation: Looking Forward



by Dottie Stevens, WSSR Foundation president

I am pleased to serve as the Foundation president for WSSR this year. The Foundation board consists of five members representing the breadth and depth of WSSRA, Serving on the board is a five-year commitment. We become close associates, even trusted friends during this time. We are deeply committed to the philanthropic ideals of this association, good investment practices, and supporting future educators as the students begin their studies or continue their studies as interns or student teachers. We welcome Kay Andersen of Clarkston (E-8/Unit 1 Clarkston-Asotin-Pomeroy) to our board.

I am Dottie Stevens of Kennewick (E-8/Unit 29 Benton-Franklin). Many of you know me as the enthusiastic emcee for basket distribution at conventions for the last two years

before the pandemic. I am looking forward to that again in 2022. I owe my basket-drawing persona to Lora Brabant and Daisy May who, after my first faltering attempts, challenged me to an over-the-top fun-filled approach. Start planning for the 2022 convention at Great Wolf Lodge in Grand Mound (south of Olympia). It will be a big deal with giant baskets you can hardly haul home! (OK, make that two or three smaller ones for the same price, so more members can share the joy of winning.)

Speaking of winning, one of our Foundation board members, Pat Cygan (NW-2/Unit 20 Seattle) was one of the most winning members ever. Her strategy - large investment in tickets and thus donation to the Foundation. Pat was on the Wall of Fame for her contributions. One of the best strategies, buying the

DONATION FORM
WASHINGTON STATE SCHOOL RETIREES' FOUNDATION
 PO Box 5127, Lacey, WA 98509

Please Print

Donor Name _____ Phone _____

Mailing Address _____ City _____ St _____ Zip _____

Donation \$ _____ In Honor \$ _____ In Memory \$ _____

NOTE: If you would like the person notified of this gift, you must include their full name and address below.

In Honor Memorial \$ _____

Name _____

Person to be Notified _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

In Honor Memorial \$ _____

Name _____

Person to be Notified _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Please check box if you would like to receive a receipt for your records. The WSSR-Foundation is a 501(c)(3) and donations are tax deductible within the limits of the law.

Check \$ _____ # _____

Cash \$ _____

ONLINE FOUNDATION DONATION
wssra.org Foundation link > Donation Form

five-dollar tickets in packets of \$20 for five tickets and get the extra ticket deal. Any one ticket has the chance for winning, so every ticket counts. Start saving now so you can invest in the raffles, the silent auction, and our Foundation.

Paula Nichols, 2020-21 Foundation president, has reached out to you in amazing ways through *Journal* articles to encourage donations, which are at an all-time high. Paula informed me that we received an additional \$18,783 memorial donation in honor of WSSRA Past-President JoAnn Balmer, who recently passed away (*see JoAnn's obituary in the spring 2021 Journal*).

Also, on our WSSR Foundation board are Marianne Harvey of Everett (NW-1/Unit 22 Sno-Isle) and Ann Chenhall of Olympia (SW-4/Unit 28 Thurston). We represent you with a lifetime of service to students, educators and all fellow school employees. We are available to chat with you at any time about the benefits of investing in our 501(c)(3) tax exempt foundation. Please consider donating to support future educators. A good way to that is to give in the honor of a retired school employee or family member.

Scholarships improved:

8 - \$1500 scholarships (added)

8 - \$2,500 annual scholarships

8 - \$1,000 annual scholarships Teacher Interns (Neil D. Prescott)

8 - \$2,000 scholarships Teacher Interns (Neil D. Prescott) added

Foundation Contributors

Joann & Fred Balmer - donation

Mellissia Christensen - in memory of Joann Balmer

Karen Keller - in memory of Trudy Slingland and Bill Marvin

Nancy Kleinschmidt - donation

Marcelle LaGrou - in memory of Bill Marvin

Barbara Landrock - in memory of Joann Balmer

Jane McCarville - donation

Ann Varkados - donation

Chelan/Douglas SRA - in memory of Betty Duvauchelle, Charles Randall, Eleanor Hughes

Grays Harbor/Pacific SRA - in memory of Gene Forrester

Lewis County SRA - in memory of Marie Mikalson

Okanogan Co. SRA - in memory of Barbara Beasley, Brenda Wilson (Smith), David Frazier, Diane Doust, Francis Hein, Karen Radke, Ken Cline

Pend Oreille SRA - in memory of Carolyn Myers

Renton/South King RSEA - Gene Forrester Scholarship, in memory of Gene Forrester, Sharon VanZandt, Lois Dye, donation

Seattle SRA - in memory of Paul Anderson

Skagit-Isle-San Juan RSEA - in memory of Butch Newman, Judy Wall, Robert Guy

Yakima County SRA - donation

Required Minimum Distribution (RMD)

Many of us, who are 72 and older, annually face a requirement to convert a percentage of our tax-sheltered savings (IRS 403b, 401k, etc.) from tax-free to taxable assets. Of course, when the time comes to convert the Required Minimum Distribution (RMD), the money becomes ordinary income and is subject to withholding regulations and, at the end of the year, federal income taxes.

That is, unless those monies are sent to an IRS 501(c)(3) charity. In this case, all or part of the RMD distribution given to an authorized charity is tax-free. If you are considering donating RMD proceeds to a charity, how about choosing the WSSR-Foundation? The Foundation supports what we all support—high school seniors interested in a career in education and student-teacher/interns. Their scholarships have aided hundreds over the years, and have been increased recently to reflect the realities of high college costs and challenging teacher preparation expenses.

So, if you are faced with a RMD this year, please consider a donation to the WSSR-Foundation. **Note: when making a RMD-to-Foundation donation, make sure that your financial institution sends the check directly to the WSSR-Foundation.** Unfortunately, a check from a private donor to a 501(c)(3) charity is not considered tax-free by the IRS.

2021 Scholarship Recipients

WSSR-Foundation Scholarship

Awarded to high school seniors planning to pursue a career in the field of education.



Alexa Mee (NW1)
Bellingham High School
Warner Pacific University



Colson Brunner (E6)
Cashmere High School
Central Washington University



Katie Stuart (SW3)
North Kitsap High School
Pomona College



Austin Jones (E7)
Gonzaga Prep High School
University of Alabama



Molly Flynn (SW4)
Skyview High School
Grand Canyon University



Paige Merkley (E8)
Richland High School
Brigham Young University

Gene Forrester Memorial Scholarship

Awarded to high school seniors planning to major in Agricultural Education at Washington State University.



Sydney Schmierer (E7)
Wilbur-Creston High School
Washington State University



BreAnna Short (SW4)
Yelm High School
Washington State University

Neil D. Prescott Student Teaching/Internship Scholarship

Awarded to college students who will be student teaching or conducting an internship for the upcoming year.



Tate Hutchins (NW1)
Central Washington University
Secondary Math Education



Reanna Holycross (E5)
Washington State University
Elementary Education



Hannah Schmidt (E5)
Central Washington University
Special Education



Kelsey Armstrong (NW2)
Northwest University



Sarah Dixon (E6)
Eastern Washington University
Elementary Education



Madison Saiz (SW3)
Central Washington University
Elementary Education



Madison Krogh (E6)
Eastern Washington University
Elementary Education

2021 Scholarship Recipients

Robert J. Handy Memorial (PEMCO) Scholarship

Awarded to high school seniors planning to pursue a career in the field of education.



Sofia Leotta (NW1)
Inglemoor High School
University of Washington



Nathan Moore (E5)
SC High School
Dordt University



Mallory Swenson (NW1)
North Creek High School
University of Northwestern-St. Paul



Emma Odom (E5)
Glenwood High School
Central Washington University



Dasaani Bascomb Brown (NW2)
Garfiled High School
Howard Univeristy



Raven Clark (E6)
LR High School
Gonzaga University



Sophie Blasingim (NW2)
Vashon Island High School
Central Washington University



Lyndsi Streeter (E6)
Okanogan High School
Washington State University



Emily Barry (SW3)
Peninsula High School
Northwest University



Sydney Schmierer (E7)
Wilbur-Creston High School
Washington State University



Reid Colkitt (SW3)
Curtis High School
Western Washington University



Jaela Thornburg (E7)
Cheney High School
Concordia University - Irvine



Allison Holder (SW4)
Olympia High School
University of Washington



Gynna Doyle (E8)
Pasco High School
Brigham Young University - Idaho



Tasha Koistinen (SW4)
Woodland High School
Portland State University



Sierra Pauley (E8)
Connell High School
undecided

For more information about scholarships awarded by WSSRA, please visit our website at WSSRA.ORG and click on WSSR-Foundation, Scholarships.



Aging in 2021



by Fred Yancey, WSSRA lobbyist

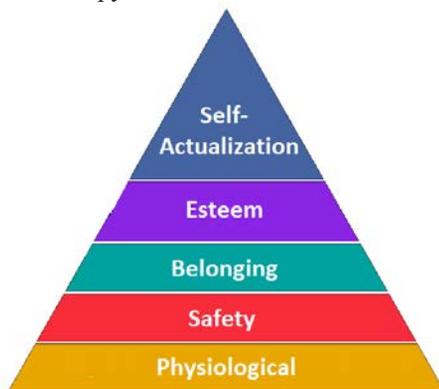
Being a 'senior' is a challenge. As one ages, everything becomes fragile. One's health, relationships, and finances are just some examples. These all take on more important roles. WSSRA knows this, which is why the Association advocates so strongly for a pension COLA for its Plan 1 members and for the maintenance of the health benefit subsidy that helps offset the cost of insurance for retirees.

However, there are other issues of importance to school retirees. These issues revolve around the reality of balancing a relatively fixed income against increased expenses.

The most recent data gathered by AARP shows the average TRS pension to be \$1,512 per month (\$18,144/year). The average Social Security paid to retirees is \$1,557/month (\$18,684/year). For a widow(er), the average survivor benefit is \$1,374/month (\$16,488/year). Also, according to AARP, one-quarter of Medicare retirees have incomes below \$15,000. Being a senior and retired is no bed of luxury.

The average retiree has lost between \$700 to \$1,200 per month in lost purchasing power alone as their pensions, even with a COLA, have not kept up with the rising costs of taxes, medicine, food, etc. Supplemental Medicare insurance through the state costs anywhere from \$336/person (Uniform) to \$177/person (Kaiser).

Psychologist Abraham Maslow wrote about a hierarchy of five needs. He created a pyramid with different levels. In life, he pos-



Dr. Abraham Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs

(image: pixy.org)

tulated, a person could work through each step, eventually reaching the top. Most seniors reached the top (self-actualization) during their working years. But as they age and the demands and expenses of life take over, they can slide backwards, often struggling to meet base needs.

These base levels that Dr. Maslow outlines focus on meeting one's physiological needs such as those for food, shelter, and health. Then one has to meet safety needs such as health and financial security. All too often, WSSRA retirees slide back into these lower levels of the pyramid.

As an association, WSSRA focuses on funding a COLA for its oldest members, maintaining the \$183 health subsidy, and on ensuring the full state pension obligation is paid. In these uncertain times, with a pandemic that remains unsolved, major changes in Federal policies coming, and the cost of living rising, WSSRA is forced to think of how to better serve its members and keep them from just bare survival. Its focus is broader than just pensions and the cost of insurance. There is more in play during a legislative session that can help a retiree.

In the recent legislative session, there were 50+ legislative proposals whose passage would address the needs of WSSRA retirees. Some of these proposals would have significant impacts; others are seemingly minor but show a respect and awareness for helping seniors.

The following is just a list of those that survived, grouped in broad categories:

Health (Insurance, Medicare, Nutrition, Long-term Care, Telemedicine)

- SHB1218 - Improving health, safety, and quality of life for residents in long-term care facilities.
- HB 1272 - Concerning health system transparency.
- HB 1438 - Expanding eligibility for property tax exemptions for service-connected disabled veterans and senior citizens by modifying income thresholds for eligibility to allow deductions for common health care-related expenses.

- ESSB 5203 - Producing, distributing, and purchasing generic prescription drugs.
- E2SSB 5052 - Concerning the creation of health equity zones.
- 2SSB5313 - Concerning health insurance discrimination.
- E2SSB 5399 - Concerning the creation of a universal health care commission.

Property Tax/Housing

- HB 1410 - Protecting taxpayers from home foreclosure.
- ESHB 1332 - Concerning property tax deferral during the COVID-19 pandemic.
- SHB 1438 - Expanding eligibility for property tax exemptions for service-connected disabled veterans and senior citizens by modifying income thresholds for eligibility to allow deductions for common health care-related expenses.
- E2SSB 5160 - Addressing landlord-tenant relations by providing certain tenant protections during and after public health emergencies, providing for legal representation in eviction cases, and authorizing landlord access to state rental assistance programs.

Broadband (Internet access and affordability)

- ESHB 1336 - Creating and expanding unrestricted authority for public entities to provide telecommunications services to end users.
- 2SSB 5383 - Authorizing a public utility district to provide retail telecommunications services in unserved areas under certain conditions.

Lest we forget, WSSRA also has a continuing need for clear legislative champions for senior issues. The number of bills listed above shows proposals that are all over the spectrum. They are disjointed and almost haphazard with multiple sponsors attempting to meet constituent needs. There is no apparent coherent picture or champion to all of them. The Association still seeks champions whom all four caucuses will look toward for guidance on proposed legislation affecting seniors.

Nevertheless, WSSRA will continue to speak and monitor pertinent bills, sign-in where appropriate, and even testify, if warranted.

Any financial assistance to and awareness of the life of a retiree/ senior is to be applauded. Otherwise, the struggle and downward spiral continues.

Interested in reading the text of any of the bills listed in this article?

Online, go to *(type into browser):*
app.leg.wa.gov/billinfo

Type the bill number in the "Search by Bill Number" box

**Visit WSSRA.ORG
click on "Legislative"**

**Information about legislative priorities, contacting legislators,
session bill reports, & the WSSRA Legislative Podcast**



Getting Connected For Less

by Cathy MacCaul, AARP Advocacy Director

New temporary federal initiative can save eligible households up to \$75 on high-speed internet bills

Connection was more important than ever in 2020, but for many, it was hard to find.

What was once an easy visit with family or friends became a complicated endeavor that took place in front of a computer screen. And if your home or community lacked access to high-speed internet, then the opportunity to connect became even more frustrating.

New research from AARP found that while more older adults (44%) now view tech more positively as a way to stay connected than they did before COVID-19, greater adoption and reliance on technology is uneven with 15% of adults 50+ not having access to any type of internet, and 60% saying the cost of high-speed internet is an obstacle.

In Washington, 7% of our total population do not have access to high-speed internet. Of the 7%, 32% are rural areas and 20% are on Tribal lands.

However, a recently launched program from the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) might help Washingtonians lower their internet bills.

The Emergency Broadband Benefit (EBB) is a temporary \$3.2 billion program that will provide a discount of up to \$50 per month for high-speed internet services for eligible households and a discount of up to \$75 per month for households on Tribal lands. Those that are eligible may also receive a one-time discount of up to \$100 for a laptop, desktop computer or tablet purchased through a participating provider.

The FCC is defining an eligible household through several different criteria.

Individuals who qualify for the Lifeline program and those on Medicaid, receive SNAP benefits, or participate in other federal assistance programs may be eligible for the monthly discount. Washingtonians who experienced a substantial loss of income since February 29, 2020—whose household had a total income below \$99,000 for single filers and \$198,000 for joint filers—are encouraged to apply for the program, as well.

While the Emergency Broadband Benefit will help many households who have experienced financial setbacks recently, the program is only short-term.

Once the allocated funds are gone, or six months after the federal government declares an end to the COVID-19 pandemic, the program will end. Individuals will receive notice before the program concludes, and the FCC guarantees at least a 50 percent benefit in the final month so participants have enough time to decide the best course of action for their internet needs.

“So much of our lives have moved online this past year,” said Doug Shadel, AARP Washington State Director. “The importance of connecting people, especially older adults, to affordable, high-speed internet goes beyond what we’ve seen during the pandemic.

“Older adults see the possibilities that stem from being connected online, and they want to learn more and take advantage of those opportunities.”

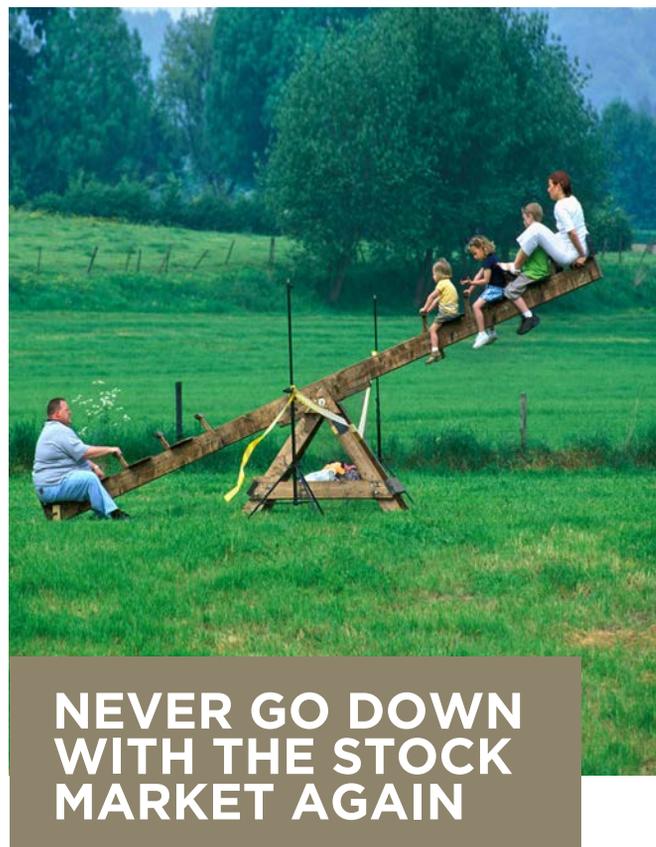
For more information about EBB,
visit www.aarp.org/EBB
or call 1-833-511-0311

More than one Journal in your mailbox?



The *Journal* comes out five times each year. WSSRA's longstanding practice is to send a copy of the *Journal* to every member. For those households with more than one member, multiple copies are sent to the same address - one for each member.

If this scenario applies to you and your spouse/ roommate and you would prefer to receive only one copy per household, please contact WSSRA Membership Coordinator Michele Hunter, michele@wssra.org or 360-413-5496, ext. 116. She will make the changes to our mailing list.



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RETIREE RESOURCES

WA Dept. of Retirement Systems (TRS, PRS)
1-800-547-6657 DRS.WA.GOV

PEBB and Health Care Authority
(health insurance)
1-800-200-1004 PEBB.HCA.WA.GOV

SHIBA - Statewide Health Insurance Benefits Advisors 1-800-562-6900
INSURANCE.WA.GOV/SHIBA

Social Security Administration (SSA)
1-800-325-0778 SSA.GOV

AARP Washington Office
1-866-227-7457 AARP.ORG
Jim Ko, state president
Doug Shadel, Washington state director

Senior Citizens' Lobby
360-754-0207 WASENIORLOBBY.ORG

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WASHINGTON STATE SCHOOL RETIREES ASSOCIATION

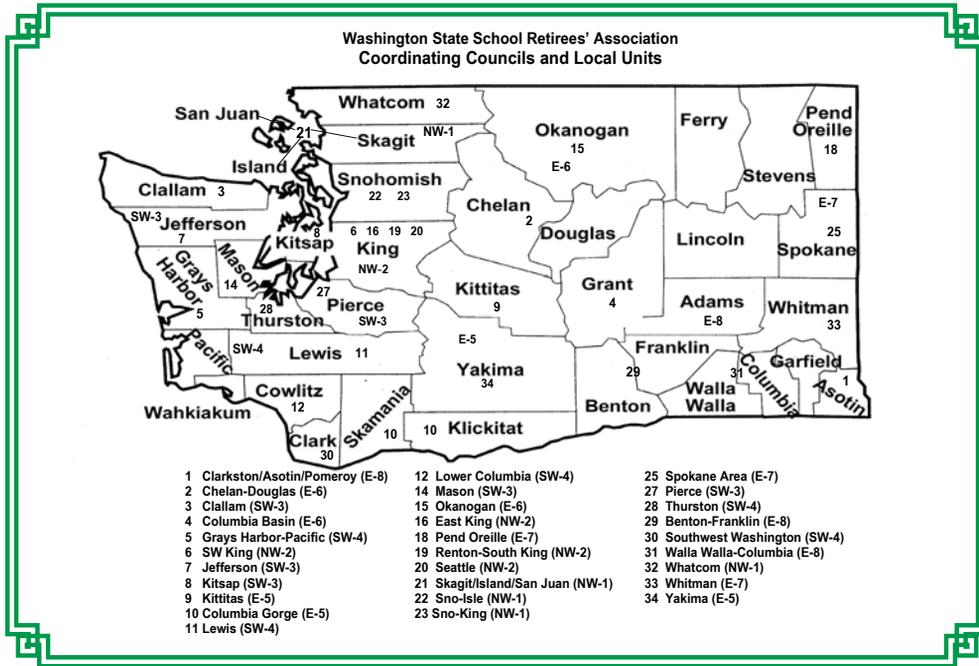


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WSSRA Around The State

What's happening in...

From the Coordinating Councils and Local Units



The following are some of Sno-Isle Unit 22's accomplishments:

- \$16,000 in classroom stipends to school staff to fund various projects
- Awarded a \$2,500 scholarship to Alyssa LaCoursiere
- Renewed a \$2,500 scholarship to Rachel Foster
- Donated \$500 to the Imagine Children's Museum
- Donated \$400 to a local school, View Ridge, for their field day
- Sponsored a drive and drop toy drive for Everett's Christmas House - filling the back of a pickup with toys and donating over \$500 in checks. Also, some members donated directly online.
- Members were kept informed about candidate positions regarding retirement issues.

NORTHWEST-1

Unit 21 Skagit/Island/San Juan: Unit 21 is focused on the year ahead with hopes to be able to get into the schools and hold some small meetings/gatherings in person. The unit's board members plan to continue to use the Zoom options to optimize the ability to reach out to unit members. At this time, the unit newsletter is offered via snail-mail and online. Continuing communication makes the difference in making the organization effective.

On May 20, the unit offered a Retirement Seminar with member **Bill De Hon** speaking to issues such as VEBA, ROTH vs. IRA's, wills, annuities and provided other tips

that make personal finances more secure. Important information was gained by those attending. More of this kind of meeting is planned for the future.

The unit's annual August retreat will bring members of the board together with some new faces to plan fall events. Building up membership is a goal. Bringing on new board members will be on the list. Planning an in-person gathering for members is also a goal.

Plans to continue to further understanding what outreach is to the unit and how best to fulfill that need. Some committee chair openings are available and will be offered to general unit membership. It is going to be a busy, productive year as things open up.

Unit 22 Sno-Isle:

As Sno-Isle Unit 22 looked back on this past school year, members wanted to take time and give a big thank-you to those working in schools. Members have been amazed by the extraordinary job of working members during such a difficult year. Members who are retirees have heard and shared stories with each other of the challenges school employees faced but also anecdotes of times when staff members went above and beyond to make things work.

Even though Sno-Isle Unit 22 has not been able to meet in person this year doesn't mean the organization has been inactive. Local membership has remained steady at 1,000 members.

Unit 23 Sno-King:

The Unit 23 SKSR board has continued to meet via Zoom. Members have been kept up-to-date via the bi-monthly, "Bulletin." The first unit gathering since February 2020 will be July 18 for the annual picnic held at Edmonds City Park. Chef Dane Catering of Lynnwood will serve a selection of four box lunches. WSSRA Executive Director **Alan Burke** will attend and install the unit's 2021-22

WSSRA Around The State

officers. He will also give updates on the health of the Association. **Jim Siscel** will explain the need for additional officers and board members to those attending.

The second Thursday of August, the unit board will meet at **Jim Siscel**'s home for the annual planning meeting. Meetings and activities will be planned for the rest of 2021 and the first half of 2022. Hopefully, the winter meetings can be held at indoor venues.

Unit 32 Whatcom County: Unit 32 WCSRA had a great meeting on May 20 with OSPI School Superintendent Chris Reykdal as the speaker. He made it easy for members to ask questions and was worthwhile. Unit 32 held their last executive board meeting on June 4. During that time, the board did a recap of activities from this past year.

Meeting dates have been set for 2021-22 with the possibility of a history cruise around Bellingham Bay in August 2022. Details are being worked on for this possible event. Although the unit was unable to meet in person due to COVID, it was wonderful to continue to have events. Members who had not attended meetings previously showed up for the Zoom meetings. As with many units, Unit 32 is looking for new leadership during the 2021-22 year.

NORTHWEST-2

Unit 19 Renton-South

King: Renton/South King did not have a membership meeting in June. However, nine Random Acts of Kindness were given to teachers and donations were sent to Auburn, Enumclaw, Kent, Maple Valley, and Renton food banks.

The May membership meeting was on Zoom. Unit 19 members gave suggestions for summer fun ideas such as good books to read and places that were interesting to visit. This information is on the Renton/South King's Facebook page.

Voting delegates to the convention were **Judy Dotson, Karen Jones, Patty Goodspeed, Joan Morgenstern, Rachel Almeleh, Eleanor Raschkow, Sue Perez, Tina Underdahl, and Robin Stroben** who participated in the Zoom meeting on June 9.

One of Unit 19 members, **Sharon Rasmussen**, recently received a special Community Service Award from AARP. Sharon has volunteered for over seventeen years as a grief counselor in her community.

On August 17, Unit 19 board members will have a planning 2021-22 meeting and potluck at **Rachel Almeleh**'s home.



Unit 19's Sharon Rasmussen Receives AARP Andrus Award

For the second year in a row, a Renton South King SRA member has received an AARP Andrus Award for community service and volunteering. Unit 19 member Sharon Rasmussen (*pictured right, with Sue Perez on left*) was honored for her 17 years of leading a grief ministry program for her community. Sharon learned of the need for grief outreach the hard way upon losing her husband to a fatal heart attack three decades ago.

Sharon's grief ministry program is designed to offer assistance to those saddened from the loss of a relative. The feeling of shock, loss, heartache, and depression is common in these cases, and that's where Sharon and her colleagues lend support. The group meets monthly, and offers assistance as long as the grieving family has a need.

This program has worked so well that Sharon has been asked by church hierarchy to share her story with others so that the idea of a grief ministry can spread. Over the years, Sharon has helped hundreds of people suffering a loss to find a way through the dark times and find a happier place. The Renton South King SRA is fortunate and proud of Sharon Rasmussen who eases the pain of death with a joyful spirit and a helping hand.

WSSRA Around The State



Unit 8 Kitsap County: Unit members recently toured the Lisa Stirett Glass Art Studio in Silverdale, WA. Pictured are (back, left to right) Sandy Deason, Patty Marz, Susan Martin, Doris Bucher, Craig Miller and Cheryl Miller. In the front are Lisa Stirett (owner of Stirett's Glass Art Studio) and Barbara Bagilio.

Unit 20 Seattle:

The latest newsletter for Unit 20 has been posted on the unit website: www.seattlesra.org. The print version will be mailed soon. "The Bulletin" contains news from the June 9 WSSRA Delegate Assembly Zoom meeting, which included the announcement that SSRA's **Patricia MacGowan**, was elected as Northwest II's district representative to WSSRA.

The newsletter also mentioned an upcoming Zoom program, "The Story Behind Citizen Kane," which will be held on July 21 from 2:30pm to about 4:00pm and will feature historian Dr. Rhoades. The Zoom

codes are listed on the home page of the unit's website: www.seattlesra.org.

The unit did an earlier Zoom program on May 8 that included three survivors of Japanese-American internment camps during World War II. **Pat Cygan**, SSRA's president held a Zoom meeting on June 2 to update the board on important unit business as well as those of Northwest II and WSSRA.

SSRA's Scholarship and Grant Fund continues to receive donations including a large number of donations in memory of Lena Jordan, a former Seattle middle school P.E. teacher.

SOUTHWEST-3

Unit 3 Clallam County:

Clallam County School Retirees' Association (CCSRA) had a hybrid meeting on May 18, 2021 with some attending via Zoom and others in person at Joshua's Restaurant in Port Angeles. The guest speaker was Port Angeles High School business teacher **Bernie Brabant**, husband of President **Lora Brabant**. He spoke about the challenges of teaching during COVID. The executive board voted to discontinue Zoom meetings after the May meeting.

On June 15, the annual picnic was held at the home of **Larry**

and **Robin Sweeney** in Port Angeles. At that meeting local member Ray and Ginni Weigel were honored as community service volunteers. President **Lora Brabant** was honored with a community service award from AARP, presented by **Beverly Brown**. **Cathy Stordeur** conducted an installation ceremony for new officers. **Lora** also announced that Unit 3 received a Unit of Highest Distinction award.

Children's books were collected throughout the year and were delivered to three organizations in May. There were over 600 new and gently used books divided between First Step in Port Angeles, Head Start in Sequim, and Crescent School District Preschool Program in Joyce. The project will continue next year.

Unit 8 Kitsap County:

In March, the unit meeting was held at the Kitsap Mobile Home Park recreation room. The guest speaker, Victoria from Eagle Harbor Books, participated via Zoom. She did a very thorough job of telling the group about local books and authors that might be of interest. Also in March, the unit elected officers for the 2021-22 year. Officers are President **Doris Bucher**, Vice-President **Craig Miller**, Secretary **Patty Marz**, Treasurer **Allision Morris**. In addition, **Craig Miller** will serve as parliamentarian and **Cheryl Miller** as historian.

Susan Miller will be Sunshine chairman, **Sandy Deason** and **Cathy McVicker** will be the membership committee, **Patty Marz** will be in charge of mini-grants and **Joan Lingfelter** will be in charge of scholarships. The unit gave a donation to all of the food banks in Kitsap County.

In April, the unit meeting attendees went to Lisa Stirrett Glass and Art Studio. She gave a talk about what she offered and shared about how they helped women in Africa. The unit gave a donation to her program abroad. It was an outstanding program and was enjoyed by all who attended.

Unit 14 Mason County:

Many Mason County members were very pleased to be back to in-person meetings on May 4. Members who were fully vaccinated for COVID-19 were invited to meet at El Puerto de Angeles Restaurant for the May meeting. A Zoom connection was also offered for those who were not vaccinated or preferred to meet virtually. Seven members attended in-person and two joined by Zoom. Some in-person members brought laptops to share so all members could see the virtual presentation by the guest speaker.

The guest speaker was Dani Cook, executive director of Exceptional Foresters, an organization founded in 1957 by

a local family to help their two sons who were mentally challenged. Sheltered workshops have evolved into working with local employers to place the 20 mentally challenged clients. The organization also works with the schools to help students set goals for life after high school to live successfully in the community. Clients are supported for medical, vocational, financial, and educational needs.

President **Eileen Perfremment** read correspondence from **Peter Diedrick** on the legislative actions taken this year. She also reported on Mason County statistics concerning COVID-19 and the state of the schools in Mason County.

The June 1 meeting was also held at the same restaurant. Zoom connection was offered again for those who are not fully vaccinated or prefer to connect virtually. Laptops were available to hear one of the grant recipients give her report. Attendance was almost the same as May.

Bonnie Rice presented the reports received by the 15 recipients of mini-grants this year and a couple of holdovers from the previous year. Mason County has four non-high districts and three with high schools. Mini-grants were awarded to most districts at a wide range of grade levels, from pre-K to special needs beyond grade 12. Elementary grants included purchase of advanced white boards to get

Remembering



Bill Marvin

WSSRA President, 2004-05

Bill Marvin (1937-2021), WSSRA president in 2004-05, suddenly passed away April 20. In addition to his term as president, Bill served for numerous years on statewide committees, with a particular passion for community outreach. He also filled key positions in several convention planning committees, and provided convention entertainment through a singing group that he led (The Warblers)

In addition to WSSRA activities, Bill was a stalwart with the Spokane Area Retired Educators' Association (SAREA), serving as a local president several times during his 26-year WSSRA tenure, and as a board member in many others. Bill was a frequent volunteer for his church and the local food bank.

Bill was born in Port Angeles, attended high school in Highline, and attended the University of Washington, graduating in 1960. He taught music and history for 30 years in the Spokane area, and traveled extensively in his spare time. He was a proud Spokane area UW alum and enjoyed attending Husky football games.

His wife of 39 years, Donna, preceded him in death in 2012. He is survived by three nephews and nieces—plus a set of friends and colleagues from his long history in education and philanthropy.

Bill's smile, "let's get it done" attitude, and willingness to help out in unit and community activities will be greatly missed by those in SAREA, District E 7 and WSSRA.

WSSRA Around The State

immediate feedback from 1st graders and save paper, board games to encourage student interactions, USB flashdrives to send home assignments where internet connections are spotty, print and purchase a book based on student research on Mars, books in a lending library, garden boxes for students to grow plants to donate to the local food bank, Versa Tiles to improve math and literacy skills, wooden blocks to assist students on the autism spectrum, and materials for pottery

projects. Secondary students benefited from Kahoot, an online program, construction of adapted workbooks for special needs students, incentives for freshmen who struggled with on-line learning, fabric for students to create a flag to represent their school, and student creation of a logo to put on t-shirts. The 12+ special needs students benefited from bus passes to travel in the community to gain the ability to travel independently to work and visit relatives and friends.

An election of officers was held. All current officers agreed to serve another term, and no one challenged. Results are President **Eileen Perfremment**, Vice-President **Bill Valley**, Treasurer **Tedd Davis**, and Secretary **Bonnie Rice**.

The unit may hold meetings through the summer if interesting speakers are found and membership want to attend meetings in person.

Unit 27 Pierce County:

Pierce County is grateful to the membership for its excellent attendance at general membership and board meetings using a virtual format this year. Highlights for the year were receiving the WSSRA Unit of Highest Distinction Award; budgeting \$14,000 for local mini-grants and future educator scholarships; and submitting two outstanding nominees for the WSSRA Hoban and McNaughton Awards (**Heather Gurley** and **Karen Chapman**).

Members who requested membership directories this year were mailed a spring "Send Out" greeting card in an effort to connect during COVID times.

In a further effort to reach out to members, Pierce County is excited to schedule an in-person picnic in August. This delightful summer picnic will be held at Clark's Creek Park South in Puyallup, 1710 12th Avenue SW, 98371, on Thursday, August 5 from 11:00 am – 2:00 pm. Bring a lunch and beverage and join us!

Join the WSSRA Email List

Now, more than ever, technology has been become a critical way to connect with people and stay informed.

Email is a simple, quick, and inexpensive way for WSSRA to connect with members.

Join the email list in 3 easy steps:

- 1. WSSRA.org**
- 2. Scroll to bottom of the page**
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WSSRA Around The State

SOUTHWEST-4

Unit 11 Lewis County:

The Lewis County unit did not try to meet this spring but were able to award three \$1,500 scholarships to high school seniors in Lewis County. Hopefully, plans can be made to meet in the coming year.

Unit 28 Thurston County:

Zoom -- who knew 18 months ago how important this online platform would be?! Unit 28's officers for 2021-22 were installed during the May Zoom unit meeting by WSSRA President-elect **Bruce Boyer**. Thank you **Bruce!** Following the installation, unit members celebrated the lives of those members who passed away during the past two years.

Unit 28 continues to use Zoom for its board meetings. Additionally, the unit has had a monthly program on Zoom. In July, a survey will be sent to unit members to get feedback on their comfort level for meeting in-person. The last 18 months have been challenging.

Unit 28 would like to extend a huge thank you to the WSSRA office staff - **Alan, Peter, Michele, Debbie,** and **Tara** - for all their help as we all stretched and grew and learned new things!.



Unit 30 Southwest Washington (Vancouver): The unit recently contributed \$1,000 to three local school foundations. Unit members Marty Erickson and Linda Bannon presented the checks to Cascadia Tech (top) and Evergreen School District Foundation (right)



Unit 30 Southwest Washington (Vancouver): Unit 30 was able to eagerly and enthusiastically contribute \$1,000 to three different school foundations - Battleground, Vancouver, and Cascadia Tech. A big thanks to Treasurer **Marty Erickson**, who enlarged the award check and offered a photo opportunity. Each picture, which was sent to the local newspaper, included President **Linda Bannon**, Treasurer **Marty Erickson** and a school foundation representative.

It was complicated to come up with a new unit president and vice-president for 2021-22. After searching and various discussions, the plan is for a shared schedule and fewer meetings. Thanks to the following who volunteered:

Despo Varkados: September 2021 board meeting (third Thursday) and October general meeting (fourth Thursday)

Linda Bannon: November 2021 board meeting (third Thursday) and December general meeting (second Thursday)

Donna Quesnell: February 2022 board meeting (third Thursday) and March general meeting (fourth Thursday)

Loretta Babbitt: April 2022 board meeting (third Thursday) and May general meeting (fourth Thursday)

Looking forward to gathering in-person for board meetings at Cameo's Restaurant and unit luncheons at Cascadia Tech. A big thanks to former unit president, **Linda Bannon**, who led the unit through Zoom and made it entertaining and enjoyable.

WSSRA Around The State



Unit 15 Okanogan: Sarah Dixon, Malott, receives OCSRA \$1,500 Scholarship for 2021 from Dee Blank, Scholarship Trustee. Also pictured (*left to right*) are Jennie Hedington and Sibyl Wehmeyer, Scholarship Committee members. Sarah is a student at Eastern Washington University, majoring in Elementary Education. She will be doing her student-teaching this coming school year.

EAST-5

Unit 9 Kittitas:

Following an earlier board meeting, the local unit may be coming to life in September with an in-person gathering. It is hoped that those attending will have been vaccinated or have had a recent negative test. The expectation is to meet again at noon at Rosewood for a luncheon and meeting on September 21. As in the past, the luncheon will be free to members and guests and will likely be sandwiches, salads, and dessert provided locally. Recent retirees are welcome. The program may

include a presentation by a person from the local FISH organization and food bank, which serves the area. This group has contributed to their funding.

It is expected that all officers and committee chairs will continue through the 2021-22 year. Communication has been through newsletter and that will continue. The most recent letter printed the names of grant recipients for 2021 and their respective schools—nearly every county school was represented. The legislative news was also included. Health plan information for next year is not available yet.

Looking forward to a more typical year and a resumption of activities with friends and colleagues. Perhaps the October meeting will again be in upper Kittitas County.

Unit 10 Columbia Gorge:

In late May, several members of the Columbia Gorge School Retirees' Association volunteered at the 25th annual Bingen White Salmon Community Cleanup. Yard waste, tires, appliances, building materials, and "free-cycles" (usable items available for swapping) were dropped off at this popular event. Unit

members helped greet, direct, unload, sort and distribute items.

In addition, Unit 10 provided gift bags to all 2020-21 retirees in the region and candy bowls to all district schools to show appreciation for the staffs' hard work this year. The unit included personal letters, posters, and pamphlets with these gifts in hopes of recruiting new members to the association.

EAST-6

Unit 2 Chelan-Douglas:

The unit's April meeting began with the introduction of the 2021 Apple Blossom Royalty. These girls are outstanding in many ways and worthy of praise. Later in the meeting, a check from member, **Chuck McHaney** for \$1,000 was given to the unit in honor of his wife, **Joann McHaney**, a longtime member of CD-SRA. Correspondence notes of thanks were received for the goody bags the unit has been providing for members that are more isolated. The "Community Cares" team reported that the gifts were a big hit on St. Patrick's Day, Easter, Mother's Day, and Father's Day. This has been such a popular program, that a suggestion was to give classroom grants to classes that would be willing to "adopt" an assisted living or nursing home for the school year.

WSSRA Around The State

The unit donated \$1,000 to the “Small Miracles” summer lunch program. **Mary Perkins** reported that the state put out an e-mail encouraging members to contact legislators regarding retirement issues. **Mary King** reported on the upcoming retirement webinar. **Billi Kraft** reported that eleven mini grants were awarded to active members.

In May, **Alan Burke** joined the unit meeting. He explained the status of the unfunded pension liability that the legislature finally addressed this session. He also reported that the Zoom Retirement webinar was well attended. The unit continues to receive thank you notes from the “Community Connections” recipients as well as from active member who received mini grants.

The board approved a \$1,000 sponsorship grant for the North Central Washington STEM Summit and \$2,000 to “Our House” Cancer Care NCW. A committee was appointed to review the unit bylaws.

The following slate of officers was elected for the 2021-22 year: Co-Presidents **Kriss Crilly** and **Denise Perkins**, Co-Vice Presidents **Marie Buckner** and **Mary King**, Co-Secretaries **Jan Ottosen** and **Christy Dekraai**, Corresponding Secretary **Billi Kraft**, and Treasurer **Sue Kane**.

Unit 4 Columbia Basin: For the first time in over a year, Columbia Basin Unit 4 members enjoyed an in-person luncheon together on



Unit 4 Columbia Basin: Unit members, (left to right) Helen Preston, Nancy Lindsay, Lanita Pomeroy, Shirley Vincent, Karen Schafer, and Pat Simmons, enjoyed a day in Leavenworth.

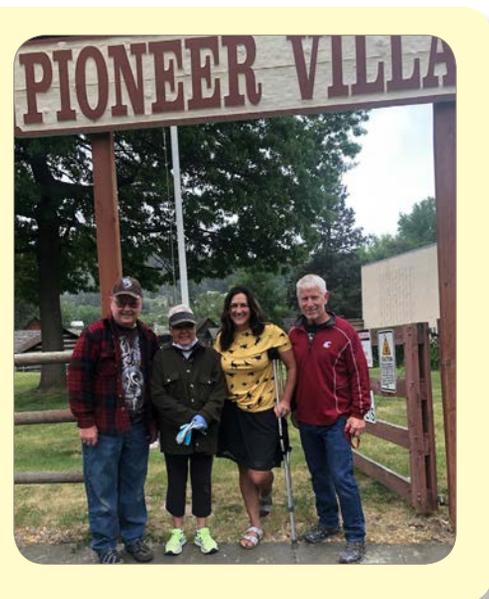
Tuesday, May 25. They met at the picnic shelter in the Japanese Gardens in Moses Lake, and everyone brought their own picnic lunch. Eighteen people attended for the event,

where much laughing and a lot of visiting occurred. Several members then took home materials for assembling book bags for the unit’s Books for Babies program.



Unit 2 Chelan/Douglas: (left photo) Members Nancy Valeson and Mary Perkins present Becky Elwell (center), house manager, with grant money for the Cancer Care House NCW.

(right photo) CDSRA members volunteered to get Cashmere Museum’s Pioneer Village ready for tourists. Pictured are Conn Lautensleger, Dee Bruner, and Don Smith, pose with Nikki Clennon, the new Cashmere Museum manager.



WSSRA Around The State

Honorary Lifetime Membership

Long-standing WSSRA members can be eligible to receive Honorary Membership. To meet the criteria for honorary membership, a member must have reached the age of 90 by June 30, have been a member of WSSRA for at least 20 years, and have been an actively contributing member. Unit presidents can submit nominations to the Executive Board for consideration. This year, the following individuals were awarded WSSRA Honorary Memberships.

Doris Hulse

Unit 19 Renton/South King

Anne Ferguson

Unit 28 Thurston County

Jane Harbison

Unit 28 Thurston County

Vivian Forrester

Unit 28 Thurston County

Barbara Breslin

Unit 28 Thurston County

Elaine Banks,

Unit 29 Benton/Franklin

David Simonson

Unit 32 Whatcom County

Dolores Vanstone

Unit 32 Whatcom County

Charles (Doug) McClure

Unit 32 Whatcom County

Robert Hall

Unit 32 Whatcom County

The CBSRA delegates for the 2021 WSSRA Convention participated in the virtual business meeting, via Zoom, on June 9. Some of them also participated in the PAC meeting that followed. For some of them, this was their first experience using Zoom to meet online with others.

A group of six members carpooled to Leavenworth on the morning of June 11 for a fun outing together. They began by walking along the trails of the River Walk, stopping to read about the geography, history, plants, and animals of the area. Later, they browsed through the variety of shops and stopped to eat lunch and gelatos along the way. Those who enjoyed this fun day together were Co-Presidents **Lanita Pomeroy** and **Helen Preston, Pat Simmons, Shirley Vincent,** Nancy Lindsay, and **Karen Schafer.**

Unit 15 Okanogan:

May found the Okanogan County SRA Scholarship Committee selecting its 2020-21 winner. Receiving that \$1,500 award is Sarah Dixon, Malott. Sarah is an EWU Elementary Education major with a middle level math endorsement and a minor in literacy. She will student teach winter quarter 2022.

In an email vote, the OCSRA board approved its 2021-22 budget. The budget includes eight grants of \$300 each

for actively involved (still working) members. Active members are encouraged to watch for the announcement of application dates and times in the unit's newsletter.

The unit is searching for a third member to its Scholarship Trustee board, which meets once yearly with an Edward Jones representative to determine scholarship funds investments. The board also determines the amount to be awarded yearly to the OCSRA scholarship winner. Current members are **Donna Sanford** and **Dee Blank.** If interested, contact **Rita Figlenski** via email, ritafig2@gmail.com.

EAST-7

Unit 18 Pend Oreille:

Unit 18, Pend Oreille County Retired School Employees, was happy to award four \$200 mini-grants to teachers from the Cusick School District, Newport High School, and the alternative Newport high school - the Pend Oreille River School.

Cindy Edgren, 5th grade teacher from Cusick, received the grant to give each student in her class the opportunity to choose Scholastic books for summer reading. She said, "I am diligently trying to give my students every tool possible to help them feel confident and successfully reach higher goals."

WSSRA Around The State

Peg Waterman, teacher and manager of the Pend Oreille River School, reported that graduation for the 28 students was held outside due to COVID-19. She also stated that many students live independently and could not afford the cost of graduation, so the grant helped with additional expenses.

Karen Behrend, foreign language teacher at Newport High School, explained that teaching French is a new program and she has “very few resources.” She purchased a subscription to Gimkit and said “it is a site that provides fun, engaging games where students can compete with others reviewing key phrases they have been learning in class.”

Katie Moser is the Life Skills teacher for the special education program at Newport High School. She teaches and reinforces skills to students with disabilities in order to lead successful everyday lives as well as skills for increasing employability. They have a coffee cart that the students run daily. She said, “It is very successful and more popular every day with the entire student body.” Katie also had students write letters to the unit telling how great the coffee cart experience is and how much they would appreciate the opportunity for the grant. They used the money to buy an ice machine and other supplies.

Unit 25 Spokane Area: **Charlotte Schelling**, SAREA vice president, arranged the speaker for the unit’s May general meeting on Zoom. Dr. Erin Church, from Rockwood Multicare, addressed ways to “Make the Most of Your Retirement Years by Improving Your Physical and Mental Health.” She recommended preventative measures including vaccines as needed, blood

pressure control, checking on Body Mass Index (BMI), cancer screening, and bone density testing. She stressed the importance of a proper diet with emphasis on plant-based foods. Daily exercise of 30 minutes, five times weekly was recommended. Hobbies are important, with time for meditation/prayer and socializing with others. A question period followed.

EAST-8

Unit 1 Clarkston/Asotin/Pomeroy: The Unit 1 executive board celebrated the Unit of Highest Distinction Award the unit received in spite of a pandemic, mask-covered year!

Plans were made to send out notes of congratulations



NAEP IS HIRING

The National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) is seeking retired educators who would like to work with a team to proctor digitally based assessments on tablets with fourth- and eighth-grade students in schools. You must be available for online and in-person training during the month of January 2022 and able to proctor between January 24 and March 4, 2022, when work is available. NAEP offers paid training, hourly wages paid weekly, and mileage reimbursement for local driving. This is a part-time, temporary position.

Visit <http://www.WorkNAEP.com> and provide your contact information. We will send you a link to our online application this summer.

For more information about NAEP, please visit <https://nces.ed.gov/nationsreportcard>



HAVE QUESTIONS ABOUT THE JOB? EMAIL: NAEPRECRUIT@WESTAT.COM
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EOE, INCLUDING DISABILITY/VETERANS

WSSRA Around The State



Unit 1 Clarkston, Asotin, Pomeroy: The unit's executive board gathered for a meeting at a local restaurant. Pictured (*left to right*) are Bonnie Hill, Sheryl Andrews, Kay Andersen, Judie Hanley, Allison Hays.

to newly retired staff from Clarkston, Pomeroy, and Asotin.

The unit is looking for ideas from other units as to how they get new retirees involved by attending their unit meetings and programs. Please contact **Kay Andersen** via email, kaydavisandersen@gmail.com, with ideas you might be willing to share!

Plans were made to order notecards with the unit logo, to develop a strategy to donate to the PAC, and to give candy bars to active staff members to kick off the next school year in September.

Finally, the unit is planning a big kick-off the school year social with active and retired members all invited. It will be a fun way to begin the new post-pandemic year for all!

Unit 29 Benton-Franklin:

Unit 29 plans to start the 2021-22 year with the first luncheon meeting at the Pasco Red Lion in August. Programs for the luncheons are listed in the BFSRA directory, the newsletter and the web page (*see end of this article*).

E-8 (Benton/Franklin, Clarkston/Asotin/Pomeroy, and Walla Walla/Columbia SRA), led by Chair **Dottie Stevens**, met via Zoom. Reports were presented and dialogue among the members was appreciated.

Even though plans were in place to host an in-person May meeting at the Richland Community Center, the installation of officers and celebration of life were conducted via Zoom. **Sharon Hosley**, E-8 representative, installed the 2021-22

officers: President **Victoria Russell**, President-Elect/Program Chair **Liz Friedrich**, Secretary **Lew Edming**, Treasurer **Ardith Eakin**, and Immediate Past President **Dottie Stevens**. Remembered in the Celebration of Life were fellow teachers and friends who passed in 2020-21.

Special acknowledgments include: **Lola Van Campen**, Billings, Montana, who turned 104 this past January, and **Elaine Banks** became an honorary member of BFSRA/WSSRA; BFSRA Unit 29, under the leadership of **Victoria Russell**, received the Unit of Highest Distinction Award in recognition of achievement of WSSRA goals for 2020-21.

Delegates to the WSSRA state convention participated in the June 9 Delegate Assembly. At this meeting, the WSSRA ex-

ecutive board announced the cancellation of the upcoming on-site convention in Pasco, and WSSRA will schedule a Zoom awards/recognition event in its place.

In June, membership directories were distributed to local members via a drive-thru at the Kennewick First United Methodist Church. **Diana Baker**, chair, updated, and perfected the directory.

Current/future program information and news can be found on the web page <http://bfsraunit29.blogspot.com/> and in the monthly newsletter.

Emergency Broadband Discount Program



As part of the federal government's most recent economic stimulus package, Congress authorized an emergency broadband benefit – designed to subsidize internet expenses during the pandemic. The program reduces an applicant's internet bill by \$50 per month and will operate until the appropriation runs out or until the coronavirus emergency is declared over.

Seniors can qualify for the \$50 monthly benefit under certain circumstances. All Medicaid – not to be confused with Medicare – participants are eligible. Anyone qualifying for food assistance can apply. Working folks can qualify if they have lost income due to a layoff or furlough. Classified school employees who have been furloughed should investigate this program, as should retirees who have lost part-time work.

To apply you can contact your internet provider or call 833-511-0311 for a mail-in application. If eligibility is approved, participants can work with their internet provider for an emergency broadband benefit approved plan.

Additional information is available on the WSSRA webpage (wssra.org) under the AARP tab.



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michele@wssra.org

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Also, if your household receives more than one copy of the Journal in the mail each time, you can let Michele Hunter know if you prefer to receive just one copy per household.



The Journal

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Dedicated to preserving, protecting and improving the benefits of educational retirees.

The mission of WSSRA is to...

- develop, propose and implement action that will benefit all school retirees.
- propose legislation and legislative action that will enhance school retirees' lives.
- provide the support necessary to strengthen local units of WSSRA.
- foster involvement by school retirees in educational and community activities and organizations.
- communicate to local units the activities and priorities of NRTA, AARP and other entities that affect retired school personnel.
- represent all present and future Washington state school retirees, both classified and certificated.

Don't delay – ask today

You'll find inside...

AARP.....	14	Foundation	8	Retiree Resources.....	15
AMBA.....	15	Legislative News.....	4	Scholarships	10
Convention Update	6	Lobbyist Article	14	WSSR-PAC.....	5
Executive Director's message....	3	Membership	7	WSSRA Around The State.....	16
		President's message	2		