

The Journal

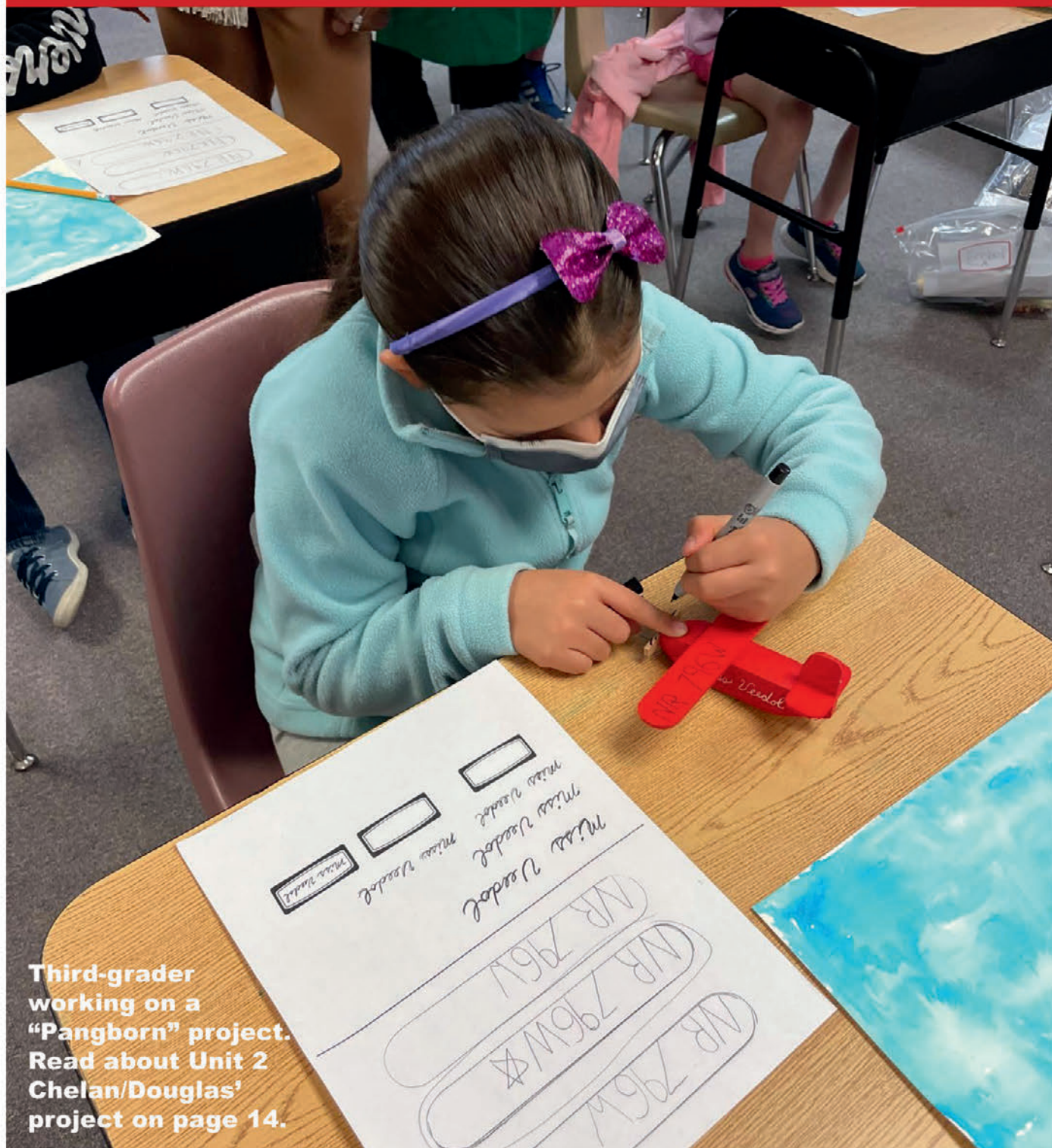
WASHINGTON STATE SCHOOL RETIREES' ASSOCIATION

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



JANUARY, FEBRUARY 2022

VOLUME 75, ISSUE NO. 3



Third-grader working on a "Pangborn" project. Read about Unit 2 Chelan/Douglas' project on page 14.

WSSRA At Work For You



A message from the president

Connecting With You



by Bruce Boyer, president

With COVID-19 and its related variants, we have been using Zoom and webinars for almost two years now. The Lacey office crew has been able to do several webinars with upper management people in various state agencies that have a direct impact on our retirement. If you haven't been able to watch them in real time, remember that these were also recorded and are available to view by going to the wssra.org website. For more information, see Executive Director Alan Burke's column on page 3.

Getting information out to our members in a timely manner has always been an important focus for us, but this year, with the Current News tab (online at wssra.org), Alan has been writing monthly articles about what our association has been working on that are important to all of us. Take the time to visit the site and let me know your thoughts.

A benefit to using Zoom is that I have been able to attend numerous state committee meetings and local unit meetings by using this format. This has allowed me to stay connected to WSSRA activities throughout the State of Washington, as well as keep me off the roads and avoid hotel expenses. The majority of local units are doing meetings via Zoom and it has allowed me to attend, "see", and communicate with members throughout our organization. I am always impressed by the dedication of so many of our members who help keep our organization indispensable to those still working and those that are retired. We are still doing some heavy lifting even during these times of COVID.

Another benefit to having adopted Zoom into our new world, is that it should allow people who want to serve as president or be on our state committees the opportunity to do so without committing to spending hours traveling throughout the state.

As you know, we are celebrating our 75th anniversary this year. It is hard to believe that after WWII, a few educators in the Spokane, Seattle, Vancouver, and Tacoma areas were able to join forces and start what is now the WSSRA. To help identify some of our milestones, we are putting together some articles that will start to appear beginning with this Journal issue. Most of them will deal with legislation that we either sponsored or co-sponsored that has benefited our state school retirees (and many other senior citizens). Let us know your thoughts about these articles as they become available through our Journal.

When you receive this January issue of the Journal, the legislature will be in session. This past fall, your Legislative Committee members received training from Peter Diedrick, our legislative director. The training helped us understand how ideas can be routed through state agencies and committees to become laws. One of the ways that

we can help maneuver bills through the legislature is by having you contact your legislators when an issue is in limbo. We have recently purchased a software program so all you have to do is type in your address and the program



*President,
continued on page 5*



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JOURNAL INFORMATION

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The WSSRA Journal Policy
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While every effort is made to check
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articles cannot be reviewed for
technical accuracy.

Material appearing in The
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of action by the board, councils,
committees and units, is presented
to promote the general welfare of
WSSRA members and otherwise
to fulfill the purposes of this as-
sociation, as defined in Article II
of the bylaws.

JOURNAL articles to:

Kristin Murphy, editor
editor@wssra.org

**Upcoming JOURNAL
article deadlines:**

February 5, 2022
for Mar./Apr. 2022 issue

April 5, 2022
for May/June 2022 issue

WSSRA At Work For You



A message from the executive director

COVID-19 and Getting Back to Normal



by Alan Burke, Ed.D., executive director

COVID has been with us for so long that it is almost becoming “normal” to mask up, avoid indoor meetings, postpone travel, and join as many Zoom meetings as individual schedules will allow. Of course, we all await a return to the “good old days”—whenever that occurs and whatever that means.

At WSSRA, we have adjusted to COVID-19 by pivoting to a new model of webinar/website service delivery, with a fair amount of success. First, in the spring and summer of 2020 we hosted a set of interviews with key officials in the Washington pension world. The series started with the Department of Retirement Systems (DRS), then the Health Care Authority (HCA)-PEBB, followed by the Office of State Actuary, and finished with the Washington State Investment Board. These are the four agencies that manage the implementation of legislatively directed pension policy in the state. By the way, those four interviews provide timely information, and recordings can be found on the WSSRA website, wssra.org (see “Archives” under the “Current News” tab).

Next, in the fall of 2020 we offered (repeated this past October 26) an HCA-PEBB webinar on the new United Healthcare (UHC) MA-PD Medicare supplement program that provides essentially the same coverage as Uniform Medical, but with a lower subscriber cost. The cost differential between Uniform and other PEBB supplement choices (Kaiser Permanente and Premiera in addition to UHC) has grown dramatically for 2022. Over 300 of our Medicare-aged members participated in the recent October 26 event, and appreciated our effort to provide a venue to hear the latest on healthcare costs and coverage options.

After that, we focused on reworking the series of unit-sponsored pre-retirement seminars that

have been offered throughout the state for a number of years. With DRS and the Health Care Authority limiting agency presenters to Zoom-only appearances in the late winter of 2020, we had little choice but to turn unit seminars into statewide webinars managed through the WSSRA office in Lacey.

And they have been successful. The winter (February) and spring (late April) 2021 webinars drew over 2,300 attendees. A repeat event on October 28 and November 4 had over 700 who logged-in. These, basic (100-level) workshops, featuring presentations by DRS, HCA-PEBB, Social Security, Medicare and VEBA, clearly have resonated with teachers and support personnel nearing retirement who are struggling with the challenges of educating kids in a hybrid—virtual and live—environment.

With ongoing guidance from the WSSRA Retirement Planning Committee, we plan to keep offering these webinars, at least until COVID-19 goes away and we can get back to face-to-face seminars. Virtual events are great, but they cannot fully replicate live seminars where agency personnel can address individual questions from smaller audiences. However, we anticipate for the remainder of 2021-22 “virtual” will be the name of the game, hence another round of DRS/HCA-PEBB webinar presentations is set for March 15, with SS/Medicare/VEBA to follow on March 22 (see page 5).

We have pivoted with COVID-19 to ensure that our members, and prospective members, get the information they need to make informed decisions about their pension and retiree healthcare options. The next question, of course, is how we will weave the advantages

Executive Director, continued on page 5

Legislative News



2022 Legislative Session Begins



by Peter Diedrick, legislative director

It's that time of year again. The Washington State Legislature convenes for its 2022 Legislative Session on January 10. This is scheduled to be a shorter 60-day session and adjourn on March 10. Bill filing opened December 6 and dozens of bills had been pre-filed by the time this publication went to print. Short sessions move rapidly, so timely lobbying by our political team and retirees will be critical to success.

A major inequity WSSRA is continuously working on is the Plan 1 COLA. The WSSRA advocacy team spent the summer and autumn ensuring Plan 1 COLA legislation moved out of the Select Committee on Pension Policy for consideration by the full legislature. In the end, what the pension committee supported was the billion-dollar plan to pay off the Plan 1 unfunded liabilities at a faster rate, and to recommend a 3% Plan 1 COLA up to \$110 per month. WSSRA is working to amend this bill, so it matches the Social Security Increase of 5.9%. We will be asking our Plan 1 membership to be in regular contact with legislators so we can pass this COLA bill.

WSSRA has sponsored several other important bills:

- **Retiree Medicare Benefits.** Every year the legislature must reauthorize the \$183 monthly Medicare Eligible Healthcare Benefit. Without the subsidy, all PEBB Medicare supplemental plans would increase by approximately \$183 per month, per person. WSSRA is working to ensure this item stays in the state operating budget.
- **Increasing the 867-hour work limit.** WSSRA is coordinating with the Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI) and school districts to shepherd emergency school staffing legislation through the legislature. OSPI

was keen on getting more retirees in schools as substitutes. They have asked for our help with the pension and retirement side of the legislation.

- **Plan 2 PEBB Benefits.** An inequity exists between Plans 2 and 3 PEBB benefits. Plan 3 employees are allowed to defer PEBB coverage more easily than Plan 2 employees. The result is some Plan 2 retirees unnecessarily being locked out of PEBB coverage. WSSRA has submitted a technical bill to equalize this retirement law.
- **10-Month COLA.** Teacher contracts and the retirement COLA schedule do not align well. Most teachers retire over the summer; unfortunately, a retiree must be separated from work by at least 12 months on July 1 to earn a retiree COLA. School employees retiring in July or August have a 22 or 23 month wait to receive a retirement COLA. This is another technical bill that will help many future retirees.

This legislative session will move fast. If the issues mentioned above are important to you or your former colleagues, please contact your legislators to support them. If you have not done so, please sign up for WSSRA legislative action alerts at the WSSRA webpage (wssra.org). There is also a weekly legislative report and short podcast – usually between two and five minutes – available on our webpage under the legislative tab. Thanks for your work. You will be hearing from us soon.

WASHINGTON STATE LEGISLATURE

**TOLL-FREE HOTLINE:
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**Visit WSSRA.ORG
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THINKING ABOUT RETIREMENT?

Pre-Retirement Webinars

Sponsored by WSSRA



Certificated and Classified Employees:

If you are within 1–5 years of retirement, you will want to attend these webinars to learn about retirement plans, medical/dental options, sick leave buyout, Social Security options, and Medicare.

Tuesday, March 15, 2022

5:00 p.m. to 6:30 p.m.

via Zoom

Webinar presentations:

- WA State Department of Retirement Systems (DRS) – Plan 2 and Plan 3
- WA State Health Care Authority – PEBB (medical/dental options)

Tuesday, March 22, 2022

5:00 p.m. to 6:30 p.m.

via Zoom

Webinar presentations:

- Social Security
- Medicare
- VEBA – sick leave buyout options

To Register for the Webinars, please email: tara@wssra.org

An agenda with Zoom instructions will be sent out before each event.

President, continued from page 2

will automatically send your message to your state representatives and senator. Emails are sent out from our Lacey office to let you know when you need to contact your legislator. The good news is that Peter often has a template available for you to use when contacting your legislator. When legislators receive a number of contacts regarding a specific issue, they do notice.

However, we can't ask you for your help if we don't have your email address. So, if you haven't given us your email address, please do so now. An easy way for you to accomplish this is to email Michele Hunter, our membership coordinator at: michele@wssra.org. (We don't give out email addresses to any outside organization except our partner AMBA. However, if you don't want to receive AMBA emails, let Michele know and she'll make sure that you're off the AMBA list.) Let's see what we can accomplish working together this legislative session.

Executive Director, continued from page 3

of Zoom events with the clear need to get people in the same room for key presentations. With Zoom, attendees can join from the comfort of their living room or classroom without encountering transportation hassles. That is a good thing.

However, live events featuring people-talking-to-people generally work better—just like live instruction is normally much better for most kids than remote teaching. The trick for WSSRA will be to combine both to make sure that we reach as many folks as we can while offering the opportunity to meet a presenter at an in-person event. All of that has yet to be determined but whatever set of experiences we offer will be designed in order to get the right information to the maximum number of retirees and those planning retirement.

Your Health Matters



Don't Fall For It



by Ken Harvey, Unit 22 Sno-Isle

I would guess the majority of those reading this article keep some type of calendar. Most likely, it has appointments and other dates to remember. I would wager, though, that you don't have "take a fall" marked on any of your upcoming dates. That's the thing about accidents, we don't plan them but we can take steps to reduce the chances of having one, especially when it comes to falls.

The statistics are a warning to take steps to lessen the chance of taking a fall. According to the CDC, each year, three million older people are treated in emergency departments for fall-related injuries. In addition, over 800,000 patients each year are hospitalized because of injuries caused by falling, often involving head injuries or hip fractures.

Fall prevention includes a number of things to consider, such as looking for tripping hazards, eyesight, footwear, medications, and hearing loss.

There are tons of checklists available both on the internet and in print. The CDC and AARP have good ones but a Google search of "fall prevention checklist" turns up lots of results. A home checklist allows you to look at where you live with a fresh set of eyes. Each list is unique but there seems to be some common items, including:

- Remove small throw rugs or use double-sided tape to keep rugs from slipping.
- Keep items you use often in cabinets that you can reach easily without using a step stool.
- Move things you can trip over from stairs and places where you walk.
- If a grandchild visits, take time afterwards to go around and look for things left on the floor.

Speaking of eyes and eyesight, be sure to have yours checked regularly. Poor eyesight is certainly a factor in a surprising number of falls. In addition, an eye exam can help identify other health issues such as diabetes.

So you've fallen in love with a new pair of beautiful shoes. Make sure that is the only fall you take. Suggestions for shoe safety include avoiding high heels and choosing soles that prevent slipping and have a lot of contact with the ground. Also, avoid a loose fit. Look for shoes that have laces, Velcro,

or a zipper. Try shoes on in the store but also walk around your house when you get home to make sure they support good balance. A specialty shoe store can help in choosing the right shoe for foot-related issues, such as neuropathy. Shoes with the toecap curving up are a good choice to prevent stumbling. One last word on footwear - over 50% of those that reported a fall at home were wearing socks or slippers.

Hearing loss can make a fall more likely. Research by the National Institute on Deafness and Other Communication Disorders found that for every 25 dB of hearing loss, the chances of a fall go up incrementally. Hearing

loss can affect balance especially for people diagnosed with tinnitus or Meniere's disease. Hearing loss causes the brain to work harder to understand and might not work as hard helping you pay attention to your steps. There are many exercises that help with balance.

No matter what your age, falls are not fun and can change the trajectory of your life. Take care.



Keeping You Informed

Increases in Social Security and Medicare

Social Security Checks will increase in 2022, but so will Medicare Fees

by Alan Burke, Ed.D., executive director

In January, most Social Security recipients will receive their largest Cost-of-Living-Adjustment (5.9%) since 1983.

That's the good news. The bad news is that prices are going up even faster than 5.9%. In addition, Medicare rates will increase 14.5% – the largest in history – in 2022. In most cases, Social Security benefits will cover the Medicare increase, but the 5.9% certainly will be much less than that once Medicare is subtracted

As for Medicare, in 2021, 93% of recipients paid \$148.50 per month for mandatory Part B services

with top earners paying considerably more than that. For 2022, the base number rises to \$170.10. (Quick math: If you are receiving \$1,000 per month in Social Security in 2021, your automatic deposit will increase to \$1,059 in 2022—or a \$59 raise. At the same time the mandatory Part B Medicare fee will go up \$21.60 per month.)

So, are retirees better off in 2022 with the 5.9% Social Security bump? You bet, but the Medicare rate increase will take a good chunk of that away.

All the more reason to make sure that all state-based pensions—Plans 1, 2, and 3—get an automatic COLA every year.



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WSSRA - Washington State School Retirees' Association



WSSR-PAC News



WSSR-PAC: 2021 Wall of Support



by Lora Brabant, WSSR-PAC treasurer

Let's give a round of applause to our generous supporters for 2021! Listed below are the contributors who gave to the WSSR-PAC so that our voice is heard in Olympia, letting our legislators know that we do care about the promises made while we were serving our community and our children. We gave a record amount of \$26,500 to prospective candidates in the 2020 election season! Let's keep the momentum in building up our WSSR-PAC so we can really make an impact. If every member of WSSRA gave at least \$25 in 2022 we would have over \$445,000.....that would definitely make a impact to make sure your voice is heard!

Want your name on the 2022 Wall of Support? Simply contribute to WSSR-PAC and let us know that your name can be published. You can either contribute by credit card on WSSR-PAC.org and hit the "Donate Now" button or you can use the form on this page and send the completed form and a check to: WSSR-PAC Treasurer, Lora Brabant, 125 West 11th Street, Port Angeles, WA 98362.

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Can we publish your name on the WSSR-PAC
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Legislative History



by Bruce Boyer, WSSRA president

As WSSRA President, one goal for my year in office is to highlight our organization's past legislative victories. The next few editions of *The Journal* will look at some of the major political victories we've had over the past 75 years. I'll start by exploring the important subsidy we get on our retiree health insurance.

A retiree benefit we lobby for every session is the Medicare Eligible Healthcare Benefit. That benefit keeps our healthcare affordable by having the state pay approximately 50% of our retiree healthcare premiums. Is the state not contractually obligated to pay that? No. We won that benefit in 1993 and were able to slowly increase it to the \$183 per month, per person it is today.

In 1992, there was no Medicare Eligible Healthcare Benefit. WSSRA lobbyists promoted a policy proposal providing a medical insurance premium subsidy to retirees over the age of 65. The centerpiece of the idea was to allow the state to backfill the subsidy expense by participating in a federal program to reimburse employers for providing retiree prescription drug coverage.

WSSRA found an eager sponsor in state budget leader, State Representative Gary Locke (who later became Governor, U.S. Commerce Secretary, and a U.S. Ambassador). The medical insurance bill passed the legislature unanimously in 1993 and was signed by Governor Mike Lowry. The legislation provided an insurance premium subsidy of 50% up to \$33 per month.

Times have changed. The subsidy is now 50% up to \$183 per month, per person. The legislative cost is \$150 million per year, for which the state receives \$20 million back from the federal government. The state could find substantial savings by eliminating the program – which is why we fight so hard to keep it.

I found this history interesting, and I hope you did as well. I also hope it makes you feel inspired to keep fighting for those medical benefits, because our relationships with legislators is what determines whether we keep them.

Supporting Future Educators



WSSR Foundation: Almost Time for Baskets and Silent Auction Items



by Dottie Stevens, WSSR Foundation president

The annual WSSRA convention is coming, time to think about gathering the baskets and silent auction items. The more the better, why not two smaller baskets (that fit in the car). Of course, giant ones do make a splash, especially for the silent auction. This is a highlight of the convention and a lot of fun (and, we do know how to have fun!).

Many thanks to Foundation contributors for direct donations to the WSSR Foundation. Your giving goes toward the philanthropic work of supporting educators and a public way of recognizing members. We are fortunate to have the 501(c)(3) WSSR Foundation. It takes considerable management from Executive Director Dr. Alan Burke and Debbie Burgess, our

fiscal, personnel, technology officer. A board of five elected members also manages the Foundation. WSSRA President Bruce Boyer also attends to advise the board. Board members are active leaders in their units and coordinating councils. I encourage you to include us in your reports to units and council meetings. We are here to serve you.

As you set-up your charitable tax-free donations, remember we have the 501(c)(3) designation. See the article on Required Minimum Distribution (see page 11). If you are turning 72, you must convert a percentage of your tax-sheltered savings to taxable assets or donate to a 501(c)(3) charity. You may need a financial advisor to assist with this conversion of investments to charitable tax-free donations.

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☐ 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 \$ _____ # _____
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WSSR Foundation

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, any amount (up to \$100,000) given directly to a charity is tax free, and any amount passed on to the retiree is taxable. 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 higher 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.

Foundation Contributors

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Mona Stacy - donation and in memory of L. Donovan Stacy

Doris Troxel Trust - donation

Ann Varkados - in honor of Despo Varkados

Chelan/Douglas SRA - in memory of Laura Jane Adams, Leroy Jones

Lewis County SRA - in memory of David "Tony" Spencer, Ruth Herren, Vickie O'Connell

Renton/South King RSEA - in memory of Harley Brumbaugh, Karla Hansen, Kathleen Canter

Skagit-Isle-San Juan REA - in memory of Beverly Barker, Beverly Wagner, Jon Carothers, Vernon Greenstreet, Vincenne Malcolm, Wanda Brendle

Yakima County SRA - donation

Membership: Strength In Numbers

Getting Back To What We Do



by Don Parks, state membership committee chair

We all had hoped to be done with COVID-19 related restrictions by now. Instead, guidelines continue to change and things have still not returned to what might be called "normal." Although this has made membership building frustrating, there are some bright spots. For instance, the annual blind-mailer was recently delivered to 29,000 non-member retirees. Ninety new member applications have come in as a result of that effort.

Over 1,000 active educators participated in the two pre-retirement webinars WSSRA held in October and November. They were mostly non-members. Membership Coordinator Michele Hunter has noticed an uptick in interest from that group. They all received an electronic membership form, a new tool, included in the follow-up survey. AMBA will also follow-up, offering their suite of member-only insurance options. George Smith, at AMBA, is available to answer insurance questions.

I am hearing of local units who are getting back to scheduling on-site building staff meetings in order to distribute mini-grants and discuss WSSRA membership. We hope these in-person presentations can become more frequent. Recently, I personally presented about WSSRA/BFSRA to the leadership team at one of the tri-city school districts via Zoom. The latter is under the heading of whatever works!

At the April Council of Committee Chairs meeting, still scheduled for Yakima, we will hope to hear how locals are finding ways to keep building membership. I'll be inviting George Smith to that meeting, in order for the Membership Committee to hear directly how AMBA is working steadily to help WSSRA build membership.

WSSRA membership numbers, as of December 1, stood at 17,167 members (as compared with 17,101 on November 1 and



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 _____

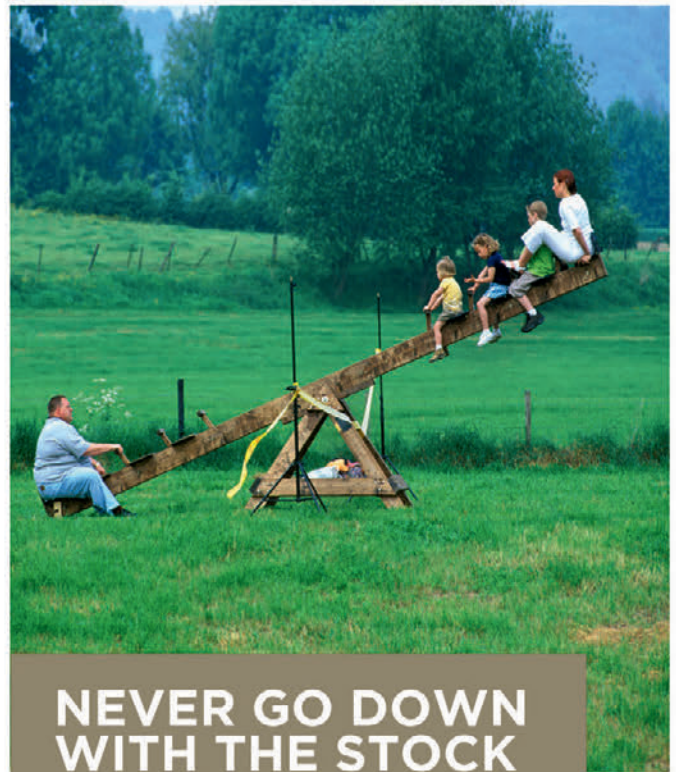
01-Clarkston/Asotin/ Pomeroy	Pacific	11-Lewis County	19-Renton-South King	25-Spokane	31-Walla Walla- Columbia
02-Chelan/Douglas	06-Southwest King	12-Lower Columbia	20-Seattle	27-Pierce County	32-Whatcom County
03-Clallam County	07-Jefferson County	14-Mason County	21-Skagit/Island/San Juan	28-Thurston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

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

17,724 one year ago). (The COVID-19 has had its effect in a number of ways.) We have 3,749 actives but lost 41 deceased. There are 159 members pending, a direct result of the recent blind mailing, new retirees, and the consistent work by AMBA.

Only 7,466 members have their email address on file with WSSRA, representing less than half of our membership. With the legislative session upon us and COLA issues on the line, we need to increase that in order to lobby our legislators more effectively. Everyone is encouraged to attend to this important detail. It will be much appreciated if that number can be substantially boosted.

Happy New year to everyone--hopefully at some point without COVID-19.



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WASHINGTON STATE SCHOOL RETIRES ASSOCIATION



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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



The Pangborn Project



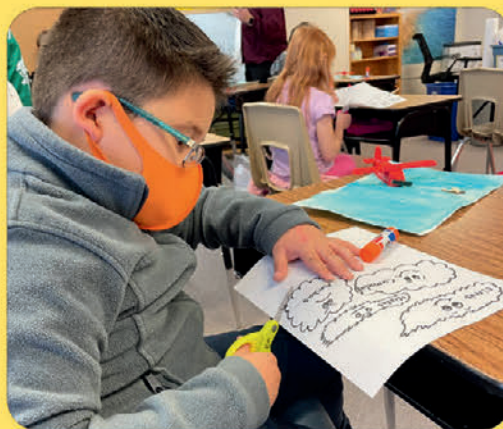
by Sue Kane, Unit 2 Chelan/Douglas SRA

SHAZAM!!! We opened our eyes and there stood Clyde Pangborn! So began the innovative 3-hour workshop that the Chelan-Douglas SRA presented to third-graders in the Eastmont School District.

In 1931, Clyde Pangborn, a North Central Washington native, and Hugh Herndon made the first non-stop trans-pacific flight from Misawa, Japan to East Wenatchee, Washington. The plane they flew was a Bellanca named "Miss Veedol." Pangborn guided the plane to a nearly perfect belly landing at East Wenatchee's Fancher Field on October 5, 1931.

The flight won the international award for the greatest achievement in flight that year. The flight also provided the link between Misawa and the Wenatchee Valley, which developed into a sister city relationship that is ongoing today.

Leading up to the 90th anniversary of this event, CDSRA member, Deb Lacy, proposed that we revisit our past activities with the Pangborn Project and develop and present a S.T.E.A.M (Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts, and Math) workshop based on the Pangborn event. After the concept was approved by the Eastmont School District, the CDSRA board designated money for the project and Deb and Marie Buckner started to work. They designed a 3-hour "Pangborn Project" workshop that the retired educators could present in the third grade classrooms.



Once the program was developed and approved, I contacted the schools and developed a calendar of when the program would be presented and which volunteers could assist in each classroom. Six "team leaders" presented the workshop to all the students and additional volunteers came in to help. A training meeting was held for the volunteers so they understood their assignments. This reunion of retirees was a highlight for some. Before leaving the training, the volunteers also helped load over 400 materials packets, one for each child. Another set of volunteers donated many hours to making the wooden airplane replicas, which needed to be cut, assembled, and painted. In addition to the training, all volunteers in the classroom had to submit a copy of their COVID-19 vaccine record and complete a background check.

Students enjoyed the project variety. They saw actual footage of the Pangborn landing at Fancher Heights, where some of them now live! They learned about clouds (science & art) and its effects on planes and pilots. Students were given a wooden replica of "Miss Veedol" made by community members. They made complicated paper "Miss Veedol" airplanes and experimented with flying them (engineering). They also calculated the distance of their flights (math). One of the highlights of the event was when "Clyde Pangborn" suddenly appeared in the room and told them more details about the transpacific flight! (Arts – Actor John Schultz was wonderful!)



Every classroom was visited by a team of 4-6 retiree volunteers. By the end of the project, CDSRA provided over 30 volunteers and worked with 420+ students.

The project was a huge success as affirmed by principals, teachers, students, and even parents. (We later found out that parents were talking about the project on Facebook and at PTO meetings!). Chelan-Douglas received wonderful "Thank You" notes and pictures from the students, which brought smiles to those who received them. What a great ending to the Pangborn Story!

Pictured: Actor John Shultz as "Clyde Pangborn." Sue Kane and Denise Perkins dressed as aviators. Deb Lacy and Marie Buckner teach a class of third graders about the historic transpacific flight. Third grade students from Eastmont School District working on "Pangborn" lesson projects.



Part-time Employment Opportunities

by Alan Burke, Ed.D., executive director

As we move into 2022 and are still dealing with COVID-19 concerns that force us to stay close to home, many retirees are considering part-time employment to fill gaps in their schedule and earn some money.

Here are three opportunities:

Clear Risk Solutions, one of two insurance training pools used by school districts in Washington, has openings for Right Response trainers who offer sessions in nearly 200 school districts across the state. Right Response is a principle-based, de-escalation training for classroom teachers and support staff. Learn more online at rightresponse.org. Currently, there are several immediate openings for trainers and presenters who would be interested in very flexible part-time work earning \$300 per training plus mileage, prep time, and travel. Clear Risk also covers initial training and certification expenses. For more information, contact Lori Sieverkropp, Assistant Director of Risk Management, at lsieverkropp@chooseclear.com.

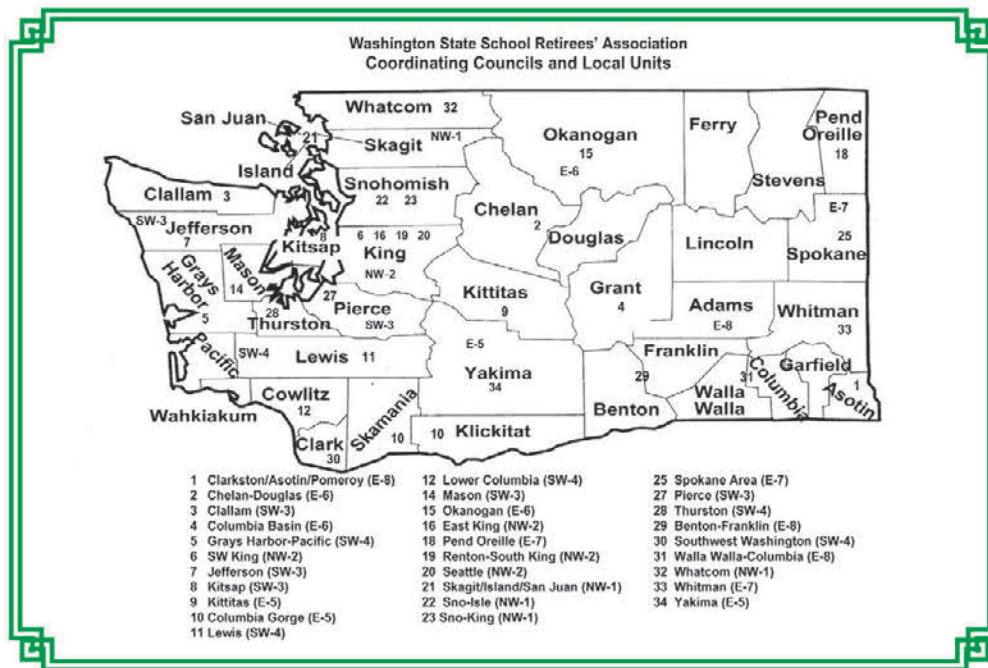
NAEP. The National Assessment of Educational Progress is seeking proctors for 2022 assessments. NAEP, known as the nation's report card, and tests randomly selected students in several grade bands. Testing in 2021 was interrupted by COVID-19, but 2022 plans are in place. NAEP offers paid training, hourly wages, and mileage reimbursements for local travel. Visit WorkNAEP.com for more information.

Subbing. Just about every district in Washington is experiencing a substitute teacher shortage. For teachers, para-professionals, bus drivers, food service workers, and almost every other job classification, the need is there. In response, many districts have raised sub rates (some up to \$200/day for teachers), and others are considering doing the same. TRS Plan 2 and 3 retirees are not under the 867-hour maximum for itinerant subbing, so can work as much as they want. Please consider helping out—teachers are quickly burning out as they frequently are asked to cover classes during planning periods.

WSSRA Around The State

What's happening in...

From the Coordinating Councils and Local Units



NORTHWEST-1

Unit 21 Skagit/Island/San Juan:

The unit's fall 2021 mini-grant event was greeted by 51 applications. STEM program materials, leather and wood for making Native American rattles, and tools for working in a green house were just some of the items the unit supported in local schools. Eight school districts plus ESD 189 benefitted with staff members representing 20 different buildings receiving a grant. **Bruce Boyer**, WSSRA state president and **Barbara Robinson**, SISJ Unit 21 co-president attended three of those district's school board meetings to award min-grant funds. As a result of meeting the superintendents at these board meetings, the unit has new members.

The unit's board is excited to offer the new Trade School/Tech School \$1,500 Scholarship for 2022/2023 school year. The unit is conducting a pilot program this first year with the Mount Vernon School District. The application became available to Mount Vernon seniors on December 6. A copy in Spanish and English is included. This scholarship will be offered on a one-year basis with the option of applying and receiving funding for a second year.

At this time, the unit board is gathering in small groups for special occasions such as collating a newsletter for mailing, preparing mini-grant applications, and reading/sorting the recipients of mini-grants. Members are holding board meetings via Zoom, so that

more can attend and feel safe doing so. The board is looking forward to 2022 with the hope that a unit general meeting can be held that all will want to attend in person.

The legislative team has taken advantage of the WSSRA seminar training offered and is using the buddy letters to make contact with local legislators. The team is ready to visit Olympia (if possible) or be part of the Zoom contact system used last year. Many have also participated in the legislator's coffee hours and town halls. When the 2022 legislative session begins, the team is ready to promote WSSRA goals and protect benefits.

Unit 22 Sno-Isle:

Members of Sno-Isle 22 were finally able to get together after nearly two years without an in-person meeting. It was a festive gathering on December 6 with 35 people attending. The catered lunch was delicious and attendees were entertained with holiday songs by Kamiak High School Mixed Barbershop Quartet. Toys were collected to donate to Everett's Christmas House. Most of all, members enjoyed seeing each other and chatting.

Also in December, Sno-Isle distributed 32 stipends to local schools worth over \$12,000. Schools have been so impacted these last several years that members were happy to help.

Unit 23 Sno-King:

The unit board continues to meet via Zoom. The November brunch meeting was cancelled due to venue restrictions. SKSR calendars were mailed to members who wanted one. Just after Thanksgiving, the unit mailed 332 Starbucks cards to the unit's active members recognizing and thanking them for what they do for the children in their classrooms, schools, and school district. **Jim Siscel** and **Cathy Webb** took care of the folding and stuffing for this mailing.

The unit donated \$500 to the Shoreline School District PTA Council's, "The Works" pro-

WSSRA Around The State

gram, which provides clothing for children in need. The unit donated \$500 to the Northshore School Foundation to be used for homeless students.

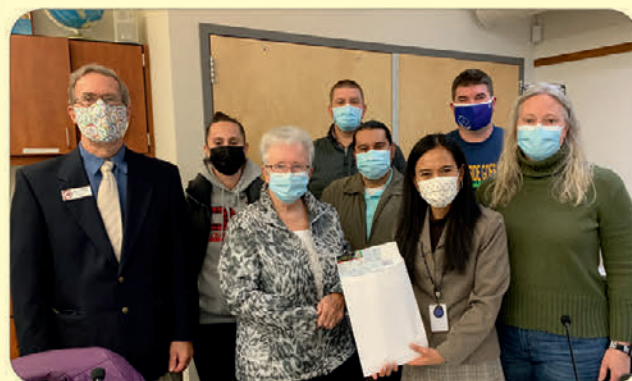
Karen McElliot, grant coordinator, and her committee approved 22 grants involving twelve schools for a total of \$6,392. Unit Treasurer **Tom Hawkins** sent a combined check to each of our three school districts who then disburse the money to the individual teachers. A framed certificate was sent to each receiving teacher indicating how their grant was used.

Unit 32 Whatcom County: The WCSRA board meets the first Friday of each month. On November 18, the Washington State American Legion commander gave members a great presentation. It was informative and interesting and members attending enjoyed it.

On January 20, 2022, members will have the privilege of hearing from State Architectural Historian Michael Houser, on a journey of historic barns throughout Whatcom County. Any WSSRA member who would also like to attend, please contact us at wcsra32@gmail.com to obtain Zoom login information.

Mini-grants have been distributed to those who are members and submitted an application. The board was disappointed in the number of applicants and may think about offering mini-grants again later. Unit 32 gave \$500 to each of the seven Whatcom County Food Bank locations for holiday needs. In December, the board delivered checks to four Family School Service programs in Whatcom County.

As with other WSSRA units, Unit 32 needs members to participate and continue to work towards that goal.



Unit 21 Skagit/Island/San Juan: WSSRA President Bruce Boyer (left) and Unit Co-President Barbara Robinson (3rd from left) present a check for almost \$2,400 in mini-grant funds at a Sedro Woolley School District board meeting. Thirteen district staff members were awarded mini-grants by the unit. Pictured are members of the Sedro Woolley school board and Superintendent Dr. Miriam Mickeson.

NORTHWEST-2

Unit 6 Southwest King: SWKSRA has begun reading mini-grant applications from teachers and para-professionals from three local districts. This year, the unit granted up to \$600 for members and up to \$500 for non-members.

Many of the requests were to purchase items to keep track of COVID-19 related school mandates that make teaching much more complicated than it was for most retired members of WSSRA.

In January, the unit will send a newsletter celebrating that a COLA has finally made it into Governor Inslee's budget. Let's hope that the legislators pass a bill giving us a COLA!



Unit 22 Sno-Isle: Unit members gathered for a holiday luncheon in December. Entertainment was provided by the Kamiak High School choir (left). Unit members brought unwrapped, new toys to be donated to Everett's Christmas House charity.

On February 12 at 7:00pm, the unit will gather via Zoom to hear Humanities Washington speaker, Ross Reynolds, KUOW's executive producer for community engagement whose topic will be, "How Audio Technology Changed the World." The January newsletter will include the Zoom information for members to participate.

WSSRA Around The State

Unit 16 East King:

East-King's executive board has been meeting about once a month and sending out newsletters every two months. The unit board wants members to know that they are thinking of them and want to keep them informed and, hopefully, encourage more to get involved (in the Legislative Buddies project, for example).

Because the unit has not held in-person luncheons, the executive board decided to use extra funds to help active

teachers and their students through the unit's mini-grant program.

The mini-grant committee, consisting of **Shirlee Hall**, **Jeani Goodrich**, and **Pat Jovag**, met and chose 27 applications to fund with up to \$300 each. Seven schools will be adding a variety of books to their libraries and seven teachers will be able to meet special needs by adding to their classroom libraries. Three physical education teachers will be adding equipment for student use. One science teacher

will have new equipment for marine investigations and another will acquire a skeleton for anatomy study. Two grants will benefit music students. Two teachers needed equipment to organize materials, one for an art classroom and the other for a math lab.

The pandemic has negatively affected many young people. One math teacher will help her pupils by providing them with an online problem-solving program. Another will use an online class to aid students with social/emotional issues.

A second grade teacher will use "feeling words" stuffed animals for the same purpose. Another school will use the funds to purchase clothing for students in need.

Unit 19 Renton/South King:

In September, some unit members participated in the 74th WSSRA convention via Zoom. On October 5, 2021, Unit 19 members had a field trip to the Neely Mansion in Auburn where they were given a tour by unit members (who also serve as docents) **Eileen Yamada Lamphere** and **Linda Van Nest**. This historical mansion has a furoba bathhouse, which was recently restored. After the tour, refreshments were served to 25 members. The November unit meeting was held via Zoom with University of Washington professor and film historian Lance Rhoades. Unit 19 members spent an afternoon with Mary Poppins and author P.L. Travers.

Joan Morgenstern and her mini-grant committee: **Judy Dotson**, **Sue Perez**, and **Tina Underdahl** are preparing to give school employees at Kent Meridian High School their mini-grants at the Kent school board meeting on January 12, 2022. Also, a scholarship will be given to a student-teacher at a later date. Unit 19 has a new liaison, **Eileen Yamada Lamphere**, who is helping at Kent Meridian and can answer questions about WSSRA and

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WSSRA Around The State

the Renton/South King unit. Unit 19 will not hold meetings in January and February. On March 1, 2022, the unit will meet via Zoom. The scheduled speaker is Jeanie McKay and her topic will be, "Octane for the Brain," about brain research and healthy living.

Unit 20 Seattle:

Like so many other WSSRA units, SSRA has accustomed themselves to Zoom-format meetings as a new normal. On November 12, seven of Unit 20's board members attended the first 2021-2022 meeting of Northwest II's Coordinating Council via Zoom. It is always a great sharing time with King County colleagues. During the meeting, each of the four King County area units shared what they were able (and, not able) to accomplish during this prolonged COVID-19 pandemic. Sharing experiences can be a cathartic experience for attendees. WSSRA Executive Director **Alan Burke** provided WSSRA highlights and goals for this new school year and legislative session.

On November 22, the Seattle unit held another board meeting via Zoom. President **Pat Cygan** welcomed new SSRA Board Member **Julee Neuhart** to serve as the unit's historian and chair of the retirement seminar planning committee. **Ron and Pat Cygan** discussed their progress in preparing a new members' directory for the unit; it

should be printed and mailed shortly—thanks mostly to the materials WSSRA's Membership Coordinator **Michele Hunter** provided.

In recent months, **Patricia MacGowan** has diligently worked with several of Seattle's high school counselors and the unit's scholarship committee to select two high school graduates to receive SSRA's **Lynn Fuller** Scholarships. Two students will be awarded the **Phil Konkell** Scholarship (\$2,500 each). After reading all 22 applications for SSRA's six \$5,000 Teacher Intern Grants, **Patricia MacGowan's** committee selected six "winners" from City University, the University of Washington, and U.W.-Bothell.

Edith Ruby and **Mary Wallon**, co-chairs of SSRA's legislative committee, updated SSRA's board on their efforts--alongside those of **Patricia MacGowan's** and other WSSRA Legislative Committee lobbyists--to improve retirees' pensions and healthcare benefits through the state legislature.

SOUTHWEST-3

Unit 3 Clallam County:

Clallam County School Retirees' Association (CCSRA) met at Joshua's Restaurant in Port Angeles, on October 19, with some people attending



Unit 19 Renton/South King: Joan Morgenstern presents a mini grant check to Randy Heath, Interim Chief School Operations and Academic Support Officer and Christine Avery, Executive Director of Learning Improvement of Kent School District. Funds will be used by staff at Kent Meridian High School in Kent, Washington to purchase a variety of supplies within several departments. Also pictured Unit 19 members (left to right) Eileen Yamada Lamphere, Kent Meridian liaison, Co-Secretary Tina Underdahl, and Co-President Sue Perez.

in person and some attending via Zoom. The guest speakers were Tanner Zahrt, the new Port Angeles High School principal, and Marty Brewer, superintendent of Port Angeles School District.

The November 16 meeting was a hybrid. The presenter was Emily Dexter of Port Angeles Food Bank, who presented via Zoom. She invited CCSRA members to contact her if they would like to schedule an in person tour of the facility. Members voted to donate \$250 to the food bank after her presentation.

December 21 was a Christmas party, which included singing, led by **Beverly Brown**. There was no executive board meeting, but a few people met after

the luncheon to read mini-grant applications and choose recipients.

Continuing projects for the unit are collecting new and gently used books for three organizations in Clallam County and collecting school supplies for a Stuff the Bus drive that will be in August. Monetary donations are also welcome. Several members have been involved with tutoring students. Members can collect box tops and submit them on their own through the Box Tops for Education Program.

Members **Lora Brabant** and **Gary Gleason** were both recently honored with community service awards from AARP. Congratulations to them.

WSSRA Around The State



Unit 14 Mason County:

(above) Unit President Eileen Perfrement presents a mini-grant certificate to Tess Nix (left), a history teacher at North Mason High School. Ms. Nix will use the grant for preservation of artifacts from World Wars I and II.

(pictured at right) Megan Pierce, teacher at Grapeview School District, receives a mini-grant certificate.



Unit 8 Kitsap County:

Kitsap County School Retirees had a great meeting in September and enjoyed gathering in-person. Luncheon plans for 2021-22 were mailed to unit members recently. If you did not get one and would like one mailed to you, please contact **Patty Marz** at peppermintpatty@comcast.net. Members are encouraged to join in the luncheons, if possible.

Recently, unit members took a tour of the Admiral Theater and saw all the improvements that have been made. It was a great tour and unit members learned lots about a local venue that can be used for meetings, dinners,

luncheons, musical engagements, and class reunions. It was a wonderful tour and nice to keep up-to-date on options available in Kitsap County. Members also collected and donated mittens, gloves, hats, and scarves to Kitsap County Resource Center to help keep people warm this winter.

In October, WSSRA Legislative Director **Peter Diedrick** spoke to the unit gathering about the Legislative Committee. He stressed the importance of every member being involved this year to help improve WSSRA's status with the legislature. They are integral to retiree's pensions, health care costs, and insurance options. Please

contact **Craig Miller** or **Doris Bucher** with any questions you might have on getting involved with the legislative process.

In December, unit members gathered at Ambrosia for the annual Christmas luncheon. As part of the event, the unit collected unwrapped toys for Kitsap Resource Center to help those in need with Christmas gifts.

The unit is hoping to have a very active year and would love to see all who can come to unit luncheons or activities. Thanks for everything you do.

Unit 14 Mason County:

With the slow-down of the COVID-19 incidents in Mason County, the membership decided to hold a hybrid meeting in November. El Puerto de Angeles restaurant's meeting room was used to spread out. The restaurant also has good COVID-19 safety protocols. Some in attendance also brought laptops so those on Zoom could participate. The meeting featured two guest speakers - Paul Wieneke, superintendent of Southside School District, and Audrey O'Connor, a public health nurse (who was unable to present at the previous meeting due to her COVID-19 public health responsibilities). Audrey presented COVID-19 statistics in the county and protocols for the schools. The members appreciated her in-

formative presentation and advice. Paul complemented Audrey's presentation on school protocols by explaining how they were implemented in his district. He also talked about measures they were taking to help students adjust to full time return-to-school and those who fell behind with online learning.

The December 7, 2021 meeting included a candidate for State Senate, Julianne Gale. Members were able to explain concerns of legislation affecting seniors, particularly the cost of living adjustment in pension plans. **Bonnie Rice**, unit secretary and grants chair, presented the ten projects the grants committee chose to fund out of 31 applications. Applications were received from six of the seven districts in Mason County, and each received at least one grant.

Teachers were honored at school board meetings in Grapeview School District and Hood Canal School District, at faculty meetings at Hawkins Middle School in North Mason School District, Mary M. Knight School, and Southside School District, and in person at Shelton High, North Mason High, and James A. Taylor Alternative School in North Mason. The teachers and administrators were all very appreciative of the awards and pictures were taken. Unit President **Eileen Perfrement**, Unit Treasurer **Tedd Davis**, and Unit Secretary **Bonnie Rice** made the

presentations. WSSRA Executive Director **Alan Burke** joined the faculty meetings to speak about WSSRA and encourage membership.

The January 4, 2022 meeting included legislators just prior to the legislative session. Unit members had the opportunity to express their concerns for cost of living adjustments and other legislation effecting seniors in particular.

The unit met the goal of presenting grant awards in-person to all recipients either at school board meetings, faculty meetings, or in a few cases, personally at the school.

Unit 27 Pierce County:

A highlight for Pierce County was its first in-person gathering! On December 9, the holiday celebration luncheon included a choice of delicious entrees and dessert. The historical presentation of Tacoma's candy company, Brown and Haley maker of Almond Roca since 1912, was enjoyed by the largest attendance yet. Kathi Rennaker personalized the history of Tacoma and its famous candy maker and delighted members with free samples. LaQuinta Inn's lovely banquet room and holiday decorations added to the festive atmosphere.

Another cause for celebration is the recent election of **Bob Duke** as Unit 27 president-elect. This year, **Bob** con-

tinues to serve WSSRA as past-president and will lead PCSRA as president next year. Pierce County welcomes **Bob's** skillful leadership.

The community service project was successful again this December. Socks were collected and donated to Tacoma's Nativity House homeless population.

SOUTHWEST-4

Unit 5 Grays Harbor-Pacific: Unit 5 hasn't had a "normal" meeting for about a year. The unit has held executive board meetings and keeps in contact with all members through correspondence with cards.

Nevertheless, the unit continues to do the community service projects that have been happening since before the pandemic. One of those projects is helping the Ocosta Schools with weekend meals. The unit donates \$75 to their lunch program monthly for weekend meals, called "Lunch Buddies."

Individuals in Unit 5 have favorite ways of helping local children - some take books, coloring books, and crayons to the Catholic Community Services. This organization has case workers who go to homes where the children need help. Unit members also take these same items to the

Remembering



Joyce Williams

WSSRA President, 2003-04

Joyce Williams, longtime WSSRA leader, passed away recently. Joyce came to WSSRA after a long career in education that culminated as a counselor at Tyee High School in the Highline School District. Upon retirement, she joined the Southwest King SRA (Unit 6), holding a number of leadership positions including president.

During her time at SW King the unit grew rapidly, with significant credit due to Joyce and her colleagues who frequently visited Highline School District faculty meetings with WSSRA/SW King SRA information and a request to join. To this day SW King has a healthy share of active members, which is a testament to the recruiting acumen of Joyce and her team.

During her three-year term in top leadership at WSSRA, she faced many unusual, time-consuming, and politically sensitive challenges. First was the illness and eventual passing of Executive Director Pat Hoban during her president-elect year. That was followed by the hiring of a new executive director who, unfortunately, lasted only three months, resigning just as Joyce's term as president got going.

Joyce served as interim executive director as her team started the recruitment process that ended, successfully, with the hiring of Ed Gonion in January of 2004. Joyce deserves much credit for holding the organization together during this challenging time.

Joyce was an organized leader who enjoyed strong support from the board and statewide WSSRA leaders. She used her skill in building membership to begin a plan that eventually saw the organization grow to nearly 15,000 members by the time she left active leadership.

After leaving the board, Joyce remained an active SW King SRA member. Her energy, enthusiasm, and decades-long commitment to address K-12 retiree issues will be missed.

WSSRA Around The State

Domestic Violence Center, Friendship House (which is connected to the Union Gospel Mission). Members also take items that men can use such as socks, coats, and blankets. Also, some members donate to the Food Bank and Clothing Bank.

The unit lost ten members who passed away in 2021 and are feeling these losses very much. One was very recent, **Dr. Bill Carter**, a unit executive board member, passed away unexpectedly just before Thanksgiving. They all will be missed very much.

Unit 11 Lewis County:

The Lewis County Retired Teachers may be a bit tired, but they are surging on to help the schools in the area. Nine \$200 mini-grants were

awarded to recipients in Lewis County schools after careful reading of the applications. Some were given to elementary teachers, some to high school teachers. These gifts help the teacher achieve the academic goals not covered by the school budget. Each application is for a designated project. Unit members go to the schools in the area helping, giving tips on retirement and recruiting members.

Caroline Stella serves on the Unit 11 legislative committee. She wrote to Senator Braun before the November 15 Special Committee on Pension Policy meeting and vote to remind him of the need for a 3% COLA for members. She has represented the association for many years, as have so many of the small but dedicated unit.

After the unit meeting, members reminisced about the past and being active with all the retired teacher's groups in the area, all the baskets made for the annual convention, ways funds were raised to support activities, actively supporting area schools and students, and good shared relationships. Members may be a bit tired, but are still striving for the education of children and the teachers who are still actively educating them.

Unit 12 Lower Columbia:

Unit 12 continued to be busy issuing mini-grants to teachers in the area. Two high school scholarships were awarded to seniors who are planning to become teachers. Unit Treasurer **Mary Lou Salberg** has been busy keeping this part of the unit active. It is always so enjoyable to hear from mini-grant and scholarship winners. Unfortunately, this year members were unable to meet the recipients because of COVID-19.

Some unit members met in October to discuss ideas for meeting again as a unit. One idea was to meet early next year in a local restaurant for lunch. President **Noel McRae** will be sending out emails with the date and time. If he does not have your email, please email or call him so you can stay informed. Those who do not have email can get a note in the mail. Information for emails, phone numbers,

and addresses can be found in your Lower Columbia unit address book.

Unit leaders are hopeful that members will come together to spend time with each other again. All ideas for activities and meeting places are welcomed.

Unit 28 Thurston County:

Unit 28 began awarding mini-grants to Thurston County school employees in 1997. This year, 50 elementary and secondary applications were received. The applications described a variety of worthwhile projects, covering every academic area. With money leftover from last year and a generous donation from a member, the unit was able to fund all the requests, totaling \$15,500. Chairs, **Nancy Zabel** and **Patti Colombo**, along with **Pat Slosson** were pleased to deliver checks to the various school districts.

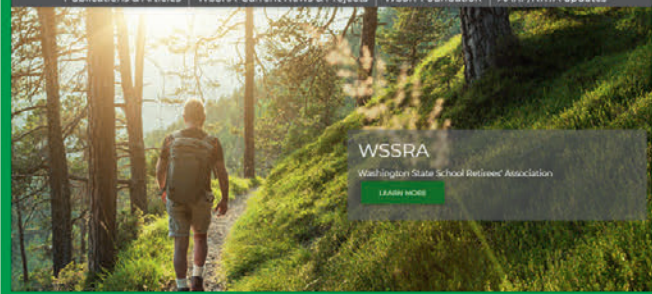
In October, community service chair, **Sally Jones**, organized the unit's second Drive-Thru Community Service event (*see next page*). Members drove up to a designated spot and dropped off checks and bags of items for five different charities: Little Red Schoolhouse, Thurston County Food Bank, Salvation Army, Interfaith Homeless Shelter, and the Other Bank. The event collected socks and underwear, gloves, hats, and leggings for the Little Red

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WSSRA Around The State



Unit 28 Thurston County: Drive-Thru Community Service Project

by **Karen Keller** On Saturday, October 30, Thurston County Unit 28 had its second “drive-thru” community service project. It was C-O-L-D but wool socks and hats helped. Socks and underwear were collected and donated to The Little Red Schoolhouse & checks to local organizations that serve families, the elderly, and the needy such as the Salvation Army and the Food Bank. Snacks & drink packets were donated to the Interfaith Homeless Shelter. Thank you to **Sally Jones**, Community Service chair, for her energy and fabulous costumes! Thanks to the generosity of unit members, the event collected 432 pairs of socks, 45 briefs, and 21 miscellaneous items such as gloves, hats, and leggings. In the three-hour event, members donated \$ 440 for the Salvation Army, \$170 for Little Red School House, and \$1,155 to the Thurston County Food Bank for a total \$1,765. Twenty-nine toiletry items were given to The Other Bank and two big grocery bags of snacks for the Interfaith Homeless Shelter. The unit is thrilled with the outcome and enjoys doing this even when it’s a cold and windy October 30.

Pictured: (left) **Karen Keller, Pat Slosson, and Sally Jones.** (Middle top) **Pat Slosson** chats with **Ann Chenhall.** (Middle bottom) Bucket of socks donated by unit member and **Sally Jones**, aka “Merlin.” (right) **Kevan Hagen** volunteering at the event and donating socks.

School House. Bags were delivered to The Other Bank and boxes of snacks to the Interfaith Homeless Shelter. In addition, monetary donations were collected for the various organizations. What a worthwhile, albeit cold, event! Thank you, **Karen Keller, Kevan Hagen, and Pat Slosson** for helping.

Unit 28 continues to meet via Zoom. In February, the unit will welcome Art Dolan,

president of the George Rogers Clark Chapter, Olympia Sons of the Revolution. Art will entertain the group with “Espionage, the Second Oldest Profession.”

As the new year gets underway, the board will decide whether to move to in-person gatherings or continue using Zoom for a while longer.

Unit 30 Southwest Washington: Happy New Year! Unit 30 would like to acknowledge and thank two excellent leaders. Both have attended unit Zoom meetings and shared valuable information to make the unit and its members more effective. WSSRA Executive Director **Dr. Alan Burke** made a special presentation concerning health insurance options. He graciously answered all questions, which allowed

participants to make solid, informed choices. WSSRA President **Bruce Boyer** has kept members up-to-date regarding various projects for which he is involved. He even made a special effort to share his involvement in recruiting new members. Unit 30 feels fortunate to have these two men to guide us. Thank you!

December brought back Darcy Schmitt and her engaging Battleground singers. This

WSSRA Around The State



Unit 11 Lewis County: "Masked and Unmasked"

Unit members pictured above (left to right): Margaret Wharton, Bob Broostrom, Caroline Stella, Kathy Petersen, sitting Martha Glanz and Jean Barner.

Unit members pictured below (left to right): Jean Barner, Bob Broostrom, Caroline Stella, Margaret Wharton, Martha Glanz, Kathy Petersen. The two young men served the lunch at Dawn's Delectables Restaurant in Centralia, Washington.

Also in attendance, Jean Bluhm (not pictured).



group has been entertaining the unit gatherings for many years and is always well received. Presenting over Zoom is difficult, but Darcy pulled it off charmingly.

Speaking of Zoom, Unit 30 is planning to go back to regular meetings in February 2022. It will be exciting to reconnect in person!

EAST-5

Unit 9 Kittitas Co.:

Although there have been no general meetings for this unit, the board met recently to review possible activities. Board member **Tim Bow** handles grant applications and distributions. He reported that the unit received twenty-eight applications for grants

and, has been the practice recently, all were granted. Eleven members will receive \$200 grants; seventeen non-members will each receive \$100 grants. Almost all of the schools and school districts in the county were represented especially Easton and Kittitas schools. A wide and innovative variety of materials was requested and unit members are pleased to enhance education.

The unit also made a \$500 contribution to FISH, the local food bank and meal distribution organization. In the new year, books will be selected for distribution to area public libraries in memory of deceased educators and others involved in education.

In January, the board will meet again and decide a course of action for the new year. A newsletter will be published to inform members of future plans. In the meantime, this group encourages members to stay well, stay in touch, stay active.

Unit 34 Yakima Co.:

YCSRA has been active the past several months meeting in-person for board and general meetings. Members have worn masks for general meetings and each meeting averaged about 40 members. The November program included a presentation by ESD 105 Superintendent Kevin Chase. He spoke about how local public schools are coping

and adapting to these unusual times. The December general meeting hosted WSSRA Legislative Director **Peter Diederick**, who reported on legislative activity in Olympia.

The December meeting also included performances from music students who received scholarships for college. Students apply for these awards through the Camerata Club, a Yakima men's chorus group, and YCSRA donates the funding. The talent of the students, two played the piano and one sang, was impressive and members enjoyed the performances.

YCSRA has also been busy awarding funds to active teachers in the form of mini-grants. Fewer applications were submitted this year but the unit was able to award \$8,120 to eighteen Yakima Valley area teachers. Some of the requests were especially interesting: a book vending machine, "glittering potion" to fight infectious diseases, and two marimba bands were granted dollars for joia tubes.

Pat Walsh, YCSRA member, helped in awarding a \$5,000 grant to the Granger Historical Society. This grant will help to build a historical museum in Granger. The building, set to break ground in 2022, is to be built across the street from a middle school. Students and teachers will have easy access to this educational resource.

WSSRA Around The State

EAST-6

Unit 2 Chelan-Douglas:

September brought the completion of the Pangborn Project in which many wonderful retirees were involved. The "Connections" committee delivered fall "goodies" which were greatly appreciated.

At the WSSRA virtual Awards and Recognition Ceremony, the past presidents were honored with special mention of **Mary Perkins** for her continued work in WSSRA for 20+ years. The highlights of the day were **Sue Kane's** winning of the Patrick Hoban Award and the Chelan/Douglas unit being awarded a "Highest Distinction" designation.

October brought another Zoom meeting with Teresa Benidito as guest speaker. She told the group about the "Madrinas de Salud" (Godmothers of Health). They educate the Latino population about COVID-19 and how important it is to get a vaccine. COVID-19 cases have dropped within the local Latino population due to the relationships and trust built by the Madrinhas de Salud. Also, during the October meeting, WSSRA Legislative Director **Peter Diedrick** provided information on healthcare plans, WSSRA legislative priorities, and a new communication project.

The November meeting was a joyous event, as members

were able to meet at the Red Lion for lunch. What fun it was to see and visit with friends! Each table had numerous "Thank You" notes and pictures from students and teachers that enjoyed the successful Pangborn Project. Reports were made on the insurance options and the upcoming legislative session. The meeting speaker was Shirley Leslie, vice president of "Our House," a place where cancer-care patients from out-of-town can stay during the week while they are receiving cancer treatment. The unit donated \$2,000 to this wonderful outreach project.

Unit 4 Columbia Basin:

CBSRA members and guests gathered for their September luncheon at Pillar Rock Grill in Moses Lake. Dick Anderson, the SHIBA volunteer, was the invited speaker and shared valuable information pertaining to current and new health insurance options. He also answered individual questions about the open sign-up period and helped members in deciding which program would best suit their needs for the coming year.

Several members of the CBSRA hiking group participated in a local walk along the Moses Lake Activity Trail on November 4. Their goal, besides getting a bit of exercise, was to make observations about the trail, such as ease of access, signage, available parking, and general condition

of the trail. This information was then shared with the Moses Lake Parks and Recreation Department, to be used for making improvements and in applying for a grant to expand the trail system. Members who took part in this community service morning walk were **Susan Hickok**, **Shirley Vincent**, CBSRA Co-President **Helen Preston** and **Karen Schafer**.

The November luncheon featured a representative from the local Salvation Army office, who spoke about their programs that serve those in need. CBSRA Treasurer **Bev Shelton** presented a donation from Unit 4 to help fund this worthy cause. Several members also signed up to be bell-ringers during the holiday

season, including **Pat Simmons** and **Nancy Nishida**, who recently volunteered their time in helping raise funds for programs that will help needy local families.

Unit 15 Okanogan:

By email vote, the OCSRA board approved the following four winners for fall grants of \$300 each as selected by the Grants Committee: **Heather Downey** (PK-5 Special Education, Okanogan) for newer Ed mark Reading Program to help students read. The newer edition will run on students' iPads. **Kris Clark** (fifth grade, Okanogan) to help eighteen students purchase rockets to launch in the spring. **Marilou Baker** (K-5 Music, Okanogan) to purchase a camera/



Unit 4 Columbia Basin: Unit members Pat Simmons, left, and Nancy Nishida, right, recently volunteered as bell-ringers for the Salvation Army at a Moses Lake grocery store.

WSSRA Around The State

video setup that will work with the school's present technology. Because of the COVID-19 pandemic, no musical performances can be held onsite this year. **Roy Johnson** (Okanogan Outreach Program) for Native speaking students to be able to take the STAMP test which can show three levels of proficiency in foreign languages resulting in one to four high school credits being awarded; competency certification for job hunting; and a State Seal of Biliteracy.

A reminder to members who are actively teaching that four additional awards will be granted spring 2022.

In another email vote by the OCSRA board, the following were awarded Community Service monies: \$400 to Red Rooster to provide lunch cards

to Wenatchee Valley College—Omak students; \$400 to Okanogan 509 to provide lunch cards to Okanogan County Outreach High School and Okanogan Alternative High School students; \$300 to Our House, Cancer Care of North Central Washington, Wenatchee; \$300 to Okanogan County Community Action Council Food Bank (which is the distribution center for all area food banks); and \$100 to The Cove Methow Valley Food Bank.

The board also approved the committee's recommendation to contribute \$500 from OCSRA contingency monies for Almira School's re-building project (Warrior Strong Fund). Almira's elementary school and junior high school burned to the ground in November.



Unit 1 Clarkston-Asotin-Pomeroy: Unit members recently toured the new Asotin County Fire station in Clarkston, Washington. Several firefighters and EMTs were former students of those who attended the field trip. Pictured are: Sharon Hoseley, Debbie Romesburg, Judie Hanley, Fire Chief Noel Hardin, and Jerry Henderson.

EAST-7

The E-7 Coordinating Council Zoom meeting conducted by Council Chairman **Don Kackman** on Monday October 4, 2021 with seven in attendance. WSSRA Executive Director **Dr. Alan Burke** reported on webinars, legislative matters, long-term care issues, and upcoming WSSRA state conventions. WSSRA President-Elect **Brad Beal** reported that he is getting his feet wet by getting to know people while filling positions on statewide committees. **Cookie Billups**, Spokane SREA membership committee chair reported the membership status for Spokane unit 25. **Patricia Anderson** reported legislative issues.

Spokane President **Brad Beal** thanked members who serve on the SREA board and the membership who are putting up with unusual situations during these difficult times. He recognized and thanked Vice President **Char Schelling**, who in her role as program chairman, put together a program of Vigilance Against Cyber Crime for the October 20 general meeting.

Unit 25 Spokane Area:

Char Schelling's highlights from the AARP session on Cyber Security during Unit 25's Zoom general meeting: When choosing passwords, don't use any recognizable

words, the more characters, the better. Use a different password for each account, change it yearly, and don't reuse it. To help you remember your passwords, use a password manager like Keeper or One Password. Avoid secret questions, if possible. Opt for using face recognition or fingerprints, if available. Don't put "smart" appliances on your home network, unless necessary. Don't use public Wi-Fi. Do use a two-factor authentication. Don't use "Remember Me." Monitor bank accounts. Use a designated credit card for online shopping. Put a freeze on credit record at all three credit bureaus. Get your credit report at annualcreditreport.com. Examine e-mails. Look at subject line. If they add an extra random word, delete it. Look at return address, does it make sense? Hover your cursor over link to see where it leads. Don't click on link or open files from strangers. Be careful with "https" it is preferable but hackers are using this now. Let your voicemail take unwanted calls.

EAST-8

Unit 1 Clarkston/Asotin/Pomeroy: Unit 1 has had some great meetings this fall! The first one happened at Patt's Nursery where attendees were given a short program on different kinds of fall plants and foliage that would thrive outside in the local area. Then, participants were able to choose from lots of

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different kinds and plant their own fall color bowls! It was fun and the group was able to social distance out in the greenhouse. It was great to get back together! Another plus was that Kate Patterson (a previous student at Clarkston schools) was the instructor.

The October unit meeting and program found members on an old-fashioned field trip. The group went to the new Asotin County Fire station for a great tour. Attendees were very impressed with the improvements and additions the county had made by moving into the new building in the Clarkston Heights. Many of the firefighters and EMT's were former students of those unit members who attended. The unit thanked them by leaving Gatorade, water and wrapped treats that they could enjoy later!

The November meeting and program was held in the Heritage House in Lewiston. While there, the program was given by Gary Bush (a previous teacher) who entertained and educated with stories about the Lewis-Clark valley and how Lewiston got its beginning. Gary also leads the local ghost tours and shared some stories, laughs, and history from those. Some unit members joined the Historical Society while there as well. It was a win/win for everyone!

The unit's December meeting became a Christmas party at Art Uncorked! Attending

members all became artists for the day and painted versions of Frosty while being instructed by the artist in charge. It was a great way to social distance, enjoy each other's company in festive surroundings.

The unit gave 20 teacher mini-grants before Thanksgiving break. It was wonderful to see the varied requests from a specific pencil sharpener for special education students to a school-wide program on kindness with all sorts of creative projects in between.

Unit meeting numbers have dwindled since COVID-19 became a reality but the group is trying to continue to keep members informed with newsletters, Facebook, email, and postcards. It's a challenge but Unit 1 is ready to forge ahead in 2022!

Unit 29 Benton-Franklin:

It's time to celebrate. Unit 29 had their first in-person membership luncheon since February 2020, at the Red Lion, Pasco. The phone tree was activated. Members were reminded to bring toys for the Salvation Army and school supplies for SHAKE (seniors helping all kids education). COVID-19 protocols were followed.

There was no formal program. It was a time to enjoy the food, fellowship, and entertainment. **Stephen Haberman** and **Mary Lou Gnoza**, one on

the keyboard and one singing, provided a medley of songs. **Peter Diedrick**, legislative director for WSSRA was a guest.

The January luncheon meeting brought the school superintendents from Pasco, Kennewick and Richland, where each shared enlightening and riveting updates about what the districts have been through during COVID-19 restrictions.

Membership count remains at a stable level. Current count is 836, up from 830 last year at this time. Of those, 428 have email addresses on file at the WSSRA office. An email address provides each member a BFSRA newsletter several times throughout the year, as

well as statewide association announcements and messages. Members are urged to file their email address with the WSSRA office.

The legislative committee and interested members continue to keep in contact with the area's nine state legislators regarding pension issues. Mini-grants have been awarded. The January E-8 meeting remained as a Zoom meeting, with plans to have the May meeting in-person in Dayton. BFSRA board meetings are now in-person and Zoom at ESD 123, Pasco.

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

ADDRESS CHANGES

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- communicate to local units the activities and priorities of NRTA, AARP and other entities that affect retired school personnel.
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