

The Journal

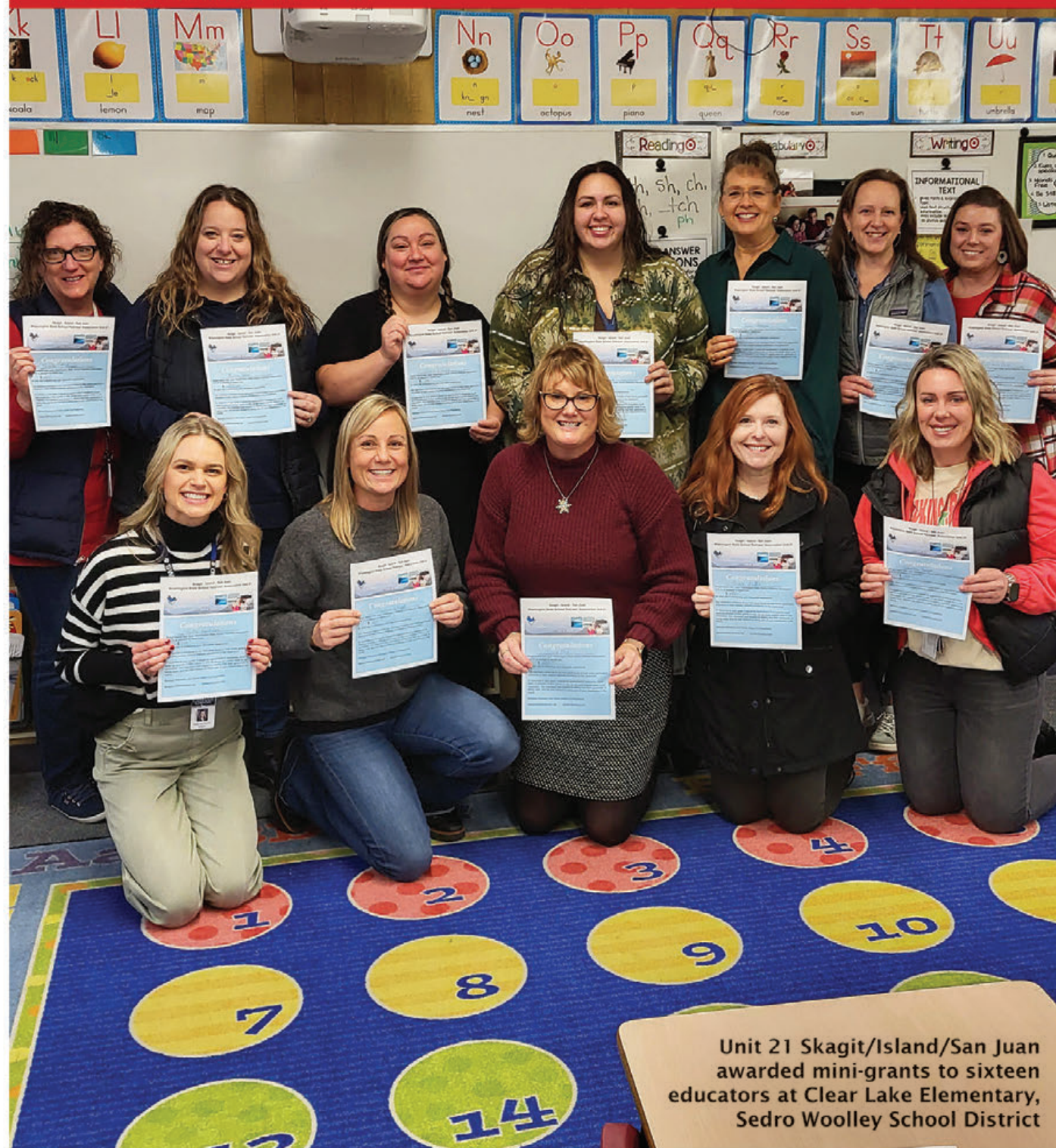
WASHINGTON STATE SCHOOL RETIREES' ASSOCIATION

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



JANUARY/FEBRUARY 2024

VOLUME 77, ISSUE NO. 3



Unit 21 Skagit/Island/San Juan
awarded mini-grants to sixteen
educators at Clear Lake Elementary,
Sedro Woolley School District

WSSRA At Work For You



A message from the president

Managing Change



by Ron Crawford, president

In the past couple of years, WSSRA and local units have faced some interesting changes such as COVID and aging membership. So how do we deal with change?

One of the change processes companies and organizations utilize to identify changes going on within their organization is doing a "SWOT" analysis.

What is SWOT Analysis? The SWOT process is a change tool to help organize and recognize the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats of your organization. The key to this process is turning your weaknesses and threats into opportunities.

An organization can use a SWOT process, usually with the guidance of a facilitator, to work through the following components:

Strengths: Identify positive strengths of your organization.

Weaknesses: What are some of the weaknesses holding you back?

Threats: List some of the current threats to your organization.

Opportunities: Develop a strategy to turn threats and weaknesses into opportunities.

Examples for WSSRA:

Membership. We can't get in schools, so we developed the WSSRA membership incentive programs.

Committee chair incentive program: Honor committee chairs at end of year with certificate or Starbucks card.

Next time your unit or organization encounters an unusual challenge, try SWOT.

SWOT Analysis



WSSRA EXECUTIVE BOARD

OFFICERS

President Ron Crawford
360-236-9305
ronaldwcrawford1@comcast.net

President-Elect Kay Bishop
425-280-4252
k2sealites@comcast.net

Immediate Past President Brad Beal
509-466-3561
bradkathy.beal@comcast.net

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DISTRICT REPRESENTATIVES

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360-653-5967
kenwes55@comcast.net

NW 2 Pat MacGowan
206-851-0232
pmac@uw.edu

SW 3 Cathy Storduer
509-539-3610
cathy.stordeur@yahoo.com

SW 4 Gail Feagins
253-964-1338
jetgail@comcast.net

E 5 Shirlee Jellum
509-365-4362
srjellum@gmail.com

E 6 Denise Perkins
509-741-0362
dperkins@nwi.net

E 7 Linda Marler
509-288-1314
ltmarler@gmail.com

E 8 Paula Nichols
509-529-5401
nananichols2@gmail.com

Historian
Karen Keller

Journal Editor
Kristin Murphy

THE JOURNAL
WASHINGTON STATE
SCHOOL RETIREES'
ASSOCIATION

Mailing: PO Box 5127
Lacey, WA 98509

Location: 4726 Pacific
Avenue SE
Lacey, WA 98503

360-413-5496

WSSRA.org

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR:

Dr. Alan Burke
alan@wssra.org
360-413-5496, ext 118

ADDRESS CHANGES:

Michele Hunter
michele@wssra.org
360-413-5496, ext 116

JOURNAL INFORMATION

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The WSSRA Journal Policy Board, WSSRA President and WSSRA Executive Board assume no responsibility for items appearing over the signature of any source. While every effort is made to check the accuracy of items accepted, articles cannot be reviewed for technical accuracy.

Material appearing in The Journal, in addition to records 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 association, as defined in Article II of the bylaws.

JOURNAL articles to:

Kristin Murphy, editor
editor@wssra.org

**Upcoming JOURNAL
article deadlines:**

February 5, 2024
for Mar./Apr. 2024 issue

April 5, 2024
for May/June 2024 issue

WSSRA At Work For You



A message from the executive director

WSSRA Advocates for You



by Alan Burke, Ed.D., executive director

The Plan 1 COLA fight has been at the center of WSSRA lobbying efforts since the launch of the organization in 1947. And it should be a priority, given that the lack of an annual COLA makes the erosion of pension purchasing power a massive problem for retirees who entered the education business before 1977. Certainly, the Plan 1 COLA fight will be front and center for WSSRA as the 2024 legislative session unfolds.

However, Plan 2/3 advocacy is equally important to WSSRA and involves several components—including recent lost pension purchasing power due to high inflation that far exceeded the existing annual 3% Plan 2/3 COLA cap.

To be sure, COLA issues for all three plans are top concerns for our legislative committee and lobbyists, but there are other important Plan 2/3 issues as well.

For instance, the existing \$183/month Medicare subsidy applies to K-12 retirees in Plans 1, 2, and 3 who use any of the PEBB sponsored insurance options. The subsidy is a big-ticket item - roughly \$210 million per year or \$420 million each biennium. In times when state revenue is in a positive territory - like in most of the past decade - the Medicare subsidy has not appeared on proposed legislative cut lists. But inclusion on those lists almost assuredly will happen during the next economic downturn, like it did in 2010 when the subsidy was cut from \$183 to \$150 per month. After the 2010 cut, it took eight years of lobbying to get the number back to \$183.

In addition to the Medicare subsidy, a so-called "implicit" subsidy exists for pre-Medicare retirees. This subsidy is designed to provide funds to compensate (and, therefore

lower) active K-12 employee insurance rates which are pooled with pre-Medicare retirees for coverage purposes. The thinking is that retirees nearing age 65 will have more medical needs than younger, presumably healthier, educators working in the K-12 system.

The advocacy upshot is that both of these subsidies can be removed by the legislature at any time and need constant monitoring by retiree advocacy groups. WSSRA does that.

There are other outstanding Plan 2/3 pension issues that need fixes. For one, the current teacher shortage could partially be addressed by incentivizing veteran educators to stay working. WSSRA is promoting a bill this session that would allow those with 30 years in the system to earn 1.5 years DRS service credit for each year after 30. Assuming that such a bill is approved by the legislature, those who stay in the system after hitting the 30-year mark would significantly increase their pension when they do retire.

By the way, this proposed bill is in alignment with longevity incentive ideas that have emerged for groups like the state patrol that are having great difficulty maintaining adequate staffing. In K-12, school bus drivers are perhaps the best example of an area with serious supply problems. It seems that just about every district in the state is encountering difficulties with finding enough drivers to get kids to and from school. We will keep you informed about developments with the status of longevity incentive proposals as the legislative session unfolds.

On this same longevity incentive topic, in the recent past, we have experienced success with increasing retire/rehire limits for substi-

Executive Director, continued on page 7...

Legislative News



Short Session, Full Agenda in 2024



by Peter Diedrick, legislative director

It's that political time of year again. The 2024 Legislative Session begins January 8. Currently legislators are unveiling their plans to make the world a better place, legislative staff attorneys are grumpily returning from their holiday breaks, and the interns are daydreaming about starting their careers.

The 2024 Legislative Session will be a short "supplemental" session. While the 2023 Legislative Session was 105 days and lasted through April, this session will be 60 days and adjourn March 7. Budget writers will not completely revamp the work they completed in 2023 but will instead adjust the core two-year budget.

Because the session is only 60 days, deadlines will pass quickly. Legislators essentially have December and January to sponsor bills. Anything not reviewed and passed by a committee in early February will be dead. Most legislation will be toast by St. Valentine's Day.

The state is expected to have some extra revenue this year. The newest carbon tax – which may be repealed by a citizen initiative – has generated over \$1 billion in tax receipts. Other revenues continue to come in higher than previous expectations. High interest rates have contributed to conservative revenue forecasting, but most consumers keep spending money. This is good news for special interest groups needing a budget appropriation, such as the Plan 1 COLA.

WSSRA Legislative Goals for 2024

Plan 1 COLA. The Select Committee on Pension Policy (SCPP) has endorsed a 3% Plan 1 COLA of up to \$125 per month. If passed by the legislature, the raise would take effect in July 2024. The SCPP blessing does not ensure passage – retirees must advocate for the bill once it's sponsored. It should also be noted that the SCPP is starting a study to restore a guaranteed, automatic Plan 1 COLA. The lobbying plan is to pursue that bill in 2025 once the study is complete.

**Visit [WSSRA.ORG](https://wssra.org),
click on "Legislative"**

Medical Benefits. The \$183 monthly Medicare benefit that lowers your PEBB premiums is in the current budget through June 2025. This session, it is important that budget writers do not lower the benefit to pay for other state projects. In 2025, retirees will need to seek an extension for the 2025-2027 budget cycle.

Plan 2/3 Pension Enhancements. At WSSRA, we regularly hear from members looking to maximize an early retirement opportunity. Often the early retirement formula at age 59 or 60 doesn't quite meet folks' financial needs. The calculation at 62 or older is what works for most early retirees with 30+ years of service credit in Plans 2 and 3.

With most school districts experiencing staff shortages, an early retirement bill was a non-starter with legislators. However, what does pique our leaders' interest is a proposal to increase the pension benefit for employment after 30 years of service. With that in mind, WSSRA will be sponsoring legislation to enhance the pension formula for retirees on the retirement bubble who need to serve a few more years to make the financial math work.

Month of Death Legislation. A quirk of state law says that a retiree's pension must stop immediately upon a member's death. Unfortunately, this usually leaves the state with the responsibility of collecting a pension refund from a surviving spouse. The halted payment also stops payment on PEBB health insurance. The Department of Retirement Systems plans to sponsor legislation to allow the survivor of a deceased retiree to be paid through the full month of death. WSSRA will be supporting this legislation.

A Full Agenda

As usual, legislators have their hands full. Issues on the agenda include artificial intelligence, soaring road construction costs, and carbon taxes. The ongoing crime, homelessness, and housing shortage trifecta needs further attention. All these matters will compete for the resources that are needed to fix pension problems and the Plan 1 COLA.

I read that joining an advocacy organization and not participating in advocacy is like joining a gym on January 1 and never working out. Legislators need to hear from their constituents for these pension bills to pass. We're here to help. If you're not on the legislative email list, please join at wssra.org.

WSSR-PAC News



2023 Wall of Support



by Lora Brabant, WSSR-PAC treasurer

Let's give a round of applause to our generous supporters for 2023! Listed below (*and, continued on page 9*) 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.

Want your name on the 2024 Wall of Support? That's easy - contribute to WSSR-PAC and let us know that your name can be published. You can either contribute by credit card at WSSR-PAC.org and hit the "Donate Now" button (*the online form will ask you if we can publish your name*) or you can cut out the form below and send the completed form and a check to the address on the form. If every member of WSSRA gave at least \$25 in 2024, we would have over \$422,000...that would definitely make an impact to make sure your voice is heard. We gave a record amount of \$28,000 to prospective candidates in the 2022 election season. Let's keep the momentum in building up our WSSR-PAC so we can really make an impact in 2024.

In Memory/Honor:

Active Teachers
Boyd, Linda
Bremer, Jean
Chavers, Ruth
Chubb, Jim
Farquhar, Scott
Fisk, Patricia
Friends Who Have
Passed On
Harter, Pauline R
Harvey, Jim
Horne, Carolyn

James, Ed
Kinneman, James
MacGowan, Craig
Melcher, Joan
Nebeker, Rick
Perkins, Mary
Quinlan, Joyce
Sabol, Emily
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Swapp, Tom
Wagner Barbara
Wagner, John
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Generous

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Contributor Name and Spouse (*if applicable*):

Address:

City, State, Zip:

Unit #/Name:

In memory of
(*if any*):

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: _____

Contribution Amount \$

Can we publish your name on the WSSR-PAC
Wall of Support list? ☐ Yes ☐ No

Mail Form & Contribution to:

WSSR-PAC

**125 West 11th Street
Port Angeles, WA 98362**

WSSR-PAC.ORG

Supporting Future Educators



WSSR Foundation: Opportunities



by Ann Chenhall, WSSR Foundation president

The WSSR Foundation's primary purpose is to raise funds and accept donations for the Foundation, and to manage the Foundation's investments for the purpose of providing scholarships to students in Washington State pursuing a career in education.

Please make sure high school seniors in your coordinating council area who have a GPA of 3.0 or higher and are planning a career in the field of education know about available WSSR scholarships this year. Applications must be submitted by March 1, 2024. The application is available online on the WSSRA website, wssra.org, under the Foundation/Scholarship tab. It is also posted at washboard.org. If you need paper copies, please contact Tara at the WSSRA office.

We take our responsibility of managing investments very seriously. This year, we moved accounts from a financial advisor model to that of diverse accounts within an established investment management company, noting opportunities in CD rates.

Our second major project is to update our Foundation bylaws. We are at the beginning of this process and know there are many steps ahead as we move into modern times. There has been a long tradition of being carefully guided by these bylaws since the beginning of the Foundation in 1985.

Looking forward to a good year ahead, we each need to prepare for 2024, making sure we have updated opportunities.

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.

<input type="checkbox"/> In Honor	<input type="checkbox"/> Memorial	\$ _____
Name _____		
Person to be Notified _____		
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City _____	State _____	Zip _____

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Name _____		
Person to be Notified _____		
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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

Scholarship Applications Due Soon

Washington State School Retirees' Association (WSSRA) invites high school seniors planning to pursue a career in education to apply:

WSSR-Foundation Scholarships – \$3,000 each
(eight total awarded – one in each WSSRA region)

WSSR-Foundation Scholarships – \$2,000 each
(eight total awarded – one in each WSSRA region)

Robert J. Handy Scholarships – \$900 each
redeemable for up to four years
(sixteen total awarded – two in each WSSRA region)

Gene Forrester Memorial Scholarships – \$2,000
Agricultural Education at WSU (two scholarships)

Scholarship applications due March 1, 2024

Apply online at
WSSRA.org

click on
WSSR-Foundation
Scholarships,
then Scholarships

Scan QR Code



Questions: Contact Tara at WSSRA, 360-413-5496

...continued from page 3, Executive Director

tuting. A bill was passed in 2022 that moved the annual limit for non-administrative subbing to 1,040 hours from the previous cap of 867 hours. Reports from the field indicate that significant numbers of retirees have taken advantage of the higher limit, filling positions that might have gone unfilled had the previous cap remained.

Another aspirational WSSRA Plan 2/3 goal is to reduce the age of full retirement from 62 to 60. Right now, educators who accumulate 30 years of service credit and reach age 62 can retire (using the 2008 Early Retirement Factor) with a non-actuarially reduced pension. WSSRA proposes that the age threshold be lowered to 60. In part, this goal is aspirational because it would arguably incentivize veteran teachers and support personnel to retire early—potentially increasing supply concerns. However, over the years we have learned that the educator supply/demand situation can change, and this item always appears on our list of legislative priorities.

The bottom line is that WSSRA advocacy includes all three K-12 retirement plans. We work every day to improve pension and health care benefits for all retirees—whether in Plans 2, 3, or 1.

Foundation Contributors

Richard Boon - donation

Ann Chenall - donation

Sharon Dennis - donation

Kathleen Eide - donation

Rita Figlenski - in memory of Jennie Hedington

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Doris Troxel Estate - donation

Ann Varkados - in honor of Despo Varkados

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Unit 6 Southwest King SRA - in memory of Donald Anderson, Jessie Attri, Darlene Hartley, Virgilia Lellana, Bernard Merrifield, Cindy Scott, Ruth Strange

Unit 19 Southeast King SEA - in memory of Jerry Henderson, Richard Kinsley, Marjorie Shawhan, Joanne Sheely

Unit 21 Skagit/Island/San Juan REA - in memory of Merydee Carlson, Donna Chan, Donald Jeanroy

Unit 22 Sno-Isle SRA - in memory of Cheryl Hogle

Membership: Strength In Numbers

Building Membership – Let's Go For It This Winter and Spring



by Don Parks, membership committee chair

Happy New Year to everyone from WSSRA. Through great efforts by many, our total membership level is still hovering at just below 17,000. That puts us at about 1,000 below pre-Covid levels. We thank those working hard on membership building, including ongoing efforts from AMBA and the WSSRA office.

WSSRA's recent membership numbers look like this...As of November 13, our membership stands at 16,886, which is up from the same time in 2022. However, just in the past month, we said goodbye to 40 members who passed away - this is an ongoing challenge for WSSRA's membership building. Those paying dues by cash totaled 1,508 – a slight increase from a year ago. Approximately 50 new members are in pending status. We continue at about 7,579 member email addresses on file - less than half our membership. Email is an inexpensive way for WSSRA to communicate important information to members.

President Ron Crawford's "rejuvenation" plan offers five areas of action for renewing and recharging units. His graphic (*see next page*) is organized in an easy to understand way. The plan is a good guide for building membership at the local level.

Finally, a reminder that Michele Hunter, WSSRA membership coordinator, stands ready with any supplies and materials your membership committee may need.

WHAT DO WE WANT? 10% GROWTH — WHEN DO WE WANT IT? NOW!

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 SCHOOL 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 SER52 SER53

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

I authorize the Washington State Department of Retirement Systems to deduct dues and any future increases as voted by the membership from my monthly paycheck, or retirement benefit check, and to pay them monthly to WSSRA. Deductions will continue until WSSRA receives written notice of cancellation. Dues are not tax deductible.

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

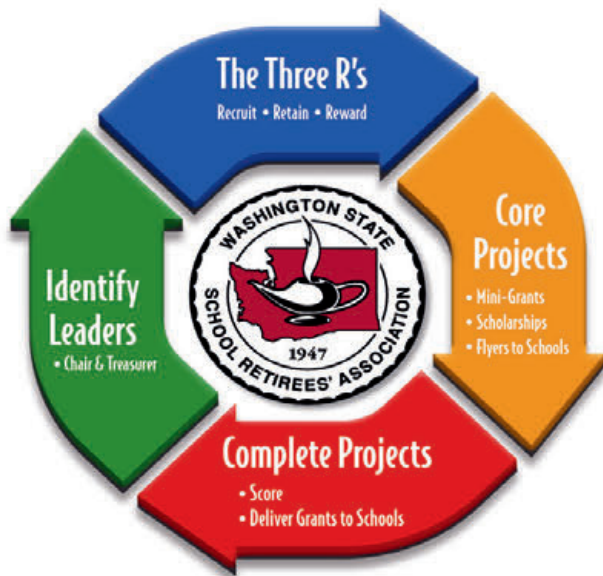
Date _____ Signature _____

01–Clarkston/Asotin/ Pomeroy	Pacific	11–Lewis County	19–Southeast 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

Rejuvenation

Renewal & Recharging



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

WSSR-PAC 2023 Wall of Support

continued from page 5

\$0 to \$49 Level

continued

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Thank you for your support!

For Your Health



Swedish Death Cleaning



by Pat McLachlan (Unit 28 Thurston County), health services committee

What is it and how can we use it to bring more happiness to our lives?

In his article, "The Swedes know the secret to happiness: You are not your stuff" (*Washington Post*, August 1, 2023), Michael J. Coren writes about the daunting task of sorting through years of his mother's stuff left in her home after she passed away. He heard from his readers that many of them had also faced an overwhelming accumulation of stuff to deal with when a loved one had passed away. So, how can we change our own lives so that we don't leave this situation for our partners, children, other family members and friends when they are grieving our loss?

Margareta Magnusson gives us inspiring advice in her book, *The Gentle Art of Swedish Death Cleaning* (available from the library or wherever you access/buy books – printed, e-books, or audio). In 2023, this book inspired eight episodes of a television show by the same name – available to stream on Peacock. During each episode, with hope and hilarity, Amy Poehler (and Scout Productions) tells the stories through real life interviews and experiences with individuals, families and friends using the Swedish Death Cleaning principles to face their mortality, to speak honestly about death, and to confront all their material possessions that must be sorted through. A designer, an organizer, and a psychologist came from Sweden to America to help these people use these principles.

Swedish Death Cleaning is "about rethinking our relationship with things, rather than making do with less, it's about getting more from the things that make you happy," says Coren. Our possessions can become "physical barriers to ward off feelings of insecurity and loneliness," instead of "a vital receptacle for our memories and identities."

Research shows that materialism defines a tendency to buy possessions for status or approval and that it is associated with more loneliness and less happiness. But things "acquired for their beauty, utility, or their association with positive experiences and social relationships" can bring us happiness. Coren's great-grandmother's

garden knife with the smooth hickory handle reminds him of childhood hours spent with her in her riotous Florida garden of mangoes and sapodillas.

Here are Magnusson's basics on how one could proceed using the Swedish Death Cleaning concept:

"Start with the easy stuff: Begin with large or duplicate items first, then finish with the small and sentimental. Clothes are an excellent place to start since many of them have little practical or sentimental use. Photographs, personal papers and letters are the hardest to clear out."

"There's no rush, but start now. The more time you spend going through your belongings, the easier it will get... But this is a reflection, not a weekend affair..."

"Tell your loved ones: Does the process sound morbid? In truth, it's a gift. People you love will hear the stories about what makes these things important, and why you're gifting them. That makes the job much more gratifying. And you can do it at any age."

"Keep the things that make you happy. After cleaning, your home should feel more beautiful and functional, with every item in its place..."

Coren, who is a climate coach and advice columnist, adds encouragement for us to find local used goods stores or online communities where trash can be turned into treasure. He also

reminds us that, "each product we buy on average, accounts for 6.3 times its weight in carbon emissions. Together, our household purchases of goods and services account for between 26 and 45 percent of global greenhouse gas emissions. Clutter is hard on our world." Before he brings something new into his home, he now asks himself: "How will I feel living with it? Will someone else ever want it? Is it worth it?"

Image: The Spruce / Jason Donnelly





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Washington State School Retirees' Association



Connections



Let's Get Family Caregivers the Support They Need and Deserve

by Marguerite Ro, AARP state director

More than 48 million Americans, including 820,000 here in Washington state, are family caregivers. It is one of the most important jobs we will ever do, and one of the most difficult. Family caregivers help their older parents, spouses and other loved ones live independently – managing medications, preparing meals, helping with bathing and dressing and so much more.

These individuals are the backbone of our long-term care system. Washington state's dedicated family caregivers provide 770-million hours of care every year, adding up to \$16.8 billion in unpaid labor per year, saving Washington taxpayers billions. The physical, financial, and emotional toll on them is great. Many family caregivers work full or part-time at paying jobs, and many cut back their hours or quit their jobs entirely to make sure their loved one gets the care they need.

We just honored the hard work and dedication of family caregivers in November as part of National Family Caregiver Month. But simply saying thank you is not enough. That's why AARP is advocating for commonsense solutions to save caregivers time and money and provide more support.

If you're new to family caregiving, we encourage you to check out AARP's 10 Tips for Family Caregivers, which provides advice and resources from experts and fellow caregivers. Among the most important:

Don't Go It Alone: Being a family caregiver can be exhausting and intense; look to fellow caregivers for support.

Build a Support Network: Enlist family, friends, and community members to assist with caregiving tasks; don't be shy about asking for help and accepting assistance.

Make a Budget: Family caregiving expenses can quickly deplete your savings if you're not careful; create a financial plan and stick with it.

Get Paperwork Organized: Organizing medical information and legal documents provides peace of mind, and it's a real time-saver when you need that info on a moment's notice.

Know Your Limits: Although it isn't easy, sometimes being a family caregiver means knowing when it is time to seek professional help to care for your loved one.

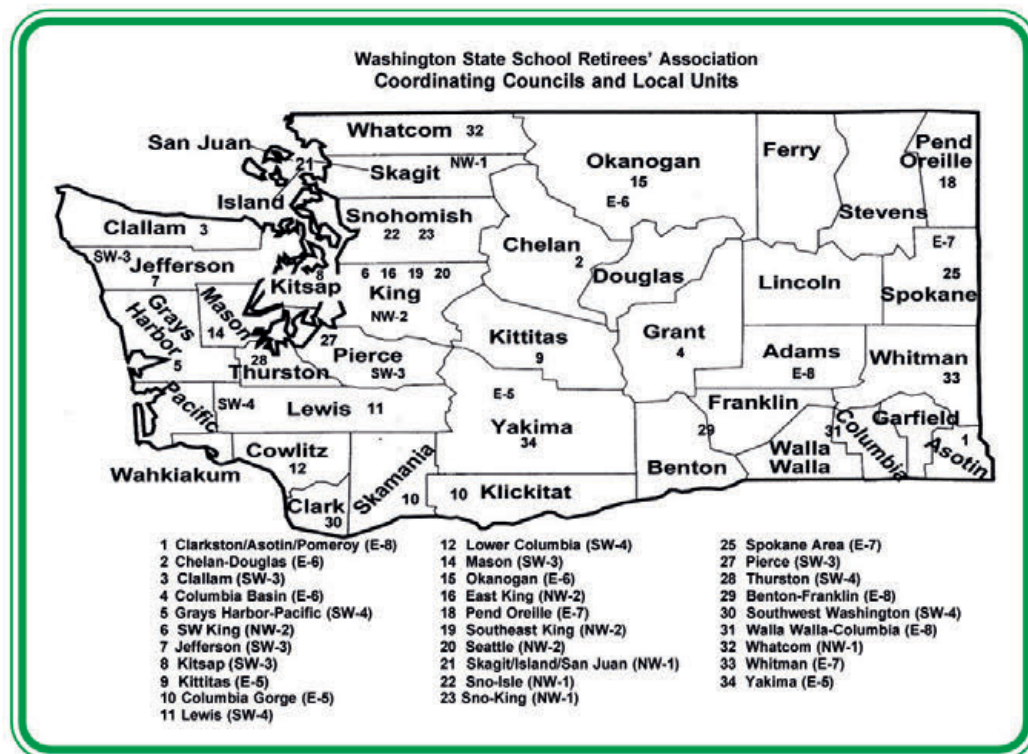
For far too long, family caregivers have gone unnoticed by many lawmakers. That's why AARP is launching I Am A Caregiver – a nationwide movement to support family caregivers and the loved ones they care for. We're tapping into the power of family caregivers to urge elected officials to pay attention to this important constituency. But we need your help. To find out how you can raise your hand and join in the effort, visit aarp.org/caregiverswa



WSSRA Around The State

What's happening in...

From the Coordinating Councils and Local Units



Information will be sent out to unit members so that they can join the "legislative buddy" teams. It will be a short session, so letters and emails will be especially important to keep WSSRA goals on legislator's minds.

Unit 22 Sno-Isle:

Unit 22 members gathered for their annual holiday luncheon in December. They enjoyed lasagna roll-ups, orzo salad, rolls, and a delicious spice cake. Entertainment was provided by Kamiak High School's Jazz Quartet. Toys were brought by attendees and donated to Everett's Christmas House as well as many cash donations. Sno-Isle members were invited to a celebration of member **Mary Ann Karber's** 100th birthday.

Unit 23 Sno-King:

Karen McElliott, unit grants chair, reported that eighteen members from ten schools will be receiving grants during the unit's first session of awarding grants. A framed certificate was delivered to each recipient. The unit will have a second session with applications due February 1, 2024.

At the unit's October meet and greet, at the Edmonds Waterfront center, Northshore Superintendent **Dr. Michael Tolley** gave an update on

NORTHWEST-1

Unit 21 Skagit/Island/San Juan: In November, **Bruce Boyer**, **Bill DeHon**, and **Barbara Robinson** hosted a retirement workshop at Samish School in the Sedro Woolley School District. Staff members began to learn about their retirement options and plans were made to meet again in the new year.

Unit board members distributed mini-grant award certificates in early December at a staff meeting at Clear Lake Elementary where 16 WSSRA members received \$200 to enhance their student's classroom activities.

On December 9, Unit 21 hosted a holiday celebration at the Skagit Golf and Country Club. Members and guests enjoyed a special lunch, entertainment by Kelly Visten and Susie Pollino plus a drawing for special holiday door prizes. Representative Clyde Shavers (Legislative District 10) and **Dina Fox**, principal of Clear Lake Elementary in the Sedro Woolley School District were special guests. This was the first time in four years that the unit was able to be back at this favorite holiday spot to gather with members and guests.

The Unit 21 board has finished plans for unit members to partner with the League

of Women Voters of Skagit County to attend a civics class at Sedro Woolley High School on February 18 on Temperance and Good Citizenship Day to talk to students about registering to vote. This is one more way the unit can get into the schools and be of service.

The next Skagit/Island/San Juan Retirees general meeting will be held February 26 (11:30 am) at the Royal Star Restaurant in Mount Vernon. **Bill DeHon** has arranged for the Skagit County Coroner to present a program.

Unit board members are looking forward to the 2024 legislative session in the new year.

WSSRA Around The State



Unit 19 Southeast King: Unit members presenting a mini-grant check for nineteen staff members of Rainier Middle School in Auburn. Pictured are: Sue Perez, Joan Morgenstern, Ryan Foster - Auburn School District Associate Superintendent, Tina Underdahl and Judy Dotson

what has been happening in Northshore School District.

In November, the unit had a luncheon at the Shoreline Center with an excellent meal prepared by Chef Dane Catering. Shoreline Superintendent **Dr. Susanna Reyes** provided an update on happenings in Shoreline School District. Also, speaker Diana White presented about her experiences during the 2023 Paddle to Muckleshoot, a journey that featured more than 100 canoes and Native American canoe families. She rode with the Blue Heron canoe family, a month-long journey landing at Alki Beach in Seattle.

NORTHWEST-2

Unit 16 East King:

After the East King unit's informative and entertaining Booktree presentation at the Olive Garden in Kirkland in November and the ever-popular silent auction in December at the Madison House, luncheons were put on hold until March due to the weather concerns. Business for the unit carried on in other areas: executive board meetings, mini-grant work, and a student-needs donation.

Mini-grant cover letters were sent out to the unit's six school districts in early November. Unit mini-grant applications

are due in mid-January. The grant selection committee members volunteered at the December luncheon and will meet soon after January 18 to choose the grantees. Each mini-grant recipient can receive up to \$300.

The grant selection committee members each read the applications and award points on a score sheet based on the unit's criteria. After that, discussion starts with any concerns about safety issues (which could eliminate a candidate) and then moves on to coverage of all the applications based on highest to lowest scores and constraints of the budget for mini-grants.

Every year one school in one of Unit 16's districts is chosen (with the assistance of district personnel) to receive a \$1,000 donation. That donation is to be used for mid-year school supplies and warm coats for needy students. Proceeds from December's silent auction went to this project. After six years, it was Lake Washington School District's turn again to receive the donation.

Unit 19 Southeast King:

A variety of classroom and instructional items will be purchased by 19 staff members at Rainier Middle School in Auburn thanks to the generosity of Unit 19-Southeast King School Retirees' Association and the Naomi Mathisen Memorial Mini Grant Fund. Mini-grants, in the amount of

\$200 each, were provided to enhance classroom learning. The mini-grant committee was impressed with the wide range and variety of instructional materials selected by Rainier staff for their classroom needs.

Items requested include: multi device wireless headset for the main office, library books that reflect diversity and support ELL students, wobble stools to help IEP and ADHD/ADD students to focus, freestanding portable white boards for small group work, manipulatives and games that encourage language ability, a heat press to learn print media and copyright laws, microscopes magnifier to clip on cell phones, football belts to replace old worn ones, flip cards and laminated vocabulary labels for EL/ML students, calculators, and whiteboard pens.

The Naomi Mathisen Memorial Mini Grant fund was established this year to recognize and honor retired Renton School District teacher Naomi Mathisen's leadership, teamwork, and her many years of service to school-aged children, teachers, WSSRA, and Unit 19 Southeast King.

On November 9, Southeast King members met and toured the King County Elections headquarters in Renton. All members who attended the tour enjoyed it and said that it was educational and interesting.

WSSRA Around The State



Unit 20 Seattle: Units members met with State Representative Emily Alvarado (34th legislative district). Pictured: Edith Ruby, Marily Miller, Mary Wallon, Rep. Alvarado, Alonda Droege, Patricia MacGowan

Unit 19 Southeast King did not have a membership meeting in December.

On January 27, Unit 19 Southeast King members will attend the musical, "Frozen," at Tahoma High School in Maple Valley.

Unit 20 Seattle:

On December 7, Unit 20 Seattle had its last luncheon/meeting of the year at the Cascade Room at the Mountaineers' Club in Seattle's Magnuson Park. The gathering featured a Red Box meal prepared by LeFournil French Bakery. The speaker was Dr. Lance Rhoades. His presentation was called, "A Cinematic Tribute to America's Veterans and Actors Who Have Served." This program honors all Americans, especially Hol-

lywood actors, who served in the military on, and after, December 7, 1941 – Pearl Harbor Day.

SSRA's latest newsletter for November-December, "The Bulletin," contained an application for S.E.E.D. grants (mini-grants for those presently working in Seattle Public Schools). The grants are \$200 one-time-only for non-members or up to \$500 each year for members. **John Thorp**, the unit's new grants chair, will be handling these applications. Contact information is on the application form.

Patricia MacGowan recently announced the recipients of the unit's six SSRA Teacher Intern Scholarships. Each recipient will receive \$5,000 to help them enter the teaching

profession and pay for some of their expenses. Winners came from the following education programs: University of Washington-Bothell, Seattle Pacific University, Antioch University, and Pacific Lutheran University.

Unit 20 will also begin offering new members who sign up to join WSSRA and SSRA within this school year a one-time six-month free membership, therefore paying \$42 instead of \$84 for their first year of membership. To make this work, their membership applications will need to be sent to Michele Hunter, WSSRA membership coordinator, who will submit the membership applications after six months of free membership to either the Seattle District payroll de-

partment (for current district employees) or to the Washington State Department of Retirement Systems (for the district's retirees). Applicants must contact WSSRA Membership Coordinator, Michele Hunter for a membership application. Mail requests to her at WSSRA, PO Box 5127, Lacey, WA 98509 or contact SSRA's Membership Chair **Julee Newhart** by email at jnewhart@comcast.net or **Pat Cygan** at rcygan@earthlink.net.

SOUTHWEST-3

Unit 3 Clallam County:

Clallam County School Retirees' Association (CCSRA) met at Joshua's Restaurant in Port Angeles on October



Unit 21 Skagit/Island/San Juan: State Representatives Debra Lekanoff (40th legislative district) and Dave Paul (10th legislative district) joined unit members at a recent unit luncheon. Pictured: Barbara Robinson, Rep. Paul, Barbara Landrock, Diane Visten, Rep. Lekanoff, Bruce Boyer.

WSSRA Around The State

17. The guest speaker was Chaplain Kathi Gregoire from the Clallam County Sheriff's office. On November 21, Kelly Sanderbeck and Claudia Catastini from End of Life Washington were the guest speakers.

On December 19, members who attended the luncheon participated in a white elephant gift exchange and some carol singing. Several volunteers stayed to help choose recipients for mini-grants.

Members continue to collect new and gently used books for the annual giveaway. Sewing notions including buttons and fabric scraps were also collected for a class at Port Angeles High School, as requested by the teacher.

The CCSRA Book Club has changed the monthly meeting date to the third Monday of the month (1:00 pm) at Traylor's Restaurant in Port Angeles. Anyone is welcome. It's a session of book sharing, so there is no required reading.

Unit 14 Mason County:

The unit continues to meet in person at El Puerto de Angeles restaurant in Shelton, offering a Zoom connection for those who are unable to attend in person.

The September 5 unit meeting included an update on each of the seven school districts in Mason County as

schools opened. The grant reports were summarized. The colleges of the two student scholarship awards received the funds. A call to legislative action was encouraged.

Tedd Davis attended the SW-3 Coordinating Council meeting on September 26. He reported the meeting outcomes, including **Eileen Perfrement** and his participation in scholarship review, at the October 3 unit meeting.

The October 3 unit meeting included a guest speaker from the League of Women Voters of Mason County, Cheryl Williams. She reported on the forums for school board

candidates in the county being held by Zoom and in-person in October. She encouraged members to join the forums to learn about the school board candidates' qualifications and positions.

The November 7 meeting's guest speaker was Senator Drew MacEwen (35th Legislative District). Unit members were pleased to have an open exchange of concerns on the pension policies, health insurance supplements, and other concerns of retirees. WSSRA Legislative Director **Peter Diedrick** and **Fred Yancey**, WSSRA lobbyist, attended to supplement the members' concerns.

As a follow-up, **Eileen Perfrement**, unit president, was pleased to represent Plan 1 retirees' concerns at the Select Committee on Pension Policy hearing on November 14. Senator Drew MacEwen is a co-chair. The proposal for the 3% Plan 1 COLA, also raising the limit to \$125/month, was endorsed by the committee. Next, it will be considered by the legislature.

At the unit's December 5 meeting, Susan Kirchoff, executive director of Youth Connection, and Paul Wieneke, superintendent of Southside School District, spoke about their efforts to improve the quality of life and success of students in Mason County.

Please visit us at WSSRA.ORG

The screenshot displays the WSSRA website. At the top, there is a navigation bar with links to various sections: About, Membership, Legislative, Insurance Benefits, Calendars, Events, Webinars, Resources, Publications, Current News, WSSR-Foundation & Scholarships, AARP/NRTA updates, and Contact Us. Below the navigation bar, the main visual is a photograph of a person hiking on a dirt path through a sunlit forest. Overlaid on the right side of the image is a text box that reads 'Join WSSRA Today' followed by a short paragraph about the benefits of membership and a green button labeled 'LEARN MORE'.

WSSRA Around The State



Unit 14 Mason County: Unit President Eileen Perfrement (*right*) presenting a grant award at a Grapeview school staff meeting to Jason Trimble, science teacher, for the purchase of the BrainPop program to enhance science instruction to grades 3 to 8.

Also, the ten grants funded for the 2024 school year were described. All principals were contacted to arrange presentations at staff meetings in December and January. Many school employees took applications for WSSRA membership.

The WSSRA scholarship posters were delivered to the five high schools in the county.

The unit continues to maintain relationships with the schools, charitable organizations, and legislators in Mason County.

Unit 27 Pierce County: PCSRA was active during late summer and early fall. The unit continues to have unit membership luncheons at the

LaQuinta Inn in Tacoma. It is a perfect venue for the unit - wonderful service, a clean inviting setting, easy parking, and a staff that cares for every need. Member **Karen Chapman** always provides center pieces for each table.

The unit had general membership meetings on November 9 and December 14. The LaQuinta prepared a special Thanksgiving lunch for the November meeting. As always, the LaQuinta chef prepared a delicious lunch served with grace and attention to detail.

Programs for November and December were presentations by unit member, **Jim Sabol**. **Jim** has an extensive resume including serving as president of Washington State Council

of Teachers of English, director of Writing Northwest In-Service program at SPU and a variety of in-service programs focusing on writing. Part I of **Jim's** in-service was about grammar and how it works. Part II is titled syntax, how to impress your friends and yourself. Thank you, **Jim**, for your willingness to step up and model the impact of unit member presentations.

The unit continues to attract new members. Thanks to **Diane Blair** - new members are joining at almost every meeting. Members bring guests to the meetings and often the guests turn into new members. Each meeting begins and ends with **Diane** encouraging visitors to join the group.

Special thanks to Unit President-Elect **Sandy Grape** for her support and willingness to step up, in her special way, whenever needed.

SOUTHWEST-4

Unit 5 Grays Harbor/Pacific Counties: The unit is happy to still be sending funds to the Ocosta School District for their Lunch Buddy Program. It is a worthy cause and is much appreciated.

The unit met at The Fishin' Hole on December 14 at noon. During the meeting, unit members worked on selecting recipients for the unit's mini-grants.

Unit 5 is looking forward to a wonderful year while supporting local students.

Unit 12 Lower Columbia:

In October, the unit met at the Monticello Hotel to restart unit activities after COVID. Fourteen members had lunch together complements of WSSRA. WSSRA President **Ron Crawford**, Executive Director **Alan Burke**, and **Gail Feagins**, SW4 board representative attended the luncheon.

Alan gave an overview of what WSSRA does for its members. Unit 12 President **Noel McRae** talked about the work of the unit so far this year. **Ron Crawford's** presentation explained some changes to the PEBB medical plans.

In November, the unit met at a local church to brainstorm ideas for new places to meet for the unit's monthly general meetings. Many restaurants were suggested. There was also discussion about the process of giving out mini-grants including ways to notify that grants are available, reading the grant applications, delivering grant awards, and getting feedback from the recipients. The unit's mini-grants are awarded to local teachers and other public school employees such as bus drivers, aides, or cafeteria workers.

Noel explained the process of giving scholarships to local

WSSRA Around The State

high school seniors. For many years, **Noel** has visited the area high schools to inform counselors and principals of the availability of scholarships for graduating seniors planning to pursue an education degree in college.

Another agenda item was a way to inform unit members of what is occurring in Olympia that affects unit members. The unit is looking for a unit member interested in getting involved in this way. Also, Unit 12 wants to encourage unit members to be more involved by sending emails

or letters to state legislators representing the area.

The unit enjoys having fun and informative meetings. **Noel McRae** shared his new hobby of wood-carving. He showed many animals in different poses. Everyone enjoyed that very much. Unit meeting attendees then went to Taco Time to visit and get better acquainted.

Unit 28 Thurston County: Holiday service projects, coordinated by Community Service Chairperson, **Sally**

Jones, are traditionally a focus of Thurston County School Retirees' Association's outreach to the community. Monetary donations were collected at the November and December luncheons for the Thurston County Food Bank and for the Salvation Army, respectively. A fun project that also occurs in December is the assembling of "mom bags" which go to moms when gifts to families are distributed by the Salvation Army. The bags of small items are meant to show special appreciation to the moms who often ask for very little personally in order

to make the holiday happier for their kids. A collection basket was available at the November luncheon to collect items such as: special lotions and bath products, special tea, coffee, cocoa or cider mixes, stationery, candles, mittens, or gloves. **Sally Jones** also spearheaded this project.

One of the unit's ongoing service projects is the monthly collection of sample-size and full-size personal hygiene and household cleaning products. Items, including soap, toilet paper, menstrual products, shampoo, deodorant, laundry detergent, dish soap, toothpaste, and diapers, are given to The Other Bank, housed at the Thurston County Food Bank. The items are distributed to families at designated times separate from the regular food bank distribution.

Upcoming luncheon programs for January and February include: "Beware Scammers and Scoundrels," presented by a representative from the Washington State Office of the Attorney General, and "Down but Not Out, the Effects of Depression," presented by **Leslie Hamaker**, TCSRA member and National Alliance for Mental Illness program instructor.

With the proximity of the unit to the state capital, TCSRA members have been actively following and participating in legislative hearings focusing on Plan 1 COLAs and other school employee issues.

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WSSRA Around The State



Unit 15 Okanogan: When OCSRA couldn't find a meeting site that provided an affordable lunch, OCSRA members Bob & Janet Shacklett solved the problem by making a \$5 soup/sandwich lunch—homemade chicken soup with egg salad sandwiches. Yum!

EAST-5

Unit 9 Kittitas Co.:

The local unit has settled again into a pattern of meetings which was interrupted by COVID. A regular meeting was held in Ellensburg in September with **Doug Murphy** doing the honors at his barbecue to treat members to a hamburger lunch with salads. Representatives from Habitat shared information about local efforts to provide affordable housing for seniors and others.

In keeping with tradition, the October meeting was at the

Senior Center in Cle Elum. A delicious lunch was prepared by the chef and served by the staff. The planned program about SHIBA had to be postponed until November.

It is time to mention the hard work by Grant Chair **Tim Bow** in getting word of the mini-grants to school districts in the county. The unit will be following a different routine in the selection process. Requests outnumbered dollars available so this year, winners of grants will be determined by lottery. They will receive word of the outcome soon.

It is also appropriate to mention the dedication of Unit President **Louie Osmonovich**. He has served locally for many years but also served the state association as president, current PAC president, and he has a hand in many other activities. Thank you, **Louie**.

The November meeting held at Rosewood in Ellensburg went as planned. This is the annual "soup" lunch. The local SHIBA person, Katherine Stephensen, spoke about medical insurance in the state. Members were reminded that the PEBB insurances are subsidized and to leave PEBB would be unfortunate.

The board has welcomed new treasurer **Dahle Trapeur**. Further meetings of the board will take place in the new year as plans are made for spring meetings. Members can expect to receive a newsletter in late January telling of these plans. Until then, be safe, stay well, take care of yourself and family.

Unit 34 Yakima Co.:

The November YCSRA general meeting was led by **Larry Scholl**. For the program, unit members were reminded about the services Job Corp can provide for at-risk youth. Federally funded and established in 1964, Job Corp trains and supports youth ages 15 to 24. Jeff Bartons, local Job Corp development specialist, spoke about the many opportunities available, including

high school diploma, GED, driver's license. Training for careers ranges from truck driving and auto mechanics to the culinary arts. Originally based on the Peace Corp, Job Corp students do not pay for their training. Many Job Corp students learn about and help fight wildfires in Washington State.

At the unit's December general meeting, led by **Paul Schafer**, members enjoyed Christmas music. A flute trio whose members include Sandy Rikerd, Diane Kinney and Janni Holesclaw beautifully boosted Christmas spirits with sing-along carols. The ladies are all retired teachers and/or members of the Yakima Symphony Orchestra.

Sandy Gavin and **Kathy Schultz** have been busy upgrading and renewing the YCSRA website. **Patrick Walsh** recently attended a meeting of Toppenish School District administrators and signed up five new WSSRA members.

EAST-6

Unit 2 Chelan-Douglas:

Unit 2 Chelan-Douglas had its first fall meeting at a new venue, the Wenatchee Valley Senior Center. The unit will be enjoying their \$5 lunches and nice meeting room for the rest of the year. The unit board approved grants to help each school in the unit with their

WSSRA Around The State

McKinney-Vento (homeless student) program. The unit provided breakfast goodies to the Eastmont School District office for all the help they give the unit. Unit 2 has hired a new webmaster and the CDSRA website should be up-to-date in November. Mini-grant applications have been mailed to active members.

Unit meeting attendees enjoyed a presentation from Erica Moshe of the "Wenatchee Brave Warriors" project. This group helps families care for family members with special needs. The project started with 20 families and is now helping 100 families in the area. It is one of the few projects providing social, creative, and physical activities for people from preschool to young adults.

The unit also heard from Rachel Evey, executive director of the Wenatchee Valley College Foundation. The Foundation handles thousands of dollars for student scholarships and the unit was pleased to hear about the technical programs available as well as the usual academic courses.

Halloween Fun! Five CDSRA members were invited to judge the Eastmont School District's staff Halloween costume contest. Wow, educators are so creative. The group went to every school in the district including the district office. Visiting the schools was delightful and all agreed that the Eastmont School District is in good hands!

Unit 4 Columbia Basin: Columbia Basin Unit 4 had some very fun and well-attended luncheons during the fall of 2023.

The October gathering fell on Halloween, so many people dressed up for the occasion and even received some tricks or treats! **Joan Dopps** provided members with decorative gourds from her garden, and **Gayle Talbot** brought a bag of fun items for members to choose from when their names were called. There was a lot of laughter when one retiree pulled a bag of prunes out of the trick or treat bag!

The November luncheon was also well-attended, with local



Unit 2 Chelan-Douglas: CDSRA members judging the Eastmont School District Halloween costume contest (pictured from left) Jan Ottosen, Christi DeKraai, Marie Buckner, Kathy Langevin, Sue Kane and EHS High School Vice Principal Stacia Hardie as "Poison Ivy."

police officers explaining their Blue Bridge program, which allows them to help people in need. CBSRA donated to this worthy program after listening to the presentation.

Unit 15 Okanogan: October's meeting found members voting the following active members as recipients of \$300 mini-grants: **Erika Cody** (Brewster SD

Transitional Kindergarten) for Conscious Discipline Feeling Buddies Self-Regulation Deluxe Toolkit. **RexAnne Hennigs** (Okanogan SD seventh grade ELA) to provide for each struggling reader a personal copy of the classroom novel allowing readers to make text annotations. **Emily Gurnard** (Omak SD first grade) to purchase hand tools and plants for a class garden. **Heather Downey** (Okanogan SD sixth/twelfth



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.

WSSRA Around The State

Life Skills) for headphones for less distraction and microphones on the headphones for speech-to-text.

Grant applications for use in OCSRA area schools are due February 15 to the Grants committee. Grant applications are available at wssra-units.org/okanogancounty

Spring 2024 meeting dates are scheduled for February 23, March 29, and May 31. Unit Vice President **Carol Payne** is securing programs for those meetings. **Bob and Janet Shacklett** will continue providing their \$5 soup and sandwich lunches which are earning rave reviews from attendees.

The unit's scholarship for an individual of at least junior standing in college desiring to work in a public school upon graduation will be voted on and awarded at the May meeting. Submissions for that scholarship should be made to **Sibyl Wehmeyer**, scholarship chair.

Scholarship applications are available at: wssra-units.org/okanogancounty

EAST-7

Unit 25 Spokane Area:

SAREA held the unit's first general meeting of the school year on October 11 at ESD 101. Members could also at-

tend via Zoom. **Sue Webber**, a volunteer with SHIBA, was the guest speaker addressing changes in Medicare and supplemental insurance policies. **Sue** is not only knowledgeable concerning PEBB but can answer questions and explain things in a straightforward manner. This helped attendees understand what each policy offers and make an educated decision about the best policy for individual needs. A big thank you to **Sue Webber**. It was nice to reconnect with old friends.

The unit's annual holiday luncheon was held on December 6 at CenterPlace. As guests entered the beautifully decorated ballroom, they were greeted with the musical talents of **Bruce Pennell**, Gene Herritz, and Angela Hunt. Guests enjoyed a delicious buffet of Hawaiian chicken, citrus rice, charred veggies with orange glaze and a mini dessert tray. Kate Francis, musical director at University High School, and the U-High Chorus entertained the gathering with beautiful renditions of holiday classics. Attendees were truly amazed by the talent these young people displayed. Thank you to all who helped to make the unit luncheon a success and kick-off the holiday season on such a high note!

Unit 33 Whitman Co.:

On November 12, Whitman County Unit 33 hosted a luncheon meeting in Colfax. In



Unit 4 Columbia Basin: November Luncheon (left to right) Lanita Pomeroy, Pat Simmons, Janet Jarman, Sue Beall, Nancy Nishida, Yoshimi Yamamoto, Sue Stuart, Sue Mabry, Wendy Fitting, Lois Palek, Laurel Skaug, Melodee Evenson, Gail Pinkerton, Joan Dopps, Shirley Vincent, Barb Franz, and the program presenter.

addition to lunch and visiting, attendees were entertained by retired music teacher Cary Cammack and cast members of "Oklahoma!" from Colfax Schools. Cary is directing school musicals in his retirement. Unit members voted to approve \$1,000 for a Whitman County applicant for a teacher intern grant.

In preparation for sending scholarship information, E-7 Representative **Linda Marler** contacted high schools throughout E-7 (Units 8, 25, and 33) to get updated contact information. Doing this last year and putting scholarship applications online greatly improved the number of applicants for WSSRA's statewide and local unit scholarships, as well as

teacher intern grants. **Linda** also met with a WSU student intern placement and supervisor, Ross Swan, who is happy to pass on the Neil Prescott Award information.

EAST-8

Unit 1 Clarkston/Asotin/Pomeroy:

The unit's October meeting was a regular business meeting with no program. Unit scholarships and mini-grants, among other business items, were discussed. The unit is a close-knit group and enjoys the monthly unit lunches! The food is good, priced fairly, and the company is awesome!

WSSRA Around The State



Unit 1 Clarkston/Asotin/Pomeroy: Unit members gathering for a recent luncheon meeting.

The unit's much-anticipated November meeting was planned to be held at the Jack O'Connor Wildlife Center located in Hellsgate Park across the river in Lewiston. The conference room was ready and the museum itself is wonderful! Many unit members had never been there or had been there many years ago. It was to be one of the highlights of this year. However, there was no way to predict what was to happen in the valley a week or so before that meeting was to take place.

A natural-gas outage affected all local-area residents using gas heating, gas stoves, and gas hot water heaters! Many unit members were affected by this unexpected and extended outage. Avista came to everyone's rescue by getting outside businesses to come

in to help. All natural-gas connections had to be turned off properly before they could repair it. Then, all gas connections had to be turned back on properly which meant trained workers had to go house-by-house for the process. As a result, the unit's November meeting was cancelled because homeowners had to be home when the workers arrived to turn the gas back on at each house. For affected unit members, that meant they had to stay put for a few days. Plus, the museum didn't have heat either, so it wouldn't have been pleasant!

The unit was able to award all the teacher mini-grants that were budgeted for and loved being able to offer these to help local schools and staff.

December brings a fun unit

Christmas party with silly white elephant gifts, Christmas riddles, door prizes and fun. Members also go to some local retirement and nursing homes to do Christmas caroling throughout the halls.

The unit does not meet in January since the weather is usually the worst. The unit plans to meet again February.

Unit 29 Benton-Franklin:

The unit's November holiday celebration and Salvation Army toy drive attracted 70 members and tables of toys, books, puzzles. Salvation Army Majors Cristian and Rebeca Sibaja talked about local work and the Angel Trees where the unit's donations are used. Rebeca Sibaja is a teacher now in service to the Salvation Army. They have started a pantry system that allows more choice and respects the needs of families. They are serving more than 1,300 families, an ever-increasing number.

Plans for the unit's January luncheon include a superintendent's panel from the largest three districts to present updates and engage in conversation with unit members. Two of the districts have building plans. Pasco is now choosing names and mascots for a large high school and a smaller tech and career school. Richland is in the planning stage for a third high school. Kennewick just shared the new school

safety officer (SSO) program for elementary schools. Unit members look forward to hearing more.

The February luncheon will be a healthcare presentation from Alexis Bonoff, community outreach manager for the local Alzheimer's association.

The unit awarded four mini-grants this fall to elementary and middle schools. The mini-grant requests were for manipulatives for K-2 students, mentor texts, and basic supplies at a middle school. All certificates and awards were presented with the assistance of a building principal. Part of the unit's mission is to support active educators, BFSRA membership, and WSSRA vision.

Unit 29 is also preparing to update unit bylaws and looking to leadership that will include two-year terms for the president, and co-president options. The new BFSRA directory is anticipated to be available early this year to incorporate all elected officials.

Current and future program information can be found on the unit webpage: <http://bfs-raunit29.blogspot.com>

Unit 31 Walla Walla-Columbia:

Unit 31 continues to grow. The membership numbers are going up, and luncheon attendance increases with each lunch event.

WSSRA Around The State



Unit 29 Benton-Franklin: Salvation Army Majors Rebeca and Cristian Sibaja with Toy Drive donations from Unit 29 members at the November luncheon.

Unit President **Kathy Pritchler** and the unit board have made volunteering a priority this school year. Members are encouraged to turn in their volunteer forms to a board member. Volunteer time and effort will be shared with legislators to convey the importance of retired school employees to the overall community health and well-being.

During the September lunch, the unit was given information on the upcoming Walla Walla Public Schools' facilities upgrade. Speakers included **Dr. Wade Smith**, Walla Walla superintendent, and school board members Derek Sarley and Kathy Mulkerin. The vote will occur in February 2024. Also, during this meeting, WSSRA Legislative Director **Peter Diedrick** presented **Jim**

Davison with the Stan McNaughton Outreach Award.

The October luncheon featured Scott Kasenga presenting on Friends of Children of Walla Walla. This organization has been a mentoring service for almost 25 years in the Walla Walla Valley. Beth Swanson from Walla Walla Public Schools shared about their VIP (Volunteer in Person) program. The unit continues to have remaining tea pots from the Teddy Bear Tea that the group is auctioning off at the next two luncheons.

Lily Kaminsky, Jane Kaminsky, and Brian Berry from the Walla Walla Senior Center presented at the November luncheon. They provided a brochure for attendees showing the many events and op-

portunities available at the Senior Center. Programs include nutrition, adult day care, and Meals on Wheels. Throughout each week activities include watercolors, fitness classes, pool table, Ukulele classes, Tai Chi classes, AARP tax aide, and a variety of card games.

Also, during the November meeting, the fall mini-grant winners were announced. Each person will receive \$200. Recipients include: Prescott School District – **Leanne Branson** and **Laura Chabre**. Columbia Elementary (Burbank) – **Cynthia Glazier** and **Michelle Redden**. Touchet School District – **Jackie Helm** and **Kathleen Warner**. Dixie School District – **Bill Clancy**. Waitsburg School District – **Nichole**

Abel. College Place School District – **Christina Arevalo** and **Elissa Aguilar** (Davis Elementary), **Scott Reardon** (College Place High School). Walla Walla Public Schools – **Deborah Prior** (Opportunity/Carnegie), **Laura Berg** (Sharpstein Elementary), **Susie Golden** (WWPS administration), **Chantal Ramirez** (Green Park Elementary), **Kim Spanish-Endres** (Garrison Middle School).

The College Place High School choral group delighted unit members at the December luncheon. They were led by choral director Robb Harrison. At the conclusion of the lunch, Unit 31 collected books to be distributed throughout the Walla Walla Valley organizations.

ADDRESS CHANGES

Please Notify:

Membership Coordinator

Michele Hunter

michele@wssra.org

Phone: 360-413-5496, ext 116

WSSRA, PO Box 5127

Lacey WA 98509

Please Note: If your household receives more than one copy of the Journal in the mail each time, if you prefer to receive just one copy per household, please contact Michele Hunter (contact info above).



The Journal

Washington State School Retirees' Association
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Washington State School Retirees' Association

Vision — Mission — Purpose

WSSRA, a non-profit Association, is dedicated to preserving, protecting, and improving the benefits of educational retirees.

The Association's Vision will provide leadership and promote action relevant to all retired and active school personnel.

The Association's Mission 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.

Ask a friend to join us today...

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