

The Journal

WASHINGTON STATE SCHOOL RETIREES' ASSOCIATION

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



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Legislative Building
Olympia, Washington

WSSRA At Work For You



A message from the president

Using Our Resources



by Brad Beal, president

Each of us joined WSSRA for a variety of reasons. As educators we chose to spend our time, energy, and knowledge with our state's most valuable resource, our youth. You carried out that mission and now you continue to make decisions on how to live the next stage of your life.

The challenge for our organization is to explore ways we can encourage each other to use the resources at our disposal. Many of us had to adapt to a variety of electronic devices during our careers. However, there is a segment our membership that have had minimal exposure.

Technology opens so many more opportunities. For example, Alan Burke facilitated an excellent live online AARP webinar, "The Six Pillars of Brain Health." It now is available on our website. A local unit accessed the AARP Speakers Bureau live presentation, "Protect Yourself from Fraud and Identity Theft." The unit used the "buddy" system that allowed a member, who would not have been able to participate, view the program from another member's home.

Through our partner, Association Member Benefits Advisors (AMBA), many of our new members are joining expressly because of the insurance options that are available. They also offer discounts. You will find contact information within the *Journal* as well as more details on our website.

Peter Diedrick has done an exceptional job as legislative director. If you are willing to be on the legislative email list, you could receive Peter's format that allows you to communicate pro or con with legislators, regarding bills using a few clicks on your computer. This process is new to many of us, but 700 WSSRA members responded after the email notice. A committee member observed that legislators took notice!

The WSSRA website and *Journal* provides you with in-depth explanations of the resources available to you. We encourage our members to provide Michele Hunter with a valid email address (michele@wssra.org), allowing our organization to provide each of you with the most current information regarding health and retirement benefits.

We would urge those who find it difficult to navigate our website to reach out to fellow members within the organization. If you open any of our previously published Journals to pages 2 and 3, you will find WSSRA Executive Board contact information as well as the contact information for our full-time staff.



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JOURNAL INFORMATION

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The WSSRA Journal Policy
Board, WSSRA President and
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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
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sociation, as defined in Article II
of the bylaws.

JOURNAL articles to:

Kristin Murphy, editor
editor@wssra.org

**Upcoming JOURNAL
article deadlines:**

April 5, 2023

for May/June, 2023 issue

June 15, 2023

for July/Aug./Sept. 2023 issue

WSSRA At Work For You



A message from the executive director

The Bill to Law Pathway



by Alan Burke, Ed.D., executive director

Did you ever wonder about how a proposed bill makes it through the legislature and becomes law? Certainly, we can mentally scroll back to our high school civics class to recall the basic steps. But in today's world, the bill-to-law pathway is way more complicated than outlined in a civics text, with roadblocks and potholes present at just about every step along the way.

The process in Washington is like most states. The same bill needs to pass the House of Representatives (98 members) and the Senate (49 members) with precisely the same language before it moves to the Governor for a signature and becomes the law of the land. (Of course, the Governor can veto all or parts of a bill, but that is the topic for another day.)

At the federal level, the process is similar but even more challenging with a majority of 100 senators and 435 representatives needing to agree on a new policy or program. And when billions of tax dollars are added to the mix, along with vast differences in political thinking among legislators from the 50 states, law making becomes astronomically more difficult.

In our legislature, a bill begins with an idea from a citizen or legislator that is converted into "bill language," usually by a legislative staff member knowledgeable in constructing unambiguous bills. Then the bill is assigned to one of 19 policy committees in the House or 14 policy committees in the Senate for consideration by the committee chair (chosen by leadership in the majority party, recently Democrats).

The chair then schedules the bill for a public hearing if s/he so chooses. After the hearing, if the bill is deemed worthy, the chair schedules

it for "executive session" which means that is up for a vote and possible amendment. If the bill (or amended bill) is approved in executive session, it then—if funding is required for implementation—goes to the chamber's fiscal committee (Appropriations for the House; Ways and Means for the Senate). The fiscal chair then, if s/he so chooses, schedules the bill for another public hearing and, if appropriate, an executive session for a vote. Low-cost bills can skip this step.

Assuming the bill passes the fiscal committee, it is then sent to the Rules Committee in the House or Senate for consideration of entry onto the floor calendar for discussion, debate, and a vote by the entire chamber. Bills cannot be amended in the Rules Committee, but can on the House or Senate floor.

If the bill, or the amended bill, is approved on the floor, it then goes over to the opposite chamber (House to Senate; Senate to House) for a repeat of the same process. That means a hearing/executive session in the appropriate policy committee, the same in the fiscal committee, and acceptance by the Rules Committee for floor action. At any time in this process the bill can be amended.

If the bill is approved with precisely the same language in the House and the Senate, it goes to the Governor for his signature. But if the language differs, a conference committee is set up with selected members from both chambers meeting to resolve differences and, hopefully, send a revised bill back to each chamber for a vote.

Is the process complicated? Yes. Is navigating the ins and outs challenging for legislators and advocates? Definitely yes. But, it does work.

Executive Director, continued on page 4...

Legislative News



2023 Legislative Mid-Session Update



by Peter Diedrick, legislative director

The 2023 Legislative Session is now half complete. The executive director's column on page 3 provided an excellent overview of the legislative process. To pass legislation, there are multiple hoops to jump through, each with strict deadlines. Most school retiree bills have passed or are getting ready to pass their first chamber, either the House or Senate.

This year WSSRA is sponsoring and supporting numerous bills to provide pension Cost of Living Adjustments (COLA), improve health benefits, enhance pension plans 2 and 3, and support seniors in a myriad of other ways.

There are no less than four Plan 1 COLA bills in the legislature this session. Two bills (HB 1057 and SB 5350) are recommended by the Select Committee on Pension Policy. They would provide a one-time 3% Plan 1 COLA up to \$110 per month and require the legislature to study funding for a permanent Plan 1 COLA. HB 1294 by Representative Steele from Chelan is a permanent Plan 1 COLA. He sponsored this bill to support Unit 2 Chelan/Douglas retirees. The bill will die, but we applaud the representative for his efforts. HB 1459 is a fascinating bill by the Democratic and Republican leaders of the House Appropriations Committee. It also provides a permanent Plan 1 COLA but partly pays for it by changing the assumptions for

investment returns from 7% to 7.2%. HB 1459 is also tied to two other pension funding bills HB 1201 and SB 5294.

House Bill 1201 and Senate Bill 5294 are governor request bills to reduce funding to the Plan 1 Unfunded Liability. At current funding rates, Plan 1 is expected to be heavily overfunded by the year 2035. WSSRA is not opposed to changing the contribution rates, as long as they fully fund the pension system and

leave room for the sorely needed Plan 1 COLA. Amendments on these bills are likely.

House Bill 1008 to equalize retiree health benefits for members of Plans 2 and 3 has passed the House of Representatives and been referred to the State Senate. Likewise, HB 1056 to provide at least 867 hours of post-retirement employment for all retirees has passed the House of Representatives. Both bills passed unanimously.

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

**WSSRA legislative priorities,
session podcasts, bill info,
and more...**

WSSRA is supporting legislation to improve dental care in long-term-care facilities, lower prescription drug costs, improve oversight to DRS and PEBB appeals, and increase eligibility for senior property tax reductions.

Thank you for staying engaged. The lobbyists are excellent guides, but they rely on constituent support to drive the legislation. Your goals cannot be achieved without your participation!

Executive Director, continued from page 3...

As you can imagine, only a small fraction of the 2,200 or so bills introduced each legislative session make it to the finish line. At any time during the process, a bill can die if the committee chair chooses to not schedule it for a hearing or executive session, if it is voted down by a committee or the entire chamber, if it dies in the Rules Committee, or if it fails to reach consensus during a conference committee negotiation. To assure that the legislature finishes their work on time—meaning the end of a 105-day session in odd numbered years, and 60 days in even numbered years—calendar deadlines are established for moving a bill from one stage to another. Missing a deadline normally means the bill dies.

To be sure, the WSSRA legislative staff, lobbyists and our legislative committee watch all of this closely. As one of our key bills—like the Plan 1 COLA—is scheduled for a hearing, we call on our membership to testify, sign-in favorable, and/or contact their local legislators through email or phone.

We know when deadlines approach and do everything in our power to make sure that our priority bills stay alive and, eventually, reach the finish line. As for the Plan 1 COLA, we were successful in 2018, 2020, and 2022 in getting versions of COLA bills to the Governor. As this current session unfolds, you can be assured that we will be doing all in our power to influence key legislators on our priorities—from now until the legislature adjourns on April 24.

WSSR-PAC News



WSSR-PAC: Why Should We Give?



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

Some members tell us, “We shouldn’t have to give our money to politicians so when they get elected they will do the right thing for us.” And we agree with that. But, for better or for worse, we don’t live in a world that works the way many of us think it should work.

Candidates need money to get elected. Wealthy candidates or those supported by deep-pocketed special interests don’t need the financial support of small individual contributions and small PACs. But many candidates who may be sympathetic to the needs of school retirees do not have personal funds to run a successful campaign. They are forced to spend huge amounts of time on fund raising, so are grateful to those who contribute. If elected, to thank those contributors, they make time during the legislative session to listen to them and consider their requests. Pay to Play, it certainly is. Do we like it? Not much. But because we want to be effective lobbyists for our members in the world we live in, we play the game.

Last summer WSSR-PAC contributed a total of \$28,000 to 36 legislative candidates, mostly in \$500 or \$1,000 amounts. Often, we were able to meet with candidates when delivering checks. Of candidates who received contributions from WSSR-PAC, 35 now sit in the legislature.

As we write this, WSSRA’s Legislative Committee members are busy meeting, either virtually or in person, with legislators in Olympia. We need their support if our priority bills are to pass. With the hundreds of bills they are considering, it is vital that we speak with them personally to explain why WSSRA’s bills are needed to ensure our members’ welfare. Do our PAC contributions to their campaigns make it easier to get an appointment? We think so.

Please give to your PAC! We emptied our coffers last August and need to rebuild. You can contribute on our website, WSSR-PAC.org, or write a check, enclose it with the form at the bottom of the page, and send it to our treasurer, Lora Brabant, at the address on the form.

For those of you arranging unit meetings, please add a low-cost fund raiser for the PAC.

Low Cost FUNDRAISER FORM

WSSR-PAC.ORG

1. Click on "Contribute Now"
2. Click on "Contribute"
3. Scroll down to Low Cost Fundraisers

Support the WSSR-PAC — Contribute Today!

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

Membership: Strength In Numbers

Membership Needs a Boost



by Don Parks, state membership committee chair



Spring is just around the corner, and we are holding our own in terms of membership levels. We are happy about that to an extent and are appreciative of the work that is being done to maintain and grow our numbers. The AMBA-sponsored blind mailings have resulted, over the past months, in over 260 new members.

In the last Journal article, several great suggestions were presented, offering new ideas to local units looking for innovative ways to get our word out. One idea that seems to work well is securing an appointment with teachers to urge them to utilize local cash grants for whatever classroom needs they have. This idea would work best with personal acquaintances. I met with the music staff at a local middle school, offering to help them combine their grants to perhaps purchase a costly equipment item they could all use. They were appreciative and the one non-member joined us on the spot.

Unit 1 Clarkston-Asotin-Pomeroy has developed two teams of members who have appointments at each school in their region for purposes of mini-seminars for staff, covering pre-retirement issues, grants, scholarships, as well as incentives and donuts!

Our membership numbers include 16,966 total members. This compares with 16,984 last month and 17,117 a year ago. We have 3,387 actives. There are 28 pending for retirees and actives each. Despite 53 deceased, we are maintaining. Those who have passed on will be missed. We have 7,293 member's email addresses on file in the state office.

It is good to see that after the past couple of years we are doing so well. Let's build on that and let's see substantial growth this coming spring and summer.

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-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

Membership: Strength In Numbers

Membership Building Incentives Update



by Alan Burke, Ed.D., executive director

Thanks for your responses to the membership/recruitment ideas that were shared in the January/February issue of the *Journal*. Your comments were reviewed by the executive board at their February 15 meeting. See the summary report below. Please feel free to comment about items on the report between now and the next board meeting (April 12) when the board plans to further refine the 2023-24 membership recruitment program. Also, in early April the WSSRA Membership Committee will meet and consider these ideas and pass on their recommendations to the board.

COVID was not kind to WSSRA in terms of recruiting new members. Without on-site recruitment access at faculty meetings—normally for mini-grant distribution and membership solicitation—normal recruitment efforts were compromised. Moreover, the COVID-related canceling of on-site unit meetings halted traditionally successful “Bring-a-Friend-to-Lunch” programs. Consequently, with 40 – 50 members passing each month, overall membership dropped by 900+ since our pre-COVID high of just under 18,000. To be sure, AMBA solicitations, DRS blind mailings, and local unit outreach helped stem the tide, but missing on-site opportunities to speak with teachers, support personnel and new retirees about the benefits of joining WSSRA has been a continuing challenge.

Without a doubt, recruiting new members is a key to the success of WSSRA. We’re 17,000 strong, but would have an even

more powerful presence in Olympia if we grew to 20,000 or even 25,000. When the 2023-24 incentive program is finalized, each unit can choose which ideas to implement, with appropriate reimbursements available from the Lacey office. Specific reimbursement procedures, and rules for earning unit cash rewards, will be delivered to unit leadership before the Pasco convention in June.

As is the case with the current program, these new member incentives only will be offered to those who sign up at a bona fide/official unit event. Generally, the rules for offering the incentives will follow the existing “\$10 cash gift for a new member” program that has been ongoing for the past five years. **Note that the board intends that these incentives will be optional based on the needs/desires of individual units.**

Again, please share your reactions to one or more of these suggestions (*see list below*) to unit, district, or state leadership to aid the board in further refining the 2023-24 membership incentive plan.

We will revisit this topic in the next *Journal* (May/June) and will include specific descriptions of additional “programs-that-work” from several units that have been successful in recruiting new members. We plan to have a finalized list to share at the convention in Pasco in June.

Your Feedback Requested...

Tentative List of 2023-24 Recruitment Incentive Ideas

1. New members will qualify for up to six months free dues so long as they sign up for dues deduction with their school district (for actives) or DRS (for retirees).
2. \$15 Starbucks or Amazon cards, or cash incentives of \$15, will be made available to new enrollees who sign up at an official unit event. For example, “Bring-a-Friend-to-Lunch” programs could offer a free lunch plus a \$15 Starbucks card, and/or a free six-month membership. The cards could be increased in value to \$20 for those who sign up for payroll deduction.
3. WSSRA will offer a “welcome back” incentive of six months free membership for former WSSRA members who have dropped out. Normally, this group is comprised of those who have left teaching, didn’t immediately retire, and have let their monthly payroll deduction lapse, or those who pay cash dues and, for whatever reason, have not re-upped on their anniversary date.
4. Monthly and annual cash membership awards will be made available to units that add new members using these, or other locally developed recruitment incentives. The awards will be offered on a percentage basis to assure that large and small units can qualify for the awards.

Supporting Future Educators



WSSR Foundation: Spread The Word



by Marianne Harvey, WSSR Foundation president

Thank you to all WSSRA members who have contributed to the Foundation through a memorial, 501(c)(3), or RMD retirement distribution. No matter how you have been involved, WSSR-Foundation is very grateful. Future educators in the state will benefit from your generosity.

At its recent meeting the Foundation voted to change its investment policy from a managed account to one which will enable higher gains on investments. With the help of an hourly advisor, when needed, foundation funds will grow at a faster rate, because we will no longer be paying high management fees. The amount earned for scholarships will be significant.

High school scholarship applications have been submitted, but it is not too late for the Neil D. Prescott student teacher and internship awards. The deadline is April 1, 2023. Applications can be found online. If you know someone who would be a good candidate, please encourage them to apply. Last year WSSR-Foundation did not receive applications for all of these awards. As a result, not all funds were utilized. This is a call for your help to find future Washington educators. Do you know someone who should be applying? Contact them.

As we look toward June, we realize convention is only a few months away. It is not too early to be thinking about items to

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 _____		
Address _____		
City _____	State _____	Zip _____

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

Please check box if you would like to receive a receipt for your records.

☐ The WSSR-Foundation is a 501(c)(3) and donations are tax deductible within the limits of the law.

Check \$ _____ # _____

Cash \$ _____

ONLINE FOUNDATION DONATION

wssra.org Foundation link > Donation Form

Scholarship Applications Due Soon for Student Teacher/Interns

Apply online at [WSSRA.ORG](https://www.wssra.org)

WSSR-Foundation & Scholarships

Student-Teacher/Interns for 2023-24 School Year

Application due: April 1, 2023

create a basket that everyone will want to take home or share with their friends. Be creative and unique. Once again, we will have the opportunity for you to share silent auction items. Many items generate significant support and have become a major source of scholarship funding. The more funds members generate, the more scholarships we are able to award. As we look toward the end of the pandemic era, we hope to see many of you, in-person, for the WSSRA Convention in Pasco. It will be great to see you, network with colleagues, and have fun in the sun.

Foundation Contributors

Mike and Sharon Boring - donation

Patricia and Ron Cygan - in memory of Craig MacGowan

Kathleen Eide - in memory of Paul Eide

Gail Feagins - in memory of Al Restoule

Jeanne Floyd - donation

Karen Keller - in memory of Anne Ozmun, Lin Fortier

Laurel Powell - in memory of Robert Woolery

Mona Stacy - in memory of Donovan Stacy

Doris Troxel Estate - donation

Ann Varkados - in honor of Despo Varkados

Chelan/Douglas SRA - in memory of Carolyn Killian, Christie Phelps, Jerry Nichols, Ron Fletcher, Sue Tarbert

Southeast King RSEA - in memory of Naomi Mathisen, Sharon Rose, William Burchell

Sno-Isle SRA - in memory of Ken Haller

Thurston County SRA - scholarship



Thinking About Retirement?

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.

Please join us for Pre-Retirement Webinars

Sponsored by WSSRA

Tuesday, March 21, 2023

4:30 pm via Zoom

- WA Dept. of Retirement Systems (DRS) – Plan 2 & Plan 3
- WA Health Care Authority – PEBB (medical/dental options)

Thursday, March 23, 2023

4:30 pm via Zoom

Social Security, Medicare, VEBA – sick leave buyout options

**To Register for the Webinars,
visit [WSSRA.ORG](https://www.wssra.org)
go to "Webinars" tab**

For Your Health



Just In Case



by Lorry Evert-Garvin, state health committee

This article is specifically offering information that is useful for any of us who might have a medical emergency and need critical help at home. We all have a reason to be careful, and it could be life-saving to have certain information ready – just in case. Tips and reminders for having an emergency plan are always worth sharing and repeating.

Medical Alert Devices: A small battery-powered device that can be worn or carried that will call for help with a simple push of a button. There are many different brands on the market with different prices and plans. One thing to be aware of is whether the device will work outside of the home. In addition, make sure your home phone and cell phone are set up to direct dial 911.

Medical Information in an Easy to Find Spot: Having key medical information is an easy to find location for emergency responders and family or neighbors can make a big difference. Placing the information on your refrigerator or another clearly visible location in your home is ideal. A few options for providing this information include,

- “File of Life” – a magnetic placard or pouch that you can place on your refrigerator door. It is a simple place to list medical conditions, medications, allergies, and doctors. Check with your local fire, police, or medical centers – many will provide a File of Life for free.
- “Vial of Life” – a one-page form to list your medical conditions, medications, contact information, etc. It can be taped to your refrigerator or other clearly visible location for emergency responders to access.

- Another option is to simply type or write this information on any piece of paper and post it on your refrigerator or other clearly visible location.

For any of these options, be sure to review and update the information at least every six months. You could consider providing a copy to a family member as well. Be certain that your family is aware of your medical issues and can be contacted.

Care Documents: Every adult in the household should have documents about how you want your health needs handled.

Common documents include a living will and a “do not resuscitate” or “DNR.” If you attended the WSSRA convention this past September, the Health Services Committee offered a “5 Wishes” booklet (blue) to fill out how you want your health needs handled. Some churches and medical offices have these available.

Pet Care: If you have a pet, emergency responders should be informed it is in the house. Also, be sure to have a plan for the care of your pet if you aren't able to do so. If your pet has special needs, make sure the caregiver is aware.

Whether you live alone or with others, if an emergency occurs, you may not be able to provide emergency responders with this important information. That's why up-to-date documentation, that is easily accessed, is critical to your care.

None of us know what waits for us in the future, so please have a plan for “just in case.” It's better to be safe than sorry. I wish us all a long, healthy future.





LONG-TERM CARE

STAYING HEALTHY TODAY MEANS BEING PREPARED FOR THE FUTURE.

With Long-term Care coverage from **WSSRA & AMBA**, you can live for today without worrying about tomorrow.

- You select the daily amount
- You select the benefit period
- You choose the waiting period
- You choose your inflation protection

Learn More: **1-877-556-4582**

myambabenefits.info/wssra

WSSRA – Washington State School Retirees' Association



Connections

AARP Free Tax Preparation Begins

Most AARP Foundation Tax-Aide sites return to in-person service

Local AARP Foundation Tax-Aide sites are now open and ready to help prepare and e-file personal tax returns. This free tax service is available to all taxpayers. The service includes federal personal tax returns as well as the new Washington Working Family Tax Credit. Tax-Aide is operating 111 sites in Washington for the current tax season which ends on April 18.

For the first time in three years, Tax-Aide returns to the traditional in-person preparation at many sites statewide. While many sites will offer walk-in, first come first served service, some require appointments and some sites will offer both walk-in and appointments. Check with your local sites to learn more about their specific requirements. Information on how to use Tax-Aide services, site locations throughout Washington state and available appointments can be found at aarpfoundation.org/taxaide or by calling 1-888-AARPNOW (1-888-227-7669).



taxpayers need to be computer savvy and have an internet connection. Counselors provide assistance using online interactive software. Those interested can get more information at <https://taxaideqa.aarp.org/hc/en-us>

“Tax-Aide is a free service for anyone who needs help completing their tax return and filing it electronically,” said Cindy Gossett, Washington AARP Foundation Tax-Aide State Coordinator. “Our dedicated and certified volunteers are ready to provide the same high-quality service as in years past. After three challenging years navigating COVID, we are looking forward to helping as many people as possible.”

AARP Foundation Tax-Aide operates the nation’s largest all-volunteer run tax preparation service. Volunteers are trained and IRS-certified annually to ensure they understand the latest changes to the U.S. Tax Code.

In addition to in-person tax preparation, Tax-Aide is also providing a new option for taxpayers to prepare their own taxes. Alternative Tax Preparation (ATP) is aimed at taxpayers who would prefer to prepare their taxes, using their own computers. In addition to free online software, Tax-Aide certified counselors will be available to assist them in preparing and filing their tax returns electronically. To participate in this new program,

In 2021, more than 820,000 taxpayers (23,000 in Washington) using AARP Foundation Tax-Aide services received more than \$892 million (\$28 million in Washington) in income tax refunds. They also avoided any tax preparation fees and pitches for high-interest tax credit or “advance refund loans.” The service is offered in conjunction with the IRS. AARP membership is not required to receive the free service

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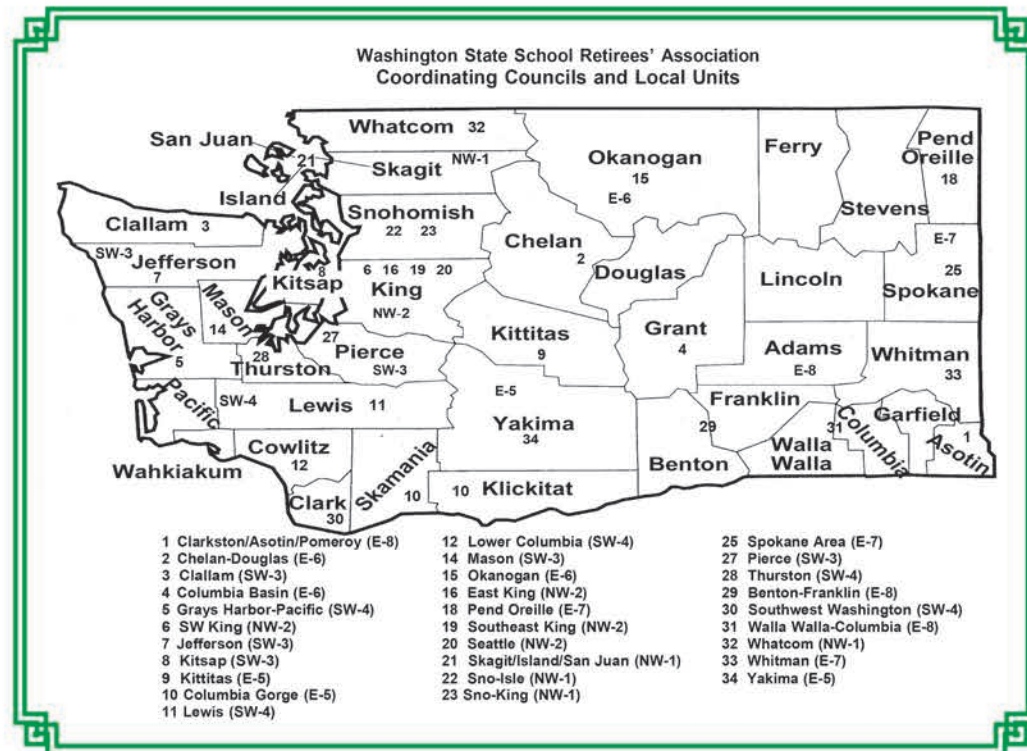
Dana teaches at the Washington State School for the Deaf in Vancouver.

Registration information will be posted soon on the WSSRA website, **WSSRA.ORG**

WSSRA Around The State

What's happening in...

From the Coordinating Councils and Local Units



NORTHWEST-1

Unit 21 Skagit/Island/San Juan:

While there are very few individuals at the helm, the unit is moving forward in several important areas. Unit 21 offered mini-grants in the fall of 2022. Forty-nine applications were received, and the mini-grant committee chose to fund 33 of the applications. The mini-grants were for activities such as field trips, snow school, and a high school science night. Mini-grants also were used to purchase supplies for math, science, and many wishes for social, emotional, behavior disorder games and kits. The unit even helped two schools

with supplies that combat lice! The unit answered the needs of six different school districts and mini-grants were awarded to members and nonmembers alike. It is a rewarding activity for unit members.

Unit 21 has built a large number of "legislative buddies." They are busy right now writing to legislators about pension issues. Unit 21 also has an active team on the Legislative Committee. This team spent has time in Olympia this session visiting legislators from the 10th, 40th, 39th and 42nd districts, speaking clearly to each about the bills that would address some of the association's pension ben-

efit concerns. This is ongoing work and one in which all members can participate.

The Unit 21 board is planning a general meeting on March 25 at a local cafe and garden spot. It will be on a Saturday so that all interested school employees and retirees can attend. There will be a speaker and updated information on the legislative team's work.

The board members are each visiting school board meetings plus there is an educational meeting set for two of the elementary schools early in March. Information on preparing for retirement will be offered. Membership drives

are being planned but more unit members are needed to help with this activity.

Unit 22 Sno-Isle:

The unit's annual holiday luncheon was held in early December. Entertainment was provided by Kamiak High School Mixed Barber-shop Quartet, always a favorite with members. Toys and over \$1,000 were collected to support Everett's Christmas House.

Unit 22 gave \$10,000 in stipends to support projects in local schools.

At the beginning of March members enjoyed a private tour of the recently expanded Imagine Children's Museum in Everett. Afterwards, members caught up with each other during a brown bag lunch together.

Sno-Isle 22 membership is back to just shy of 1,000 members.

Unit 23 Sno-King:

October was celebrated with a catered brunch with a Shoreline District update by Superintendent **Dr. Susana Reyes**. **Linda Fitzgerald** and **Lynda Hughes** shared their experiences river cruising from Budapest, Hungary to Amsterdam, Netherlands.

At the unit's November catered luncheon, **George**

WSSRA Around The State

Smith from AMBA explained the many benefits WSSRA members can enjoy. Vice-President **Cathy Webb** shared the importance of volunteering using ideas gained at the WSSRA convention. **Karen McElliott**, grants coordinator, highlighted that the unit received applications for 36 grants from 16 schools that received funding this year. **Virg Rayton**, Washington Kids in Transition Coordinator, explained that the unit's service project will be moved from January to April.

The unit donated \$500 each to the Northshore Schools Foundation to be used for

homeless student services and the Shoreline PTA Council's program, "The Works," to purchase clothing for students in need.

Unit 32 Whatcom Co.:

Unit 32 has not been very busy since the last NW-1 coordinating council meeting was held in the fall 2022. The holiday season contributed to the activity level. The last two unit newsletters included requests for members to step-up and help continue unit operations. The unit is a vital organization but needs help from local members to en-

sure it will be active into the future. So far, one person has expressed interest in helping but many more are needed for the unit to survive. A few other units within WSSRA are experiencing this same difficulty in getting new leadership involved. Any helpful suggestions in getting unit members involved in leadership are welcomed.

Unit 32 awarded ten mini-grants to several school districts for a total of about \$3,500. The mini-grants will be used to enhance many student's learning experiences!

The unit's tired leadership continues working on the Unit 32 calendar with programs and activities for 2023!

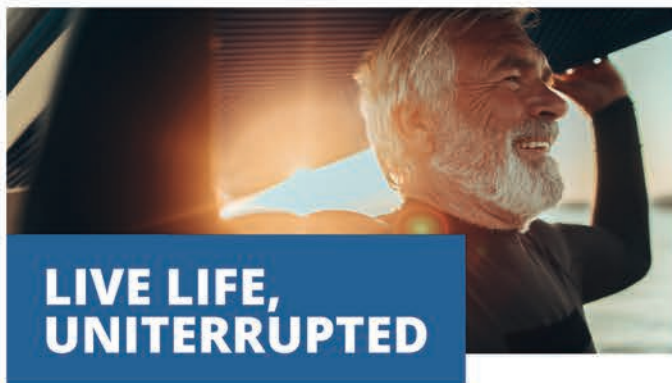
occupational therapy and physical therapy supplies, and musical instruments. The unit was glad so many paraeducators, office staff, and teachers applied for these grants as it was rewarding to see the difference these funds make in the lives of the students and staff. The unit has 160 members still teaching but only 2 of them requested grants this year. Unit members will reach out to others with mini-grant information as all staff are able to apply for grants up to \$500.

Two unit board members are retiring from some of their duties. The unit thanks **Nancy Tracy** for her service as secretary. Although she is resigning as unit secretary, she is continuing at the unit membership chair. Thank you to **Kerry Lohr** for being the unit treasurer for the past two years. In past years, she has held positions of vice president and secretary.

Unit board meetings are held usually on the second Monday of the month. A winter newsletter will be mailed to unit members.

Unit 16 East King:

Each year, East-King's executive board chooses a school to receive a \$1,000 check. This money is meant to augment funds for a school needing extra help meeting the basic needs of its students. **Pat Jo-vag** spearheaded this year's



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WSSRA - Washington State School Retirees' Association



NORTHWEST-2

Unit 6 Southwest King:

In January, the unit distributed 43 grants to staff in Federal Way and Highline School Districts. Thank you to **Karen Juhl (Adlum)** for overseeing the grant information and also to those that delivered the grants to the various schools. Some of the grants requested were for all kinds of books, including dictionaries, books written in Native American languages, class sets of books, and books to help guide math and science nights for parents. Also requested were water toys for kindergarten, math manipulatives, a national PE conference held in Seattle,

WSSRA Around The State



Unit 3 Clallam County: 2023 CCSRA mini-grants given at Port Angeles High School. Pictured are Bernie Brabant, Unit President Lora Brabant (and Daisy), Jarrett Hansen, Brooke Hoefler.

efforts. After contacting the Riverview School District superintendent, she determined that Carnation Elementary would most benefit from it this year. After speaking with the principal there, a donation form and check were sent to the school.

Mini-grant applications were due January 18. After that, the grant selection committee met to read, score, and discuss the applications. It took four hours for **Shirlee Hall, Pat Jovag, and Claire Fell** to complete the process. They awarded 26 mini-grants for up to \$300 each.

Following that meeting, applicants were reached by phone or email. Then their principals received emails informing them of the grant awards and

detailing the purposes of the funds. In the past, most principals have responded with positive acknowledgement of the efforts of their educators and gratitude for the grants.

Before COVID, most checks and WSSRA brochures were presented at staff meetings. Presenters had the opportunity to share information about the organization. Recently, checks and information have just been mailed to the schools. This year grants went for books, sports equipment, organizational materials, art supplies, special education equipment, math needs, sheet music for an orchestra and materials for a workshop club to build a buddy bench for a new elementary school.

Unit 19 Southeast King:

In January, **Joan Morgestern** and her mini-grant committee of **Judy Dotson** and **Tina Underdahl** met with fourteen teachers who had received mini-grants and two student teachers who had received scholarships from Unit 19 at Maple View Middle School in the Tahoma School District. At that event, **Joan, Judy, and Tina** were given thank you cards, and a photo was taken with all the participants by the local newspaper.

Unit 19 members **Karen Jones, Linda Hollingsworth, Sue Perez** and **Tina Underdahl** were given instruction by members of the Kent-Des Moines Garden Club about how to make "Love in the Cup" on February 6, 2023. They made forty Love in the Cups which were given to

residents at the Holden Retirement and Memory Center.

On March 7, 2023, Unit 19 members had a Zoom meeting. The presenter, Art Dolan, talked about women during the American Revolutionary War.

Unit 20 Seattle:

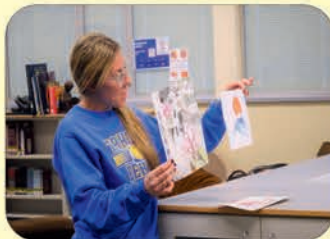
The Seattle Unit held board meetings by Zoom on December 8 and January 30. The unit held its most recent SSRA members' meeting/program on November 10 in the Cascade Room at the Mountaineers' Club on Sand Point Way. Since that event was extremely well received, the unit decided to hold another luncheon, at the same venue, on May 4. The speaker will be Dr. Lance Rhoades, presenting his "take" on another

Please visit us at...

WSSRA.ORG

The screenshot shows the WSSRA website with a navigation menu including: About, Membership, Legislative, Insurance Benefits, Calendars, Events, Webinars, Resources, Publications, Current News, WSSR-Foundation & Scholarships, AARP/NRTA updates, and Contact Us. Below the menu is a large banner image of a person hiking in a forest. Overlaid on the banner is the text "Join WSSRA Today" followed by a short paragraph about membership benefits and a "LEARN MORE" button.

WSSRA Around The State



Unit 19 Southeast King: The unit's mini-grant committee (*pictured, center/seated*) Tina Underdahl, Joan Morgenstern, and Judy Dotson recently visited Maple View Middle School in the Tahoma School District to deliver fourteen \$200 mini-grants to Maple View staff members to use for classrooms and other spaces. The unit received a special thank you from the school staff and was featured on the school district's social media and online platforms.

(*pictured bottom left*) Krystal Shook, 7th grade Language Arts and Social Studies teacher, used her grant money to purchase art supplies for students to "recreate the painting techniques and calligraphy from Imperial China" and create a learning experience that's "better than only reading the textbooks and answering questions."

Photos and information courtesy of James Stanley, Tahoma School District.

classic film. Also, during this meeting, the unit will honor SSRA members who are 85 or "better."

At the unit's January board meeting, it was agreed to have extra copies of the unit newsletter, "The Bulletin," printed and mailed to each of the one hundred or so public schools in Seattle. **Edith Ruby** and **Julie Neuhart** agreed to help with preparing and mailing the newsletter. This newsletter will also feature an ap-

plication form for the unit's mini-grants.

In both board meetings, discussions were held about the need to increase unit membership. The board is in the process of setting up an offer of free membership for up to a year if the new members sign up for automatic dues deduction.

The unit will, again, contribute \$25,000 to the Seattle Public Schools Scholarship Fund.

Unit 20 members attended the Northwest 2 Coordinating Council in-person on February 24 at the Holden Retirement facility located in the Southcenter Mall area. (The last meeting for this group was canceled due to snow.)

SOUTHWEST-3

Unit 3 Clallam County: Clallam County School Retirees' Association (CCSRA)

met at Joshua's Restaurant in Port Angeles on January 17 and February 21. The December 20 meeting was canceled due to snow.

The speaker in January was W. Ron Allen, Jamestown S'Klallam Tribal Chair and CEO. He explained some tribal history, economic activity and developments that contribute to the local community, and some future plans.

The February speaker was Roberta Grisot from the Clallam County Genealogical Society. This will be continued in March with a field trip to the Genealogical Society center in Port Angeles.

Mini-grants to Clallam County teachers and Peninsula College scholarships to be awarded this year will total \$55,459.93. This is made possible with funds from the CCSRA foundation and the Naddy grants from the estates of a former Port Angeles educator and her brother.

Several members continue to meet for a book club at a restaurant in Port Angeles on the second Thursday of each month throughout the year. People share about books they have read rather than everyone reading the same book. All are welcome.

Unit 8 Kitsap County:

In December, the unit met at the Meadow Meer Golf Club on Bainbridge Island. Attend-

WSSRA Around The State

ees brought unwrapped gifts to give to Kitsap Community Resources for Christmas. It was great food and all enjoyed visiting, as well as the Christmas decorations.

In January, the unit voted on officers for next year. Those elected include President **Doris Bucher**, Vice-President **Craig Miller**, Secretary **Patty Marz**, and Treasurer **Allison Morris**. Committee chairs include Historian **Cheryl Miller**, Sunshine Chair **Cathy McVicker**, Scholarships Chair **Sandy Deason**, and Programs Committee **Patty Marz**, **Cheryl Miller** and **Craig Miller**.

The unit is trying to increase the number of people who come to unit luncheons. Unit luncheons are held at the Kitsap Family Pancake House at 11:00 am (instead of 10:30 because of a change at the restaurant). All unit members are welcome to attend.

Unit board meetings are on the third Monday of the month at the Family Pancake House. Anyone who is a member is welcome and encouraged to share any ideas you may have. Thanks for your continued support.

Unit 14 Mason County:

The Unit continues to meet on a hybrid model, with remote attendees choosing the Zoom option for convenience. Most active members join in person in a meeting room of

a local restaurant over the lunch hour, the first Tuesday of each month. Guest speakers are invited for every meeting but are sometimes unable to attend. Each meeting includes an update on school issues, health in the community, and legislative activities.

Travis Couture, the only representative in the Mason County Legislative District who has been unable to attend, was invited to the January 3, 2023 meeting, but he was involved with orientation at the House of Representatives, and unable to attend by Zoom. The members received an update on the mini-grants from Secretary **Bonnie Rice**, and agreed to support eight food banks and shelters in Mason County, for \$900 total. WSSRA Executive Director **Alan Burke** shared legislative concerns and received a commitment from members to contact legislators. The buddy messages from WSSRA Legislative Director **Peter Diedrick** have been very helpful for this purpose.

The February 7, 2023, meeting included a presentation from the Mason Health team that serves the Shelton School District students in a part time clinic at the local YMCA, convenient to the high school, junior high, and middle school. Since the closing of the Planned Parenthood clinic in Shelton, students had to travel to Olympia or see their own physician.

Instead of supporting scholarships from the Unit, members preferred to promote the WSSRA scholarships. All high schools in the county have received the poster promoting the scholarships and reminder email from Unit President **Eileen Perfrement** about the deadline.

Eileen Perfrement met Travis Couture, newly elected State Representative, with a team from Thurston County. The meeting was in his office at the Capitol. Retirement and health care concerns were discussed, and he was attentive and took notes. He seemed sympathetic to retiree needs. **Eileen** and Vice President **Reva Fowler**, along with oth-

ers, met virtually with State Senator Drew MacEwen, who has been assigned to the Select Committee on Pension Policy. He has been supportive of WSSRA issues in his previous legislative position as Representative.

The unit is on track to meet goals of community service, increasing membership, supporting schools through grants and students through scholarships, and legislative contacts.

Unit 27 Pierce County:

A message from Unit President **Bob Duke**: "As New Years arrived, I reflected on our organization. One of my themes is, "You can tell the

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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
Marguerite Ro, Washington state director

Senior Citizens' Lobby

360-754-0207 WASENIORLOBBY.ORG

WSSRA Around The State

quality of a relationship by the greetings and goodbyes." As a school principal since 1978 I have had many opportunities to observe how staff enter and leave buildings. Looking for signs of staff burn out I could see folks that didn't engage when arriving or leaving. As a graduate school instructor at PLU I observed my students to make certain they understood the importance of greetings and goodbyes. The same is true in personal relationships. The couple who doesn't greet or engage when leaving is not moving together, they are moving apart.

In reflecting on the culture of our unit, I think the greetings and goodbyes are an essential component of our positive culture. **Carolyn Bjerke** and **Marianne Candioglos** welcome folks and check them in. They spread good will to folks as they arrive. **Diane Blair** always makes sure to engage all members before the meeting begins and makes sure to greet and acknowledge new folks, visitors, and guests. The time as folks arrive and get seated is a time for visiting. The lunch at our round tables where the visiting continues. The visiting reminds me of

Home on the Range, "Where seldom is heard a discouraging word and the skies are not cloudy all day." The meeting ends gradually with folks helping with clean up, putting our stuff away, saying goodbye and helping get folks to their cars.

And then there is **Karen Chapman**. Her table decorations are welcoming and demonstrate the importance we place on our meetings. Who wouldn't feel welcome with center pieces made with such love and care. Our board member greeters, **Edie** and

Ed Moersch always contact members before and after the meetings. They even make me feel welcome and important.

I would say PCSRA greetings and goodbyes are a sign of the health of our culture."

SOUTHWEST-4

Unit 5 Grays Harbor/Pacific Counties: The Grays Harbor Pacific unit met on January 25 at the Fishin' Hole restaurant in Montesano. Those present were **Judy Holliday, Shirley Joplin, Marge Leggett, Ron Crawford, Alan Burke**. The group scored and ranked the 19 GHPSRA mini-grant applications and awarded eight at \$400, one at \$260, and one at \$250. **Alan Burke** and **Tara Teitzel** will send emails to the winners (with a copy to their principals) and a regrets email to those who were not chosen. As is always the case in these situations, all of the grants applications were worthy, but the budget allowed for awarding ten.

The group continues to support Grays Harbor Community College with reviewing and awarding scholarships to student teachers this spring.

GHPSRA continually supports the Ocosta School District and their lunch buddy program.

Donations continue to Grays Harbor and Pacific County

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WSSRA Around The State

school libraries. The librarians are genuinely thankful for the books which have name plates inside in memory of their former retiree(s) that have passed away.

Unit 28 Thurston County:

Legislative Chair **Ann Chen-hall** has been very busy organizing both Zoom and in-person visits with the legislators who represent unit members.

The hospitality/luncheon team of **Vicki Carter, Bobbie Andreas, and Nancy Peebles** have planned a wide variety of interesting programs. The February guest was Hanford McCloud, Tribal Council member, the coordinator of the Nisqually Canoe Family and Cultural Specialist for the Nisqually Tribe. Cooperation between schools and the tribe is critical for the success for all students especially native students.

It was a pleasure to have Art Dolan back again in March. Art is the Past Commander of the George Rogers Clark Chapter of the Sons of the Sons of the Revolution. Once again, he presented an outstanding program, this time on Thomas Paine: Reflections on the Revolution.

Each April the Unit recognizes the mini-grant recipients by hosting them at lunch. Although having all attend would be wonderful, just a few teachers were able to get subs and attend, sharing

how they used their grant money. Teachers are given an opportunity to tell how they used the funds and also to have a leisurely lunch while sharing stories and ideas with other teachers from different districts.

Noting that baby diapers are costly, the Unit has begun a new community service project. Members can contribute disposable diapers or make a monetary donation. A suggestion at the board meeting was to add formula, so that will be included. All will be given to the "Other Bank" which provides products that cannot be purchased with SNAP benefits. Thanks to **Sally Jones and Patty Gee** for organizing this.

SW 4 Board Representative **Gail Feagins** has gathered all units' scholarship readers including **Pam Burke** representing Unit 28, to select this year's recipients. In the fall members made face-to-face contacts with career centers in every high school in an effort to better publicize the scholarships.

EAST-5

Unit 9 Kittitas Co.:

At a recent board meeting, it was decided to continue meeting in person in 2023. News about the education grants will be available soon. A newsletter was sent to members the end of January.



Unit 8 Kitsap County: Unit members visited their legislators from the 23rd and 26th Districts in January. Pictured in Senator Emily Randall's office are Craig and Cheryl Miller, Senator Emily Randall, Patty Marz and Jim Hunt. Unit members appreciated the senators or representatives that met with the group and felt that the meetings were very productive.

The February meeting was on Tuesday, the 21st at Rosewood Clubhouse in Ellensburg. Free lunch was served to those in attendance. The program was by **Paul Schaffer** of Yakima, he shared his extensive postcard collection. Guests at general meetings are always welcome.

The April 18 meeting will be at the Putnam Senior Center in Cle Elum at 12 noon. Free lunch will be served by the Center staff. Legislative actions will be discussed. A likely program will be a spokesperson from the COAL Community Center in Ronald.

The May 16 meeting and lunch will be at Rosewood at noon. Likely program about

the 100th Anniversary of the Ellensburg Rodeo.

Thanks are due to the present officers who now have served for several years due to no elections during the COVID years. President **Louie Osmonovich**, Vice President **Doug Murphy**, Secretary **Mary Christensen**, Treasurer **Remi Davis**. Also thanks to committees chairs: **Tim Bow, Cathy Murphy, June Fischer, Darlene Carlton**.

Unit 34 Yakima Co.:

YCSRA general meeting program on February 6 featured Dan Young, an active EMT and is member **Peggy Young's** son. His topic, "Just in Case,"

WSSRA Around The State



Unit 4 Columbia Basin: Unit members enjoying a field trip to Moses Lake Museum and Art Center. Left to right, Louis Logan and his wife, Helen Preston, Shirley Vincent, Sue Beall, Gayle Talbot, Lanita Pomeroy and Karen Schafer.

provided information about being prepared for health and other possible emergency situations for seniors.

Twenty-nine YCSRA active members applied and were granted \$11,965 in mini-grants. One school district, Highland, was clearly on top with a record of ten grants awarded.

Every month at YCSRA general meetings, members are asked to respond to a question of the month. A recent question, "What do you enjoy most about winter weather?" had some interesting answers: **Nancy Lindgren** - "I love to shovel snow. Really, I do!" **Nick Schultz** - "When my snow thrower starts on the first

pull..." Some people just want to sit in front of the fire, but many appreciate how snow beautifies the landscape.

EAST-6

Unit 2 Chelan-Douglas:

This year the Chelan-Douglas unit increased the amount of the mini-grants they awarded to active members. CDSRA active members could apply for \$250 mini-grants, a \$50 increase over last year. Two \$500 mini-grants were also awarded, this was a new aspect to this project. Membership committee member, **Vinnie Lee**, did a wonderful job of organizing the distribution of the grants at the member's

faculty meetings. Along with presenting the grants, it's a great opportunity to encourage potential members to join and apply for the next round of grants.

The unit legislative representatives, **Terry Sloan** and **Mary Perkins**, have been involved in the legislative update meetings and are making plans to meet with legislators.

The February membership meeting featured Beth Statler who shared information about volunteering with "Hand in Hand Immigration Services." This organization helps legal, permanent residents with naturalization. February also brought the "Twinnucussion" event to the Performing Arts Center and CDSRA sponsored the event so students from around the area could attend a live performance.

Unit 4 Columbia Basin:

Columbia Basin Unit 4 presented educational grants to twenty-three school employees for the 2022-2023 school year. Ephrata School District: Columbia Ridge Elementary – **Ronda Billingsley, Ali Mantese** and **Judy Dillin**; Grant Elementary – **Laura Collins** and **Jennifer Baum**; Ephrata Middle School – **Tina Mullings**. Moses Lake School District: Columbia Middle School – **Jennifer Kostelnik**; Groff Elementary – **Kim Francisco, Candice Pitts, Megan Cox** and **Carina Cruz**; Peninsula El-

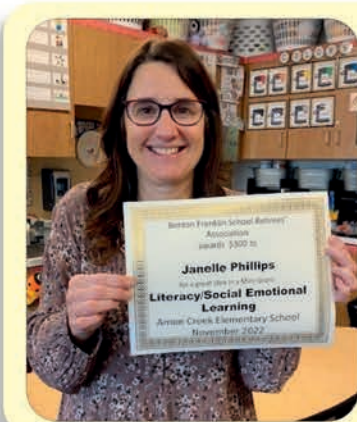
ementary – **Joan Dopps** and **Debbie Horney**; Knolls Vista Elementary – **Bill Bertram, Meghan Lamb** and **Brenda Welch Mathis**; Lakeview Terrace Elementary – **Rena Janke Wright**; Sage Point Elementary – **Anna Davis**; North Elementary – **William Thurmond**; Park Orchard Elementary – **Emerson Ferguson**. Othello School District, Scootney Springs Elementary – **Lynette Rackham**. Wahluke School District, Morris Schott Elementary – **Jan Bender**. Wilson Creek School District – **Jackie Floetke**.

Several CBSRA members recently spent a chilly winter morning on an indoor field trip to the Moses Lake Museum and Art Center, where they enjoyed an informative tour of the exhibits and art show. Those who attended were Co-Presidents **Lanita Pomeroy** and **Helen Preston**, **Shirley Vincent**, **Sue Beall**, **Gayle Talbot**, **Louis Logan** and **Karen Schafer**. After the tour, some of the members ate lunch together at a local restaurant.

Four unit members participated in the Moses Lake march and program honoring the life and legacy of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. on January 16. The group included Co-President **Lanita Pomeroy**, **Pat Simmons**, **Louis Logan** and **Gayle Talbot**.

The January luncheon was attended by thirteen CBSRA

WSSRA Around The State



Unit 29 Benton-Franklin: Janelle Phillips, an educator with the Kennewick School District, recently received a \$300 mini-grant from the unit. She used the grant funds for literacy and social emotional learning items.

members. The group listened to a presentation by a representative from the Moses Lake Fire Department, who spoke about fire safety.

Unit 15 Okanogan:

Okanogan County School Retirees met in January and February at the Community Presbyterian Church of Omak. The change of venue also meant a change to a 10:00 am meeting time which included coffee and goodies rather than lunch.

Unit Scholarship Committee, Sybil Wehmeyer and Barb Christensen reminds members to advertise the Unit's May 1 date for submission of unit scholarship applications. Applicants must have graduated from an OCSRA area high school and be pursuing an educational degree with a goal of teaching in a public high school. This year's award is \$1,500 as set by the Unit's scholarship board of trust-

ees—**Dr. Richard Johnson, Donna Sanford, and Dee Blank.**

January's program was presented by two of the Unit's active members—Okanogan Superintendent **Steve Quick** and **Roy Johnson**, Okanogan Alternative High School - outreach principal and teacher. Quick detailed February levy items; **Johnson** told of the offerings for alternative learning in the Okanogan School District.

EAST-7

Unit 25 Spokane Area:

SAREA celebrated the holidays with a fabulous luncheon at CenterPlace in Spokane Valley on Wednesday, December 14. It was the first time the unit had gathered together since COVID and everyone had a wonderful time saying hello to good friends and sharing a delicious meal together.

Attendees were pleased to have NEWESD 101 Superintendent Robert Roettger and STCU Community Relations Manager Kristen Piscopo join for the luncheon.

The E-7 region was well represented by, E-7 District Representative **Linda Marler** and her husband Martin, along with Coordinating Council Chair **Don Kackman**. **Marilyn Shaw** was awarded WSSRA's honorary membership for a member over 90 years old, who faithfully served the local and state organizations for over 20 years.

The music director at East Valley High School, Mr. Christopher Lane and his students, the Strolling Strings, entertained the gathering with festive musical numbers and dances. Cheryl Richards, the events coordinator at CenterPlace, decorated the room

with holiday cheer, complete with a roaring fireplace! Thank you to all who helped to make the celebration a huge success and to all the members who attended.

Unit 33 Whitman Co.:

After a wonderful November luncheon, Unit 33 members have been enjoying the holidays and watching the snow come and go. The group met in Colfax and St. Patrick Parish Hall for a catered luncheon.

There were many questions by those who considered changing Medicare supplement insurance. E-7 Representative and Unit President **Linda Marler** fielded some questions and connected others to WSSRA Executive Director **Alan Burke** and PEBB officials.

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WSSRA Around The State



Unit 29 Benton-Franklin: Unit member Cathy Osborn (*pictured at left, standing*) asks a question of the Superintendent's Panel held during the unit's January meeting. Superintendents from the area's three largest school districts, Dr. Shelley Redinger (Richland), Dr. Michelle Whitney (Pasco), Dr. Traci Pierce (Kennewick), attended the unit's luncheon.

Unit President **Linda Marler** and her husband, Martin, and **Don Kackman** were guests of SAREA for a fabulous Christmas luncheon at the Spokane Valley Events Center. The ESD 101 superintendent was in attendance. **Marilyn Shaw** was presented with an honorary membership.

Unit 33 will meet again in March.

EAST-8

Unit 1 Clarkston/Asotin/Pomeroy: Unit 1 always takes the month of January off to regroup for the new year. The executive board, however, did meet and formulated a plan for the rest of the unit meetings. Thank you to President **Kay Andersen**, Vice President **Judie Hanley**, Secretary **Bonnie**

Hill, Membership Chair **Alison Hays**, Retirement Chair **Kathi Meshishnek**, and Outreach Chair **Sami Tuschhoff**.

The unit is very excited to have finally gotten the "go-ahead" from local school principals that they are allowing unit members to come into their buildings again. Unit members plan to attend staff meetings to begin recruiting in person again!

Another idea the unit is working on is to connect with active staff members that are within five years of retiring by having an information minisession. This program doesn't have a name yet but is intended to supplement the pre-retirement Zoom seminars that WSSRA is providing. The plan is for a few unit members to meet with these staff at their schools and offer any assistance as they make their plans for retirement – either by answering questions or connecting them to resources. The goal is to help them realize what WSSRA can do for them when they do retire by opening that communication

now rather than the actual year they will be retiring.

Unit programs are looking great for the rest of the year. February's program featured the new Hospitality and Culinary Arts program at Lewis-Clark State College. In March, members will hear how they can help with the "Yes for CHS" levy campaign. In April, attendees will hear how they can volunteer through a non-profit agency called Interlink. In May, a lunch and tour of the Pataha Flour Mill in Pomeroy (about 45 minutes from the LC valley) is planned.

Unit 29 Benton-Franklin: Unit 29 began the new year with an early luncheon on January 9 to gain information from superintendents about local bond and levy elections held on February 14. Members were enthusiastic and 70+ were in attendance to hear from **Dr. Traci Pierce** of Kennewick, **Dr. Shelley Redinger** of Richland, and **Dr. Michelle Whitney** of Pasco. These elections came with urgency as several lo-

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WSSRA Around The State

cal districts suffered through double levy failures in 2022. Many unit members served on the citizen bond and levy committees and rallied at schools, planted yard signs, as well as planning with other citizens in support of public schools.

The unit is excited to assist with planning for the WSSRA Convention which will be June 5-7, 2023 in Pasco. **Dr. Michelle Whitney**, superintendent of the Pasco School District will be an opening speaker. A locally trained teacher and administrator she is always a delight to hear. She is also an ardent supporter of Teacher Academies in Pasco High Schools. A grass roots approach to "grow your own." The unit is also planning for baskets for the convention now.

Thank you to WSSRA for development and distribution of posters advertising the WSSRA Foundation scholarships for future educators. The posters were distributed to local high schools and colleges which also resulted in many supportive conversations.

President **Victoria Russell** is now in her fourth term as unit president. **Victoria** is a retired teacher from Hanford High School in Richland. Last September, you may have met her at the Great Wolf Lodge as she anchored the ticket donations for baskets table at the WSSRA Convention in 2022.

Upcoming unit luncheon programs will include: March – Master Gardener presentation by BFSRA member **Alice Allison**; April – Juneteenth scholarships and pageant; May – Celebration of life and installation of officers.

Current and future program information news can be found on the unit webpage: bfrsaunit29.blogspot.com and the newsletter.

Unit 31 Walla Walla-Columbia: Unit 31 December luncheon featured the Berney Elementary choir of Walla Walla School District. The choir delighted the audience with many selections for the holiday season. It was a student led choir, a student emcee introduced each song and shared a small antidote for each song.

The January luncheon brought three area superintendents to the meeting. The small school district of Touchet (205 students enrolled), was represented by Robert Elizondo. He mentioned the loss of students for a variety of reasons. He informed the group of the school district report card. A handout on assessment scores for the school district in math, ELA and science was shared. The superintendent from the middle-sized College Place School District (approximately 1,200 students) discussed that the city of College Place is going through a

boom in housing and this in turn is affecting the student population. **James Fry** spoke to the group about the issue of increased enrollment and the effect this is having on buildings. The district has purchased property to build another school. At this time no decision has been made on the level to be housed at this new property. The large school district, Walla Walla, with approximately 5,000 students, was next on the agenda. Superintendent **Dr. Wade Smith** articulated that students need help around mental health. This was a common theme of the three school districts. Each superintendent shared what their district is doing to assist students and staff to address concerns.

The February luncheon speaker was the Carnegie Picture Lab, located in Walla Walla. Carnegie Picture Lab believes

strongly that the arts are essential for a child's healthy development and holistic educational experience. The arts build 21st century skills and play a key role in the overall vitality of a community. As the only local nonprofit organization dedicated to creative art programs for young people, Carnegie Picture Lab fills a critical niche in the Walla Walla educational and cultural landscape. Carnegie Picture Lab programs are supported, in part, by a grant from the Washington State Arts Commission and the National Endowment for the Arts.

Over the course of this school year, Unit 31 members have been going to each of the schools and talking to staff about WSSRA. Using the carrot of possibly getting a mini-grant, the unit has enrolled about 15 new members from the active teachers in Unit 31.

ADDRESS CHANGES

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and promote action relevant
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*Dedicated to preserving, protecting and improving
the benefits of educational retirees.*

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

Don't delay – ask today

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