

WASHINGTON STATE SCHOOL RETIREES' ASSOCIATION

The Journal

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



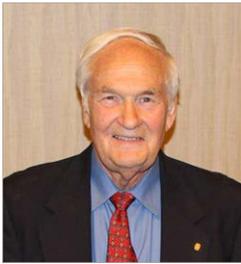
MARCH/APRIL 2024

VOLUME 77, ISSUE NO. 4



"Mukilteo Lighthouse"
watercolor painted by Joan Penewell, Unit 22 Sno-Isle member

WSSRA At Work For You



A message from the president

The New Look Volunteer



by Ron Crawford, president

Much has been said about the future of volunteers within our association. Each of our units, coordinating councils, committees and boards are run by volunteers. The more volunteers and participation, the better everything runs. This, in turn, contributes to the vitality and longevity of our association.

In recent years, many types of organizations locally and throughout the country, are asking where have all the volunteers gone and why aren't members volunteering to actively participate in the organization anymore? Sound familiar?

As we have explored these questions for our own organization, we are learning that engaging volunteers may look different than in years past. So, what does the new volunteer look like? Research tells us this!

Up-and-coming volunteers...

- Are usually busy and tend to volunteer for several organizations.
- Are tech savvy and want to use this process.
- Want to make a difference but not necessarily a contribution.
- Don't want to work with less than competent volunteers.
- Want the position simplified and expect to be empowered.
- Above all, you must do the ASK.

For WSSRA, we need to expand our thinking to include the new breed of volunteers or face a continued loss of committed participants. Hopefully, your unit will implement these ideas in your recruitment process.



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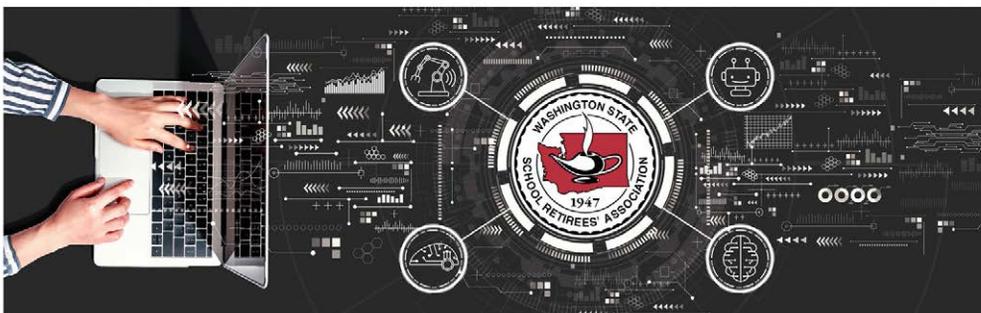
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The New Look Volunteer



Tech Savy Busy Professionals making a difference

THE JOURNAL
WASHINGTON STATE
SCHOOL RETIREES'
ASSOCIATION

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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:

April 5, 2024
for May/June 2024 issue

June 15, 2024
for July/Aug./Sep. 2024 issue

WSSRA At Work For You



A message from the executive director

Volunteering, Mini-Grants, and Scholarships



by Alan Burke, Ed.D., executive director

WSSRA members volunteer in their communities. A lot!

Often in the hustle and bustle of legislative advocacy we forget that WSSRA stands for more than just lobbying for pensions and health care benefits. To be sure, advocacy is at the center of what we do and do well, but it is not the only thing our organization does.

In fact, one of our purposes, as stated in our mission statement, is to “foster involvement by school retirees in educational and community activities and organizations.” This means community service, which is a central focus in each of our thirty units.

From back-to-school supply contributions, to holiday food drives, to socks for kids, to Teddy Bear Teas, to Books for Babies, and onto senior citizen help during tax season, WSSRA volunteers donate thousands of hours to helping those in need across the state.

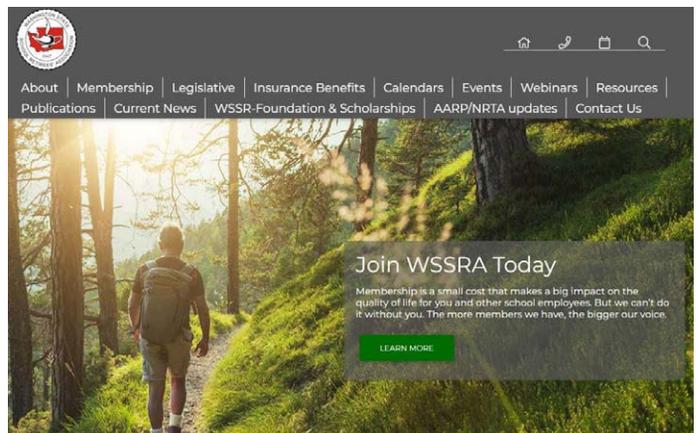
Add to this scholarship programs for high school seniors and student teachers, plus mini-grants that support teachers and para-professionals with on-site project funding, it is easy to see that WSSRA members fill important community needs. And we can't forget about our members who volunteer in the schools tutoring kids or reading to those living in care facilities.

All of this philanthropy is sometimes forgotten in Olympia as we work with legislators and policy makers to maintain and improve pensions. This is unfortunate and needs to be remedied.

Pre-COVID, during the 2019-20 school year, we asked unit leaders to keep track of volunteer hours, mini-grants distributed, and scholarships awarded. The numbers are impressive: from June of 2019 through May of 2020 our thirty units volunteered 133,000 hours, gave out \$135,000 in mini-grants, and awarded \$276,000 in scholarships to high school seniors and student teachers. Giving continues into 2024. For example, Unit 31 Walla Walla-Columbia tracked over 800 volunteer hours by unit members in the past eight months.

So, when a prospective member asks what WSSRA is all about, be sure to mention the community giving that all of our units do. And be sure to remind your local legislators of our philanthropy when visiting with them. To be sure, legislators need to be informed, and reminded, that we are much more than an organization that wants their vote on pension matters.

We are all about advocating for pension and health care benefits for K-12 retirees. But we also care deeply about giving back to our communities.



Please visit us at WSSRA.ORG

Legislative News



Mid-Session Legislative Update



by Peter Diedrick, legislative director

The 2024 Washington State Legislative Session is bustling along. Legislators attempted to tackle over 1,000 bills in the first month. This is a short 60-day supplemental session that is scheduled to end March 7 (around the time you'll receive this publication).

As of mid-February, when the *Journal* went to press, most of WSSRA's legislation – including a Plan 1 COLA for 2024 – was moving through the legislative process ahead of schedule. As always, there have been amendments and surprises. There is an adage in lobbying – it's your legislation until a legislator sponsors it, then it's their legislation.

Plan 1 COLA Update

House Bill 1985, the legislation to provide a Plan 1 COLA in 2024, passed the House Appropriations Committee. As of mid-February, HB 1985 was waiting on the House floor calendar for a vote before it could be considered by the Senate.

A committee amendment lowered the maximum payable COLA. The previous bill provided a 3% increase up to \$125 per month. The amended HB 1985 will provide a 3% pension increase up to \$110 per month. Please check the WSSRA website (wssra.org) for more recent updates.

Health Insurance Legislation Update

Retiree health insurance has multiple moving pieces this year. WSSRA's position was "no cuts." With the current health benefits being a \$400 million non-contractual state budget item, getting through the legislative session without reductions is always an accomplishment.

The Governor proposed increases to premium subsidies – what we call the Medicare Eligible Healthcare Benefit. The current policy is 50% percent of the premium, up to \$183 per month (double that for retiree and spouse). Governor Inslee's proposal would have increased the benefit to 60% of the premium up to \$193 per month. Wonderful news except that it came with the following giant caveat: it was paid for by skipping a 2024 Plan 1 COLA. WSSRA supports any improvement to medical benefits, but not at the expense of COLAs for members.

The Washington State Healthcare Authority – the state agency with oversight over PEBB retiree insurance – is starting another review of the Uniform Medical Plan (UMP). The retiree version of Uniform is a traditional Medicare program administered by Regence. A massive provider network, worldwide coverage, and comprehensive benefits make the plan highly popular. It is also becoming prohibitively expensive. Currently the plan premium sits at \$532 per person, per month. It will likely exceed \$600 in 2025. The Healthcare Authority believes they may have found a way to slightly restructure the plan so it achieves additional federal funding to lower premium prices. The WSSRA legislative team is attending these meetings and will keep you posted on any developments.

Advocacy for Plan 2 and 3 Members

The Plan 1 COLA and maintaining the \$183 per month Medicare health care benefit are unquestionably the top issues for WSSRA. TRS 1 and PERS 1 are the only pension plans without Cost-of-Living Adjustments and members in those plans deserve ample attention. That said, nearly all our other advocacy work affects TRS/SERS Plans 2 and 3.

This legislative session, WSSRA sponsored HB 2471 to give a pension bonus to Plan 2/3 members who continue working past 30 years of service. State Representative Shelly Kloba (Legislative District 1 - Bothell) authored this bill and got it started. With the bill in the system, we can get financial information about the proposal to help move it forward.

Over the past few years, we've been able to work with legislators on a number of key issues, including eliminating some return-to-work restrictions for early retirees, giving Plan 2 retirees more access to PEBB retiree insurance, improving

Visit WSSRA.ORG
click on "Legislative"

Information about legislative priorities, session updates, contacting your legislators, bill reports, and more...

Legislative, continued on page 7...

WSSR-PAC News



The PAC is Back



by Mary Wallon and Edith Ruby, WSSR-PAC

What WSSR-PAC can achieve depends on **you**, the members. Your contributions to the PAC, and the information you provide about candidates, are the basis for the PAC's decisions. Some contribute yearly, or make a monthly contribution on the website, or use the form below. Unit low-cost fundraisers keep the PAC's treasury increasing at a steady pace. At the June convention you can select from the variety of items made for purchase under the direction of WSSR-PAC Treasurer Lora Brabant. And please keep in mind the convention project begun last year, bottles of wine for auction at each table, brought by members in units all over the state.

In addition to monetary contributions, we need information. It is important that we hear from you about incumbent members of our state legislature, and challengers who could help us achieve our goals: a permanent Plan 1 COLA, maintenance of the PEBB Medicare benefit, and Plans 2 and 3 pension enhancements. Your information is from the grassroots of our organization, and we need to have that information before (or, immediately after) the Primary election on August 6, 2024. As

soon as primary winners are determined, the PAC must go into high gear to decide which candidates deserve our financial support and which candidates to recommend for endorsement.

How is this information from you passed on? Units, coordinating councils, and individuals may contact any member of the WSSR-PAC executive committee. In 2022, the PAC distributed \$28,000, and this year the hope is to support even more legislators. We support them by contributing what we can to assist as many as possible of those we count as allies. Also, we review the records of all candidates who are called to our attention and recommend some for endorsement by the WSSRA executive board. Endorsements are published in the *Journal* in time for members to use that information when voting. Your input into the PAC's decisions is vital.

Both money and information are contributions that the PAC needs and appreciates. Each and every member of WSSRA can help. Thank you!

Support the WSSR-PAC — Contribute Today!

Contributor Name and Spouse (if applicable):

Address:

City, State, Zip:

Unit #/Name:

Contribution Amount \$

In memory of (if any):

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

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

Signature: _____

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

LOW COST FUNDRAISER FORM

WSSR-PAC.ORG > click on "Contribute Now" > Click on "Contribute" > Scroll down to Low Cost Fundraisers

Supporting Future Educators



WSSR Foundation: Growing New School Employees



by Ann Chenhall, WSSR Foundation president

Springtime brings thoughts of seed catalogs and garden plans for many of us. The WSSR Foundation is working to grow school employees of the future through our scholarships. Please make sure that colleges near you with education programs have the new posters with QR codes for students who are nearing student teaching or a school internship. Two \$2,500 scholarships are available in each WSSRA district. Posters are available from coordinating councils or the WSSRA office. The deadline for student teaching/internship scholarship applications is April 1, 2024.

We are all beginning to think of our fun Wenatchee convention in June. Maybe that makes you think of gift baskets and the silent auction! This is one way we grow our Foundation.

It is always fun to pair a good cause with a fun event. Maybe your unit has already been brainstorming ideas and collecting goodies. We will have the tickets ready. Plan for those multiple ticket deals.

Our Foundation board had a very productive January meeting. After reviewing the updated bylaws draft, we voted to send them on to the convention delegates for adoption. Dottie Stevens reported on her pilot program to have colleges choose recipients of the student teaching/internship scholarships. We have invited Bruce Boyer, WSSRA finance chair, to attend our meetings to provide investment assistance. We are looking for a Trustee candidate, from NW1 or NW2 (Marianne Harvey is temporarily filling the position). Welcoming Spring plans!

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

Please Print

Donor Name _____ Phone _____

Mailing Address _____ City _____ St _____ Zip _____

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

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

In Honor Memorial \$ _____

Name _____

Person to be Notified _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

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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

Foundation Contributors

Mary Bly - donation

Jeanne Floyd - RMD donation

Jeanne Harmon - donation

Marianne Harvey - RMD donation

Mona Stacy - in memory of Donovan Stacy

Ken "Casey" and Millie Stenehjelm - in memory of Ric Pilgrim

Chelan/Douglas SRA - in memory of Roberta Ahnemiller, Randy Cooper, Mickee Crowe, Margaret Danner, Shirley Stanifer

Seattle SRA - in memory of deceased members

Southeast King SEA - in memory of Carol Collins

Southwest King SRA - in memory of James Glennon, Marilynn Greening, Annette James, Marvel Mulliken

Thurston Co. SRA - Gene Forrester Scholarship

Scholarship Applications for Student Teaching/Internship Due Soon

Washington State School Retirees' Association (WSSRA) invites college students currently enrolled in a college of education, pursuing a certificate in education and doing student teaching or an internship in the 2024-25 school year in Washington State to apply:

Neil D. Prescott Student Teaching/Internship Scholarships – \$2,500 each

sixteen total awarded – two in each WSSRA region

Scholarship applications due April 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

Legislative, continued from page 4...

investment opportunities for Deferred Compensation participants, and making TRS/SERS 2 the default plan for new employees who do not fill out their retirement plan paperwork.

Month of Death

A distressing issue affecting retirees in all retirement plans is the "month of death" policy. Current law requires a pension to stop payment on the day of a retirees' death. Usually, the state must contact the surviving spouse or estate and collect a refund. It's a disappointing and traumatic event for the survivors. House Bill 2013 would have addressed this by paying the pension payment for the full month of death. Unfortunately, this bill appears to be stalled for this session. A half-measure, House Bill 2481, has taken the other bill's place for now. HB 2481 would pay the retirees' PEBB insurance payment during the month of death. The outcome will be decided soon.

2024 Legislative Interim

The spring edition of *The Journal* will have a final report on the 2024 Legislative Session and a 2024 election preview. Expectations for the 2024 election are driving policymaking during this legislative session. All state-wide elected officials, half the State Senate, and the entire State House of Representatives are up for election, along with federal positions. Six citizen initiatives will be on the ballot, several of which would affect state tax revenues. Budget writers in Olympia are a bit spooked and have been implementing cost cutting measures, hence the amendments to WSSRA's bills this current legislative session.

Stay connected

You can get timely updates on urgent legislative matters by signing up for the WSSRA mailing list at wssra.org.

Membership: Strength In Numbers

Share Your Ideas for Membership Building

 *by Don Parks, membership committee chair*

As we welcomed 2024, we found our membership holding steady compared with previous months. As of early February 2024, our membership is at 16,932 with 197 pending memberships (active and retired). In comparison, this time last year we had 16,966 members. The recent blind mailing by AMBA brought in 111 members. We are showing a downturn in the number of deceased for the month of January, totaling 16. This is less than half the usual deceased total.

The number of member emails on file with the WSSRA office is increasing. Currently, we have about 7,743 member emails. Providing your email offers WSSRA a quick and inexpensive way of communicating with members on important topics such as legislation, webinars, and other events for members. Member email lists are not shared.

As we continue through 2024, there is good work happening in terms of membership building. During the height of the pandemic, many units experienced hurdles in being able to connect with school building leadership and attend staff meetings. Recently, several units have been able to reconnect with local school staff. For those units who are finding success, you are invited to share your ideas with the general membership at the June convention in Wenatchee. I understand one Western Washington local unit is having good results. I also can report that Columbia Gorge Unit 10 is continuing to grow as our newest unit. Hats off to them! At the council of chairs meeting in April, we will be planning our convention leadership session.

There are many ideas to contact school districts or individual school buildings to distribute WSSRA brochures and make

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 SERS2 SERS3
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



presentations to staff. One fun and effective way to make in-person contact is to present mini-grant awards to educators at their school. Another opportunity is to deliver scholarship awards in the spring. During benefits events or other staff gatherings, make presentations to staff about retirement planning. Many are interested in learning about our legislative work to improve pensions and insurance coverage. In any case, perseverance may be needed.

As we continue to bounce back from Covid days, our membership levels are staying consistent and slightly climbing. We have great ideas for making contact and sharing what WSSRA can do to enhance the educational experience and help plan a comfortable retirement.

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
Marguerite Ro, Washington state director

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

For Your Health

Healthy Lifestyle Habits

submitted by Jody Freepons, state health committee

A sampling of the Healthy Lifestyle Habits list created by Jennifer Kropf, founder and chief editor of Healthy Happy Impactful® (healthyhappyimpactful.com)...

1. Breathe in fresh air every day.
2. Move your body for 30 minutes every day.
3. Prioritize sleep - get those 8 hours!
4. Eat a salad.
5. Try a new recipe.
6. Take a walk at lunch.
7. Use the stairs instead of the elevator.
8. Wear sunscreen.
9. Have a regular dance party.
10. Floss.
11. Drink a glass of water when you wake up.
12. Cook at home more often instead of eating out.
13. Reduce or give up soda.
14. Go on a regular walk with pets or family.
15. Stay out of the middle aisles at the store as it's where the majority of processed food lurks.
16. Join a new workout class for a month.
17. Plan your meals a week in advance.
18. Drink a glass of water before eating.
19. Buy smaller plates to eat from.
20. Stop eating after dinner.
21. Cut back or eliminate alcohol and caffeine.
22. Make one healthy snack or meal every week.
23. Aim for one extra vegetable in your meal.
24. Eat less meat.
25. Include strength training in your exercise.
26. Listen to music that lifts you up.
27. Get outside regularly and open your shades daily.
28. Laugh often.
29. Call a friend or family member to check on them.
30. Volunteer your time.

Pick a few habits and start today!

Thinking About Retirement?



Certificated and Classified Employees:

If you are within one to five years of retirement, you will want to attend these webinars (*no fee*) to learn about retirement plans, medical/dental options, sick leave buyout, Social Security options, and Medicare.

Please join us for the two-part Pre-Retirement Webinars

Sponsored by WSSRA

Thursday, March 14, 2024

4:30 pm via Zoom

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

Tuesday, March 19, 2024

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**

Or, scan the QR code



Questions: Email: tara@wssra.org | phone: 360-413-5496



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KEEP LIVING YOUR WAY.

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- Discounts on Travel, Dining & more

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myambabenefits.info/wssra

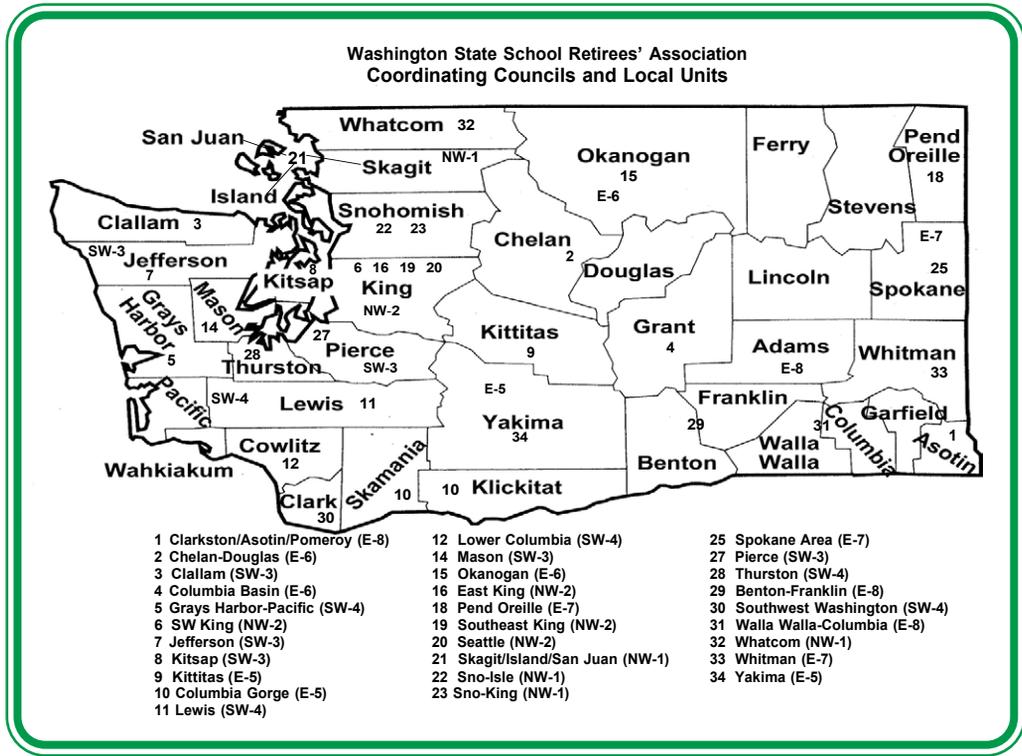
Washington State School Retirees' Association



WSSRA Around The State

What's happening in...

From the Coordinating Councils and Local Units



21 board members. Information was shared on the workings of WSSRA and how unit members can be involved in the activities that make the unit valuable and useful. Three members agreed to serve as a working chair – either taking on a job or partnering with another member. This type of activity makes it more welcoming to those just starting out.

Unit 21 is fortunate to have some dedicated and seasoned board members. Now, the unit is even more fortunate since five women stepped up and are taking on committees or joining committees in an effective way. It is a breath of fresh air and an infusion of new energy!

NORTHWEST-1

Unit 21 Skagit/Island/San Juan: Unit 21 Legislative Committee members have spent several days talking on Zoom meetings with legislators from the 10th, 39th, 40th and 42nd legislative districts. Members focused on supporting bills that would give Plan 1 school retirees a one-time 3% COLA. Another issue would be giving Plan 2 and 3 school employees an opportunity to work over 30 years and get a .5 bonus year on their retirement. This would be an attempt to keep valued staff and would help alleviate the issue of not enough school

employees to meet the needs. On February 26, the unit provided a program on "critical emergency services available in your community" at the Royal Star Restaurant in Mount Vernon. Speakers **Bill DeHon**, volunteer support officer and Skagit County Coroner Hayley Thompson offered information on emergency related services and on the Critical Incident Stress Management Volunteer program.

Unit members are teaming up with other groups to get into the schools, to reach out and let the school populations know who we are and to build partnerships. Nancy

Jenny, League of Women Voters of Skagit County and **Barbara Robinson**, retiree and League member visited the civics class at the Sedro Woolley High School on January 16. The presentation was on registering young voters. As a result, about ten students registered to vote. The League provided posters, flyers, and the registration forms. Barbara provided the contacts and the teaching skills. This event rewarded the unit with meaningful contacts with the classroom teacher, the librarian, and the school principal.

In February, a workshop was held for the newly active Unit

Unit 22 Sno-Isle:

Sno-Isle 22 members celebrated February with a splash of creativity. Unit member **Joan Penewell** led the group in exploring the basics of watercolor landscape painting. Participants showed off their masterpieces in an impromptu art display. The brown bag lunch event with snacks and delectable desserts revealed that Joan is not the only artistic member of Sno-Isle 22.

All 25 of the Unit's \$400 classroom stipends were delivered to school employees in Snohomish County to help with projects and enhance student learning.

WSSRA Around The State

Unit 23 Sno-King:

Unit 23 SKSR leadership took advantage of the winter break to work on membership initiatives, as well as fine-tune details on spring programs. Hours of planning time went into confirming program venues and activities. Logistics for a unique opportunity for SKSR members to tour Climate Pledge Arena were confirmed.

The SKSR scholarship team worked on updating application documents and verifying that online access is functional for potential senior applicants in the spring. The teacher mini-grants team completed the remainder of the presentations to deliver these awards to deserving classroom teachers. Several mini-grant requests were received for the second round. Mini-grant awards were delivered to recipients in February.

Finally, unit leaders enjoyed some valuable down-

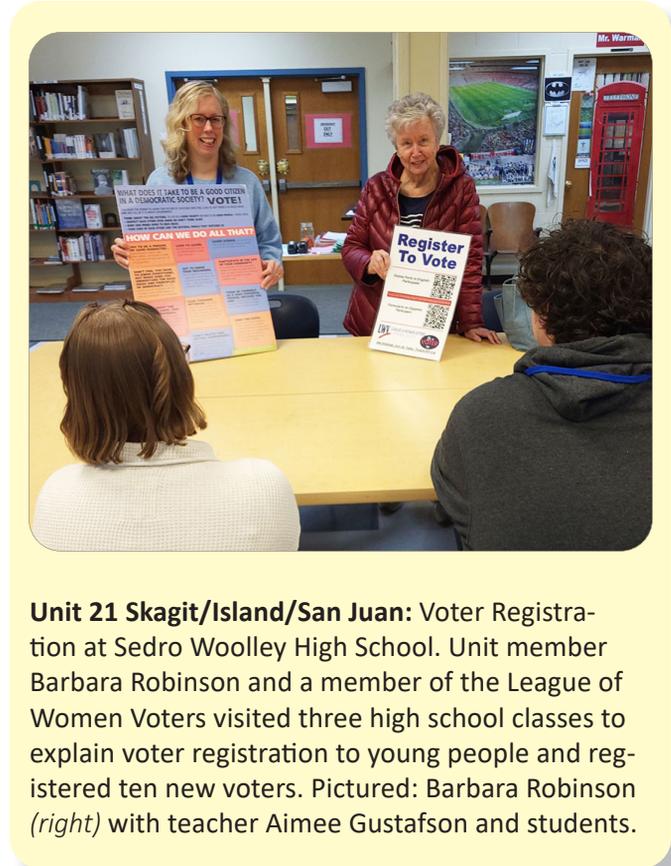
time during the holiday season to recharge the batteries. Ready for the work and fun of spring with SKSR!

NORTHWEST-2

Unit 6 Southwest King:

In January, Unit 6 read and delivered mini-grants to staff in the Highline, Federal Way, and Vashon school districts. Thank you to Karen Juhl for receiving mini-grant applications via the Internet again. Also, thank you to **Bill and Nancy Tracy, Joe Cail, and Astha Tada** for reading all the grant applications.

Some of the mini-grant requests were for library books, shelving, class books, chairs and tables, math games and manipulatives, physical education equipment for special needs children, and art and band supplies. The unit enjoys being able to fill needs that are not always available through school budgets. School staff are always appreciative of these mini-grants and unit members enjoy being able to help in this way.



Unit 21 Skagit/Island/San Juan: Voter Registration at Sedro Woolley High School. Unit member Barbara Robinson and a member of the League of Women Voters visited three high school classes to explain voter registration to young people and registered ten new voters. Pictured: Barbara Robinson (right) with teacher Aimee Gustafson and students.

Unit 16 East King:

East-King is continuing its practice of picking a school from one of the six area districts each year to receive a wintertime donation of \$1,000 to help needy students get school supplies and

warm coats. This year, with the assistance of the Lake Washington School District's superintendent, Redmond Elementary was chosen to be the recipient of the donation. **Pat Jovag** volunteered to make the presentation.



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.

WSSRA Around The State



Unit 19 Southeast King: Unit members partnered with the Des Moines Garden Club's community service project, "Love in the Cup." Des Moines Garden Club, Unit 19 members, and residents at Puget Sound Transitional Care worked together making cup-size bouquets of flowers.

East-King received 21 mini-grant applications from local district educators by the January 18 due date. The grant selection committee met to read, score, and discuss the applications. The grant selection committee consisted of **Shirlee Hall**, Joyce Arnold, Allie Kurle, and **Bruce Dodge**. The discussion was lively, insightful, and effective. By unanimous agreement, all but two mini-grant requests were funded. Several applicants sought funds for books to meet a variety of needs, organizational tools were requested, three asked for math materials, two sought drama experiences for their students, and several requested equipment to help their special needs students.

Following the meeting, copresidents **Carolyn and Robert Fletcher** were informed of the results. **Robert** then volunteered to make staff presentations at the majority of Issaquah and Mercer Island schools. He shares information about WSSRA and the East-King unit. He invites attendees to join and honors recipients in front of their peers for the time, effort, and commitment they've put forth to earn the grants.

The March luncheon will have Reid Saaris present, "Equal Opportunity Schools."

April's gathering will feature a hula program.

Unit 19 Southeast King:

In January, the Southeast King unit members attended the musical, "Frozen," at Tahoma High School. It was a sellout performance given by district students.

Unit 19 Southeast King gave scholarships to student teachers Cassidy Poore and La Hoi Wingo Tse, both from Auburn School District. Each recipient received \$500, sent to their schools - Western Governor's University and University of Washington.

On February 5, 2024, Unit 19 members partnered with the Des Moines Garden Club's community service project, "Love in the Cup." Des Moines Garden Club, Unit 19 members, and residents at Puget Sound Transitional Care worked together on this project.

The first Southeast King membership meeting of 2024 was held on March 5 at Village Concepts in Fairwood. Unit 19 member Melodi and her hula sisters performed hula dances, provided information about Hawaiian Islands, and taught members a couple of hula dances.

On March 11, 2024, Southeast King members are invited to the Auburn School District's board meeting. They will be acknowledged and received Governor Inslee's Certificate of Appreciation for Washington State Retired School Employees.

Unit 20 Seattle:

At the Northwest 2 coordinating council meeting in December, discussions centered around ways to increase unit membership levels and attracting members to volunteer for vacant positions on unit boards of directors in order to become future leaders.

The Seattle Unit held its December luncheon featuring speaker Lance Rhoades' program, "A Cinematic Tribute to America's Veterans and Actors Who Have Served." It was the unit's largest audience since the pandemic. The unit is hoping for another big audience for the March 7 luncheon meeting at The Mountaineers' Club in Magnuson Park. The program will feature **Dr. Alan Burke**, WSSRA's executive director. He will discuss how WSSRA's members can impact the 2024 elections. Le Fournil's French Bakery will provide the food.

Unit 20 will continue offering new members who sign up to join WSSRA and SSRA within this school year a onetime six-month free membership. The offer means new members would pay \$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 department (for current district

WSSRA Around The State

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 jneuhart@comcast.net or **Pat Cygan** at rcygan@earthlink.net.

On January 15, some SSRA board members met with **Eleanor Toews**, former archives head librarian at Seattle Public Schools. They discussed disposition of SSRA’s records using guidelines sent out by WSSRA and reviewed that the SoDo-area office continues to be a viable option for SSRA.

SSRA’s latest newsletter for February-March, “The Bulletin,” included an application for S.E.E.D. grants (mini-grants for those presently working in Seattle Public Schools). Grants are \$200 for non-members (one time only) or up to \$500 each year for members. **John Thorp** is SSRA’s classroom grants chairperson and will be handling these applications. Contact information is on the application form.

Unit Scholarship Chair, **Patricia MacGowan**, is again working to find worthy applicants for scholarships for high school graduates as well as for college teaching internships.

Unit members are actively working with WSSRA’s legislative lobbying team to advance pension and healthcare issues. SSRA’s **Edith Ruby, Mary Wallon, and Patricia MacGowan** continuously update unit members on legislation affecting all members.

SOUTHWEST-3

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

met at Joshua’s Restaurant in Port Angeles on January 16, 2024. The guest presenter was David Brownell, director of the North Olympic History Center in Port Angeles. He distributed kits for members with sample materials for archiving family history and photographs and explained the best ways to store such things.

At the December meeting it was announced that members **Linda Frazer and Dan Peacock** got married on De-

cember 2, 2023. They were congratulated and treated to a free lunch.

Mini-grant recipients were chosen in December. From Port Angeles High School, Dana Snell received \$250 for a calming room project and Gunnar Thomason received \$405 for 3-D printing engineering solutions. Nathan Shield, from Crescent School, received \$440 for a water marbling project. Robin Forrest, from Sequim’s Helen Haller

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WSSRA Around The State



Unit 3 Clallam County: Unit members Linda Frazier and Dan Peacock are newlyweds - Congrats!

Elementary, received \$500 for a book publishing project.

Several members donated sewing notions for a high school career and technical education class. Ray and Ginni Weigel donated a full-sized violin to the Port Angeles School District.

The guest speakers for the February 20 meeting were Morgan Hanna and Dr. Quinn Mitchell from Olympic Angels, a foster care community charity based in Port Townsend.

Unit 8 Kitsap County:

In December, the unit held a Christmas party at the Silverdale Lanes. Attendees brought money or gifts for Kitsap Community Resources, which resulted in a \$900 donation to

the organization. The unit also made \$200 contributions to St. Vincent De Paul Food Bank, Kitsap Humane Society, Coffee Oasis, and Muro House.

The unit awarded \$300 mini-grants to North Kitsap School District staff - Aaron Evans, Jason Koontz, Reanna Rapada, Kristy Dressler, Kara Lantz, and Michelle Scarr. The unit awarded \$300 mini-grants to Bainbridge Island School District staff - Barry Hoonan, Cindy Wilkins/Melissa Mellow, Ashley Anderson, Erin Sheehan, Vicki Millander, and Kelly Tierney. The unit awards six \$300 mini-grants to one district in Kitsap County every year. The grant recipients are decided by the unit's committee from the application process. The unit appreciates all the applications and is so impressed

with the quality of requests. Thank you to all who applied this year.

At a recent unit meeting, Dr. Aaron Leavell, ESD 114 superintendent, spoke about the changes and challenges facing the districts, teachers, and students in ESD 114 Olympic Region. He talked about artificial intelligence, attendance, the decrease in number of students, how to catch up with students from the pandemic, and wages. It was a fascinating talk, and the unit will try to have him back next year.

During recent unit meetings, attendees discussed how to get more people to attend unit luncheons, topics for upcoming programs, and places for the unit to visit. The unit would

like everyone to bring ideas for ways to make the unit a more active organization.

Unit officers for 2024-25 have been elected, including: **Doris Bucher**—president, **Craig Miller**—vice president, **Allison Morris**—treasurer and **Patty Marz**—secretary.

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. Each meeting includes a legislative update, mini-grants, and scholarship updates, and other WSSRA business.

At the January 2, 2024 unit meeting, Paul Wieneke, su-

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WSSRA Around The State

perintendent of Southside School District, spoke about the HOPE project to improve the quality of life and success of students in Mason County.

Haley Foelsch, community health specialist-homeless response/behavioral health, and other colleagues from Mason County Public Health and Human Services, attended the February 6, 2024 meeting to describe how Public Health and Human Services is responding to homeless and drug abuse in the county.

Donations to community food banks and shelters were distributed after the holidays.

The ten mini-grant project recipients from six of the seven school districts in Mason County received certificates at staff meetings from MCSRA President **Eileen Perfrement**. New members were recruited from the meetings, as well as support from the staff for community service, support to schools and graduates through scholarships, and legislative work to support retirement and insurance plans.

Unit members support "buddy messages" from **Peter Diedrick** to stay connected with state legislators. **Eileen Perfrement** also testified in person at the House Appropriations Committee in support of House Bill 2481 to extend the health insurance coverage for deceased employees to the end of month of death, as well as extending

the retirement payment to the end of the month so survivors don't have to return a portion of the retirement funds to the state. She also spoke to Representative Dan Griffey and Senator Drew MacEwen on Zoom regarding pension plan and insurance plan legislation.

SOUTHWEST-4

Unit 5 Grays Harbor/Pacific Counties: The unit is happy to continue sending funds to the Ocosta School District for their Lunch Buddy Program. It is a wonderful benefit to the students and is much appreciated.

The unit will meet at The Fishin' Hole in Montesano on April 24 at noon. Members will work on selecting recipients for the scholarships. The unit will also send \$1,600 to Grays Harbor College for a student teacher and \$1,060 to the college for educational materials.

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

Unit 12 Lower Columbia: Members met in early January to discuss speakers and activities for future meetings. The unit was very interested in hearing from the Cowlitz

Tribe and how the Ilani Casino's success has helped their tribal children. Other topic possibilities were a local educator who paints in watercolors, a presentation about drug use and sex trafficking in the general area, and how the canine unit has been used in Cowlitz County. Other ideas were the management of the mountain goats around Mt. St. Helens and how beavers are moved into areas that are more suitable.

Members took WSSRA scholarship forms to all the Unit 12 high schools. The scholarships are for high school seniors planning to major in education. Applications that



SW 4 Coordinating Council: SW4 Coordinating Council met at the Rib Eye Restaurant (Napavine, WA) on January 22, 2024. Conversations were lively and the food very good. Attendees enjoyed visiting with WSSRA friends and were extra happy because the TRS/PERS Plan 1 COLA legislative bill had just passed out of House Appropriations at the time. Attendees included: WSSRA President Ron Crawford, SW4 Chair Carolyn Stella, SW4 District Representative Gail Feagins, and Secretary Patty Gee. SW4 will meet again on March 25 at 10:00am at the Rib Eye (Napavine, WA).

WSSRA Around The State

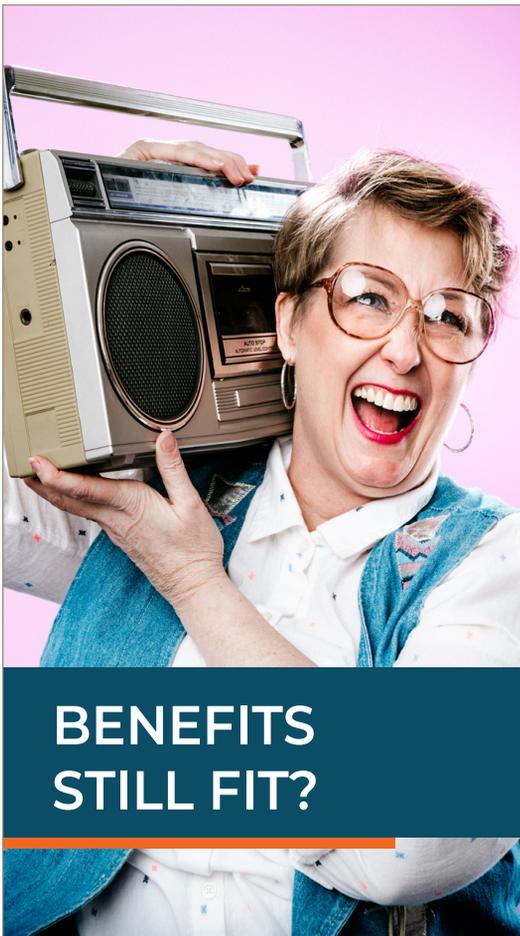
were't selected for the state scholarships will be sent back to the unit as possible candidates for their local scholarship program.

With money from Fibre Federal and the Lower Columbia Unit, the members awarded several mini-grants. A science teacher from Toutle Lake High School received a grant for a new aquarium filter system, aquatic plants, and a digital LED lighting system.

An R.A. Long High School teacher bought novels, so the students do not have to share books anymore. Mrs. Allis, from Mint Valley Elementary, used her grant to purchase certificates and small gift bags for each winner at the Mustang of the Month assembly. Lower Columbia Unit 12 and those who received mini-grants are very grateful for the support Fibre Federal has given throughout the years.

In late January, Unit 12 visited Cowlitz County Museum. Member **Bob Koenig** provided lunch. Danielle Robins, the museum's education liaison, has developed lessons on tribal life, the founding of Longview, and the Oregon trail. Danielle visits classrooms to help teach social studies curriculum across the grades. She brings items from the museum, activities, and games. She tells about the coastal tribes and the

Cowlitz tribe to the third graders. Second graders hear about how Robert A. Long planned Longview. This presentation is centered on the 1920's. Danielle tells of the Long Bell Mill, massive trees, and the use of rails to bring in logs. The museum has many historical photos of the Longview/Kelso area. The presentation was very good, and the members want to visit again because the museum has much more to explore.



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Washington State School Retirees' Association



WSSRA Around The State

Unit 28 Thurston County:

The unit's January luncheon featured Elena Huizar, Washington State consumer protection outreach services coordinator within the Washington State Attorney General's office. She advised attendees, "If you get scammed, don't be embarrassed. Report it. Everyone is vulnerable." If you find yourself scammed, the first step is to call the statewide consumer resource center at 800-551-4636 or file a free complaint at atg.wa.gov/file-complaint. Elena's engaging presentation is highly recommended for other units as well.

Kelly Wilson, coordinator of the "All Kids Win" program, spoke at a recent unit executive board meeting. The program provides student food bags to secondary schools within Thurston County with the goal of ensuring that hunger never gets in the way of student success. The program is now serving 1,000 students a week, and each bag costs \$10.02. Kelly encouraged members of TCSRA to participate by volunteering in several needed activities including a food drive for canned tuna and chili.

TSCRA membership chair, **Dorn Barr**, has made 22 presentations at county schools. Overall, combining membership presentations with recognizing mini-grant recipients has gone well. All new members have opted for the 6-month free option. TSCRA

members are also working hard to get the word out about scholarship awards available to students who plan to pursue a career in public education.

Art Dolan will again present a first-person story rendition of the American Revolution at the unit's monthly lunch on March 15. The topic, "Women in the Revolution," is highly anticipated.

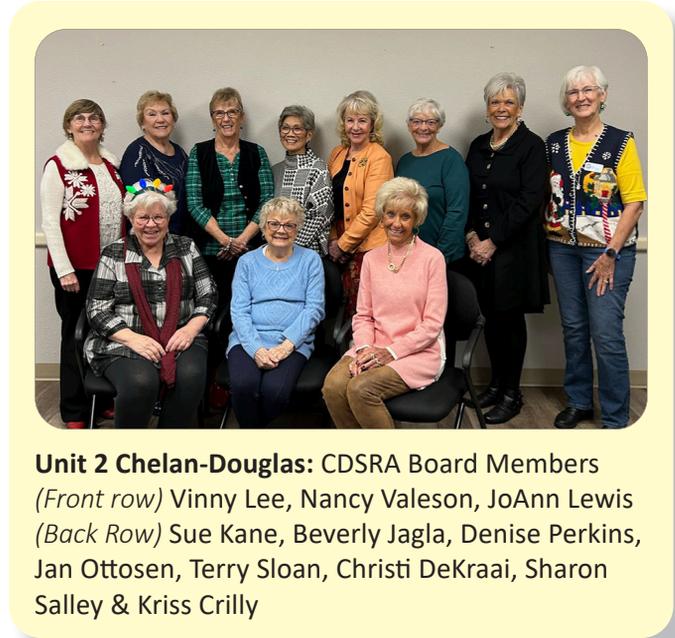
EAST-5

Unit 9 Kittitas Co.:

The Kittitas County unit is grateful for the continued membership of so many retired and active employees from education. This enables the unit to support local needs – mini-grants to active educators, donations to worthy causes, and newsletters to members.

In the last several months, mini-grants were awarded to educators representing nearly every school in the county and all grade levels. Not every request could be honored as applications exceeded the budget. As a result, a lottery system was used.

The January newsletter was mailed only to members residing in the county. A member in another state mentioned saving postage costs and the unit needs to do that. The next planned newsletter, which is usually distributed in August, will cover the entire year's



Unit 2 Chelan-Douglas: CDSRA Board Members (Front row) Vinny Lee, Nancy Valeson, JoAnn Lewis (Back Row) Sue Kane, Beverly Jagla, Denise Perkins, Jan Ottosen, Terry Sloan, Christi DeKraai, Sharon Salley & Kriss Crilly

activities, and be sent to all unit members. These changes will preserve the pool of money available and avoid the cost of another newsletter. The board wants to be able to support members and provide grants in the future. During the Covid years, the unit's bank balance built up with no meetings, and no in-person conventions.

The February 20 lunch meeting was held at Rosewood in Ellensburg with a representative from AMBA presenting the program.

The April 16 meeting will take place at the Putnam Senior Center in Cle Elum. The program is yet to be determined.

On May 21, lunch is planned at Rosewood Clubhouse.

A program, "Collectibles" by DD Pringle, has been arranged by **Doug Murphy**. This "Antique Roadshow" type presentation was very popular in the past. Attendees are encouraged to bring objects to be evaluated.

Unit 34 Yakima Co.:

YCSRA rotates president responsibilities on a monthly basis for general and board meetings. This February that position was fulfilled by **Kathy Fletcher** leading the meetings. **Kathy** is a long-time actively participating member and has held positions at the local and state level. **Kathy**, like several members, reached the landmark age of 80 in 2022. An opinion she has espoused that many agree with is, "Eighty

WSSRA Around The State



Unit 25 Spokane Area: A Thank you note from Vivian Davis, mini-grant recipient: "I was one of the recipients of your grant which was surprisingly hand-delivered by my former 5th grade teacher (and family favorite teacher), **Mr. Brad Beal**; this made the moment even more special! ...I wanted to share a picture of the decodable readers that I was able to purchase with your grant funds and to let you know how appreciative I am!...Thanks again for your commitment to helping educators and students in our area and for your generosity!"

A thank you from Wendy Davis, mini-grant recipient: "...I wanted to take a minute to say Thank You! I used the grant money to create a welcoming "calm down corner" in my classroom that kids can use when they are feeling angry, upset, discouraged, etc. to calm down so they can rejoin the group and be successful. With the grant money I purchased a beanbag chair, textured pillow, and breathing/feelings posters. My kids love it! I had to give them all a turn using our new area because they were so excited about it! I appreciate the generosity of all who made this possible!"



is not the new sixty, (as has been said). In fact, 80 is just plain 80 where clerks call you 'honey' and almost everything you once knew is obsolete or hopelessly old fashioned."

The unit's February general meeting program featured local author Rob Phillips. He is the author of the critically acclaimed "Luke McCain" mystery series. He lives locally in Naches Heights with his wife Teri and a Labrador Retriever. His "McCain" books feature a yellow Lab who assists his master on cases. The series has sold almost 50,000 copies worldwide.

Again this year, mini-grants for active teachers was a very

successful YCSRA activity. Before Christmas, teachers who applied were granted over \$12,000. Thank you to **Kathy Schultz** for leading this committee.

EAST-6

Unit 2 Chelan-Douglas:

The Chelan-Douglas SRA was proud to award two \$500 and nineteen \$250 grants to active CDSRA members. These amazing school employees produced some fantastic ideas to help local students. The unit is also delighted to welcome 17 new members thanks to the membership committee.

The unit's December general meeting was enjoyed not only by unit members, but also by all who attended the senior center lunch on December 19. Holiday music was performed by two Wenatchee High School groups. Members learned how meaningful the "Stage Kids" production company is in helping young people develop confidence, self-discipline, and goals. The unit gave them a grant this year and it was fun to hear how much it was appreciated.

The unit put together a "Stocking Stuffer" event for the children spending their holiday at "The Grace House," a refuge for women and children. The unit also approved a grant

for the upcoming Mariachi Festival in Wenatchee.

Unit 4 Columbia Basin:

After spending several weeks staying inside, due to the extremely cold winter temperatures, sixteen members of Columbia Basin Unit 4 ventured out to attend the first monthly luncheon of 2024 on Tuesday, January 31. They met at Pillar Rock Grill in Moses Lake, where they listened to guest speaker Mai Houvener, who talked about the OBRA Project, a business incubator in Moses Lake that houses and helps creative new businesses to succeed. One of the businesses, The Tree Fort

WSSRA Around The State

Children’s Museum, was of particular interest to CBSRA members because some of them had volunteered to help with this fun and educational project a few years ago, when it was a pop-up in two Moses Lake elementary schools. In addition to the featured presentation, those who attended the luncheon received door prizes, which were enjoyed by all.

In other CBSRA business, several committees have been busy with their projects. The Books for Babies group has been assembling book packets and delivering them to local hospitals. Co-President **Helen Preston** even enlisted her husband to help with the job! The Grants and Scholarships committees have been receiving quite a few applications and plan to present the awards to recipients very soon.

Unit 15 Okanogan:

A January county-wide scholarship fair held at the Omak Elks was termed a real success by OCSRA members **Marcelle LaGrou** and **John LaGrou** who staffed the unit’s table at the event. County students were encouraged to visit “vendors” at the Saturday afternoon event to learn what scholarships various groups had available to them. Organizers recognized that several scholarships go unclaimed yearly because the word fails to get out about availability. In addition to high school students, several parents also

took the opportunity to pick up materials and chat with the nine groups represented.

Marcelle and John report a side result of their promoting at the scholarship fair was the recruitment of several new active members to WSSRA/OCSRA.

Please visit the Unit’s website at:

wssra-units.org/okanogancounty

EAST-7

Unit 25 Spokane Area:

As everyone knows, teachers spend a great deal of their own money on books, supplies, clothes, food or whatever it takes to keep their students safe and help them reach their full potential. Every September, SAREA posts the opportunity for teachers throughout the Spokane area to apply for a mini-grant to be used for something they would like for their students or classrooms. This year, SAREA awarded \$8,000 to 42 teachers, up to \$250 per check. **Pat Anderson** and **Jan McFarland** worked tirelessly, putting in many hours, to make this program a success, year after year.

Unit 33 Whitman Co.:

The unit welcomed guests to a luncheon meeting at St. Patrick Parish in Colfax. Entertainment was provided by

cast members in the musical, “Oklahoma!” thanks to the director, retired music teacher, Cary Cammack. It was hard not to sing along.

Unit members discussed funding a scholarship for a Whitman County student, and members enthusiastically decided to donate \$1,000 to a student teacher intern this spring.

Retired Colfax teacher Ross Swan is now a student teacher supervisor and placement coordinator at WSU’s College of Education. He is pleased that WSSRA and the local Whitman County unit are awarding grants to student teacher interns.

EAST-8

Unit 1 Clarkston/Asotin/Pomeroy: The Unit 1 Christmas party was held, and a great time was had by all! The gathering was held at Jollymore’s Restaurant across the river in Lewiston. The white elephant gift exchange was awesome, and everyone went home with something new! The food was outstanding as usual, and the door prizes were definitely one of a kind.

Some unit members gathered to do some Christmas caroling to entertain a few members now living in facilities and cannot travel. It was a fun activity and will plan to continue with these visits.



Unit 25 Spokane Area: Peperzak Middle School teachers, Kim Vandervert and Lorna Vu celebrate receiving their mini grants with Principal Andre Wicks.

WSSRA Around The State



Unit 31 Walla Walla - Columbia: Unit member Diane Briggs volunteers at local area high schools teaching fly tying and fly fishing to students.

The executive board met in January at the Asotin County Library and addressed many issues. Finances were discussed and improvements were made to the mini-grant selection process. Membership Chair **Allison Hays** plans to follow up with the 2023-24 new hires in the school districts. A discussion was held regarding the recruitment of para-pros and secretaries. **Allison** also volunteered to help format the unit newsletters which will likely be electronic from now on due to rising costs.

A new addition to monthly meetings will be a basket

for members to donate to the scholarship fund or the mini-grant fund as a visual reminder that those funds need donations all year round.

Unit 29 Benton-Franklin:

Attendees at the Unit's January meeting had the pleasure of listening to area superintendents **Traci Pierce** (Kennewick), **Shelley Redinger** (Richland) and **Michelle Whitney** (Pasco). Also, attendees were thrilled with drawings for Valentine baskets from **Jan Fraley**. Over 70 members in attendance enjoyed a hearty meal of

roasted pork with cinnamon apples, or a Cobb salad. The unit donated school supplies through Seniors Helping All Kids Education.

The February meeting featured a healthcare presentation from Alexis Bonoff, community outreach manager for the local Alzheimer's Association.

The unit's February focus was promoting the WSSR Foundation scholarships with contacts at local high schools and colleges. The unit is becoming more acquainted with Columbia Basin College as they are now offering nine

Bachelor of Arts programs, one being in elementary education for K-3, with 28 student teachers currently. At a recent breakfast, two current student teachers in Kennewick were able to discuss their experiences with added information from CBC's college advisor for the program. Unit members are looking forward to hearing more at the March luncheon that will focus on this program. Also, CBC is granting college credit for Teacher Academy students at local high schools.

The BFSRA March luncheon program is of particular interest to members, as the unit has been supporting student teachers with \$3,000 scholarships at colleges of education, through WSU Tri-Cities, Heritage University, Central Washington University, and Eastern Washington University. Future teachers from the area are attending these universities.

Current and future program information can be found on the unit webpage: bfsraunit29.blogspot.com

Unit 31 Walla Walla-Columbia:

Unit President **Kathy Pritcher** and the board have made volunteering a priority this school year. Members are encouraged to turn in their volunteer forms to a board member so that they can review and present to legislators the importance of

WSSRA Around The State

retired school employees to the overall health and well-being of our communities.

Unit 31 membership continues to increase, the January 2024 count was 589, this is up ten from last year. In addition, twelve new members took advantage of the 6 months free membership offer.

In December, Unit 31 collected around 350 books for the unit's service project. Books were donated to the Walla Walla YMCA, the Christian Aid Center, Washington Children's Home Society, Valle Lindo, Waitsburg and Dayton Elementary Schools, and the Washington State Correctional Facility for their visitor waiting room. This spring, a basket of books will be delivered to Rosemary's Place daycare which will be located at the Columbia County Hospital District in Dayton.

The number of members who attend the monthly luncheons continues to increase, which is encouraging. During the January luncheon, officers from the Walla Walla Police Department shared with the group about fraud scams that have been discovered locally. The group were also educated about what to do if you think you have been scammed.

Also, in January under the leadership of **Mardel Bierwagen**, scholarship information was dispersed throughout the high schools in Unit 31. The



Unit 1 Clarkston-Asotin-Pomeroy: Unit members gathered at a local restaurant for their annual holiday party. The jolly gathering included wonderful food, a lively "white elephant" gift exchange, door prizes, and lots of laughter!

information included a large poster and a sheet for the school counselor to review scholarships WSSRA and the local Unit 31 provide to area students and student teachers.

In February, Rich Bosley shared with the luncheon group how to prepare for spring gardening. Mini-grant winners were selected at the end of the luncheon.

The Unified sports program for the Walla Walla Valley were the presenters at the March luncheon. Unified Sports joins people with and without intellectual disabilities on the same team. Unified Sports teams are made up of people of similar age and ability.

ADDRESS CHANGES

Please Notify:

Membership Coordinator

Michele Hunter

michele@wssra.org

Phone: 360-413-5496

WSSRA, PO Box 5127

Lacey WA 98509

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The Journal

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