

# OKANOGAN COUNTY SCHOOL RETIREES' ASSOCIATION

## 2024 WINTER NEWSLETTER

Website: [wssra-units.org/okanogancounty](http://wssra-units.org/okanogancounty)

### MEMBERSHIP NEWS:

**January 2024 Compilation:** On 01/04/2024, OCSRA had 332 members: 17 Cash Payers, 217 Retirees on pension payment, 2 Honorary Status, and 96 Actives working in school systems. Total WSSRA membership: 16,916

**OCSRA Welcomes New and Returning Members:** Brewster Retiree: **Karla Phillips**; Okanogan School District: **Dorinda Belcher, Megan Blayne, Toni Brown, Jennifer Clark, and Emily Wiley**

**In Memorial: Jennie Hedington**, Okanogan, died October 5, 2023 at age 85. Jennie was an Elementary Title Program Director and 2<sup>nd</sup> grade teacher at Okanogan's Virginia Grainger Elementary School for 29 years. An indispensable member of OCSRA, Jennie planned amazing programs and fundraising ideas while chairing several committees and serving as Vice President. Her leadership and "can do" attitude will be greatly missed.

### OCSRA MEETINGS FOR 2024:

**11 AM, Friday, February 23, 2024:** \$5 Soup & Sandwich Lunch and General Meeting, Community Presbyterian Church of Omak, 9 Birch St. S. *Voting for Spring Grant Winners*. Program: Okanogan HS Sign Language Teacher, Jason Brown, and 2<sup>nd</sup> year students.

**10 AM Wednesday, February 28, 2024: E5/E6 Coordinating Council ZOOM Meeting.**

**11 AM, Friday, March 29, 2024:** \$5 Soup & Sandwich Lunch and General Meeting, Community Presbyterian Church of Omak. *Election of New Officers*. Program: Carol Payne: History of Virginia Grainger

**11 AM, Friday, May 31, 2024:** \$5 Soup & Sandwich Lunch and General Meeting. Community Presbyterian Church of Omak; *Setting Budget and 2024 Scholarship Vote*

**June 3-June 5: WSSRA Convention**, Wenatchee Convention Center

### DONATIONS TO OCSRA'S SCHOLARSHIP FUND

OCSRA's Scholarship Fund has received over \$1,000 in memorials this year. The donations help an Okanogan County high school graduate reach his/her goal of a college degree in an educational field. Since OCSRA is a 501(c)(3), all donations are tax deductible. To donate, write a check payable to OCSRA. In the "For" section, write "Scholarship Fund in memory of or in honor of \_\_\_\_\_." If possible, include a note

with the name/address of the person to be notified of your donation. Mail your check and note to: OCSRA, 185 Hennepin St, Okanogan, WA 98840.

### **PRE-RETIREMENT NEWS:**

- WSSRA's Pre-Retirement 2-Part Webinar is scheduled for March 14 and March 19. More information will be sent to school districts later or contact Tara at WSSRA: 360-413-5496.
- Check the Department of Retirement Services (DRS)'s website under "Life Events" for retirement articles and checklists: [drs.wa.gov](https://drs.wa.gov)
- Remember: With 30 years of school employment, you can retire with full pension at age 62 using the 2008 ERF (Early Retirement Factors) schedule. One caveat: health care coverage.
- Need one-to-one help? Financial Alternatives, East Wenatchee, partnered with North Central ESD to provide free retirement help: 509-663-7526

### **OCSRA'S \$300 MINI-GRANTS:**

OCSRA is offering four \$300 Spring Grants for members to use to enhance programs in Okanogan County public schools. The application form is available on OCSRA's website: [wssra-units.org/okanogancounty](https://wssra-units.org/okanogancounty) and due February 15 to Carol Payne, Grant Chair. Other members of the Grant Committee are Marcelle LaGrou, Sibyl Wehmeyer, and Sherry Pitts.

Winners of OCSRA's 2023 Fall Grants:

- **Erika Cody** (Brewster: Transitional Kindergarten): Conscious Discipline "Feeling Buddies" Self-Regulation Deluxe Toolkit
- **Heather Downey** (Okanogan: 6<sup>th</sup>-12<sup>th</sup> Life Skills): Noise-cancelling headphones with microphones for speech-to-text and calculators for visually impaired users
- **Emily Gurnard** (Omak: 1<sup>st</sup> Gr.): Kid-sized hand tools, gloves, wheelbarrow, and plants for school garden
- **RexAnne Hennings** (Okanogan 7<sup>th</sup> ELA): Personal copies of classroom novels allowing struggling readers to make text annotations.

### **COLLEGE SCHOLARSHIP AVAILABLE**

OCSRA is offering a \$2,000 scholarship to an Okanogan County graduate who is at least a college junior seeking initial certification in an educational field and plans to work in a public school. The application is online at OCSRA's website: [wssra-units.org/okanogancounty](https://wssra-units.org/okanogancounty) Applications must be received by Scholarship Committee Chair, **Sibyl Wehmeyer**, by May 1, 2024. Other members of the Scholarship Committee are **Barbara Christensen** and **Richard Johnson**.

## **COMMUNITY SERVICE PROJECTS**

**Mary Johnson**, Community Service Committee Chair, reported that \$1500 of the Committee's \$2000 budget was used for the following projects: "Our House" Cancer Care of NCW: \$100; Weatherization Program and Food Banks at Okanogan County Community Action Council: \$200 each; Bulldog Bites Food Pantry for Okanogan Outreach School: \$400; Gas Cards for needy WVC-Omak Students: \$400; Meals On Wheels: \$200. The remaining budget will be spent later in the year. In addition, OCSRA members donated clothing and supplies for the Support Center. Other members of the Community Service Committee are **Carol Payne** and **Sherry Pitts**.

## **LEGISLATIVE NEWS**

### **Peter Diedrick, WSSRA Legislative Director**

Legislators are closing out Week 2 of the 2024 Legislative Session. At this point, nearly all legislators' time is spent in committee hearings and constituent meetings.

Here is the current status of our legislation:

*House Bill 1985, SCPP recommended Plan 1 COLA: Public Hearing was held on 1/15. We are lobbying for a committee vote as soon as possible.*

*Permanent Plan 1 COLA Study: State Actuary Study is in progress. Study deadline is December 2024.*

*Medicare Eligible Healthcare Benefit: Funded in Governor's Budget at 60% up to \$193 per month. HB 2188 was reviewed in the House Appropriations Committee on 1/15. No vote has been scheduled at this time.*

*Plan 2/3 Service Credit Legislation: Bill drafting complete and awaiting a bill number.*

*House Bill 2013, DRS Month of Death Legislation: Executive Session & Committee Vote Scheduled for Thursday, January 25 at 4:00 in the House Appropriations Committee*

## OCSRA News Shorts

**WSSRA Conventions**--Contracts are in place with hotel room rates at \$149. Future June Convention Sites are:

- Wenatchee Convention Center; Wenatchee 2024
- Yakima Convention Center; Yakima 2025
- Great Wolf Lodge; Grand Mound 2026
- Tri-Cities Convention Center; Kennewick 2027

Please let OCSRA President, Rita Figlenski, [ritafig2@gmail.com](mailto:ritafig2@gmail.com), or OCSRA Treasurer, Penny Garrison, [pgarrison07@gmail.com](mailto:pgarrison07@gmail.com), know by February 15 if you are planning to help at Convention this year so that room reservations and convention registration may be made for you. The Unit pays room and registration costs for attendees and WSSRA pays the current State Rate for mileage for two per vehicle to Wenatchee.

- OCSRA needs three volunteers for its **Nomination Committee**. Voting for 2024 – 2025 officers will take place at the March meeting. President, Vice President, Secretary, Treasurer, and one Scholarship Trustee will be on the ballot.
- General meetings this Spring are scheduled for: **February 23**; **March 29**; and **May 31**. Bob and Janet Shacklett are cooking up delicious soup and sandwich lunches for the nominal fee of \$5. Remember to bring cash only.
- A reminder that the Unit sponsors a scholarship each spring for someone of at least college junior standing working for initial certification as a teacher. In addition, WSSRA offers two **student teacher/internship scholarships** to be awarded in the E6 District—Okanogan, Chelan/Douglas, and Grant counties.
- **March 1** is the deadline for high school seniors to apply for \$2,000 and \$3,000 scholarships. Applicants should be planning a career in education.
- WSSRA Executive Director, Alan Burke, has announced his **retirement** effective post the June 2024 Convention. The WSSRA Board will meet mid-January to determine whether to hire from within the organization or to open the position. E6 Representative, Denise Perkins, desires your thoughts on the matter.
- The **WSSR Foundation** will present its Bylaws changes this month to the WSSRA Board and the Rules and Resolutions Committee for review.