

MAY 14 LUNCHEON - INSTALLATION OF OFFICERS HAPPENINGS

Publication of the Pierce County School Retirees' Association (PCSRA)

Volume XXXVI Issue 4 Spring 2026

General Meetings/ Luncheons

IN PERSON

La Quinta Inn

1425 E. 27th Street, Tacoma

Spring 2026

April 9

May 14

2nd Thursday Noon Lunch

•

**WSSRA Convention June 2-4
Yakima Convention Center**

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Pierce County School Retirees' Association

P.O. Box 112493

Tacoma, WA 98411-2493

Sandy Grape

President

Open

President-Elect

Carolyn Ohlson

Recording Secretary

Vickie Rettke

Corresponding Secretary

Derryl Finney

Treasurer

Conni Abernathy

Happenings

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WSSRA: 1-360-413-5496

wssra.org

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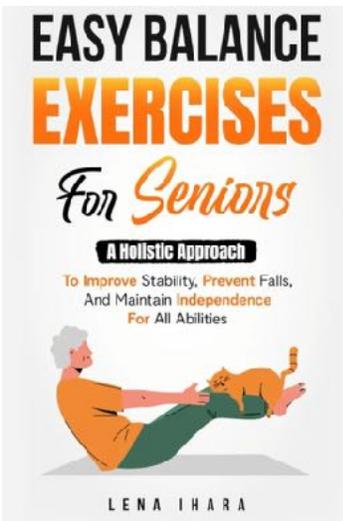
APRIL 9 Meeting:

Arlene Thomas

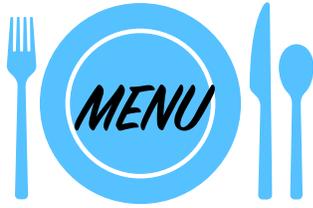
Please join us for our luncheon on April 9th, where I'm pleased to announce that Arlene Thomas will be our speaker. Arlene will share ways Seniors can maintain stability, prevent falls, and maintain their independence.

Expect to practice some guided exercises with her. She recently published the book "Easy

Balance Exercises for Seniors: A Holistic Approach to Improve Stability, Prevent Falls, and Maintain Independence for all Abilities". Arlene uses the pen name Lena Ihara and her book is available on Amazon.



Arlene taught various subjects during 15 years in the Sumner, Tacoma, and University Place School Districts. She holds a B. ED from the University of Hawaii and a M.S. in Family Studies from Central Washington. After a serious personal injury, Arlene researched ways to support her mind and body in holistic ways. She speaks at various events, and I am so proud to have her share her wisdom and insights at our luncheon. By Vickie Rettke



April 9th meeting:

CHICKEN CORDON BLEU

Rice pilaf, tossed green salad with assorted dressings, sliced fresh fruit, vegetable medley, dessert, iced tea and coffee.

May 14th meeting:

TACO BAR -

Tossed green salad with assorted dressings, sliced fresh fruit, seasoned ground beef, shredded cheese, diced onions, diced tomato, sour cream, salsa, Spanish rice, refried beans, dessert, iced tea and coffee.

Cost \$15

Call Carolyn Bjerke at
253-759-3951

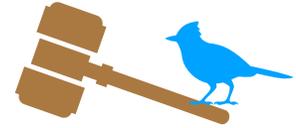
by **April 3rd**
for reservations
and by **May 8th** for
May reservations

Membership

Directory

For those members who wish to receive the newly published **Lavender 2024-2025** Pierce County School Retirees' Directory, call **Marianne at 253-536-6717** and she will mail one to you. Security concerns caused us to change the way the directory is distributed.

President's Message Spring 2026



Start me up, PCSRA—because this year, our membership is hitting a rhythm all its own! With several newer retirees jumping in and bringing fresh spark to the mix, this group just keeps getting louder, stronger, and more fun to be part of. We're keeping the beat going by staying connected in every way that works: a phone call, an email, or simply showing up for each other. That's how this group rolls.

As we move into our April and May luncheons, let's keep that momentum going. These gatherings are our chance to reconnect, swap stories, and enjoy a good meal together. If you still need to make a reservation, contact Carolyn Bjerke at 253-759-3951. We've got a solid program lined up, thanks to Karen Chapman and Vickie Rettke, and a buffet lunch that always hits the right note—coffee, iced tea, dessert, and the whole thing for just \$15, tax and gratuity included.

I'm continually inspired by the dedication in our PCSRA family, and I'm excited for everything ahead as we move through this season with fresh energy and a strong backbeat.

Looking for even more ways to get involved? Consider stepping up as a delegate to the annual WSSRA Convention. This year is at the Great Wolf Lodge. It's a great way to represent PCSRA, learn what's happening statewide, and add your voice to the mix.

And as we look ahead to summer, don't miss our August 13 picnic—a relaxed, easygoing tradition where the only thing you need to bring is yourself. Good food, good company, and a little sunshine... it's the perfect way to keep this rhythm going. So, mark your calendar, because when August 13 rolls around, we're ready to start it up all over again.

Your President, Sandy Grape
PCSRA - Unit 27



PCSRA General Membership Luncheon & Officer Installation May 14, 2026

The Pierce County School Retirees' Association (PCSRA) is excited to welcome **Peter Diedrick**, Executive Director of the Washington State School Retirees' Association (WSSRA), as our guest speaker for this year's May 14th General Membership Luncheon. We are also delighted to have **Emmett Mills**, WSSRA's Legislative Coordinator, joining us for the event. Emmett plays a key role in WSSRA's legislative work,

collaborating with volunteers statewide to advance policies that protect pension security and strengthen retiree benefits.

Peter has remained steadfast in WSSRA's mission to advocate for retired school employees. Under his leadership, the organization has focused on pension fairness, healthcare improvements, and securing cost-of-living adjustments (COLAs) for retirees—efforts that reflect WSSRA's commitment to the financial security and well-being of retired school staff.

We invite you to join us for this special occasion and hear Peter share insights from his work with WSSRA, along with an update on this year's legislation affecting our retirement benefits. With Emmett present as well, members will have the chance to hear directly from the coordinator of WSSRA's statewide legislative strategy.

Our luncheon will also include time to celebrate and reflect on several important milestones:

- The installation of new executive officers.
- A heartfelt memorial honoring the members we have lost this year.
- Recognition of all new members who have joined our association in the past year.

Join us for a luncheon that brings our PCSRA community together. We can't wait to see you there.

Sandy Grape



PCSRA Honors Jill Hassing

Jill Hassing, La Quinta Event Coordinator, was honored at the February 12th PCSRA meeting with flowers and a framed Certificate of Appreciation. She has retired after 27 years with La Quinta. Jill helped create the magic - gracious surroundings, catered menus, responses to special requests, great service by staff - that members consistently experienced at luncheons.

Jill told of her personal connection and acquaintance with our association, for her mother was a long-time member before her recent passing. As we were honoring Jill, she honored us in return! She enthusiastically spoke of her support and PCSRA's positive effect on retirees and schools.

We wish Jill Hassing a HAPPY RETIREMENT as she plans her next cruise adventures! Thank you for your contributions, Jill.

An Invitation to explore online!

We invite you to explore our newly updated website where you will find details of social events as well as links for up-to-date legislative information. There's more! You will also find information with links to health and wellness sites, as well as communications such as our newsletter and links to the WSSRA Journal! Membership benefits are always a high priority. You will find links and sites that explain this crucial topic.

On the home page are five categories. Each grouping has bulleted details in which you can discover more information by simply clicking on "Learn More". The five sections are:

Who we are: (check out the pictures- you may see yourself!), This section provides a description of who we are, what we do, and a list of our board members who welcome your suggestions and concern.

Events: This section concerns information ranging from details about our general meetings to our Legislative Meet and Greet. It also includes links to explain the 'where, what, and when' updates for the annual WSSRA convention.

Scholarships/Grants This section shares detailed information about our Scholarships and Mini-Grants. It is in this section that students can find details about our scholarships.

Membership: This section provides not only information to share with others in becoming a member, but helpful and useful sites for membership benefits.

Communications: This section includes the present and past editions of our newsletter, 'Happenings', which is in color on our site! Additionally, links to the WSSRA Journal include sites such as health and wellness, social security, and AARP. Legislative information, crucial to our benefits, is available on the provided sites.

We are proud of our site. Please take time to discover helpful links and sites. We always welcome suggestions and concerns.

Happy online discoveries! Pat Skiffington,
Website Committee Chair

FYI - to get to us online search our site by typing Pierce County School Retirees' Association, not just PCSRA or access us from the WSSRA.org site.

LEGISLATIVE UPDATE

Emmett Mills, Legislative Coordinator
Washington State School Retirees'
Association

We did it! On the afternoon of Friday, March 6, the Washington State House of Representatives unanimously passed Substitute Senate Bill 5862, providing a COLA to TRS 1 and PERS 1 retirees in 2026. The bill previously passed the Senate unanimously in February. If signed by the Governor, TRS 1 and PERS 1 retirees will see their monthly pension amounts increase by 3%, not to exceed \$110 monthly, beginning at the end of July. All other pension plans managed by Washington State automatically receive a COLA every year including members of plans 2 & 3 TRS/PERS.

More good news! Insurance benefits protected! After passing the COLA, the Senate proposed a reduction for the health insurance benefit provided to retirees who purchase the Medicare supplemental insurance through PEBB. This could have cost retirees up to \$400 per year. After valiant efforts by WSSRA leadership and members who were in action contacting their legislators, the cuts were not enacted. Good news for retirees in this year of budget challenges! More evidence your \$7.00 monthly dues at work!

**PLEASE CONTACT YOUR
STATE REPRESENTATIVES
TO SAY THANK YOU
TOLL FREE 1(800) 562-6000
OR EMAIL**

www.wssra.org to join our email list.

ANOTHER EXAMPLE OF YOUR \$7 PER MONTH AT WORK!

Imagine that, as a classroom teacher, your classroom budget was totally cut. That reality hit many teachers this year! Pierce County School Retirees' Association to the rescue!

PCSRA offered mini-grants to teachers and support staff to assist in providing supplies, equipment and other special project outlays not included in classroom budgets. This year, mini-grants were offered to Puyallup and Tacoma School Districts. In a year of budget cuts, this news was welcomed by teachers! Applications were received from 60 teachers, and 47 mini-grants were awarded. A total of \$13,169 is now at work in classroom with kids!

The new Mini-Grant Committee, co-chaired by Vickie Rettke and Annie Ragan, worked with Dr. Alan Burke, State Membership Chair, in implementing the program. After awardees were decided, Alan Burke visited the (seventeen) schools to make personal presentations. As part of the visit, Alan presented information, with assistance from Vickie and Annie, about the five things that teachers need to know in planning for the future - Social Security, VEBA, DRS, PEBB, and Medicare. Teachers heard how WSSRA advocates for retirees and heard about the politics of pensions. Afterward, a total of 132 teachers joined WSSRA!
Thank you, Alan.

PCSRA hopes to offer the programs to additional schools in both districts next year. Both superintendents have been supportive and appreciative of the mini-grants and have reached out with a thanks for helping kids.

A special thanks to co-chairs, Vickie Rettke and Annie Ragan, as well as Alan Burke, and to Derryl Finney, Sandy Grape and Diane Blair for the program support.

Your PCSRA Association at work



This is the third and final article on the key changes that were made to our bylaws. The previous two articles covered the makeup of the board and the selection process for delegates to the WSSRA Annual Convention.

Following COVID PCSRA had awarded over \$60,000.00 in scholarships to students seeking a career in public education. These scholarships have been and will continue to be available partially through your dues and through legacy donations by members who share the vision of the association. That is to provide financial support to students wishing to become professional educators/providers in public education.

The scholarship committee meets at least twice a year or more frequently if deemed necessary to carry out the scholarship application process and make recommendations for awardees. The association president or designated representative and the treasurer are non-voting advisory members of the committee. Currently, there are three scholarships managed by the committee.

First, there are the Pierce County School Retirees' Association scholarships for high school seniors. These are funded by a portion of your dues and are part of the annual budget of the association. The purpose of the fund is to provide scholarships to graduating high school seniors, who are Pierce County residents, seeking a career in public education and/or related fields. This includes any certificated or position in public education.

The second scholarship is the Nina Ball Memorial Scholarship fund. Nina Ball was a teacher in the Tacoma School District for 33 years and a member of the association then known as the Retired Teachers' Association. She bequeathed a portion of her estate to the association

to support individuals specifically intending to become public school teachers. These funds are maintained separately from the general fund and may not be used for anything other than the scholarships.

The third scholarship is the Chuck Abernathy Memorial Scholarship fund. The family of Chuck Abernathy, a former president of the association and an innovator in the Clover Park School District, provides recurring donations to the fund for high school seniors and college/university student teachers wishing to become professional educators/providers in public education. These funds also may not be used for anything other than the scholarships.

Donations may be made to any of the existing scholarship funds or a separate fund may be established. The association may reject donations that do not align with the goals and objectives of this organization. Note that donations to the PCSRA scholarships are not tax deductible. Donations to either of the existing legacy scholarships or creation of separate scholarships should be addressed with the donor's financial advisor.

PCSRA is proud of its ability to help so many students in their pursuit of a career in public education and is grateful for the generosity of former and current members like Nina Ball and the Abernathy family. For more information, please visit our website where you will learn more about our bylaws and a further breakdown of our scholarships.

February Meeting

Our wonderfully entertaining Guest speaker, Pam Gassman of the DAR, center. Right: Patrica Albert and Joyce Ells, and left Karen Chapman introducing our speaker.



Below: Sandy Grape greets April's guest speaker, Arlene Thomas in the buffet line.

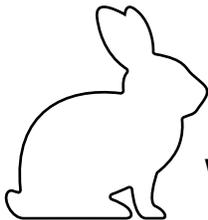


Above: Laurel Powell ready to dispense prizes from the PAC drawing.
 Left: Vickie Rettke asking for help with decor for the convention.
 Below: Valentines hijinks with Randy Wilson, Connie Wekell and Marilyn Hicks.





Pierce County School Retirees' Association
P.O. Box 112493
Tacoma, WA 98411-2493



Wait... There's a PCSRA Picnic? I'm In!



The PCSRA August Picnic is coming up, and we'd love to see you there on August 13th. This year, we're giving a warm welcome to our new retirees and newest PCSRA members. They're bringing fresh energy and new stories, and the picnic is the perfect place to meet them.

We're also inviting our long-time members to help make the welcome personal. If you know a new member—or even if you've only seen their name once—reach out and invite them to join us. A friendly call or hello can make someone feel instantly included.

Come enjoy the afternoon with us. We'd love to see you at the picnic.

Where: Puyallup Clark Creek Park South (1700 12th Ave. SW)

(go south on 14th Street SW. Watch for sign, turn right onto 12th Ave SW)

When: August 13, 2026 11:30 to 2 pm