

MEET & GREET Save the Date: Thursday, October 15th

HAPPENINGS

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

Volume XXXVII Issue 1 Fall 2026

General Meetings/ Luncheons

IN PERSON

La Quinta Inn

1425 E. 27th Street, Tacoma

Fall 2026

September 10

2nd Thursday Noon Lunch

•

October 15

Meet & Greet 3:30 -5:00

•

WSSRA Convention June 7-9

**Kennewick Toyota
Convention Center**

•

**Pierce County School
Retirees' Association**

P.O. Box 112493

Tacoma, WA 98411-2493

Sandy Grape

President

Open

President-Elect

Open

Recording Secretary

Vickie Rettke

Corresponding Secretary

Derryl Finney

Treasurer

Conni Abernathy

Happenings

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WSSRA: 1-360-413-5496

wssra.org

Published four times per year, by the Pierce County School Retirees' Association, a non-profit since 1945. Membership dues are \$84 a year State/local.

PCSRA September Luncheon Guest Speaker:

Rep. Sharlett Mena



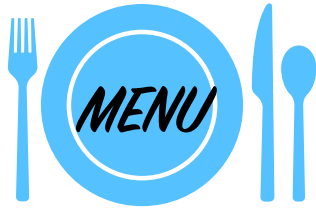
Representative Sharlett Mena serves the 29th Legislative District, which includes South Tacoma, East Lakewood, Parkland, and Spanaway. First elected in 2022, she is now in her second term and continues to focus on issues that directly affect working families, public education, and community wellbeing.

Before joining the Legislature, Rep. Mena worked in public service and advocacy roles, including positions with the Washington State Attorney General's Office and the Washington State Department of Ecology. Her background reflects a strong commitment to consumer protection, environmental health, and ensuring government works effectively for the people it serves.

In the Legislature, she has sponsored and supported bills related to school safety, student wellness, and equitable access to educational resources. She has also been active in efforts to strengthen consumer rights, improve environmental protection, and support essential public services across Pierce County.

Rep. Mena has been a positive and engaged partner with WSSRA members, including speaking at the statewide convention in June earlier this year. Her remarks emphasized the importance of ensuring that educational resources remain strong for future generations, including fair funding across school districts, support for educators and professional staff, including her mom, and maintaining safe, healthy learning environments for all students.

PCSRA thanks Legislative CoChair Barbara Church for her work in coordinating this opportunity.



For September 10

Chicken Buffet:

Chicken Cordon Bleu, roasted red potatoes, seasonal fresh fruit, tossed green salad with assorted dressings, vegetable medley, dessert, coffee and iced tea.

October 15

Meet & Greet

For November 12

Thanksgiving Buffet:

Turkey, stuffing, mashed potatoes and gravy, cranberry sauce, vegetable medley, tossed green salad, dessert, coffee and iced tea.

Cost \$15

Call Carolyn Bjerke at
253-759-3951

by **Sept 4th**

for September reservations
and by **November 6th** for
November.



Membership Directory

For those members who wish to receive the newly published **Yellow 2026-2027** 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. Be sure to dispose of last years issue appropriately.

President's Message – September 2026



Sandy Grape, President

PCSRA rolled back in from summer like a band hitting the stage after a long break — and wow, it felt good. In June, 19 of our delegates headed to the WSSRA Convention at Great Wolf Lodge.

They showed up strong, represented PCSRA with heart, and yes — those “mermaid” table decorations absolutely stole the show. Vickie, Annie, and Geraldine, you rocked it. 

We kicked off the year with our potluck picnic at Clarks Creek South Park, and you all brought the good stuff — food, laughter, and that easy PCSRA rhythm we fall into every time we're together. The sunshine didn't hurt either. Folks were already talking about next year before the last dish was packed up.

Our September 10th luncheon at LaQuinta has that “start me up” energy. Let's have a great turnout, great conversations, and a whole lot of smiles.

PCSRA is off to a strong start, and that's because of you — your energy, your kindness, your willingness to show up. We're rolling into this year with momentum, good spirit, and a whole lot of heart. Let's keep going!

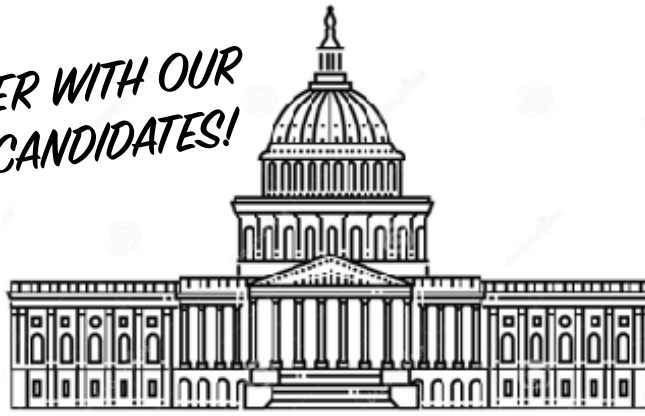


Health Services —

Vacant Board Position

The Health Services position on the PCSRA Board is still vacant. This role includes attending Board meetings and preparing brief health updates for our Happenings publication. In past years, this position has often been filled by a retired RN or someone with a healthcare background, as the work may include sharing health information, staying aware of local programs, and helping connect members with relevant resources. Members with interest or experience in health-related topics are encouraged to contact PCSRA leadership.

*A GET-TOGETHER WITH OUR
LEGISLATORS & CANDIDATES!*



PIERCE COUNTY LEGISLATIVE “MEET AND GREET”

Save the Date: October 15, 2026

Come to our annual get-together with Legislators at LaQuinta Inn! This is the time for us to develop relationships and educate lawmakers who impact our retirement benefits. We are already hearing that we will need to be vigilant to protect our benefits, especially health benefits, during this economically challenging session.

It's easy to visit over hot hors d'oeuvres, fresh fruit and cheeses, coffee and cookies in this relaxed setting! Back by popular demand are the delicious hot stuffed mushrooms and teriyaki mushrooms. Our Legislators need to see us as their constituents during this election session when they want our votes.

Our voices are amplified as a group!

WHEN: Thursday, October 15th at 3:30 p.m. - 5:00 p.m.

WHERE: Tacoma LaQuinta Inn off I-5 at Portland Avenue exit

WHAT: Conversation over Hors d'oeuvres and Sweets, Assorted Fresh Fruit and Cheeses, Coffee, no-host bar available.

COST: \$5

PLEASE MAKE ATTENDANCE AT THIS ONCE-A-YEAR EVENT A PRIORITY!

Come and protect your retirement benefits at this annual fun event.

Easy talking points available.

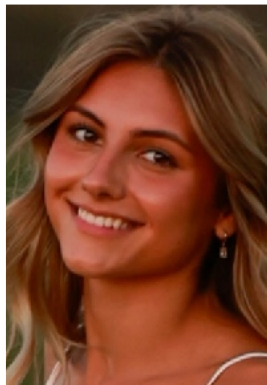
PCSRA SCHOLARSHIP WINNERS FOR 2026



L to R: Ariana Torres, Spanaway High, Clara Jordan, Gig Harbor High, Finley Huss, Sumner High.



L to R: Hazel Herron, Sumner High, Jaiden Huff, White River High, Jane Aune, Covenant High.



L to R: Jillian Ancheta, Rogers High, Madilyn Prior, Stadium High, Malachi Wilson, Gig Harbor High.

L to R: Owen Johnson, Spanaway High, Shelby Henderson, Sumner High.
Not shown: Jason Thomas, Rogers High, Makayla Barber, Steilacoom High, Logan Keogh, Rogers High, Grace Harrison, White River High, and Victoria Aguon, St. Martin's, Student Teacher.



LEGISLATIVE UPDATE



*By Emmett Mills, Legislative Director
Washington State School Retirees'
Association*

emmett@wssra.org

And so the cycle begins again. At the end of July, TRS 1 and PERS 1 retirees received a 3% COLA (not to exceed \$110 per month) thanks to a bill that WSSRA helped pass earlier this year. Now we must make sure a similar bill passes next year.

This is the challenge facing TRS 1 and PERS 1 retirees, who are 80 years old on average. As the result of budget cuts in 2011, they are the only retirees with state-managed pensions to not receive automatic annual increases. We have consistently advocated for a permanent solution to the problem, but so far these efforts have fallen short. With the state in dire financial straits, another one-time increase will be a heavy lift in 2027. We are working with the Select Committee on Pension Policy to draft COLA legislation and are hopeful that it will set us up for success. We are also working to make sure legislators don't cut our PEBB Medicare benefit, which narrowly escaped a reduction earlier this year.

With elections coming up in November, it's the perfect time for our units across the state to invite legislators to attend their meetings. Candidates on the ballot are eager for opportunities to meet voters and hear about issues they care about. If you see that a legislator or candidate is scheduled to visit your unit, be sure to attend. A room packed full of retired teachers and school employees is the ultimate show of force.

Thank you for your continued commitment to defending your pension and benefits. This next year will likely be very challenging. Everything you do to help will make a difference.

WSSRA Convention at Great Wolf Lodge



Autumn Safety Tips for Older Adults

Fall is gorgeous in its own right, but falling leaves and winter weather can make outdoor spaces dangerous for unsteady seniors. Be sure to rake up any lawn debris or fallen leaves to prepare for the winter season and prevent accidental falls. Gutters, walkways, roads, and sidewalks may also need attention. Additionally, installing handrails and non-skid surfaces to exterior stairs makes it easier to prevent a tumble from slipping on ice or leaves. If you're a senior and still maintaining your own yard, be sure to stretch and use your legs to prevent injuries to your neck or back while landscaping. Inside, be sure to test your furnace, fireplace, and chimney to ensure that your home has heat.

We've passed the summer solstice and the days are becoming shorter and shorter. By November, it'll be dark outside very early. In some places, as soon as 4 PM. Be sure to be mindful of this time change as **driving at night can be dangerous**. If you do drive at night, make sure you drive slowly and take great care merging and turning to avoid accidents.

With daylight savings gone and the days infinitely shorter, you'll need to rely on sources of artificial light. Before autumn takes full effect, be sure to stock up on candles, light bulbs, and batteries. You should also check and replace the batteries in your smoke and carbon monoxide detectors twice a year: in March and November when you change the clocks for daylight savings. Testing them twice a year is a great way to ensure they're always working. It may also be a good idea to install smart lights that turn on automatically when they sense motion to help prevent accidents or falls in the dark. Remember, **poor lighting** is a key contributor to senior falls.

Socks, warm house shoes, wool hats, coats, and sweaters are all great articles to keep at home during the fall. It's also a good idea to keep warm clothes in your vehicle just in case your car breaks down while it's cold or wet outside. Like mom always said, it's better to have it and not need it than to need it and not have it.

With autumn comes flu season. To protect yourself, get vaccinated, and wash your hands frequently. Wash your hands after handling money, returning home from public places, after using the bathroom and before eating. You can

also take Vitamin C or Zinc to help promote a healthy immune system.

Another great way to prevent getting sick this autumn is to regulate and maintain a healthy activity and sleeping routine. Fall and winter are the most important seasons to keep your body moving. Practicing yoga, taking a short walk, or going for a jog on the treadmill can lower your chances of getting sick and also **help you sleep better**. It can also reduce your risk of falling by promoting strong muscles and healthy joints. On the other hand, sleep is a crucial part of keeping your immune system healthy. Sleep allows your body to recover and repair itself and fight off illnesses. Without it, you're more likely to suffer from a fall or getting sick. Rest can also keep your mind sharp and alert and leave you feeling happier and more refreshed for your daily routine.

There's nothing cozier during the fall than a clean house and a vanilla-scented candle. However, during autumn there is a noticeable uptick in fires caused by improper candle use. Never leave a candle burning if you leave the house or fall asleep. Be sure to keep burning candles away from high traffic areas and pets.

If you still don't use a personal emergency response system or other medical alert devices, now is the time to start looking into them. Everyone can benefit from having a medical alert device handy at all times. **PERS devices** make it possible for seniors to safely age in their own homes and call for help if they need it. They're great for getting help after a fall or accident and can bring peace of mind both to you and to your loved one. With two-way voice communication, these devices can put your loved one in touch with you, their friends, other family members, neighbors, and even 911 at the press of a button. Best of all, these devices are small, water-resistant, and can fit into a purse or pocket. They can also be worn on a belt clip or around the neck on a lanyard.

Autumn is notorious for slippery leaves and icy rain. To prevent falls outside, it's a good idea to invest in a solid pair of waterproof, slip-resistant outside shoes. No-skid shoes are also great for in the house. As daylight savings makes the home darker earlier, non-slip shoes can prevent accidental falls from water, poor lighting, or other trip hazards found around the home.



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



Not to soon to think
about the Sock Drive...
While those back to
school sales are on...
Just sayin'

• • • • •
• **Fun Fact:** PCSRA Membership •
• is at an all-time high... Thanks to •
• Alan Burke and the hard working •
• mini-grant committee Congratulations! •
• • • • •