Happy Holiday Meeting December 10

HAPPENINGS

Publication of the Pierce County School Retirees' Association (PCSRA) **Volume XXXVII Issue 2, 2026/27**

General Meetings/ Luncheons
IN PERSON
La Quinta Inn
1425 E. 27th Street, Tacoma

Winter 2026
November 12
2nd Thursday Noon Lunch
•
December 10
2nd Thursday Noon Lunch
•
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
•

WSSRA: 1-360-413-5496
wssra.org

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TFD CARES

We are so happy to welcome Victoria Jackson, from the Tacoma Fire Department to be here with us at our Nov. 12 luncheon.

Victoria is a co-administrator with Tacoma Fire Dept CARES, a non-urgent unit which does much to help and enhance the Tacoma community. Helping people is a priority for them. Victoria will be happy to answer questions or tell us where to find more information.

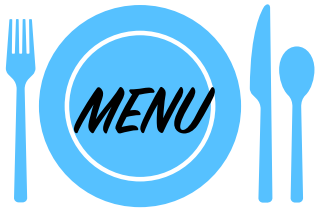
The Tacoma Fire Department provides the community with both emergency and non-emergency medical services. In 2012, Tacoma Fire began providing non-emergency medical services to support community members beyond the traditional 911 emergency medical services (EMS) call. The CARES Program is a long-term strategic initiative to support public safety. It is an expanded fire department-based service supported by Washington State Legislation (RCW 35.21.930)

The CARES Program is available to residents of Tacoma, Fife, and Fircrest. First responders make most referrals to the CARES Program internally. Common referrals include complex medical needs (three or more chronic illnesses), complex psychiatric needs, limited social support (homeless, caregiving, and loneliness), and substance use support and barriers.

Come educate yourself about all the ways the Tacoma Fire Dept helps people beyond the very important job of firefighting and sending out EMT's.

This TFD program provides important information for all to hear. See you there!

Remember - Food is good, Friends are great, and Fun for all -The 3F's Karen Chapman, Programs



For November 12
Thanksgiving Buffet: Turkey, stuffing, mashed potatoes and gravy, cranberry sauce, vegetable medley, tossed green salad, dessert, coffee and iced tea.

For December 10
Italian Buffet: Penne Pasta with Alfredo and/or Marinara meat sauce, fresh fruit, tossed green salad with choice of dressings, vegetables, garlic bread, dessert, coffee and iced tea.

Cost $20
Call Carolyn Bjerke at 253-759-3951
by **November 6th** for November reservations and by Reservations by **December 4th** for December 10

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 year's issue appropriately.

President's Message – Fall/Winter 2026



It has been a lively fall for Pierce County SRA, with members speaking up for retirees, connecting with legislators, and enjoying good times together.

In October, Pierce County hosted its annual Legislative "Meet & Greet," bringing together PCSRA members, legislators, and candidates from Legislative Districts 2, 25, 26, 27, 28, and 29. The event had a strong turnout and gave members an opportunity to build relationships with those who influence retirement benefits and to share concerns about protecting those benefits—especially health-care benefits—as the upcoming legislative session approached.

As 2026 is an election year, Meet & Greet also gave legislators and candidates an important opportunity to meet PCSRA members as constituents. Members were able to hear from candidates, learn more about their positions on issues important to retirees, and explain why protecting retirement benefits matters.

PCSRA Past President Diane Blair organized the event with help from others. Emmett Mills, WSSRA Legislative Director, provided helpful talking points so members could feel prepared to discuss issues affecting retirees. The president opened the gathering, and members then had the opportunity to visit with legislators and candidates. Along with the serious business of advocacy, everyone enjoyed the welcoming atmosphere and some popular appetizers.

PCSRA appreciates Diane Blair, Emmett Mills, and everyone else who helped make the Meet & Greet both informative and enjoyable.

November will bring another enjoyable opportunity for members to gather at the PCSRA luncheon. Everyone enjoys a delicious Thanksgiving buffet, along with friendly conversation, laughter, and fellowship with friends and fellow members. The luncheon is a wonderful way to celebrate the season and enjoy the camaraderie that makes PCSRA such a special organization.

As the year winds down, PCSRA stays involved in several key areas, including scholarships, mini-grants, and membership outreach. These programs reflect the organization's ongoing commitment to supporting its members, encouraging future generations, and strengthening communities.

PCSRA is grateful for the members who attend events, volunteer their time, share their ideas, and help keep the organization active and growing. Their participation has an influence and helps make each gathering a success. Best wishes to all PCSRA members for a happy Thanksgiving, a joyful holiday season, and a healthy and fulfilling year ahead.

Warmly, Sandy Grape, President

THE MEET & GREET

A GET-TOGETHER WITH OUR LEGISLATORS & CANDIDATES!





Legislative candidates from Pierce County met with PCSRA members at the annual event. A bipartisan representation attended.









Support for retirement medical benefits and Plan 1 COLA were hot topics for discussion! Retirees valued the opportunity to interact and question candidates from their districts.



Energetic attendees, important conversations, and catered hors d'oeuvres in the banquet rooms at LaQuinta Inn - what a great event!









Thank you to all the legislative candidates who attended and made this an exciting event; Legislative District 25; David Berg, Rep. Cyndy Jacobsen, Jenn Marie Strickling. Legislative District 26; Rep. Adison Richards. Legislative District 27; Carole Sue Braaten, Rep. Jake Fey. Legislative District 29; Rep.Sharlett Mena, Rep. Melanie Morgan, Krista Perez, Patrick Stickney and Clover Park School District Superintendent Ron Banner.

Septembers Luncheon with Rep. Mari Leavitt, 28th District



A warm and informational address by our friend Marni Leavitt, 28th District Representative, was the highlight of the September luncheon. We all enjoyed the time together with our friends and the opportunity to hear “from the source” what is happening in the legislature.



Above: Marni and Diane Blair

Above: Marni and Lucy Schilter-McKee , enjoying the buffet luncheon



Left: Laurel Powell telling us about the PAC and the raffle before and after the meeting.

Health Services —

Vacant Board Position

The Health Services position on the PCSRA Board remains open. The position involves attending Board meetings and preparing brief health-related updates for the *Happenings* publication.

In the past, the position has often been filled by a retired RN or someone with a health-care background. Responsibilities may include sharing reliable health information, staying informed about local programs, and helping members connect with useful resources.

Members with an interest or experience in health-related topics are encouraged to contact PCSRA leadership to learn more.

Recording Secretary —

Elected Board Position

The Recording Secretary records the minutes of all Board meetings and General Membership Meetings held during the luncheons. The position also helps maintain an accurate record of PCSRA business and decisions.

The Recording Secretary is an elected Board position and plays an important role in keeping the organization organized and informed. Members who are interested in learning more about the position or serving as Recording Secretary are encouraged to contact PCSRA President Sandy Grape at **office@sandygrape.com**. A willing volunteer would be greatly appreciated.

LEGISLATIVE UPDATE



By Emmett Mills, Legislative Director Washington State School Retirees' Association *emmett@wssra.org*

Can you feel it in the air? It's getting dark earlier. The leaves are changing color. The mornings are chilly. These are all signs of the inevitable – the state legislative session is only a few months away. Unfortunately, it looks to be a long and harsh one with scarce resources.

As we prepare for a legislative session that will likely involve significant budget cuts, we have two primary areas of focus. The first is protecting the PEBB Medicare Benefit, which is received by every public sector retiree who purchases Medicare insurance through the Public Employees Benefits Board (PEBB). The state provides an automatic premium subsidy of up to $183 per month for all PEBB Medicare retirees. Without this benefit, monthly premiums would increase by up to $183. Unfortunately, this benefit is low hanging fruit – it isn't contractually guaranteed and could be easily taken away. We defeated a proposal to reduce it earlier this year and are working to educate legislators about its importance.

Our second area of focus is to secure another COLA for TRS 1 and PERS 1 retirees. Unlike members of other pension plans, most TRS 1 and PERS 1 retirees don't receive automatic annual increases. We are working with the Select Committee on Pension Policy to draft a bill that would provide these retirees with a COLA in 2027. While money is very scarce, there are ways that the legislature could provide a benefit increase at no immediate cost to the state.

During the fast-paced legislative session, we rely on email communications to let you know when we urgently need your help. Please make sure we have your email address by going to www.wssra.org, scrolling down to the bottom of the page, and filling out the box that says "WSSRA Members - Join our email list!".

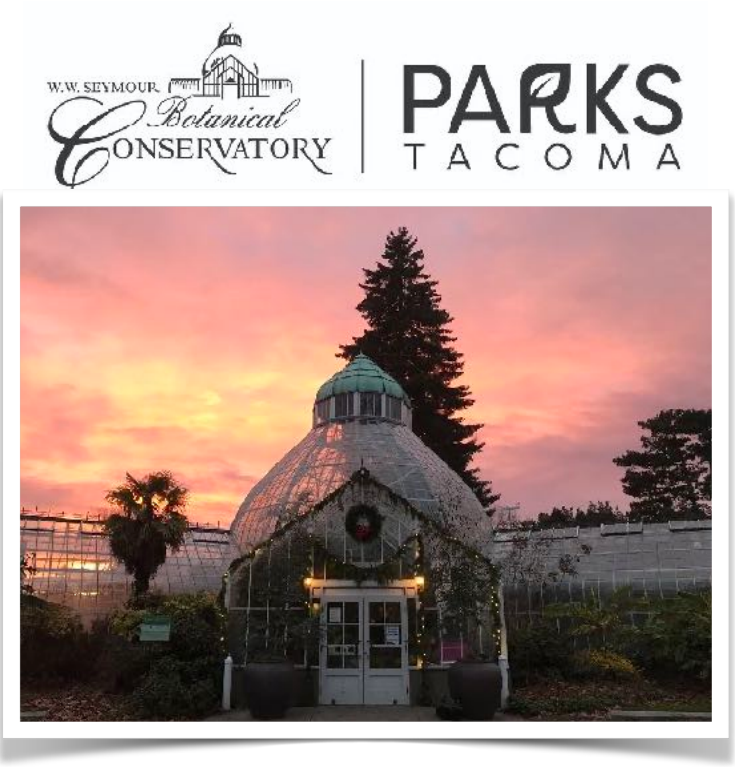
Notice of Luncheon Cost Increase

The Pierce County SRA Board, after careful consideration and review of luncheon costs, approved an increase in the amount paid by unit members. Beginning with the November General Membership Luncheon, the amount will increase from $15 to $20 per person.

Based on the most recent luncheon invoice, the total catering cost was approximately $30.25 per person, including the buffet, applicable charges, sales tax, and gratuity. PCSRA covers the difference in cost for us all.

We appreciate your understanding as catering and related costs continue to increase. We look forward to sharing another enjoyable luncheon with you!

December 10 Program: Seymour Conservatory at Wright's Park



If you were a member of PCSRA during COVID you might remember how we had to go online for our "luncheon programs". Tyra Shenault, Horticulture Resources Supervisor of the beautiful Seymour Conservatory at Wright's Park, graciously presented a Zoom program for our group. Pictures were shown from both historical and present time, of the inside and out.

At our December 10th luncheon, Tyra will come, this time in person, to speak about this beautiful Tacoma treasure.

The Conservatory displays seasonal changes throughout year. These plantings are interspurced with the permanent ones.

Christmas is a wonderful time to stroll through the "glass house". This December you will find "Aloha" spirit when visiting, not only in the conservatory decorations, but in the island attire worn by staff. Santa will also be decked out in "cool" island clothes. So don your tropical clothes and come on in.

Liven up your Holidays and come to our Dec 10th luncheon. Let Tyra put you in a tropical Christmas mood. I can almost smell those tropical flowers now!

Can't you? Karen Chapman, Programs

Why Your Involvement Matters Now

The Pierce County School Retirees' Association is growing. As our organization grows, so does our impact—along with the operational demands required to sustain it and to continue the work that inspired you to join us.

Expansion means meeting higher regulatory, administrative, and strategic requirements. To keep moving forward, we need dedicated members to step into key volunteer positions. The work of our board and committees is the engine that drives our mission.

Having dedicated volunteers—regardless of previous experience—helps us meet legal standards, manage budgets responsibly, and maintain our non-profit status. It allows us to launch new initiatives, serve more current and future educators, and advocate for legislation that enhances the lives of school retirees without burning out our existing team.

We really need you. Remember, retirement isn't about slowing down, it's about directing your passion to where it matters most. So, please consider joining our leadership team today. Ready to help guide our next chapter? Reach out to our team today to explore available positions and find a role that aligns with your skills, availability and interests.

Retirement isn't about stepping back from the world—it's about choosing where to lead it next.

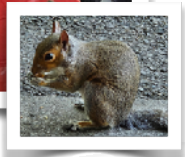
SUMMER FUN

















And here, as promised, is the recipe for the most talked about dish on the table.

Mary's Apple Cake

350 degree oven
Greased 9x13 cake pan
45-50 minutes

1. Sift together and set aside:
   - 2 c. flour (or 1/2 all purpose flour, 1/2 whole wheat flour)
   - 1/2 tsp. salt
   - 1 1/2 tsp. baking soda
   - 2 tsp. cinnamon (or 1 tsp. Chinese five spice, 1 tsp. cinnamon)
2. Beat together
   - 1 c. oil (or 1/4 c melted butter and 3/4 c oil)
   - 2 c. sugar (or 1 1/2 c. sugar, 1/4 c. brown sugar)*(use less sugar if apples are sweet)
3. Add and beat until creamy
   - 2 eggs
   - 1 tsp. vanilla
4. Mix in the sifted dry ingredients
5. Mix in 4 c. diced apples and 1 c. chopped walnuts (save 1/4-1/3 c. nuts and a little brown sugar to sprinkle over the top of the batter when it is in the pan)
6. Bake at 350 degrees for 45-50 minutes
7. Frost when cool

Cream Cheese Frosting:

- 2 3oz. pkg. cream cheese
- 1 tsp. vanilla
- 3 TBSP butter softened
- 1 1/2 c. powdered sugar

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SOCKS SOCKS SOCKS!

It is time for our Holiday Sock Drive. Please remember to bring NEW women's, men's, boys' or girls' socks to the General Membership Luncheon on November 12th and/or December 10th.