



*Skagit-Island-San Juan
Unit 21
School Retirees' Association
February, 2017*



HAPPY NEW YEAR!

2017 is here and our Unit 21 has exiting news and much work to do.

First of all the state legislature will be considering four major items for their two year budget:

- A. Funding education—known as the McCleary deadline
- B. Real ID—driver's licenses and ID cards need to be brought into compliance with federal law to include security enhancement and be issued only to people who can prove they are legally in the United States
- C. Funding of Mental Health—Governor Inslee has asked for an additional \$300 million for the next two years to apply to improving the state's mental health problems
- D. Law Enforcement Use of Deadly Force

Information on all of the above is available from your district legislator. We ask that you contact your legislators and tell them how the passing of our goals is important to you—the more communication we have the better they can understand our retirement needs. The most important thing you can do is call, email, or write to your legislator and let them know your concerns.

In February and March of this year **three** of our unit members (Bruce Boyer, Diane Visten, Barbara Robinson) will be in Olympia to work with the WSSRA Legislative Committee, our lobbyists, our WSSRA legislative director and others to contact the 39th, 10th, and 40th district representatives on the following issues:

1. Restoring Plan 1 COLA, these retirees have had a static salary over the years as COLA was taken away to fund other legislative issues. It must be given back!
2. Restoration of the Medicare Eligible Healthcare Benefit to the original \$183 subsidy on the Medicare supplement insurance through the PEBB..
3. Making the actuarially recommended pension payment. The states pension stays well funded as long as the state pays its annual payment. Unfortunately the state has not always paid their share.
4. Protect the Defined Benefit Retirement Plan for future school employees. Defined Benefits Plans offer retirees a secure retirement.
5. Plan 2 Default—NOW—If new employees do not select between plan 2-3 within a short time after they are hired, the employee is automatically placed in Plan 3.
6. GOAL 867—Retirees should have the equality in retire-to-work rules.

This year Unit 21 will be awarding a \$1500 scholarship to a student teacher . We are coordinating with Western Washington University to accomplish this goal and are looking forward to working with them. Diane Visten has been Unit 21's contact persona and has been diligent in establishing who and what type of person we would like to receive this scholarship.

DO NOT FORGET—WSSRA has a member benefit program. A list of the benefits are on page 9 of your recent WSSRA Journal. If you are interested in any of the benefits please contact www.myambabenefits.info/wssra. I urge you all to read the January/February Journal for more information on all these issues.

Barbara Landrock, President Unit

Retirement Seminar

Date: March 3, 2017

Time: 5:50—8:30 pm

Place: NW ESD 189 Anacortes, Washington

Let your family and friends know about our annual Retirement Seminar

WSSRA Unit 21

Board Members/Contacts

President:

Barbara Landrock
bland3@hotmail.com

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Historian:

Bonnie Green

Legislative:

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babsann09@comcast.com

Newsletter:

Joyce Moon
joycevmoon@gmail.com

Outreach:

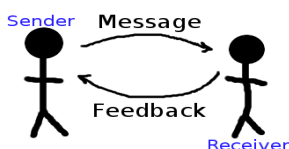
Reidar Ytgard
rmytgard@wavecable.com

Retirement Planning:

Lonnie Keown
lonnie.keown@gmail.com

Social Media Addresses

- **WSSRA.org** (for updated organization news and legislative news)
- **SISRA21.org** (Facebook-Website for local news and updates)
- **WSSR-PAC**
1928 Circle Loop
Lacey, WA 98503
www.wssr-pac.org





Sweethearts of Unit 21

As we ready our February newsletter, Skagit/Island/San Juan Unit 21 would like to share our pride in a unique couple who has worked diligently to uphold the values and goals of the Washington State School Retirees' Association. They are the "Sweethearts of Unit 21" and have earned that title through their dedication to each other, their family and their community. So please meet Reidar and Millie Ytgard.

Their story began in the early 1970s when Reidar, a young Burlington-Edison school bus driver, noticed a fetching young widow whose children rode his bus. Then one day when Millie was attending a parent conference for one of her children they met in the halls of Westview Elementary School and started talking. That talk led to a union of two very special people who eventually formed a blended family of six children and 45 years of dedication to each other and their family and friends. That blended family now includes not only the six original children but 12 grandchildren and five great grandchildren. As with most modern families the members have moved and spread across wide areas of our country. Reidar and Millie are fortunate that most of their family has settled somewhere along the west coast from San Francisco north and provide wonderful places to visit.

Reidar is the chairman of Unit 21's Outreach Program and is great at the job. He loves to meet and get to know people. Millie, the shyer of the two, is his companion in all that he does. She is always there when someone needs a little extra. And, as a wonderful cook who has worked for many restaurants in Skagit Valley, she usually adds a bit of good food to the occasion. Our group potlucks can attest to her outstanding culinary skills. Reidar, who is well noted for his singing of the National Anthem at all Skagit Valley College basketball games for many years, has graced many of Unit 21's social events with his musical talents and it has become a tradition to close out the annual Holiday Luncheon with his singing Auld Lang Syne. He often plays his harmonica for group sings and lends a truly festive air to these events.

A Teacher's Look Back

When a teacher retires, he or she may tuck away a lot of memories or breathe a sigh of relief. In my case, I left for a new career or two in Wyoming and Oregon. But I carried a metal box that I still have which I peeked into every few years. It is filled with photos and clippings from years of class photos and outings. There are even program agendas for parents.

My years of teaching in Skagit County were from January 1956 to June 1982. Now it is 2017, so sixty years have seen a big departure from the traditions of those days. Those early Kindergarten and First Grade students are nearing their retirement years and have become the respectable adults of today. When I hear their names, I smile with satisfaction that they have been completing their jobs well today. Two are even local police chiefs.

After student teaching the fall of 1955 in the old Lincoln School in Burlington, I moved across the street to Roosevelt to teach First Grade as the teacher was taking maternity leave. The next year during class time, the school board members toured and observed our classroom activities. There was merit pay for good teachers in that day.

Our Washington Education Association local unit had informal get togethers so the teachers could have social contact. I still have a memory of a game we played with shoes off. The Superintendent had holes in his socks.

Dick and Jane readers challenged a teacher because phonics was not recognized as a needed tool for the sight reading era of the day. But teachers supported each other in helpful critiques and encouragement. There were three experienced First Grade teachers who offered wisdom and an experienced way to teach. I had great respect for Viola Squires, Lucille Umbarger, and Pauline Sandell. Recipes were exchanged. Orientation to family situations of students made it close to a near-family relationship. It is true! Some teachers wore house dresses from a past era then. Frugality was real.

In 1958 I finished my degree as I had been teaching on an emergency certificate. There was a shortage of teachers at the time. From 1959 to 1982, I taught Kindergarten and First Grade in Mount Vernon, first in Roosevelt School then Lincoln School. When Roosevelt School became the Administration Building, the move to a larger school diminished the closeness as times were changing.

But all through those years, the children were the emotional glue that made it a very rewarding experience. I admit that I still visualize them at that innocent stage of their youth. There is even a "kid" in me as I learned from my students so many things.

Laurel (Pruett, Clairmont) Christiansen, Dannebrog, Nebraska

COMMITTEE REPORTS

Treasurer: As of February 17, 2016



Checking Balance : \$3078.53 (Funds used for ongoing expenses of Unit 21)

Savings Balance: \$6687.96

Funds expended for scholarship = \$1500,

Funds expended for mini-grants = \$2500,

Lonnie Keown, Treasurer

Correspondence/Memorial: The Skagit-Island-San Juan Unit 21 of the Washington State School Retirees' Association remember our friends and former members :



Maxine Hansen, Oak Harbor, WA (was living in Palm Springs, CA at time of death)
Jean Scribner, Bellingham, WA

Eloise Stendal, Correspondence

Scholarship: **Great News!** Unit 21 has established a Western Washington University scholarship Of \$1500 per year to be awarded to a qualified student teacher in order to offset expenses incurred during that time period. We are committed to offer this scholarship for five years. After that time we will reevaluate the process. Western is very excited about the idea since we are the first to recognize the huge expenses incurred by student teachers and we can make a real difference to a deserving future teacher.



Diane Visten, Scholarship Chair

Grants: Unit 21 supports school employees one more time! Each year we have offered mini grants to any school employee in the Skagit/Island/San Juan school districts. These mini grants are in response to requests for music supplies, art supplies, books, tech materials, physical education equipment, money for field trips to museums and places like Mountain Camp, along with purchases of supplies for special projects. This past October we received 43 applications and we funded 25 mini grants. Teachers of Sedro Woolley School District received 10 grants, Mount Vernon School District teachers received 10 grants, teachers in the Concrete School District received 4 grants and a Lopez Island School District teacher received a grant. We provided these monies to members and non-members alike - for any of the school districts in our area. Next year we hope to continue this program again and ,perhaps, offer more grants. We are proud to announce that over the past 21 years we have awarded a total of \$30,200 in grants to deserving projects. We would also like you to know that anyone can **donate to our mini grant program** by sending a check to Skagit/Island/San Juan School Retirees' Unit 21 (P.O. Box 66, Burlington, WA 98233). This is one way to continue to be an effective partner in our chosen profession and to make a difference in the education of children.



Barbara Robinson, Membership

Health: What follows is an extraction from the Skagit Valley Herald article on Dementia by Dr. Robert Ashley. Loss of memory is the most scary disease. Researchers have reported a decline in this disease since 2013. Why? It seems that any form of education helps reduce the number of cases. As the educational process increases functional brain reserves. However, more highly educated people still get dementia so education may not be the remedy. Some sources indicate that people should be encouraged to use their mind more. Be it playing games, doing puzzles, or any form of activity that requires using your brain. It is possible that exercising the brain could stave off dementia. It has been noted that people who are proficient in the languages have a decline in dementia. Therefore it is important to use your mind. Learn new materials and continue to educate yourself daily.



Mary Henderson-Jones, Health Chair

Historian: Bonnie Green continues to tradition of collecting documents and/or mementoes about Unit 21's activities in a scrapbook format. Members send pictures, and written material to her for organization and preservation. The books are then stored at the Sedro Woolley Museum.



Newsletter: Hello, I am back to say **thank you** for the way you all seem to appreciate the time and effort it takes to get the newsletter out. And that the new format is to your liking. This issue includes a new feature, a focus on one of our most active couples, plus an article written by a Unit 21 member who currently lives in Nebraska. I hope you all follow suit and **submit an article that you would like to share**. We are very interested in what you all enjoy, would like to read about, and anything that is just plain fun to be involved in. Special events, community activities, and social events are all things we could help you advertise to your fellow school retirees. So please do not hesitate to let us know what is coming up—or things that you would like to share with the group, by contacting me at joycevmoon@gmail.com. We need your active participation and input to make this an interesting and successful tool for all of you. And many, **many thanks to Eloise Stendal for proofreading the newsletter**. Her help is invaluable.



Joyce Moon, Skagit/Island, San Juan Newsletter

Committee reports continued

Legislative: I attended our NW-1 Coordinating Council meeting on Jan. 9 and heard Dr. Mike Boring speak about the legislative session that has since started on Jan. 10. He indicated that this would be one of the toughest sessions in history with the legislature tasked to resolve the mandated funding issues of our schools by the end of this session. His prognosis is that it could easily go into two extra sessions which would put quite a burden on our school districts as they won't get the financial data needed to set their budgets until probably mid-summer, which will in turn, impact when new staff can be hired and other cascading issues. He noted that there is some talk about revisiting the COLA issue for our Plan 1 retirees this year. While I was encouraged to hear this, I was even more surprised to get an email from WSSRA asking me to give them guidance from the choices they offered. This is one more reason for you to submit your email address at the WSSRA web site. This is how WSSRA can make contact with those of us who have registered our email addresses and gain our input into the process. As I have mentioned before, this is the best way for WSSRA to give and get information to/from you in a timely manner during the legislative session. If you are having trouble getting signed up, send me an email at bnpboyer@msn.com and I will see that your email is on the "list". This is the only use that will be made of your email address if given to the Lacey office. I am making this a short report as I plan to add another report after Diane Visten, Barbara Robinson and I get back from visiting our legislators Feb. 8-9. Hopefully we will have more concrete information to pass along to you then. In the meantime, if you get an email from WSSRA requesting that you phone or email your state senator or legislators, please help us show them that we are listening and concerned. **The more people who contact them the better they hear us!**



Bruce Boyer, Legislative Chair

Membership: What can I do as a member of WSSRA? I'm busy, I work, I don't like meetings! All these are valid reasons NOT to "be active." However there are some meaningful ways to be "a member." **First be informed!** Submit your email address to our WSSRA organization so you can receive updates and alerts especially during this important legislative session. Do that by going to WSSRA.org and "Join Our Mailing List" on the left hand side of the page. **Second you can sign up** to get newsletters from each of your legislators and keep watch on what they are doing that impacts not only your pension benefits, but the other important decisions that affect your life. Do that by going to Leg.Wa.Gov and finding your legislator's information. **Third, make contact** and make your concerns known. Do that by writing a letter, an email or by visiting your legislator when they are back in their districts. And last, but certainly not least, **find a new member**. Invite friends or co-workers to become a member also. We are fast becoming a presence to be heard in Olympia due to our State Legislative committee work, to our lobbyists, and to our legislative director's work. The more members we have, the more impact our organization has. This session is crucial and the voices of our members are important. **It is important to be an involved member!!**



Barbara Robinson, Membership Chair, Past Unit 21 Co-President

Outreach: Unit 21 continues to work with the local foodbanks. We collect food and personal hygiene products at every meeting. They are then taken to the central distribution point in Sedro-Woolley and transported to the foodbank of our choice. The collection to be taken in February is earmarked for the Sedro Wooley foodbank. Unit 21 collected and donated \$52 plus several boxes of food to the foodbank due to the generosity of attendees of the Holiday Luncheon. We continue to welcome your donations to help those less fortunate in our community. And **Thank You** for your efforts.



Reidar Ytgard, Outreach Chair

Retirement: The **Retirement Seminar** is scheduled for **March 3, 2017** at the **Northwest ESD in Anacortes, WA**. Time is **5:30 to 8:30 pm**. The seminar is open to ALL school employees in Skagit, Island, and San Juan Counties. The presentation will cover Plans 2 and 3 and the Deferred Compensation Program, and will include how to use the Benefit Calculator, the Plan 3 Defined Contribution account, and tools to be for retirement planning. However, we will not be covering information for TRS 1 participants. There is a recorded TRS 1 seminar made available on the education tab of the DRS website <http://www.drs.wa.gov/multimedia/seminars/seminars.htm>. Registration information will be delivered to schools during the first week of February. Questions? Contact lonnie.keown@gmail.com.



Lonnie Keown, Retirement Chair

Congratulation's to Diane Visten for once again organizing a very enjoyable Holiday Luncheon!

Here is her report of a task well done.

The Christmas season got off to a great start when almost 50 WSSRA members gathered at the Skagit Golf and Country Club for our annual Holiday Luncheon on December 7th. We enjoyed caroling around the piano with Pam Verner and then were treated to a delicious lunch of hearty soup, fruit, bread, and cookies for dessert.

The Burlington-Edison advanced girls chorus sang for us, as well as the Highlighter Swing Choir, a first for us. It was lovely. Unit 21 board members provided enticing baskets that were raffled off for the benefit of our grant fund. We welcomed our state director, Dr. Mike Boring and his wife as special guests. Dr. Boring gave a brief talk about what was transpiring in Olympia and cautioned us all to stay alert and active as the state legislature convened and once again became involved in the issues they need to resolve this session. We were honored that they traveled all the way from Olympia to be with us.

Barbara Landrock presided over the luncheon and also introduced Angie Vanderhaak who thanked us for our newly inaugurated scholarship being offered to student teachers at Western Washington University. This will be an annual offering of \$1500 and we will work with the university for five years in this endeavor.

Overall, we raised \$114 for our mini grant fund. That was a wonderful gift. In addition, we contributed \$52 to a local food bank as well as several boxes of food donations. Our group is so generous and it really gave the Christmas spirit a good start for us all. Thank you all who helped make this event possible—and to all who attended.

Diane Visten, Grants and Scholarship Committee Chair, Past Unit 21 Co-President

EMAIL NEWSLETTER AVAILABLE!

Are you interested in getting your Unit 21 newsletter via email? It's faster, comes in color, and is more convenient.

If you would like this service please contact:

Bruce Boyer

bnpboyer@msn.com

Thank You!

ADDRESS CHANGES

**Please let us know if you have moved
and have a new address.**

Send new addresses or contact information to :

babsann09@comcast.net

Or

bnpboyer@msn.com

Thank you!

Please support your **WSSR-PAC** with a check today. Your dues do not go to support this valuable service; they depend totally on fund raising events and individual contributions. Make checks payable to:

WSSRA-PAC Treasurer :



WSSRA-PAC

1928 Circle Loop

Lacey, WA 98503

Thank You!

"Refrigerator Poster" SISJSRA Calendar

Event	Date	Time	Location
Unit 21 SISJ Board Meeting (no host lunch available)	February 13, 2017	10:00 am	Creekside Continuing Care Community 400 Gilkey Road Burlington, WA
Retirement Seminar 	March 3, 2017	5:30-8:30 pm	Northwest ESD #189 1601 "R" Avenue Anacortes, WA
Unit 21 SISJ Board Meeting	May 8, 2017	10:00 am	Bruce Boyer's Home
WSSRA Convention 	June 5-7, 2017		Pasco, WA

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Skagit-Island-San Juan Unit 21
WSSRA School Retirees'
P. O. Box 66 U.S.
Burlington, WA 98233



Most current news from Olympia

I just got home from meeting with our local legislators in Olympia and am writing this now when it is still fresh in my mind. I went to Olympia the past two days with Barbara Robinson and Diane Visten who have represented you before. This was my first experience of advocating for members of WSSRA and found it to be a worthwhile and educational experience.

This year, WSSRA statewide leadership has helped to get a hearing for House Bill 1484/Senate Bill 5556, which would reinstate a COLA for our retired members. This Bill, sponsored by both Republicans and Democrats would provide an increase of \$2/month for each year of service (up to \$60/month). A hearing was held last week and was reportedly well received in the house appropriations committee public hearing. Several WSSRA members from throughout the state testified for the need of this bill. Diane, Barbara and I met with the legislators or their aide to advocate for support of this bill when we went down this week. See other side for names and contact information of the 11 members we met with.

During our meetings, we shared with our elected officials a little history of WSSRA and the COLA. For those of you who may not remember, up till 1998 retired WSSRA members took part in a gains sharing program which steadily increased your retirement check. In 1998 this was taken away and we were put on a COLA to help keep up with inflation. However, in 2011 our COLA was taken away because of budget constraints. Since then, as you already know, we have not received a COLA from the state. This means that members who retired in the early part of this century have not ever had a COLA, as they needed to be 66 before they would be eligible. You might also not be aware that TRS 1 and PERS 1 are the only two retirement systems out of the 15 state retirement systems that do not currently receive a COLA.

Currently, HB 1484 is in the Appropriations Committee. The next step would be for it to go to the executive caucus who would need to send it on to the Rules Committee. If you want to track this bill you can view it on the legislature web site by searching for it by its' number.

Another item we spent time going over with our legislators was the monthly \$33 that were taken away from us for Health Care Benefits starting in 2011.

Many of the legislators we talked with were sympathetic about the two issues discussed above. However, as the legislators have just now been given by projected revenue forecast for the upcoming biennium and they have not agreed on a budget, there were no promises made.

Late in March, Diane, Barb and I will again travel to Olympia to meet with our legislators to check on the progress of these issues and advocate with them for you. In the meantime, if you haven't given your name and e-mail address to WSSRA for a possible "all hands on deck" phone call or letter to a legislator, you can e-mail me at bnpboyer@msn.com and I will forward it for you. Hopefully with your help, we can reclaim our rightful COLA.

Bruce Boyer

Unit 21 Legislative Chair

State Legislator Contact Information
(Keep in a handy place for possible future use)

10th District

Sen. Barbara Bailey	360 786-7618	PO Box 40410	Olympia, WA	98504-0600
Rep. Norma Smith	360 786-7884	PO Box 40600	"	"
Rep. Dave Hayes	360 786-7914	PO Box 40600	"	"

39th District

Sen. Kirk Pearson	360 786-7676	PO Box 40439	"	"
Rep. Dan Kristiansen	360 786-7967	PO Box 40600	"	"
Rep. John Koster	360 786-7816	PO Box 40600	"	"

40th District

Sen. Kevin Ranker	360 786-7678	PO Box 40440	"	"
Rep. Kristine Lytton	360 786-7800	PO Box 40600	"	"
Rep. Jeff Morris	360 786-7970	PO Box 40600	"	"

42nd District

Sen. Doug Ericksen	360 786-7682	PO Box 40442	"	"
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(Senator Ericksen was out of State and we were not able to meet with him)

Rep. Luanne Van Werven	360 786-7980	PO Box 40600	"	"
Rep. Vincent Buys	360 786-7854	PO Box 40600	"	"