



*Skagit-Island-San Juan
Unit 21
School Retirees' Association
February, 2018*



WSSRA Unit 21

Board Members/Contacts

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*Bonnie Green

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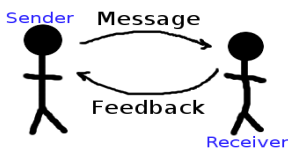
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Social Media Addresses

- **WSSRA.org** (for updated organization news and legislative news)
- **SISRA21.org** (Facebook-Website for local news and updates)



President's Report

Since my last report, our unit has been busy. In early November, some members of the board personally delivered most of the 25 mini grant awards to school employees (if the awardees worked a good distance from Mt. Vernon we mailed their checks). We took the opportunity to share with them our associations' goals. These recipients and their fellow staff members are now more familiar with our organization and some have even joined as active members.

In December, Diane Visten organized and emceed our annual Holiday Luncheon. If you Diane, you already know that it was well done and contained a cultural musical performance. Many of you who attended commented that you appreciated the opportunity to get together with former colleagues and socialize. We all recognize that it is harder to do now that we don't see our work mates every day.

This leads me into the final part of my report. In the past, before I became a member, our unit held a couple of meetings a year for members to get together, socialize, share a meal and hear from a speaker. One of Unit's stated goals for this year is to hold at least one such meeting this spring. After hearing back from our members after my our newsletter asking for suggestions, we have decided to schedule a general membership meeting on **Monday, April 16**. The speaker will be **Liz Jennings, head of the local Community Services Office** in Mount Vernon. After meeting with her and discovering the wide variety of services and help that Community Services provide in our community, I was awed. Did you know that 85% of the people they provide services for are employed? I will not now go into detail and provide the number of things they do, but hope that you will join us at the April meeting to hear about how LBJ's Social Contract is alive and well in our community.

Hopefully, this will lead to more opportunities to get together, visit and learn from other speakers.

Bruce Boyer, Unit 21 President

WSSRA Skagit-Island-San Juan Counties Unit 21 presents:

Retirement Seminar

Date: March 9, 2018
Time: 5:00—8:30 pm

Place: Northwest ESD 189
1601 R Avenue, Anacortes, WA

Speakers:

***Larry Cade**, Benefits Marketing Rep ***Eric Mathieu**, Retirement Plan Counselor
Addresses **Plan 2** and **Plan 3** Retirement Issues

COMMITTEE REPORTS

Treasurer: As of July 10, 2017



Checking Balance: \$2309.59 (Funds used for ongoing expenses of Unit 21)

Savings Balance: \$10978.05 (Funds earmarked for scholarship, mini-grants, and community charities; includes money donated for that purpose, money donated as a memorial for a deceased member and a percentage of dues received).

Barbara Landrock, Treasurer

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



Donna Martin, Burlington, WA

Patricia Cowgill, Anacortes, WA

Charles Abernathy, Coupeville, WA

Dorothy Wilcox, Lynnwood, WA

Shirley Nickerson, Mount Vernon, WA

Eloise Stendal, Correspondence Chair

Health: Influenza Virus –The influenza virus not only attacks children but the elderly as well. The flu season is here and a huge problem. Many have died across our nation due to the extreme contagiousness of this virus. This respiratory illness spreads quickly through our population.



Symptoms to be aware of may include fever, chills, sore throat, cough, a congestion of the lungs, sinus problems, head and muscle aches and even diarrhea and/or vomiting. Older adults are at a greater risk as after age 65 our immune systems are not as robust and can't fight off infections as efficiently as they once could. More serious conditions such as myocarditis (inflammation of the heart) and inflammation of the brain can occur. In extreme cases our body's inflammatory response to flu infections can lead to sepsis, a life threatening condition that requires immediate treatment.

It is very important that we all get a flu shot in the fall to help control this disease as well as build our immunity to

it.

Mary Henderson-Jones, Health Committee Chair

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



Retirement: Know anyone who is retiring within the next few years? It's never too early for them to start planning! Let them know about Unit 21's retirement seminar on **March 9, 2018, 5:00–8:30 pm** at NW ESD in Anacortes. This **FREE seminar** is open to all school employees. The featured presenters are Larry Cade, Health Care Authority and Eric Mathieu, Retirement Plan Counselor for the State of WA Deferred Compensation and Defined Contribution Plan, Dept. of Retirement Services. Registration information will be sent to schools the last week of January.



Lonnie Keown, Retirement Chair

Membership: Membership is one of the most important aspects of our organization. It gives us a voice in our own future and our retirement benefits. Unit 21 currently has 548 members, a decrease of 10 from last year. You, as a member of **WSSRA**, can "talk up" the benefits of membership to help us increase that number! Ask a friend, or that school employee that is still working, to join. It just takes one to enroll one! There is a membership form in your journal, or you can contact babsann09@comcast.net for a form. WSSRA's goal is to maintain and improve pension benefits for **ALL** school retirees.



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

Newsletter: Hello, I am your new newsletter "editor" and want to invite each and every one of you to feel free to contribute interesting articles, advertise events, and participate in the production of this communication. **We need your input to make this a successful venture.** Please let me know what you like/don't like. You can reach me at joycevmoon@gmail.com. I will be looking forward to hearing from you. **Thank you.**



Committee reports continued

Legislative: Your WSSRA legislative Committee descended on Olympia the week of January 22 through 24, from all across the state with every unit being represented. We met at the Governor Hotel in Olympia for training in Advocacy and Lobbying activities. Peter Diedrick (Legislative Director), Dr. Alan Burke (Executive Director), Dr. Curtis Horne (WSSRA President), Ester Wilfong and Larry Scholl, (WSSRA Legislative Committee CO-Chairs) gave each of us pointers plus information on the current legislation on our pension issues. Our lobbyists, Fred Yancy and Michael Moran, informed our committee about the current bills offered that impact our pension benefits.



Skagit, Island, San Juan Unit 21 has three members on the Legislative Committee, Diane Visten, Barbara Robinson, and Bruce Boyer. For the January 2018 visit Bruce Boyer and Barbara Robinson partnered with Tim Knopf and WSSRA President Elect, Linda Averill, and used a team approach to visit the legislators from Districts 1, 10, 21, 32, 38, 39, 40, 42, and 44.

The team came out of the visits feeling hopeful about the chances of a COLA and some support on our Retiree Medical Benefit. Many legislators professed to support our needs and to recognize that WSSRA members had earned these benefits. Some legislators were willing to go the extra mile and to keep our bills moving. Some have signed onto those bills. However there are some who say “no money” and are not willing to make that change in their thinking. Hopefully when the legislators receive a report in Mid-February on the state of our economy and the earnings generated there will be movement.

Your WSSRA committee is saying that “there is money, we have earned it and if not now then when?” Your WSSRA team has been “visiting” Olympia on these matters for several years but this feels like the time we are closest to having something positive come out of the legislative process in regard to our needed benefits. We need to make a difference this year, but it will take your help. Several of you sent “stories” about how the lack of COLA and the decrease in our medical subsidy have affected you and your family. Several legislators mentioned that they are more likely to help when they hear directly from their constituents about specific issues. It is obvious that we need to keep pressure on them to keep these bills alive and moving through the required committees and legislative process.

This is where we all can make a contribution. We need for you to continue to phone or send personal letters or emails until we are successful this legislative term. A point to remember: if your pension is for \$25,000 per year, you have lost \$6000 since 2011 plus a loss of \$33 per month for your medical benefit. This correlates to over a 12% loss in purchasing power while your daily living expenses have continued to go up.

Here are the bills we need to “speak” to:

- House Bill 2452 and Senate Bill 6305—provide a 3% increase to all TRS 1 and PERS 1 retirees on the first \$25,000. In addition the bills increase the Retiree Medical Benefit to at least 50% of the insurance premium.

Here are the legislators that you need to “speak” to:

- District 10: Senator Barbara Bailey, Representative Norma Smith, Representative Dave Hayes
- District 39: Senator Keith Wagoner, Representative Dan Kristiansen, Representative Carolyn Eslick
- District 40: Senator Kevin Ranker, Representative Kristine Lytton, Representative Jeff Morris

Don't let your Legislative Team work be wasted by not backing them up. Don't let this opportunity to increase your retirement benefits lapse because you did not let your legislators know what you need and what you want. This is urgent and requires immediate action on your part. This is the closest we have come to getting back our COLA. You need to contact your Legislators to vote this out of committee. Your letter, email or phone call counts.

Barbara Robinson, Diane Visten and Bruce Boyer, Unit 21 Legislative Committee Members

Outreach:

1) 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 very generous collection from the December Holiday Luncheon Meeting was donated to the Sedro Woolley foodbank.



Reidar Ytgard, Outreach Chair

Burlington, WA 98233

P. O. Box 66 U.S.

WSSRA School Retirees'

Skagit-Island-San Juan Unit 21

Permit No. 5

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Happy Valentines Day

