



Skagit-Island-San Juan

Unit 21

Washington State School Retirees' Association

MAY 2021



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WSSRA

**Pre-Retirement
Seminar/webinar**

**February 18th,
2021**

5:00 pm

President's Message

The Year of the Rollercoaster Rides...

This year has been full of surprises. We started last summer enmeshed with the COVID-19 virus and wondered what changes it would bring to our Unit.

With students doing remote learning, we undertook a different approach to our mini-grants in the fall. We doubled our investment in the mini-grants and prioritized grants that would benefit marginalized and homeless students the most. With many students not having a home computer or available broadband, we wanted to help those most "out of the loop".

It was at about this same time that your board voted to support local community action groups in our three counties with funds for feeding the hungry.

Our Board continued to have meetings through ZOOM and have learned a bit about how it can help us in the future. See article about general membership ZOOM meeting coming up this May 20.

The state was predicting to be Billions of dollars in the red by the time the legislature was scheduled to meet in January. This led our association to develop a legislative package that was just trying to keep what we have gained and not lose ground. By the time we were part way through the legislative session, the state revenue forecast was in very positive territory and we "readjusted" our legislative package. Kudos to Alan Burke, our executive director who took the reins and started pushing the legislative leaders for a major commitment to start getting the TRS 1 and PERS 1 plans fully funded. As you might have seen recently, the State did commit to putting \$800 Million into those pension plans in June 2023. This will go a long ways toward achieving COLA equity throughout the retiree plans.

Early this spring our board moved to allot more funds to two needy groups. One is an alternative school that is just starting up. We donated funds help fill the "closet" that will be used for food and clothing for students in need. The other project was to support marginalized students with items to help them re-enter school facilities.

And lastly, we will have a transition within our leadership with Diane Visten and Barbara Robinson taking on the role of co-president this coming July. Speaking for myself, I appreciate their willingness to fill in for me in our unit while I take on more responsibility within the State WSSRA leadership.

Bruce Boyer, President

Hello to all you Unit 21 Members-----

I am willing to bet that you did not know that our unit is unique in having THREE people serving on the State Legislative Committee. This year is different in so many ways, including virtual meetings, etc, but by chance, State President Elect Bruce Boyer plus Committee Member Barbara Robinson, and Diane Visten all took part in the proceedings for the entire session.

That meant that we helped each other with zoom meetings with legislators from districts 10, 39, 40 and 42 as well as weekly committee meetings, and e-mail messages to keep our interests in front of the legislators. So much support came from our state Legislative Director, Peter Diedrick, Contract Lobbyists Michael Moran and Fred Yancey, as well as our Executive Director, Alan Burke. Without their knowledge and insights we would never have achieved our goals for this year. They deserve a big “thanks” from us all.

We began the year with modest goals, since the state was facing a shortage of funds. As always, we wanted to protect our Healthcare benefits, and the Recommended Pension payment to Plan 1. We also were asking for a bill to reduce retirement penalties for older employees who felt the need to retire early because of the pandemic. Also, we asked for an Open Enrollment Window for PEBB Retiree Plans.

Then-----things changed for the better for our state! Funds from the federal government made new possibilities come to light.

When all was said and done, we achieved much more than we thought possible. Here is our initial take on the budget in a nutshell!

1. Maintains the \$183 Medicare Benefit.
2. The state makes the actuarially recommended pension payment
3. No Plan 1 COLA this year,
4. The state appropriates \$800 million to the TRS Unfunded Liability to be paid on June 30, 2023,
5. The state initiates a study to analyze a one-time PEBB open enrollment period for retirees locked out of PEBB insurance, as proposed in WSSRA’s House Bill 1040.

We were disappointed that there was no Plan 1 COLA, however, the \$800 million payment to the Plan 1 unfunded liability is a major political achievement for retirees.

The chair of the Senate Ways and Means Committee has indicated that this payment is the first of several installments to pay off the underfunding and thereby set Plan 1 retirees up for an possible automatic COLA in the future.

There were other bills that passed and we also supported which will help ALL seniors, such as SB 5203, which reduces prescription drug costs, HB 1218, which increases legal protections for nursing home residents, HB 1438 which reduces property taxes for lower income seniors, SB 5021 which protects pension credits from coronavirus furloughs, and HB 1336, which expands high-speed internet across the state.

We want to thank all of you who contacted your legislators, and especially those who helped with our “buddy messaging program.” You made a difference.

In case this sounds interesting to anyone out there, we would be willing to mentor you for a position on this committee for next year. It is truly one of the most important ways that we can support our members, and is very rewarding. I am honored to have been a part of this for several years, and know that our other members feel the same way.

Now we will continue to keep in contact with our legislators and start planning for next year--- the work goes on!



Skagit, Island, San Juan School Retirees' Unit 21 is proud to nominate our member, Kathy Reim, for the Stan McNaughton Outreach Award

On The Road Again!!

Kathy Reim and her husband have been on the road for years now supporting the people and the organizations that she and her husband believe in. She has been an active working member of the Skagit, Island, San Juan School Retirees for years. She has stood as a banner for us through her work for our retirees in the many areas where she has been active. For Kathy volunteering is a way of life. It is how she expresses herself and how she makes a bet-

ter experience for herself and others. Kathy builds relationships. Those relationship's become paths for successful changes.

Early in her teaching career she saw opportunities to gain knowledge and information as a way to also include others. Kathy was selected to be in the Puget Sound Writing Project from the University of Washington. She used those skills to mentor other teachers in her district to bring effective writing strategies to students. She was also one of the founders of the Fourth Corner Writing Project at Western Washington University.

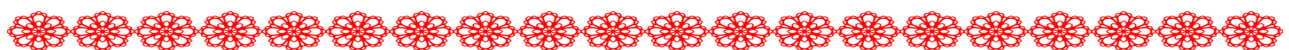
Kathy was a part of the development of a mentoring/coaching program where she mentored 14 student teachers, and close to 20 teachers after retirement. Her encore career was in mediation spending about 10 years doing conflict resolution in schools especially ones in remote or rural areas of the San Juans.

Kathy has inspired waves of other active people who also make a difference. She has taken her influence even further by getting groups working together in important ways. For example as a WSSRA member she has partnered with the League of Women Voters to hold candidate forums, and to bring subjects like the student homelessness issue to light in public forums. Now we have retirees and league members working together and as a result we are both more informed and better known.

Kathy has been honored in many ways as a valuable asset to the community. Perhaps her most impressive was to have a PFLAG scholarship named in her honor. The DReim Big Scholarship of \$1000.00 is to be given to a senior from a Public School in Skagit County to a young person who identifies as a member of the LGBTQ community or an ally who has demonstrated dedication to that community. Her work in the LGBTQ community began several years ago when she became President of the local PFLAG Chapter in her community. Kathy began to work closely with PFLAG National and was elected to become the Regional Director for the Pacific Northwest. As Regional Director she traveled to many counties and states to meet with other local PFLAG chapters to provide support and education to those individuals. Kathy has worked many hours in putting together Regional conferences for all PFLAG chapters to come together in crating a welcoming and safe community through education, support and advocacy. It is because of Kathy Reim, Skagit PFLAG continues to exist and flourish in this community.

Kathy has a way generating interest and energy that she shares with others so that they become active and included. She and her husband, as volunteers for the local theater, take around posters to advertise upcoming events. Now they do it for the many groups she is a part of. PFLAG, WSSRA Retirees, and others are joined and working together on many projects. She knows many effective people and soon we are all sharing our work, our knowledge and are dealing with issues together.

As an educator and WSSRA member she has a vision of what needs to be done and how to do it. She is an outstanding example for our community and for our organization.





In fond remembrance OF THOSE OF OUR MEMBERS WHO HAVE passed away.....

*Lelia Davis Adrine Knapp Shirley Harless
Dorothy Luce Tracy Zimmerman*

A contribution has been made to the WSSRA Scholarship Foundation in honor of each individual listed above.

Calendar of Events:

Thanks to the "COVID YEAR" challenges, we are changing our WSSRA State Convention needs in a now familiar way...we are **ZOOMING** into our new fiscal year on our computers, tablets and other electronic devices. **On June 9th at 1 p.m, our virtual business meeting will include election results, budget approval, and by-law changes.** This is an important meeting specially for Unit 21 because our own Bruce Boyer will be the newly elected WSSRA President for the 21/22 year. If you are interested in "attending" let Bruce Boyer, Diane Visten or Barbara Robinson know. See the contact information on the front page of the newsletter asap as you must be a registered delegate.

Our next plan is to have an on-site convention **October 4-6 at the Pasco Red Lion with awards, scholarship recognition, plus breakout sessions and leadership training and the handoff of the gavel to Bruce** at the end of the convention. This event will be subject to the lifting of COVID-19 restrictions. Plans are in the works to offer zoom connections to these events also. A final decision to go live will be made midsummer so watch for information then.

We will return to in person general membership meetings when we are given the green light by the State and County Health Commissions. In the meantime, stay safe and hope to see you in the not too distant future.

General Membership ZOOM Meeting May 20 from 4:30-6:00 PM

Many of you that live in the Skagit Valley probably know about Bill DeHon, a member of our local Unit. He has led financial seminars for a number of years and has no ulterior motives other than to help you prepare for your hard earned retirement. He has agreed to help us do a webinar later this month via ZOOM. If you have attended the recent WSSRA Retirement Webinars, you know how much information was given out over a short period of time. What Bill would like to do is cover some topics that weren't covered in the previous WSSRA presentations and help you be better prepared to more fully enjoy your life after the classrooms. Topics that he will present include but not limited to are:

1. Elements of Wills why you need one
2. RMD to charity new laws
3. TAP Annuity for information only
4. VEBA what you need to do each year
5. The two new medical plans available through PEBB you could select in November

We hope to be able to set up our ZOOM in such a manner that Bill will be able to answer questions during his presentation. Obviously, he will not be able to answer questions to specific issues that need to be meted out through the appropriate agencies. If you wish to attend this webinar, you will need to pre-register with Tara Teizel at tara@wwra.org When it gets close to the webinar, Tara will then send you a ZOOM link which you can use to join us.

A Woman Who Made a Difference in the Skagit-Island -San Juan Area

Inez Edna Marie Breazeale

1805—1987

Edna was born in Missouri in 1895 and moved to the shores of Padilla Bay with her family in 1901. Edna and her brothers, Fred and Marcellus, learned to love the natural world around them while growing up on the family farmstead. These experiences played a crucial role in her later life.

Edna graduated from Burlington High School in 1912. She then moved to Seattle to attend the University of Washington where she graduated cum laude in 1917. Her teaching career of 43 years included English and journalism at Seattle's Roosevelt High School for 33 years. During her teaching career Edna was known for respectfully standing up to administrators without being intimidated, a skill that served her well in her later encounters with legislators and government officials,

In 1961 the Breazeales and area residents were confronted by a large development proposal for Padilla Bay. Plans were underway for a 9,000 acre industrial park with a dredged deep water port and filled industrial land. A local committee, headed by Miss Breazeales, circulated a petition showing opposition to the plans. Over 2,000 area citizens added their signatures, and the project was eventually abandoned.

"There are so few places anymore where children can go and just be free and learn about things. We felt that there ought to be some place that wasn't just all people and houses" - - Edna Breazeale

Edna's untiring 23 years of work to protect the largest eel-grass meadow in Puget Sound paid off. In 1980. Padilla Bay became the National Estuarine Research Reserve set aside for research and education. She and her brothers gifted their 64 acre farm for the interpretive center and research facility which flourishes today on her property and with her spirit preserving wetlands everywhere.

More about Edna can be obtained through the Padilla Bay Interpretive Center in Bayview, WA. The staff there delights in sharing their experience and knowledge of Edna's gift to the area.

Notice to all members—

let's think ahead!

In case you have never considered attending a WWSRA convention, let's take a look at 2022. That Convention will be held in early June at the **Great Wolf Lodge near Olympia** for the first and probably only time. We are allowed 14 or so delegates and would love to be joined by members who never attended a WSSRA Convention before. Those who attend will be re-imbursed for their expenses so transportation is the only out-of-pocket expense. This novel and exciting setting should be an interesting, (and even a bit of fun) experience. So do something different and contact the board with your information. Let's make the 2022 convention a part of your plan for next year!

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Unit 21's Kathy Reim as a volunteer with the League of Women Voters.

