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**Contact any of the
above individuals for
information about join-**

Skagit, Island, San Juan School Retiree's Association President's Update

Diane and I send our best wishes to you all. We see signs of spring popping out in our cold valley. For the first time in ages Unit 21 is planning a gathering "in person" which is a sure sign of spring! Please check out the invitation and put the date on your calendar. We hope this is the first of several gatherings in person as we move through the year. It is very important that we become a more active association. Our unit also handed out 33 mini grants in December. We funded activities such as field trips, snow school, a high school science night plus supplies for math, science and games and kits that support social, emotional building skills. We even helped two schools purchase supplies that combat lice. Our unit answered the needs of 6 different school districts for members and nonmembers alike. This is an annual activity of our unit that is rewarding to us and also gets us back into the schools.

Several of our members visited legislators during the 2023 session to promote our pension benefits such as a COLA for Plan 1 members. We also have Legislative Buddies that are writing to our legislators to let them know what are concerns are. YOU can be on of the letter writers if you like. Do it on your own or let Diane or I know and we will contact you with an easy way to make your voice heard. We have two members reading scholarships in March. These are scholarships that WSSRA offers across the state. Our area offers scholarships for high school seniors heading to college, to student teachers and also for a high school senior heading to a trade/tech school. Our local Unit 21 also offers a Tech/Trade School Scholarship and a student teacher scholarship in a partnership with Western Washington University. Spring is the time when these applications are due so we will be busy reading and selecting the recipients from our local area schools. In June our membership will hold our annual WSSRA Convention in Pasco, Washington. It is a great time to gather and renew our commitment to this organization that does so much for all school employees. WE have to remember that this is the only organization that speaks for OUR retirement future. It is the only organization that promotes and protects our \$\$ and our health benefits. At this convention we hold workshops to continue this important work. All members can attend and become an important part of the work. It is a fun time to find new friends or to renew old friendships. Let Diane or I know if you would like to learn more about this opportunity.

Many of us are retired but we have a great number of members that are still out there working every day. They may not be thinking of retirement soon but it should always be in their minds. So WSSRA is offering a retirement seminar online for those that want to plan ahead. It is never too early to make those plans as there is always some things that need to be done ahead. This seminar is a great way to start making those plans so for those that are still out there in the trenches please read the flyer about this upcoming seminar.

Join Us for Lunch!



Where: 18923 Johnson Road, Mount Vernon

When: Saturday, March 18, 2023, 11:30 AM – 2:00 PM

Formerly Skagit Valley Gardens, **Skagit Acres** is a first class garden center and boutique gift shop. Come shop their local products, décor, and gifts as well as find plants perfect for your garden and planters.

Enjoy a delicious lunch and visit with friends, old and new. With a Saturday date, we are hoping that current school employees attend as well as retirees. Everyone will receive a **free flowering plant**. The program will include a **speaker on spring planting** and an update on current legislative issues.

\$12 includes half sandwich and soup. Broccoli cheddar OR corn chowder soups; choice of sandwich on 9 grain or sourdough - turkey sandwich with maple cream cheese, cranberry jam, red onion, romaine lettuce OR ham and Tillamook cheddar, tomato, lettuce, honey mustard, and mayo. Price includes coffee or soda.

Bring a new member and lunch is \$6.00 for each of you!

RSVP your attendance and choice of sandwich/soup by March 15 to either:

Barbara Robinson, 360-708-9046, babsann09@comcast.net

Diane Visten, 360-421-8909, dvisten@yahoo.com



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

Joan Melcher, Mount Vernon, WA

John Pakusich, Bellingham, WA

JoAnn Knapp, Mount Vernon, WA

Judith Anderson, Oak Harbor, WA

Eatherine ... John ... Burlington, WA

James Sikkema,, Anacortes, WA

Linda Elis, Hemet, CA

Shirlene Baker, Oak Harbor, WA

Thomas Swapp, Anacortes, WA

Wanda Muller, Bellingham, WA

What: Pre-Retirement Zoom Webinars

When: Tuesday, March 21, 2023 @ 4:30 PM

Presented by: Department of Retirement Systems and Health
Care Authority/PEBB

When: Thursday, March 23, 2023 @ 4:30 PM

Presented by: Social Security/Medicare and VEBA

Sponsored by Washington State School Retirees' Association

Certificated and Classified Employees: If you are within 1-5 years of retirement, you will want to attend these (no fee) virtual webinars to learn about your retirement plans (Plan 2 or Plan 3), medical/dental options, sick leave buyout (VEBA), Social Security options, and Medicare.

These webinars will feature presentations from the following agencies:

- **WA State Department of Retirement Systems (Plan 2 and Plan 3, (March 21)
- **WA State Health Care Authority/PEBB (Medical/Dental/Vision options, (March 21)
- ** Social Security and Medicare (March 23)
- **VEBA (Your sick leave buyout options – (March 23)

Please visit www.wssra.org and register under the webinar tab.



Phone: 360-413-5496 ext 111

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Legislative Bits & Pieces, March 2023

As we march towards the half-way mark for this legislative session. everything is in flux, but all WSSRA's bills are queued up in the right spots at this time.

A Plan 1 COLA Update. There are currently four Plan 1 COLA bills. HB 1057 and Senate Bill 5350 are the Select Committee on Pension Policy recommended bills. They are both ready for committee votes. HB 1294 is a permanent Plan 1 COLA replacement by Representative Steele (Wenatchee). This bill is expected to die. The final proposal, HB 1459, is by the Democratic and Republican budget leaders in the House of Representatives. This bill is also ready for a committee vote; however, I would expect amendments.

House Bill 1201 and Senate Bill 5294 are Governor request bills to reduce funding to TRS 1 and PERS 1. WSSRA is opposed. Those bills are currently on hold. Amendments are likely. House Bill 1008 to equalize retiree health benefits for members of Plans 2 and 3 is on the calendar for a vote by the full House of Representatives. Likewise, HB 1056 to equalize return-to-work rules for early retirees, is queued up for a vote by the House.

WSSRA is supporting numerous other bills to enhance the lives of seniors. Bills to