

65 Years of Advocating for Retired Teachers

On September 18, 1954, a small group of women met at Olympia High School to organize an **Olympia and Thurston County Chapter of the Retired Teachers' Association**. The first president was Mabel Fox. Their goals were to promote the social and educational welfare of retired teachers, keep their interest in education alive, take an active part in civic affairs, and make an organized effort to secure and maintain suitable homes for retired teachers.

The early meetings of the group were held on the third Saturday of each month, usually excluding the holidays and summer months, except for the occasional summer picnic. Their meeting locations varied and included Olympia High School, the Olympia Community Center, the Coach House of the State Capitol Museum, the Courthouse, restaurants, and even members' homes when a public location could not be found. When necessary, members were asked to bring their own sack lunch.

The group grew and by 1956, there were 26 members reported. Early issues of concern included insurance, pension, legislation, health care and community service.

By the early 1960s, membership attendance had dwindled; sometimes there were not even enough members to hold a meeting. Historian Ruby Dingee attributed the decline to the loss of early leaders Mabel Foxwell and Fannie Johnson with no replacement leadership to

follow them. The group considered joining forces with another unit nearby. The breaking point came in April 1964 when the nominating committee had no candidate for president.

Later that year, a meeting attended by the state association president and 22 members was held to discuss the group's reorganization. It was reborn under a new name (*Olympia* was dropped), a new president (June Ramaker), a new constitution, and the institution of membership year-books. Meetings were held mostly at local restaurants on the 3rd Friday of the month. Ruth Ball, a resident of Panorama City, introduced the idea of meeting at Panorama by hosting in her home in January 1965. By the end of that year, 50 or more members attended each meeting. Men also began to join and take active part in the group. By 1967, there were 13 men out of 88

members. Another turning point occurred in January 1966, the first time the group met at the Panorama restaurant.

The first male president to run the organization was Herman Miller, who served from 1967-1970. Under his leadership, Panorama's restaurant became the designated meeting place as it is today.

On July 28, 1997 an endowment fund was established to provide small grants to teachers in Thurston County to enhance learning in their classrooms.

In 2002, their name changed to Thurston County School Retirees' Association (TCSRA) to be more inclusive. By 2005, there were 623 members—one of the largest in the state. Over the years five members have become state presidents. Only the Seattle unit has provided more presidents from their organization.

As of 2018, the ranks of TCSRA have swollen to nearly 800 members and they serve all retired and active school employees. TCSRA has donated their organizational archives to the Lacey Museum. We are proud to be their historical custodians. These records are open to the public.



President Karen Keller presents River Ridge teacher Denny Gradoville with a mini-grant, 2017

Lacey Museum

829 Lacey Street SE
Lacey, WA 98503

Open Thursday & Friday 11 am-3 pm
Saturday 10 am - 4 pm
FREE Admission

Phone: 360-438-0209
E-mail: museum@ci.lacey.wa.us
www.laceymuseum.org



Our Mission

The Museum enriches our community and engages visitors by sharing vibrant stories of the past through the preservation and celebration of Lacey and the South Sound region's cultural heritage.

Museum Staff Contacts

Erin Quinn Valcho
Museum Curator
360-413-3557
equinnva@ci.lacey.wa.us

Marisa Merkel
Museum Educator
360-438-0209
mmerkel@ci.lacey.wa.us

Lacey Historical Commissioners

Erich Ebel, Chair
Kimberly Goetz, Vice Chair
Jeff Crane
Seth Huff
Thomas Smith

Sarah Thirtyacre
Alan Tyler
Roemello Chavez,
Youth Commissioner