



Bits & Pieces

IN-PERSON
LUNCHEONS ARE
CANCELLED
UNTIL
FURTHER NOTICE!

www.wssra-units.org/thurstoncounty/

April 2021

Unit 28 of the Washington State School Retirees' Association
Serving retired and active school employees and our community.

WE'RE MAKING PROGRESS!

April. Flowers are blooming. The sun peaks out a little more often. We catch glimpses of our mountain. The days are warmer. We are starting to talk about our garden...a family get-together... summer! Hope is in the air!

Shots in our arms: Hurrah! Many of us retired and actively teaching members have had one or two doses of the Coronavirus vaccine. We are starting to feel hopeful that life will someday return to some semblance of normal. The TCSRA board is beginning to discuss when we will be able to get together again for meetings, luncheons, and programs.

Pre-Retirement Webinar: What a huge success! Around 2,000 members from across the state attended online. Follow-up smaller events are planned for April 29 and May 6 to provide an opportunity to answer more questions. Visit www.wssra.org for more information and to view the recorded webinar.

Legislative Advocacy: Our members have worked tirelessly during this legislative session. **Ann Chenhall**, our Legislative Committee chair, and her team—**Duane Olson, Sally Olson, Nancy Zabel, Barb Dittrich, Pat McLachlan, Keitha Bryson, Karen Keller, Ron Crawford, Patti Colombo, and Gery Gerst**—have met with our legislators on Zoom calls and have become “buddies” with them through emails, phone calls, and letters. They are making sure that our agenda is being heard. A huge thank you to all!

State Convention: The annual June convention is postponed until October 3-5. We are *hoping* to be able to have an in-person event in Pasco. The final decision will be made this summer. If an in-person convention is not advisable, we will again have a virtual one-day convention. In either case, we will be looking for delegates to represent TCSRA. Are you interested? Let me know!

Pat Slosson, TCSRA President

PARADE OF PROJECTS

The April luncheon, when we hear from some of our mini-grant recipients, is always a highlight of the year. We enjoy seeing how creatively these teachers use our grant money.

Join us at our April 16 Zoom “luncheon” meeting! We will be able to show you photos and videos of some of this year’s projects, and we’ll describe the others. We awarded grants to all seven of the elementary applicants, and those were announced in the March *Bits & Pieces*. The recipients were all very excited to be winners, especially during this difficult time for teachers and students.

The Zoom meeting room will open at 9:50 a.m., and the program will begin at 10:00. **Remember you don't need a computer to participate.** You can call in on your phone and listen to this presentation. To call in on your phone, dial the following number and then follow the prompts to enter the meeting ID and the passcode:

Dial: 1-253-215-8782
Meeting ID: 837 6853 2575
Passcode: 345353

Zoom computer links will be available on the program page of our website, on our Facebook page, and in a reminder email notice sent out from ZiNita Carrell.

The TCSRA mini-grant program was established in 1997 with a deposit of \$6,648.75 into an endowment fund. Over the years the fund has grown to nearly \$75,000, mostly from fund raisers and donations. Member **Lucille Messer** passed away in 2008 and bequeathed us nearly \$25,000, expressing the desire that we’d be able to give more grants each year. We have increased the number from 10 to 20 grants, and sometimes we’ve given as many as 35 because of partial requests and extra donations. Two years ago, the TCSRA board voted to award active member applicants up to \$300 and non-members up to \$200.

Nancy Zabel and Patti Colombo, Committee Co-chairs

In Memoriam

We note the passing of **Shirley Elfbrandt**, **Helen Poths**, and **Edward Swan**, and we offer sincere condolences to their families and friends.

LEGISLATIVE REPORT



The outcome of the legislative session seemed pretty set at the halfway mark. The state was short some revenue, but the budget stabilization money—the savings account for the state operating budget—would be enough to cover the gaps. Legislators were also looking at some tax increases to fund new policies and programs. We were concerned about benefit cuts to retirees, but appropriators indicated their intention was a “no cuts” budget. Two of WSSRA’s bills—HB 1032 and HB 1040—died in committee, but that was not wholly unexpected. [See the March issue on our website for specifics on those bills. —Editor]

All those assumptions were blown apart when the United States Senate passed its version of the most recent federal stimulus package.

The state is now expected to be awash in cash. The federal government is sending bailout money for schools, local governments, transit, unemployment, taxpayers, and the state operating budget. In conjunction with higher-than-expected state tax revenues, state appropriators are in a very comfortable position. Because there is extra revenue, WSSRA has requested that some of it be used to support Plan 1 pensions.

WSSRA is supporting several bills to improve the lives of seniors. HB 1218 would create a set of new legal protections for long-term-care and nursing home patients. SB 5203 seeks to lower generic prescription drug costs by allowing the state to contract directly with drug makers for bulk rates. HB 1336 would allow local governments to manage high-speed internet like a public utility, thereby bringing broadband service to rural areas. HB 1438 is designed to let more seniors qualify for property tax exemptions. Finally, SB 5021 would backfill pension credits for school employees who were furloughed this year due to COVID-19.

There are about five weeks left in this legislative session. The state budget proposals are due out after this publication goes to print, but we will update you in next month’s newsletter. Speaking philosophically, every legislative session is weird in its own way, and this one has upheld that tradition.

Peter Diedrick, WSSRA Legislative Director

THE AMERICAN RESCUE PLAN ACT: WHAT IT WILL DO FOR EDUCATION

The recently passed *American Rescue Plan Act* includes \$170 billion for education: \$130 billion for K-12 schools and \$40 billion for higher education. The money will be used to reduce class sizes and modify classrooms to enhance social distancing, install or repair ventilation systems, and purchase personal protective equipment. The funds will also be used to hire more nurses and counselors and to provide money for summer school.



The funds for higher education will be used to defray the COVID-related expenses incurred by colleges and universities and to provide aid to students to help cover expenses such as food, housing, and computer equipment.

Twenty percent of the dollars for education will go toward addressing the learning loss that has happened during the lost school year. Granted, many students have managed to keep up through in-person or online classes or a combination of both. But many other students have fallen behind due to a lack of internet services or devices to connect to online classes and/or a lack of adult help with and supervision of their studies. And many thousands of students across the country have “fallen through the cracks” and are missing from any connection to school.

It is critically important to make sure that those students who have not succeeded with distance learning will receive the most assistance. The funding will come through the Title 1 program, will probably be spent for a nationwide program of tutoring, and will require much planning and oversight. This money may also go toward efforts to find missing students and do whatever is required to get them back into school. In other words, school districts will be hiring extra people to get students back to school and caught up. I see this as an opportunity for TCSRA retired school employees to contribute to our public school needs. If you have the time and the desire to help out, watch for opportunities offered by our local schools.

ZiNita Carrell, Education Co-Chair



Olympia High School class of '65 is having a “Not a Reunion” picnic on August 7. No expense and not overly organized. Please stop by and visit.

RSVP to Jennifer, robin45@eoni.com, or text or call 541-786-2245.

Each month we randomly draw the name of one of our "active" (not-yet-retired) members, who then receives a Starbucks gift card in the mail.



This month's winner is:

Teresa Jackson
Tenino School District



Check this box each month to see if YOU are the lucky member.

NOMINATING COMMITTEE NEWS



The Nominating Committee is pleased to recommend the following members as officer candidates for 2021–2022:

President: Pat Slosson
Vice President/President-elect: Lorene Rang
Secretary: Pat McLachlan
Fiscal Treasurer: Will Gentz
Membership Treasurer: ZiNita Carrell
Nominating Committee: Gail Feagins

Ron Crawford, Jay Wood, and Sue Shannon
Nominating Committee

NOMINEE BIOGRAPHY

Gail Feagins, Nominating Committee: Gail Feagins has been chair of TCSRA's Member & Health Services Committee for 12 years and has written many excellent articles regarding health and consumer issues for *Bits & Pieces*. She has also served on WSSRA's state health committee for the past two years. Born in Canada, Gail grew up in Yakima and graduated from Central Washington University. She taught in the North Thurston School District for 31 years, mainly at Chinook Middle School. Over the years she taught French, language arts, social studies, and calligraphy. Through a grant from the University of Washington, Gail spent six weeks in Egypt, along with 17 other social studies teachers from the Pacific NW. While there, the teachers met Mrs. Sadat. Since retirement in 1998, Gail has volunteered at the Tax Center at Fort Lewis, the Washington State Attorney General's Office, and the Thurston County Food Bank. She has made several trips with Global Volunteers, tutoring English on a short-term basis in Europe, Asia, and the Caribbean. She also made a humanitarian trip to Tanzania with the Safi School Project. Besides traveling, Gail enjoys reading, walking, and skiing.

A biography of **Lorene Rang** was published in the March 2021 *Bits & Pieces*. Biographies of the other nominees for office—**Pat Slosson, Pat McLachlan,**

Will Gentz, and ZiNita Carrell—are available at www.wssra-units.org/thurstoncounty/. If you would like a printed copy, please call Sharon Dennis at 360-438-5351.

SPECIAL ELECTION PROCEDURE

Because of the restrictions on meetings due to the COVID-19 pandemic, our officer elections will be done via email and USPS mail. Members for whom we have email addresses will receive a message from **ZiNita Carrell**, asking you to vote "Yes" or "No" on the slate of candidates. Please reply to her with your response.

If you don't receive an election email from ZiNita, send your vote to dazicar88@gmail.com or mail a written response to TCSRA, PO Box 3051, Lacey, WA 98509-3051. **The deadline for voting is April 16.**



MCKENNY, MCKENNA, MCKINLEY, MCKINNEY

We apologize to member **Catherine Annie Bailey**, who teaches at Margaret McKenny Elementary—not *McKinney*—for misspelling her middle name and the name of her school when we listed her as a mini-grant recipient last month. We thank **Signe Feeney** for catching this error and for suggesting this article.

McKenny Elementary in the Olympia School District was named after Margaret McKenny, an Olympia resident, landscape architect, environmentalist, and author. Her activism was influential in the preservation of local open spaces—including Watershed Park, Sylvester Park, and the Billy Frank Jr. Nisqually National Wildlife Refuge—from private development.

McKenna Elementary, part of Yelm Community Schools, is located in McKenna, WA. The town was named for E. W. McKenna of Chicago, a vice-president of the Chicago, Milwaukee, & St. Paul Railroad.

Olympia School District's McKinley Grade School, named after the president, is no longer standing. It was closed in 1989, and the school staff was relocated to a new building, which was near Yelm Highway and renamed Centennial Elementary.

As far as we know, the nearest McKinney Elementary School is W. Verne McKinney in Hillsboro, OR.

Sharon Dennis, Editor

Thurston County School Retirees' Association
P. O. Box 3051
Lacey, WA 98509-3051

**PRSR STD
U.S. POSTAGE
PAID
OLYMPIA, WA.
PERMIT #5**

ADDRESS SERVICE REQUESTED

MARK YOUR CALENDAR!

You will not want to miss our upcoming Zoom "luncheon" events. The programs will begin at 10:00 a.m., and complete information will be published in *Bits & Pieces*, on our Facebook page, and on the TCSRA website.

April 16: Mini-grant recipients (See page 1.)

May 21: Installation of 2021- 2022 Officers

2021-2022 DIRECTORY

One of the important ways that our group stays in touch with each other is through our directory. We will begin editing our 2021-2022 edition soon. If you wish to make a change to your listing, we need to know **no later than June 15**. Please consider the following, keeping in mind that you may have up to 4 lines for your entry:

- ◆ Our standard listing for members is name, address, and telephone number. *If this entry is acceptable to you, no action on your part is necessary.*
- ◆ You may substitute your email address for your home address and/or your telephone number.
- ◆ A few members have even asked us just to list their names or not to be listed at all.
- ◆ We have some requests from previous years and will honor those again unless notified, so check your listing in the 2019-2020 directory.

If you'd like us to change your directory listing, please contact us at bitsandpieces-editor@hotmail.com or at 360-438-5351.

Sharon Dennis & Pat Slosson, Directory Co-Editors

COMMUNITY SERVICE NEWS

Last month I suggested that we make a special effort to cheer up a person who may be lonely. This month may I suggest that you make a similar gesture towards an essential worker who has served you all these months? It may be a grocery store clerk, a medical worker, a postal clerk, a hairdresser, a restaurant employee, or any one of the hundreds of essential workers who have risked their lives to serve.

A card, note, small gift, or larger than usual tip could go a long way towards showing your gratitude to an essential worker in your immediate world. But beyond that, please remember to offer a smile and heartfelt thanks to all who serve you every day.

Sally Jones, Community Service Chair



BITS & PIECES, the newsletter of the Thurston County School Retirees' Association, is published nine times a year, September through May, as a membership service. Editor: Sharon Dennis, 360-438-5351. **Information for the May 2021 issue is due by April 15.** Please email copy to bitsandpieces-editor@hotmail.com.