



Bits & Pieces

IN-PERSON
LUNCHEONS ARE
CANCELLED
UNTIL
FURTHER NOTICE!

www.wssra-units.org/thurstoncounty/

May 2021

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

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

As this TCSRA year ends, we can once again say "Wow! This has been interesting!" We have Zoomed our board meetings, we had a successful drive-by community service event, and our luncheons have been replaced by fun Zoom programs. During this year we learned a lot about COVID and the accompanying protocols, but most importantly we learned lessons about friendship, communication, and staying connected. Thank you all for hanging in there with us! This is an amazing organization, and I am proud to be a member.

Thank you to our officers and committee chairs. They are a dedicated group, committed to advancing the goals and interests of TCSRA. A very special thank you to **Ray Colombo** who has served as our vice president for two years.

Officer elections: We successfully conducted our second email vote. Congratulations to **Pat Slosson**, President; **Lorene Rang**, Vice President/President-elect; **Pat McLachlan**, Secretary; **Will Gentz**, Fiscal Treasurer; **ZiNita Carrell**, Membership Treasurer; and **Gail Feagins**, Nominating Committee.

We are pleased to announce that the WSSRA Executive Board has awarded *Honorary Membership* to TCSRA members **Anne Ferguson**, **Jane Harbison**, **Barbara Breslin**, and **Vivian Forrester**. Dues are no longer collected from Honorary Members. The criteria include being over the age of 90, membership for over 20 years, and a history of service to the unit and to the association. All four of these women have been steady, willing workers who have served in many capacities.

Our world has changed, but TCSRA's purpose remains the same: *Serving retired and active school employees and our community.*

Stay well!

Pat Slosson, TCSRA President



MEET WSSRA'S PRESIDENT-ELECT

We will welcome WSSRA President-elect **Bruce Boyer** to our May 21 Zoom "luncheon" meeting. He will install our officers for 2021-2022.



Bruce taught chemistry at Mt. Vernon High School for 25 years, followed by two years as the Dean of Students. He then served for three years as an assistant principal at Lynden High School and retired after four years as assistant principal at Mariner High School in the Mukilteo district. Following retirement, he worked with student teachers from two universities for 12 years.

Since joining WSSRA, Bruce has served as the president, treasurer, and legislative chair for the Skagit/Island/San Juan Unit. He has also been on the WSSRA Legislative Committee for many years, helping to push for better pension benefits.

Bruce and his wife, Pat, have two children and enjoy doing things with their grandchildren. They also like to go crabbing and salmon fishing in the summer. His hobby has been raising grass-fed beef for 50 years.

Following the installation of officers, **ZiNita Carrell** will lead us in a memorial for the members who passed away in the last two years.

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 program. To do so, dial the following number and then follow the prompts to enter the meeting ID and the passcode:

Dial: 1-253-215-8782
Meeting ID: 938 5724 9886
Passcode: 147316

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

Karen Keller, Program Chair

THANK YOU, TEACHERS!



Teacher Appreciation Week is May 3-7. TCSRA wishes to thank our active teachers for their unwavering devotion of time, energy, and talent for the sake of our children. Their efforts contribute so much to making this world a better place.

LEGISLATIVE REPORT



Retirees are in a politically precarious position at the end of the 2021 legislative session. House and Senate leaders have all proposed financial enhancements to Plan 1. Unfortunately, they have not proposed the same enhancements. The Senate would like to make \$800 million in extra payments to pay off the TRS 1 unfunded liability with the long-term goal being an annual Plan 1 COLA. House leaders did not like that idea, and proposed spending \$14 million on a 1.5% Plan 1 COLA, of up to \$22 per month, per retiree.

Plan 1 retirees could end up with both the unfunded liability payment and the COLA, or neither. The good news is that WSSRA's initial goals for the session have been met. Due to the initial budget deficit, the WSSRA political team was concerned that legislators might cut the \$183 medical benefit. That did not happen, so now the political fight is over benefit gains, which is a much better position to be in.

At the time of print, the five senior citizen bills that WSSRA has been supporting are progressing well. Legislation to protect pension credits during the pandemic, to lower prescription drug costs, to protect nursing home patients, to expand high-speed internet across the state, and to lower senior citizen property taxes all seem likely to pass.

As the legislative interim approaches, it is already time to think about goals for the 2022 legislative session. As soon as the 2021 session adjourns, WSSRA will begin working with the legislature's Select Committee on Pension Policy on proposals for 2022. The process will start by collaborating with the WSSRA Legislative Committee, the WSSRA Executive Board, and WSSRA's political allies. The association will then be well positioned to address the legislature's pension experts with unified goals and messaging.

Peter Diedrick, WSSRA Legislative Coordinator

In Memoriam

We note the passing of **William Bowman**, and we offer sincere condolences to his family and friends.

OUR COUNTRY'S PUBLIC SCHOOL SYSTEM IS TIPTOEING BACK TO LIFE

After grinding to a halt in March 2020, managing to operate remotely, and then attempting to function via a hybrid model—in-person learning one to two days a week and virtual learning on the others—our public schools are making strides toward fully reopening.



Educators and school staff are being prioritized for the COVID-19 vaccine in every state. The federal government just allotted \$140 billion to help K-12 schools reopen, including \$10 billion for testing and tracing. This massive infusion of federal aid will allow school districts to confront challenges that have long plagued the nation's educational systems with the largest sums going to the districts that have the highest concentrations of poverty. This will help update aging buildings and ventilation systems, provide more nurses as well as social and mental health services, revamp curricula, and provide summer school and after-school programs.

Pharmaceutical companies are ramping up vaccine trials for young children. A huge change occurred when the CDC revised its recommendation for social distancing in schools from 6 feet to 3 feet. This new guidance will improve the ability of schools to reopen for full-time in-person learning.

The latest data now show that just 20% of students are still learning virtually full time. While the majority of students are still learning through the hybrid model, the number of students who are attending school fully in person is increasing. "There have been many, many schools that have reopened," says Randi Weingarten, president of the American Federation of Teachers. Weingarten is concerned, however, that the CDC's revised guidance for 3-foot distancing comes as new variants seem to be infecting children more than the original strain. She says, nevertheless, that she and other school leaders and educators are more hopeful and confident that schools will be reopened safely for in-person learning, with proper mitigation.

To be sure, there are still many challenges to face before we can return to full-time in-person education, but we are making strides in that direction. As Education Secretary Miguel Cardona said in an interview, "With successful implementation, our students are going to have a better experience than they did before the pandemic."

ZiNita Carrell, Education Co-chair



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:

Heath Owens

North Thurston Public Schools



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



SENIORS—PRIME TARGETS FOR SCAMMERS

Seniors seem to be prime targets for scammers, even ending up on what are called *SUCKER LISTS*. Why is that? There are a few reasons. First of all, we are available. We are at home. We answer our doors, our phones, our emails, and our texts. This is in contrast to the younger generation, many of whom never answer their phones or emails. We have a reliable source of income—Social Security. It doesn't matter to the scammer how large or small your Social Security check is. We are known to be courteous and thoughtful and to give generously.

Scammers play on our emotions. These include greed—the desire to get rich quick—sympathy, and fear. Scammers also play on seniors' loneliness and possible cognitive decline. Whenever there is a national emergency or crisis, scammers are there to play on your emotions and steal your money or identity. Remember all the COVID-related scams for fake cures, PPE, and vaccines. The FBI has warned that fake COVID vaccination-record cards are being sold online for \$100–\$600. Be alert for possible future scams regarding COVID vaccination passports. FEMA has warned that scammers are calling to register people for their COVID-19 Funeral Assistance Program. FEMA will not contact you, and you cannot apply online. You actually have to register by phoning FEMA at 1-844-684-6333.

Business imposter fraud against consumers aged 60-79 has increased dramatically over government imposter fraud. Consumers in that age group reported losing \$46.36 million last year to business fraud. The average victim lost \$898. Here is a text I received: “**your account will be dedcted for usd 395 for autorenewal geek squad services to cancel this call on...**”. Notice the spelling, grammatical, and punctuation errors in this **Geek Squad scam**. I have also been getting calls, emails, and texts saying that X amount of money has been charged on Amazon, and if I didn't make the charge, to press a number or click a link. Another is that I have an Amazon credit and that I should click on a link to see what I can get. I have been receiving similar texts from Xfinity, Netflix,

and the USPS. Scammers use familiar and trusted names to lure seniors.

How can you protect yourself? Keep your phone number to yourself and don't post it on social media. Don't answer calls unless you recognize the number. Engaging in conversation with these callers only gets you more calls. Don't open attachments or click on links unless you know they're from legitimate sources. Contact the company directly or log into your account yourself to see if you've been charged. If you get a call, email, or text from your bank or credit card company claiming there is a problem with your account, use the phone numbers on your bank statement or on the back of your credit card. Delete emails or texts that ask you to verify personal information online. If you're asked for payment using a gift card, you can bet it's a scam.

Suspected Amazon frauds can be forwarded to stop-spoofing@amazon.com. Complaints can also be filed with the Washington State Office of the Attorney General at www.atg.wa.gov and the Federal Trade Commission at ftc.gov/complaint.

Gail Feagins, Member and Health Services



2021-2022 TCSRA BUDGET

The TCSRA Board has approved a 2021-2022 budget to be submitted to the membership for a vote in May. Income projections for the new year are \$56,190, an increase over the projection of \$51,140 for this year. The main reasons for the increase are that our carryover has grown due to the virtual rather than in-person convention and luncheons and because we now have more than 1,000 dues-paying members. The projected expenses for next year are \$46,272, an increase of \$6,649 over this past year's expenses of \$39,623. Carryover funds added on a one-time basis to the elementary and secondary mini-grants and new funding for community service account for the increase. You can review the complete budget plan on our website at www.wssra-units.org/thurstoncounty/. Please direct any questions that you have about the budget to **Barbara Dittrich** at rdittrich@comcast.net.

The 2021-2022 budget will need to be approved 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 proposed budget. Please reply to her with your response.

If you don't receive a budget email from ZiNita, please 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 May 15.**

Barbara Dittrich, Finance Committee Chair

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

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ADDRESS SERVICE REQUESTED

Please let us know by June 15 if you'd like to make a change in your 2021–2022 Directory listing. Please consider the following, keeping in mind that you may have 4 lines for your listing:

- Our standard listing is name, address, and phone number. *If that is acceptable to you, no action on your part is necessary, if your information is correct.*
- You may list your email address instead of your home address and/or phone number. Some members want only their names listed, and others prefer not to be listed at all.

For changes, please contact us at bitsandpieces-editor@ hotmail.com or at 360-438-5351.

WE HAVE EXCITING MINI-GRANT NEWS!



The Thurston County School Retirees' Association is pleased to announce that active TCSRA members—those who are currently working for public school districts in Thurston County—will be eligible to apply for mini-grant awards of **up to \$500** to fund their school projects. This is a one-time increase to our award amounts, available only this fall. Non-members will still be eligible for awards of up to \$200 (elementary) and up to \$250 (secondary).

If you are interested in membership in TCSRA, please go to www.wssra-units.org/thurstoncounty/.

Check back on September 1, 2021, for both elementary and secondary grant applications, which will be available on our website.

**Pat Slosson, Nancy Zabel, and Patti Colombo,
Secondary & Elementary Mini-Grant Committee Chairs**



COMMUNITY SERVICE NEWS

Please continue to serve the community by following the COVID protocol, even if you've been vaccinated. At this writing, new cases in Thurston County are actually increasing, and the vaccination schedule is not likely to produce "herd immunity" any time soon. It would be foolish to abandon preventative measures now.



In the meantime, keep collecting **toiletries** for *The Other Bank* and **socks of all sizes** for the *Little Red Schoolhouse*. And don't forget to stay in touch with family and friends who could use a pick-me-up call or note. It'll do you good, too.

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 September 2021 issue is due by August 13. Please email copy to bitsandpieces-editor@hotmail.com.**