



Bits & Pieces

IN-PERSON
LUNCHEONS ARE
CANCELED
UNTIL
FURTHER NOTICE!

www.wssra-units.org/thurstoncounty/ November 2021

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

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Greetings on this chilly fall morning! As we continue into the fall, your TCSRA Executive Board is monitoring the progress of the coronavirus as it moves through Thurston County and the state, creating variants as it goes. We are reading every notice from the Washington State Department of Health and the governor's office, and we are listening to the CDC and the doctors. We are eager to get back together! But we are moving cautiously to protect our members, our families, our communities.

Although we are not together in person, our work as an association has not stopped. Our mini-grant programs, both elementary and secondary, received dozens of applications. Those committees are doing the hard work of reading and deciding on the awards. The recipients will be hearing from us soon! More on this in our December newsletter.

As we send out mini-grant checks, we are thinking about our endowment fund at the Community Foundation of South Puget Sound. In order to continue our efforts to support special projects, we must encourage donations to our fund. We currently have a committee looking at our endowment and strategizing our efforts to expand it.

Plans for an in-person state convention in June continue. As you may recall, we will be meeting at the Great Wolf Lodge in Grand Mound. It will also be WSSRA's 75th anniversary. Historian **Karen Keller** and WSSRA President **Bruce Boyer** are gathering stories and memories from each unit to share at the convention. Do you have a special memory of a person, a program, an event that you would like to share? Write it up in a few sentences and send it to Tara at the WSSRA office (tara@wssra.org).

As always, I hope you are staying safe and staying well!

Pat Slosson, TCSRA President

LEGISLATIVE REVIEW & PREVIEW

Please join us for our program via Zoom on November 19 at 10:00 a.m., when we will welcome WSSRA Legislative Coordinator **Peter Diedrick**, for a review of our last legislative session and a preview of this year's session.



This is one of my personal favorite programs. Peter explains the ins and outs of the session in a way that brings it more clearly into focus for me. At the same time, I feel I am empowered and given the tools to reach out to my representatives to make a difference.

The legislature will be conducting its session digitally again this year, which, of course, creates some challenges for us. Without the face-to-face option, we will be hearing from Peter about initiatives and methods for reaching out to our representatives.

Peter Diedrick earned an Associate of Arts and Sciences degree from Everett Community College, a Bachelor of Arts in Political Science from Western Washington University, and a Master of Public Administration from Seattle University. WSSRA employed Peter in 2011, and we are fortunate to have his wealth of experience working for us. Prior to joining the WSSRA staff, he was an Economic Data Analyst for the Washington Employment Security Department, a legislative aide for the Washington State Senate, and a graduate intern in the United States Department of State. Peter and his wife Danielle are the proud parents of two boys, Charlie and Freddy.

As with all our zoom programs, you can sign in on

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LEGISLATIVE REPORT



Plan 1 retirees should keep an eye out. The potential hearing date for a Plan 1 COLA has been moved to November 16. The Select Committee on Pension Policy (SCPP) was poised to have a hearing at its October meeting, but the committee opted for another month to study COLA proposals. We believe attending the Zoom meeting and speaking in favor of a COLA would help the measure pass. I'd like to send you the link to the SCPP page. Email me at peter@wssra.org.

You are probably aware that schools are having a difficult time with staffing right now. The Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI) reached out to WSSRA and other stakeholders to help address this issue. Our political team is working with the legal and legislative departments at OSPI to temporarily loosen retire-rehire policies. Legislation will likely be needed—we have some experience with that. If OSPI decides to go forward, we will be fully supporting their legislative proposals in this endeavor.

The WSSRA State Legislative Committee has completed its post-convention legislative training. The training was divided into four Zoom meetings, all covering different material. The trainings are open to all WSSRA members. Please contact me at peter@wssra.org if you would like a link to the recordings. The four training sessions were:

- Legislative Committee and unit legislative chair training. Legislative, political, and state budget update. Lobbying tips.
- WSSRA VoterVoice software preview. (This program will automatically identify WSSRA members' legislative districts.) Briefing on the state's pension plans and public policy issues facing those pension plans.
- Legislative process and the state budget process. How does a bill become a law at the legislature? How is it funded in appropriations? This is the how-to guide that was skipped in your civics class.
- Congressional process and the federal budget process. What is budget reconciliation? How is the federal process different from the state legislature? Why is lawmaking so difficult in Washington, DC?

The Washington State Legislature is reorganizing itself in November. The House and Senate will meet in short bursts over the month to finalize committee assignments and confer on legislative goals. There

is \$2-3 billion in one-time federal money available for use. Also, the tax revenue forecast for 2022-2023 is \$1 billion higher than previously anticipated, so legislators have some money to spend. The Plan 1 COLA needs to be a 2022 legislative priority!

Peter Diedrick, WSSRA Legislative Director



EDUCATION: HERE'S GOOD NEWS!

Let's celebrate that two educators in our midst have received distinctions as regional teachers of the year, and one of them is next year's STATE teacher of the year.

2021 Educational Service District 113 Regional Teacher of the Year

North Thurston's **David Buitenveld** teaches mathematics at Nisqually Middle School in Lacey. He leads the math team, serves on the leadership and AVID teams, co-leads the Drama Club, created the Green School Club, and crafted an elective class, *How to Change the World*, where students explore purpose in life and view education as empowering them to make change. After twenty years in infotech, David sought a deeper purpose to his life. Then he discovered the joy of teaching while tutoring his niece in calculus. He earned his Master in Teaching, later becoming a Google Certified Educator and Microsoft Innovative Educator. David realized that middle school is where students form identities. He has developed a classroom tradition; after the first math test, everyone gathers on the floor to talk about failure as part of learning, how to respond to a poor grade, and how a test score never changes their value. Afterwards, students have eight minutes to celebrate or grieve, then spend the rest of the period playing with Ozobots.



2022 State Teacher of the Year

In his role as the North Thurston Public Schools' Native Student Program Specialist, **Jerad Koepf** (Wukchumni tribe) provides cultural and academic support for about 230 Native American students from over 50 tribes, nations, bands, and villages. Jerad offers training and support to colleagues, is growing his district's Native studies program, and serves as the liaison to local tribes. He has played a key role in creating district



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Each month we will randomly draw the name of one of our “active” (not-yet-retired) members, who will receive a Starbucks gift card in the mail.

This month’s winner is:



Arthur Van Veen
Yelm School District



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

VAX UP FOR WINTER and more...

Winter is upon us, and so is the time for open enrollment for Medicare supplemental plans. Open enrollment for the PEBB plans is November 1-30. For plans outside PEBB, the date extends to December 7. If you missed the October 26 webinar on the Uniform Medical and United Healthcare plans, it is available on the WSSRA web site, www.wssra.org.

An important vaccine this year is the flu shot. Last year, because of social distancing and mask wearing, the flu was almost non-existent. That will not be the case this year with the restrictions on gatherings relaxed. This year’s flu vaccine protects against 4 flu strains. If you’re 65+, be sure to get the Fluzone High-Dose vaccine.

Get your COVID-19 booster when available as soon as you’re eligible. For Pfizer it must be at least 6 months since your second shot. You can get it if you are 65+ or live in a long-term care facility. Those 18 and up are eligible if they have underlying conditions putting them at serious risk if COVID is contracted. This includes diabetics and smokers. Those whose occupations give them high exposure to COVID, such as teachers and healthcare workers, are also eligible. Although the CDC says it’s okay to get the COVID booster and the flu shot at the same time, you may wish to space them two weeks apart.

If you’re 50+ and have not received the Shingrix shingles vaccine yet, consider getting it, even if you have had shingles or the earlier, 1-dose vaccine. Shingrix is a 2-dose vaccine taken at least 2 months apart. And don’t forget about the pneumonia vaccine if you’re 65+ and have never received a second shot.

Here are some contacts if you need help regarding COVID or anxiety during the winter or anytime:

For the COVID-19 ASSISTANCE HOTLINE for general COVID information, dial 1-800-525-0127 and press #. You can also text 211-211. This is available 6 a.m.–10 p.m. on Mondays and 6 a.m.–6 p.m. Tuesdays-Sundays, and state holidays.

WASHINGTON LISTENS is a support line to help people manage stress and anxiety. It is available 9

a.m.–9 p.m. Mondays-Fridays and 9 a.m.–6 p.m. Saturdays-Sundays at 1-833-681-0211. Resources for self-help tips can be found at www.walistsens.org.

Gail Feagins, Member & Health Services Committee



COMMUNITY SERVICE

When the Salvation Army puts together Adopt-a-Family boxes, who do you suppose gets short shrift? I’m guessing it’s the selfless mom who is just grateful that her kids receive something that they have asked for. So, while the kids are excitedly opening gifts and stockings, mom is probably opening the frying pan she needs or possibly a much-needed item of clothing to replace something that is worn out.

To ameliorate this situation, why not donate a “Mom Bag” for the family box? Just get a pretty holiday bag and put in half a dozen or so small “luxury” items wrapped nicely and labeled “MOM.” Think of it as a mom stocking. Possible items might include a lovely bar of home-made scented soap—save the hotel freebies for our regular collection of toiletries, a pretty notepad, journal or set of post-its, a few beautiful notecards or birthday cards with stamped envelopes, a picture frame, a small book of inspirational sayings, or a paperback that you think any mom would enjoy—perhaps an Erma Bombeck, a scented candle or an unusual or special holiday ornament. These are merely suggestions; feel free to be imaginative.

You may have any number of items to re-gift because you’ve received more gifts of soap or candles than you will ever use. There is no shame in re-gifting so long as the item is in pristine condition, and you think someone else might really like it. Be sure to check that there is no hidden message such as “to Grandma” or “to my favorite teacher.” If there is a pen with a notepad or journal, make sure it writes.

This is not an official TCSRA community service project, but it’s a worthy one and one that might be fun for you to do with a couple of friends or neighbors.

The Salvation Army needs the Mom Bags by December 10. If you need help with delivery, just call **Pat Slosson** at 360-561-3232 or **Sally Jones** at 360-866-8039 by December 6, and we will arrange a pickup. Then we will make a one-time delivery.

Sally Jones, Community Service Chair

In Memoriam

We note the passing of **Jacqueline Hinchcliffe**, and we offer sincere condolences to her family and friends.

Thurston County School Retirees' Association
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EDUCATION (Continued from page 2.)

policies supporting Native education, culture, and students. His most recent project was working on a bill requiring training in equity and in government-to-government relations for administrators and educators.

Jerad says, "My advice to new teachers was the theme of my graduate cohort: teach the child in front of you. This involves adapting the pedagogy, materials, relationships, supports, everything, to each child and each class. Each new student is a new relationship and culture to learn from and [to] use that knowledge to inform instruction, content, and inspire critical evaluation of curricula. Learning from and adapting to students makes us better teachers." Jerad was in my Master's in Teaching cohort at Evergreen State College. I can attest that he deserves this award.

Great educators in our locale; good news amidst the challenges!

Gery Gerst, Education Co-chair



NOVEMBER PROGRAM (Continued from page 1.)

your computer or call in on your phone to listen. The meeting room will be opened at 9:45 a.m., and the presentation will begin at 10:00 a.m. See you then!

Meeting ID: 944 9726 6639

Passcode: 420008

By phone: 1-253-215-8782

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

Pat Slosson, TCSRA President

If you were able to donate kids' socks and/or money for charities at our October 30 drive-thru event, thank you! Details will follow in the December Bits & Pieces.

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 December 2021 issue is due by November 10.** Please email copy to bitsandpieces-editor@hotmail.com.