



Bits & Pieces

IN-PERSON
LUNCHEONS ARE
CANCELED
UNTIL
FURTHER NOTICE!

www.wssra-units.org/thurstoncounty/

January 2022

Unit 28 of the Washington State School Retirees' Association

Serving retired and active school employees and our community.

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

 Ring in the New Year! Let 2022 be the year that normalcy returns. My wish: let me see your whole face, not just your eyes. Let me not hesitate to give you a hug. Let me invite you over for a meal. Let me laugh with you as we sit side-by-side. Normal. It will be so much sweeter, and I will appreciate it so much more! It's January, and we aren't there yet. But maybe by summer? Or next fall? We'll keep hoping!

At our December TCSRA Executive Board meeting, we discussed the prospect of getting back together. As you may remember, we suspended our luncheons in March of 2020. If you are new to our group, our luncheons were scheduled for the third Friday of each month at Panorama's Seventeen51 Restaurant & Bistro. We were served an amazing lunch, while we listened to speakers who covered a wide range of topics. Those events have been missed. We have attempted to carry on with Zoom programs, but it is not the same as in-person interaction. At the same time though, we recognize that we are a vulnerable population, and the board feels a deep sense of responsibility for our safety.

The board has decided to take a leap and see how our members would feel about cautiously starting in-person meetings. We hope to be able to invite you to a program event at the Lacey Community Center on February 18. As always, we will have an entertaining speaker.

The board has also created a COVID safety plan that we will follow:

- Register to attend the event by replying to an email that you will receive early in February from ZiNita Carrell.
- Bring your vaccination card verifying that you have received both COVID vaccine shots PLUS a booster shot for Moderna and Pfizer or one COVID vaccine shot PLUS a booster for Johnson & Johnson.

- Wear a face mask covering your mouth and nose at all times while in the building.
- Maintain social distancing.
- No food or drink will be served.

More information will come as we work out all the details. Watch for emails. If we don't have your email information, please go to our website and register it using "Contact Us." You may also send comments regarding this plan.

Other news from our board meeting: Vice President/President-elect **Lorene Rang** reluctantly submitted her resignation from the position in order to attend to some family responsibilities. The board has appointed **Sue Shannon** to the position. Sue will fill the vice president/president-elect position this year and then will be on the ballot for president this spring.

Happy New Year! We hope to see you soon!

Pat Slosson, TCSRA President



MEET SUE SHANNON

Sue Shannon, Vice President/President-elect: Sue served a total of 44 years in Washington public school districts, including her last years at the Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction. After teaching in Longview and in Ellensburg, she came to North Thurston Public Schools (NTPS), where she began as an English teacher and assistant principal at Timberline High School. Her next positions were as an assistant superintendent for planning and construction at NTPS, as an assistant superintendent for curriculum and instruction at ESD 113, and as a director of learning and education policy at WEA.

Sue has a bachelor's degree, two master's degrees,

(Continued on page 3; see "Meet Sue Shannon")

Please remember: If we don't have your email information, please go to our website and register it using "Contact Us." This will be increasingly important as we start trying to have in-person activities.



LEGISLATIVE REPORT



A lot is happening politically right now—legislatively and electorally. The 2022 Washington State Legislative Session starts January 10 and will run through March 10. After this legislative session, the legislative and congressional boundaries will shift. Some legislators may find themselves in different districts, and you may have a new set of legislators.

The Washington State Legislature is meeting for a fast 60-day session. Bill deadlines will come quickly, and we will need to be ready. This year WSSRA is working on obtaining a Plan 1 COLA, protecting retiree medical benefits, letting more retirees work in retirement, and equalizing retiree medical benefits for retirees in Plan 2 and Plan 3. As it is, Plan 3 retirees have more PEBB insurance deferral rights than Plan 2 members. Bill numbers for those four proposals will be listed in your next newsletter.

Many of the legislators working on our bills will find themselves in new legislative districts after the session ends in March. This year's redistricting project included some drama, but the Supreme Court said the redistricting commission met its basic obligations and the new maps are legal. The maps themselves are fascinating to look over—at least to us legislative staffers. The state's urban areas have experienced a population boom. To make the districts work, legislative districts between Mount Vernon and Olympia shrank and shifted towards Seattle. Rural districts expanded. The grand compromise happened over the district that has traditionally been based around Wenatchee. Commissioners moved the Wenatchee/Chelan district over Stevens Pass to create a sprawling district running from Lake Chelan to Snohomish. If you would like to see the maps, they are available at: <https://www.redistricting.wa.gov/final-maps>.

New legislative updates will be available every Friday on the WSSRA website (www.wssra.org), when a written report, a Facebook update, and a short podcast will be posted. Please give our website or Facebook page a visit to keep up with the latest legislative information.

Peter Diedrick, WSSRA Legislative Director

EDUCATION'S UNSUNG HEROES: LOCAL SCHOOL BOARDS

Update: In November I wrote about Jerad Koepp, State Teacher of the Year from North Thurston; he since has been featured on King 5 news. Now let's pivot to celebrate those public servants to our students, educators, and communities called "local school boards." The job entails countless meetings and critical decisions affecting infrastructure, curriculum, personnel, labor contracts, public input, and complaints. It's not a lucrative job, and board members are almost on speed dials for complaints.



School boards impact the future of our children and of society. It's not just about new construction or what texts can be used. Now it involves coping with the pandemic, adjusting to safe in-person learning and to using Zoom. They have to address educator burnout and shortages, how to meet the special needs of students, how to provide meals safely in the cafeteria, what to do for those who don't have broadband connections or even a computer at home, and how to support teacher innovation of presentations in several modalities.

To those things add the whole "mask or no mask" and "required vaccine or not" issues facing students and staff and how to address social events, such as dances, pep rally assemblies, concerts, games, and more. These volunteer public servants—who have lives, families, jobs of their own—face a plethora of challenges daily.

Add to that some boards facing vitriol and threats over their duly-elected power of decision making. Let's appreciate them and tell them so. Many voters simply throw away their votes for school board candidates because it requires—at a minimum—time to read the voters' pamphlet.

Consider this New Year's Resolution: to write to one or more board members in your school district directly or via the district office to express your appreciation for their service. We honor military vets; board members truly earn their stripes every day.

Gery Gerst, Education Committee Co-chair

In Memoriam

We note the passing of **Rhys Hanson** and **Carol McCormick**, and we offer sincere condolences to their families and friends.

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:

Joyce Tangen

Educational Service District (ESD) 113



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



STORIES THAT INSPIRE MEANING AND JOY

The New Year 2022 is here, and after almost two years of coping with the COVID pandemic, we are looking for inspiration to help us “accentuate the positive” and “spread joy up to the maximum and bring gloom down to the minimum” as songwriter Johnny Mercer sang to us.

We can find inspiration in living our own life's meaning and in our connections to family, friends, pets, our larger community, and nature.

Reading the stories of others who are finding their purpose and joy will help us reflect on how we want to live each day during these stressful times. At www.dailygoo.org, we find many stories, poems, videos, and essays on the subjects of generosity, everyday heroes, nature, science and technology, work, mind and body, and business. *Lessons from Living in Nature*, *Mr. Wright's Law of Love*, *A 15-Year-Old Homeless Artist Rocks the World*, and *Living Gratefully in the Time of Corona Virus* are several meaningful essays and videos in this library. The latter essay asks us, “In the midst of losses, how can we direct our attention toward the gifts that remain in our lives so as to build greater capacity to face what is challenging?”

The magazine YES! provides inspiration for its readers. Its motto is “Journalism for People. Building a Better World.” Christine Hanna, Executive Director, says this magazine gives us, “Stories to make sense of the fractured world. Stories that inspire millions of people to step up and act on behalf of a better world.”

YES! treats us to stories about people who are accentuating the positive as they work to resolve problems, as in the issue: What the Rest of the World Knows with the articles, *How Norway Built an Economy That Puts People First* and *Truth and Reconciliation: Our Way out of a Dark Past*. Or the issue: Building Bridges with the article, *Only Bridging Can Heal a World of Breaking*. That

website is www.yesmagazine.org.

We can make a daily habit of consulting one of these havens of positive inspiration to strengthen ourselves to live lives of meaning and joy in these challenging times.

Pat McLachlan, Member & Health Services Committee



MEET SUE SHANNON (*Continued from page 1.*)

and a doctorate. She was one of the founders of the North Thurston Education Foundation and served as volunteer executive director from 1988 to 2016.

A member of TCSRA for many years, Sue served one year as chair of the Finance Committee, was the TCSRA nominee for the Stan McNaughton Outreach Award in 2017 in recognition of her community volunteer work, and recently served on the nominating committee.

Sue's late husband, Jim, was also a teacher and coach in North Thurston Public Schools. She has one son. Sue enjoys traveling, reading, music, and spending time with family and friends.



COORDINATING COUNCIL NEWS

Happy News: The SW 4 Coordinating Council will meet at the **Rib Eye Restaurant, I-5 at Exit 72 Rush Road**, on **Monday, January 24**. Masks will be required, and social distancing observed. WSSRA will reimburse mileage for ALL drivers whether you drive alone or have passengers.

We will begin at 9:30, have a complimentary lunch, and be on the road home at approximately 12:30. This is a critical meeting as there are WSSRA positions for next year that need to be filled. All unit officers and chairs will receive an agenda in early January. There will be no Zoom option.

For those of you who are new to our organization, officers and chairs from Grays Harbor/Pacific, Lewis County, Lower Columbia, Southwest Washington, and Thurston County meet to share information and to make decisions that affect all our area units.

Contact Karen Keller at kckraifan@gmail.com or at 360-918-8234 for more information.

Karen Keller, Coordinating Council SW 4 Chair

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COMMUNITY SERVICE

I was privileged to deliver 34 "Mom Bags" to the Salvation Army on behalf of TCSRA. I also left a box of larger gift items that didn't readily fit in a bag. Major Janet, my contact at the Salvation Army, assured me that the additional items were welcome and would be distributed to moms as well. Three TCSRA members delivered another eleven bags directly to the Salvation Army, bringing our total to 45 bags!

Even though I am unable to list the names of all who donated, I would be remiss in not naming **Terry Lowe** and **Laura Zylstra** who read about the project in *Bits & Pieces* and took it to Darlene Soost who coordinates service projects for their Bible study group at their church. Their group contributed 16 of our bags.

This example of networking brings hope because it is a reminder of how the ripple effect can produce results much greater than expected. The TCSRA slogan "Each one, bring one" was started as a way

to increase membership, but Terry and Laura's example of bringing others into our work and world shows how, even as individuals, we can expand our influence toward positive outcomes.

Sally Jones, Community Service Chair

ARE YOU UP TO DATE?

- COVID vaccine, 2 doses for Pfizer and Moderna; 1 dose for Johnson & Johnson.
- COVID booster shot
- Flu shot (this year's)
- Shingrix vaccine for shingles, 2 doses
- Pneumonia vaccine, 2 doses if you're 65+

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 February 2022 issue is due by January 12. Please email copy to bitsandpieces-editor@hotmail.com.**