



# Bits & Pieces

IN-PERSON LUNCHEONS ARE CANCELED UNTIL FURTHER NOTICE!

[www.wssra-units.org/thurstoncounty/](http://www.wssra-units.org/thurstoncounty/)

April 2022

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

## PARADE OF PROJECTS

April is traditionally the month when we invite mini-grant recipients to a luncheon to share how they used their mini-grant funds. Last year we asked them to share on Zoom, either live during our meeting, through a power point presentation, or with a video. This year as we got closer to April, we realized that ***we could not ask recipients to do one more thing***. This has been another difficult year for our active members. Students returned to school this fall at different levels; substitute teachers, paraeducators, and bus drivers have been scarce; as COVID continued to spread, classes were disrupted. Our mini-grants are one way for us to support our active members. This year our committees will also support them by *not* asking them to leave the classroom where they are most needed, while we present summaries of some of their projects.

We had 32 elementary applicants and 17 secondary applicants from Olympia, Yelm, North Thurston, Rainier, Tenino, and Tumwater. This year we were able to give grants to all of them.

***Here is a look into some of the elementary projects:***

♥ One teacher asked for funds to order Burke Boxes from the Burke Museum in Seattle. These are wonderful assortments of artifacts and items grouped by theme.

♥ Wanting to pair musical concepts with literature, a music teacher purchased books with story songs, biographies of composers, and picture books that bring musical concepts alive for her youngest learners.

♥ A class set of journals and pens was needed for a class of 5th graders. "We have come across so many big emotions, high anxiety, and big feelings for this group of pre-teens."

♥ Flexible seating was a popular request. Stools, bounce chairs, and cushions boost overall

academic achievement by increasing student motivation, choice making, and overall engagement.

♥ Lacrosse is gaining popularity in the Olympia area, so a PE teacher used funds to buy 26 lacrosse sticks for her 3rd–5th grade classes.



♥ "Our third-grade team is implementing *First Chapter Friday*. Every Friday, each teacher will select a chapter book and will give a sneak-peek into the book. It's a fun, engaging way to encourage students to participate in independent reading."

♥ Several applicants were first-year teachers who needed supplies and books for students. This included notebooks, pencils, whiteboards, folders, and bins to help keep their supplies organized.

***Our secondary classroom needs were as diverse as the courses being taught. Here is a look into some of their requests:***



♥ Items needed for a "calming corner" included a saucer chair, a multi-function electronic timer, a pack of plastic storage bins, assorted fidget toys, pop it toys, a mindfulness game, a marble maze, a logic puzzle book, and a breathing board. *[If you don't know what some of these things are, you could look them up on Amazon.—Editor]*

♥ Funds for transportation and a one-day substitute

*(Continued on page 2. See "PARADE OF PROJECTS.")*

## *In Memoriam*

We note the passing of **Jeanne Cunningham** and **Elizabeth Thomas**, and we offer sincere condolences to their families and friends.

## **LEGISLATIVE REPORT**



Never tell a constituent that a bill is dead. That critical advice is drilled into all legislative staffers. It's stalled; yes, that's okay. It's a zombie bill; sure, it gets the point across. The reason is that on rare occasions the rules are suspended, and a bill gets resurrected.

One of our "dead" bills, HB 1699, was resurrected in the final moments of this legislative session. HB 1699 temporarily increases retiree return-to-work hours from 867 to 1040. School retirees will be able to substitute in classified and certificated positions—excluding central administrative positions—for an additional 21 days or 173 hours. The new law will be in effect through the year 2025.

Legislators passed a record-breaking operating budget, \$64 billion in sum. Much of that is one-time federal money. WSSRA's contract lobbyists think the biennial budget written next year will be closer to \$55 billion after the federal money is spent.

Fortunately, school retirees had some important items in the budget. The final budget included the \$183 monthly Medicare Eligible Healthcare Benefit. Legislators made the actuarially recommended pension payment to the pension funds.

Legislators also passed legislation for a Plan 1 COLA to take effect this summer. Plan 1 retirees will receive an increase of 3%, up to \$110 per month, starting this summer. Plan 2 and 3 retirees will receive a 3% increase as well, so all retirees who have been retired for more than a year will get a pension increase in July.

An end-of-session report will be available on the WSSRA webpage ([www.wssra.org](http://www.wssra.org)) for those would like a complete list of pension, health care, and senior bills this session.

*Peter Diedrick, WSSRA Legislative Director*

### **It's time to contribute to the WSSR-PAC!**

Legislative success depends in part on having legislators who are sympathetic to our causes. The PAC gives campaign donations to those candidates. This is an election year, and the PAC needs contributions from TCSRA and WSSRA members. Go to [www.wssr-pac.org](http://www.wssr-pac.org) or to page 6 in the recent issue of *The Journal* for information. You can send a check or donate online.

## **2022-2023 TCSRA BUDGET**

The TCSRA Board has approved a 2022-2023 budget to be submitted to the membership for a vote in May. Income projections for the new year are \$63,690, an increase over the projection of \$56,190 for this year. The main reason for the increase is that our carryover has grown due to the virtual rather than in-person convention and unit luncheons. The projected expenses for next year are \$41,022, a decrease of \$5,250 over this past year's expenses of \$46,272. The reason for the decrease is that mini-grant funding was returned to the usual amount after the one-time increase due to carryover funds in the current budget. Also of note is that TCSRA will now award three scholarships, including a donation to the Gene Forrester scholarship. You can review the complete budget plan on our website at [www.wssra-units.org/thurstoncounty/](http://www.wssra-units.org/thurstoncounty/). Please direct any questions that you have about the budget to **Barbara Dittrich** at [rdittrich@comcast.net](mailto:rdittrich@comcast.net).

The proposed budget must be approved by a vote of the membership in May, so please watch for voting instructions in the next *Bits & Pieces*.

*Barbara Dittrich, Finance Committee Chair*



## **PARADE OF PROJECTS** (Continued from page 1.)

were requested so that students could participate in an outdoor science inquiry program at the Mount Rainier Institute.

♥ New Market Skills Center requested funds to purchase an acrylic mirror to go above a work demonstration area in the Culinary Arts class so that students can see cooking demonstrations while staying seated.

♥ In order to restore a wooded area next to the school while creating a garden, one classroom requested gardening tools.

♥ The Veterinary Assistant program at New Market Skills Center has a small budget provided by the school but needed funds to purchase additional supplies such as bandage materials, lab materials, and PPE for surgery practice.

♥ There were numerous requests for novels for classrooms and for Battle of the Books.

Mini-grants make a difference for students and teachers, and Thurston County School Retirees' Association is pleased to provide the funding. Applications for mini-grants for the 2022–2023 school year will be available on our website on September 1.

*Nancy Zabel & Patti Colombo, Elementary Co-chairs*  
*Pat Slosson, Secondary 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:



**Shane Dover**

**Tumwater 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 2022–2023:

**President: Sue Shannon**

**Vice President: Open Position**

**Secretary: Patty Gee**

**Fiscal Treasurer: Will Gentz**

**Membership Treasurer: ZiNita Carrell**

**Nominating Committee: Patty Gee & Sue Ballard**

*Gail Feagins, Patty Gee, and Sue Ballard  
Nominating Committee*

## NOMINEE BIOGRAPHIES

### **Patty Gee, Secretary & Nominating Committee:**

After 20 years with North Thurston Public Schools, Patty went on sabbatical to earn her master’s degree at Central Washington University (CWU). Meanwhile, her husband was called to Tokyo, Japan, as a Christian missionary. Patty followed and was able to do research comparing Japan’s early childhood programs to ours for her master’s degree thesis. After three years in Japan as ministers of a Christian Mission Church, they returned, and Patty finished her Master’s in School Administration at CWU and then worked in several districts—Toppenish, Shelton, Steilacoom, and Griffin—as a speech language pathologist. At this point, she retired and realized a life goal by opening her “Open Door Autism Clinic” in Olympia. She directly provided the therapy for autism communication and social skills, and her husband, Jerome, was the Executive Director. As a volunteer, Patty has been President/Executive Director of the Autism Society of Washington, secretary for the North Thurston Education Association, secretary for several church boards and councils, and secretary/board member of the Regional Women of the Lutheran Church of America. Patty now has the time and desire to become the secretary of TCSRA, and she looks forward to reconnecting with her fellow teachers and support service colleagues.

**Sue Ballard, Nominating Committee:** Sue grew up in Olympia and attended Lincoln Elementary, Jefferson Junior High, and William Winlock Miller High

School—now Olympia High School. She earned a B.A. and an M.Ed. from Central Washington University, and she also taught at Central for several years. Sue started her K–12 career in the Olympia School District, where she taught Special Education and Child Development. After time as the Special Education Director for ESD 113, Sue headed south to Vancouver, where she spent over 20 years in the Evergreen School District. There she was a Special Education Administrator, a Career and Technical Education Administrator, an English Language Learners Program Administrator, and a part-time high school teacher. By the time she retired, Sue had taught every grade but 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup>. After retirement, she taught at Washington State University in Vancouver. With the pandemic, Sue’s life has changed, as it has for many of us. She reads a lot, plays with her cats, and talks on the phone. She belongs to several book clubs and also meets with her Brownie Troop from 1952. Sue lives at Panorama in Lacey and enjoys activities available there. She also has become very fond of Zoom meetings.

Biographies of the other nominees for office—**Sue Shannon, Will Gentz, and ZiNita Carrell**—are available at [www.wssra-units.org/thurstoncounty/](http://www.wssra-units.org/thurstoncounty/). If you would like a printed copy, please call Sharon Dennis at 360-438-5351.

## SPECIAL ELECTION PROCEDURE

Because we’re still not having in-person meetings, our officer elections will be done via email and USPS mail. Those of you 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.

If you don’t receive an election email from ZiNita, send your vote to [dazicar88@gmail.com](mailto:dazicar88@gmail.com) or mail a written response to TCSRA, PO Box 3051, Lacey, WA 98509 -3051. **The deadline for voting is April 15.**

## HELP WANTED!

You may have noticed that we have an unfilled position, that of **Vice President**, in our slate of officer candidates for 2022–2023. Here is your opportunity to work with the TCSRA leadership team as they strive to implement the purpose of our organization: “. . . to promote the general welfare of its members while continuing the promotion of education and good citizenship.” *This is a one year commitment and does not obligate the candidate to fill the presidency the following year.*

**Interested?** Please contact **Gail Feagins** at 253-964-1338 or at [jetgail@comcast.net](mailto:jetgail@comcast.net). She can give you complete information about this position.

**Thurston County School Retirees' Association**  
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If you are returning from your Snowbird location, please let the WSSRA office know to change your address or to restart your mailings.

Email [michele@wssra.org](mailto:michele@wssra.org)  
or call [360-413-5496](tel:360-413-5496), option 116.

Remember, the Post Office charges our unit for each forwarded or returned *Bits & Pieces*.

## 2022–2023 DIRECTORY

One of the important ways that members of our group stay in touch with each other is through our directory. We will begin editing our 2022–2023 edition soon. If you wish to make a change to your listing, we need to know **no later than June 10**. 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 to list only their names or not to be listed at all.
- ◆ We have some requests from previous years and will honor those again unless notified.

Please check your listing in the 2021–2022 directory. If you'd like us to make a change, let us know by contacting us at [bitsandpieces-editor@hotmail.com](mailto:bitsandpieces-editor@hotmail.com) or at 360-438-5351.

**Sharon Dennis & Pat Slosson, Directory Co-editors**

## COMMUNITY SERVICE NEWS

This month let's remember to keep collecting big and little kids' **socks** and **underwear** for the *Little Red Schoolhouse* and **toiletries**—personal hygiene and household cleaning products—for *The Other Bank* at the Food Bank.

Meanwhile, please save the third Saturday morning in May for a very enjoyable work party at the *South Sound Reading Foundation*. Details will follow in the May *Bits & Pieces*.

**Sally Jones, Community Service Chair**

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

***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 2022 issue is due by April 13.** Please email copy to [bitsandpieces-editor@hotmail.com](mailto:bitsandpieces-editor@hotmail.com).