



Bits & Pieces

IN-PERSON
LUNCHEONS ARE
CANCELED
UNTIL
FURTHER NOTICE!

www.wssra-units.org/thurstoncounty/

May 2022

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

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

May 2022. The TCSRA year, along with my three-year term as your president, is ending. It has been my honor and privilege to be president of Unit 28. I have to say, though, that it was not what I expected. I have presided at only six luncheon meetings, instead of the normal 27. I have interacted with only a few of you at drive-thru community service events and at Zoom programs. Why? COVID.

I could have felt alone and isolated in this job. During the COVID quarantine our unit could have said, "We'll wait until it's all over." We could have folded up our tents and left. But no! Dedicated officers, committee members, and membership at large have gone above and beyond to keep the work of this amazing organization moving along. Email, phone calls, Zoom, and snail mail—we have managed to keep in touch and keep Unit 28 a strong presence *"serving retired and active school employees and our community."*

Officer elections: We successfully conducted our third email vote. Congratulations to **Sue Shannon**, President; **Patty Gee**, Secretary; **Will Gentz**, Fiscal Treasurer; **ZiNita Carrell**, Membership Treasurer; **Sue Ballard** and **Patty Gee**, Nominating Committee. Vice President? We are still looking. Are you out there?

WSSRA Fall Convention and WSSR Foundation Baskets: We are looking forward to September 12–14, at the Great Wolf Lodge. Our unit will contribute four baskets to the WSSR Foundation raffle supporting scholarships: a celebration basket (wine, chocolate, table decor, etc.), a coffee basket, a tea basket, a Grandparent basket (games, movies, snacks, etc.). If you would like to donate an item to one of these baskets, please contact Ann Chenhall (360-481-6152) or Sally Jones (360-866-8039).

Pat Slosson, TCSRA President



ZOOM WITH US IN MAY!

Once again, we will welcome WSSRA President **Bruce Boyer** to our May 20 Zoom "luncheon" meeting. He will install our officers for 2022-2023.



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 year.

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: 880 6736 1233
Passcode: 268422

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.

Pat Slosson, TCSRA President

THANK YOU, TEACHERS!



Teacher Appreciation Week is May 2–6. 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

The Legislative Session Is Over.
The Election Season Is Here.



Welcome to the legislative interim. The legislature has adjourned, and barring a crisis, legislators will be in their home districts through December. Thank you for all your work this session.

The Washington State School Retirees' Association has two important tasks to complete over the interim period:

1. Create a policy agenda for the 2023 legislative session.
2. Build support for retirees' goals by engaging with legislative candidates.

Our WSSRA political team is already working with the Select Committee on Pension Policy (SCPP) on next year's bills. The SCPP is an interim-only committee which endorses bills for the next session. Any pension bills retirees would like to pass in 2023 should be endorsed by the SCPP this interim. We will likely need your help sometime this summer or autumn, so please keep an eye out for SCPP updates.

Like it or not, it is now election season. The entire state House of Representatives and one half of the state Senate is up for election. It will be crucial to meet with legislative candidates. WSSRA's lobbyists estimate that 20% to 40% of the legislature may turn over this election cycle. It's a trifecta of retirements, redistricting, and a likely swing election year that will wipe out some incumbents. Education will be crucial; candidates need to learn about pension issues! This is our chance to help them. The bill-drafting work being done is meaningless if a new legislature doesn't care about retiree issues.

I would be remiss to not mention the Washington State School Retirees' Political Action Committee (WSSR-PAC). The lobbyists are encouraging the PAC to spend \$50,000 this election cycle, and the PAC has roughly \$20,000 in the bank. If every WSSRA member gave \$1.50 per year, that goal

would be met. The PAC can now take online contributions at www.wssr-pac.org. No dues money goes to the PAC, so contributions are critical. The PAC is simply one more tool available to retirees in advocating for their own interests.

Peter Diedrick, WSSRA Legislative Coordinator



STAFFING SHORTAGES IN PUBLIC SCHOOLS ACROSS THE COUNTRY

"The COVID-19 pandemic has contributed to a staffing shortage in the nation's schools," Commissioner Peggy Carr of the National Council of Education Statistics said in a statement recently. New findings from a snapshot of time between January 11 and 24, when the Omicron variant was at its peak, show that the pandemic has wreaked havoc on the education profession at a time when schools must help students recover academically and stave off mental health challenges.



To cover staffing shortages, over half of the schools reported increasing class sizes and using school staff outside of their intended duties. This includes directing office staff to teach, assigning Title 1 and other specialists to classrooms, asking recently retired teachers to return, asking parents to provide support in the classrooms, and even asking the National Guard to step in.

National teachers' unions have been sounding the alarm on an "unprecedented staffing crisis across every job category." In February the 3-million-member National Education Association released poll data showing that 55% of educators are ready to leave the profession. And there is a shortage of prospective teachers to fill the gap.

At least the COVID-19 situation has improved recently, with the number of cases of the virus falling sharply. Also, the end of the school year is rapidly approaching, offering teachers and other staff a much-needed break. But a lot must be done to help students recover academically. Perhaps next year would be an important time for retired teachers to volunteer in classrooms!

ZiNita Carrell, Education Co-chair

In Memoriam

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

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:

Kandis Jimenez

Yelm Community Schools

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

WE HAVE A NEW EDITOR!

It was at a November luncheon meeting when **Billie Williams** announced that she could no longer edit *Bits & Pieces* and needed a replacement. I was sitting next to **Olive Hull**, a longtime member. She turned to me and asked, “Do you have a computer, Sharon?” I didn’t volunteer immediately, but a few days later, I sent a note to Billie. That was 12½ years and 114 issues ago, each one completed with the help of many volunteers—contributors, proofreaders, and mailers.

I have thoroughly enjoyed doing this job, but it is time for me to pass it along to someone else. I didn’t have to ask **Pat Slosson** if she has a computer, if she knows how to use Microsoft *Publisher*, or even if she enjoys doing this kind of work. I just asked her if she’d like to have this job, and she said, “I’d love to edit the newsletter!” So that was that.

Pat has been the TCSRA membership chair, secretary, secondary mini-grant chair, newsletter proofreader, co-editor of the directory, vice president/president-elect, and president. She worked for four years for the Arizona Republic and Gazette. When she moved back to Washington, she taught English at North Thurston High School and River Ridge High School. At NTHS she taught/advised the yearbook staff, and at RRHS she taught Beginning Journalism and taught/advised the newspaper staff. Pat will be an excellent *Bits & Pieces* editor!

Meanwhile, I will continue to edit our website and co-edit our annual directory. My new email address is sed6501@outlook.com.

Sharon Dennis, Retiring Editor



“BLUE ZONES – SECRETS OF A LONG LIFE”

What should we be doing to live longer and healthier lives? For decades, Dan Buettner, a National Geographic Fellow and New York Times bestselling author, and his team have studied 5 places in the world he calls Blue Zones, where the aging population stays active and healthy into their 80s and 90s. Many live to be over 100 and typically do not

suffer from degenerative conditions, such as heart disease, diabetes, and cancer, which are common in most of the industrialized world. These Blue Zones are: Okinawa, Japan; Sardinia, Italy; Nicoya, Costa Rica; Ikaria, Greece; and Loma Linda, California.

Although each Blue Zone has its own unique environmental influences, customs, and cuisines, these regions do share some characteristics in common. Dan describes what he has learned about these regions in his books: *The Blue Zones: Lessons for Living Longer from the People Who’ve Lived the Longest*; *The Blue Zones Solution: Eating and Living Like the World’s Healthiest People*; and *The Blue Zones Kitchen: 100 Recipes to Live to 100*. His website is: www.bluezones.com.

In his talk, “9 Lessons from the World’s Blue Zones on Living a Long, Healthy Life,” Mr. Buettner outlines the Power 9 principles of people who live longer and healthier in the Blue Zones. They are: 1. “**Move Naturally.**” Moving naturally throughout the day—walking, gardening, doing housework; 2. “**Purpose.**” Knowing why you wake up in the morning; 3. “**Down Shift.**” Having stress-relieving rituals built into daily routines; 4. “**80% Rule.**” Stopping eating when your stomach is 80% full and eating your smallest meal in the early evening; 5. “**Plant Slant.**” Eating mostly beans, vegetables, fruit, and whole grains—meat only in small amounts; 6. “**Wine @ 5.**” Consuming moderate but regular amounts with friends and food; 7. “**Belong.**” Being part of a faith-based community; 8. “**Loved Ones First.**” Having close and strong family connections; and 9. “**Right Tribe.**” Having close friends and strong social networks.

Since 2009, Dan Buettner has partnered with Healthways and local governments, businesses, schools, and religious organizations to start 42 Blue Zone Projects in the U.S.

Pat McLachlan, Member & Health Service Co-chair



2022–2023 TCSRA BUDGET

The TCSRA Board submitted the 2022–2023 budget to the membership last month, and you can review the specifics in the April *Bits & Pieces* and on our website. This 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 13.**

Barbara Dittrich, Finance Committee Chair

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

ADDRESS SERVICE REQUESTED

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Please let us know by June 10 if you'd like to make a change in your 2022–2023 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 a few prefer not to be listed at all.

For changes, please contact us at sed6501@outlook.com or at 360-438-5351.

COMMUNITY SERVICE

Promoting Literacy; Creating Potential

After so many months of not planning a group activity, the time has come for an opportunity to get together and do some community service. A visit to the South Sound Reading Foundation (SSRF) is planned.

"To bring the joy and promise of books and reading to all South Sound children."

To that end the SSRF was launched in 2001 in response to research done by the national Children's Reading Foundation showing that reading at grade level by third grade is a key factor in predicting high school graduation. In 2004 the SSRF gave out 1,100 books. In 2020-2021, under the creative leadership of Jennifer Williamson-Forster, 80,000 books were given to children; that's about 1,500 books per week.

The SSRF has defined ten programs to distribute these books, including a Literacy Van which visits low-income housing units, schools, after school programs, community events, and rural areas. A newer service called "Bag O' Books" allows a parent or caregiver to order books online for their kids simply by providing their ages. A volunteer then selects several age-appropriate books for each child and packs them

in a brown paper grocery bag for the parent to pick up. The books are given to the children "for keeps."

As a former librarian, I feel compelled to mention that this program, wonderful as it is, is not meant to discourage use of our school and public libraries. Ideally, receiving those free books will encourage kids to look for more to read at a library.

We will meet on **Saturday morning, May 21**, from **10 to noon** at the SSRF warehouse at 200 Sleater-Kinney RD NE. From the light at Martin Way, turn west towards North Thurston High School and watch closely for the entrance almost immediately on the right-hand side of the street. We will check donated books for damage, wipe them down, affix SSRF stickers on the back and sort them into labeled bins. The books provide endless fodder for easy conversation.

Sally Jones, Community Service Chair

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