



Bits & Pieces

www.wssra-units.org/thurstoncounty/

March 2023

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

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Happy St. Patrick's Day and welcome to the First Day of Spring! I recently perused the OSPI website looking for news. The 2023 State and Regional Teachers of the Year have been announced.

Dana Miles is the Washington State recipient. She teaches Work Experience and Bilingual Language Arts at the Washington State School for the Deaf in ESD 112. Dana, a deaf person, advocates for her students and helps them learn to advocate for themselves. The Capital Region, ESD 113, recipient of Teacher of the Year is Carolyn Gilman, a National Board Certified English teacher, at Olympia High School. She teaches English and Creative Writing and is advisor to the school's literary magazine, the novel writing and poetry clubs, and the Poetry Slam Team. Congratulations to these two outstanding educators.

The bios of Washington state and regional Teachers of the Year are on the OSPI website. I also discovered [Roots to Apples](#), a collection of essays by these award-winners, posted annually since 2011. Jared Koepp, 2022 Washington State Teacher of the Year and our October speaker, has an essay in the series. The writers provide insights into their professional lives and share heart-warming stories about their students. You will find it at <https://www.k12.wa.us/educator-support/awards-recognition/seed-apple>.

The pace of activity for TCSRA is picking up. The Finance Committee presented the 2023-24 budget to the Board in February and will share it with the membership in April for a vote in May. The Nominations Committee confirmed the slate of officers for 2023-24 and will present it this month. Election is in April; installation is in May.

TCSRA has a busy, dedicated core of members who serve as leaders. To increase participation, we conducted a survey in February asking members to identify their areas of interest. Please, join us for lunch and consider volunteering for a project.

Sue Shannon, TCSRA President

WELCOME BACK ART DOLAN!



Once again, Art Dolan will be joining us at our March meeting to share his latest presentation—"Thomas Paine: Reflections on the Revolution." This is a fascinating story about a man prone to failure in England, who within 14 months of arriving in Philadelphia, changed the course of America's future. Once in the colonies, Thomas Paine found the voice of a nation.

Art Dolan is Past Commander of the George Rogers Clark Chapter, Sons of the American Revolution (S.A.R.). Art is a direct descendant of a Revolutionary War patriot, Jeremiah Fitch, member of the Bedford militia 1775. Art has presented three other programs for us: "George Washington's Secret Navy," "Stars and Stripes Revolutionary Road," and "Espionage, The Second Oldest Profession."

Art was born near his Patriot ancestor's home in Bedford, Massachusetts. After serving in the military during the Viet Nam war, he became a science teacher in Spokane Public Schools. In 2003 after retiring from teaching, Art relocated to Olympia and began researching his Revolutionary War roots, discovering the S.A.R. Art is an active member of the Alexander Hamilton Chapter.

Bobbie Andreas/Hospitality

[Bring a friend, and be sure to make reservations for



Friday, March 17, 2023—12 noon
The Ember's Restaurant
Indian Summer Golf and Country Club



Honey Dijon chicken (GF, DF) served with rice pilaf and seasonal veggies **OR** Italian Vegetarian salad
Dessert: Chef's Choice

(\$20 includes tax and gratuity)



LUNCHEON RESERVATIONS

I will be sending out emails to remind you of our upcoming luncheon. Please respond to that email if you plan to attend. We need our reservation count by **noon on Friday, March 10**.

If you **do not receive an email**, or if you **need to cancel or add to your** reservation, email me at dazicar88@gmail.com, or call me **no later than noon on Friday (253-381-2592)**. Please do not call the restaurant with reservation changes. To be added to the email list for notification, please send me your email address.

ZiNita Carrell, Email Committee Chair



LEGISLATIVE REPORT

We are marching towards the half-way mark for this legislative session. Everything is in flux, but all of WSSRA's bills are queued up in the right spots at the time this newsletter went to print.

A Plan 1 COLA Update: There are currently four Plan 1 COLA bills. House Bill 1057 and Senate Bill 5350 are the Select Committee on Pension Policy recommended bills. They are both ready for committee votes. HB 1294 is a permanent Plan 1 COLA replacement by Rep. Steele (Wenatchee). This bill is expected to die. The final proposal, HB 1459, is by the Democratic and Republican budget leaders in the House of Representatives. This bill is also ready for a committee vote; however, amendments are expected.

House Bill 1201 and Senate Bill 5294 are Governor request bills to reduce funding to TRS 1 and PERS 1. WSSRA is opposed. Those bills are currently on hold. Amendments are likely.

House Bill 1008 to equalize retiree health benefits for members of Plans 2 and 3 is on the calendar for a vote by the full House of Representatives. Likewise, HB 1056, to equalize return-to-work rules for early retirees, is queued up for a vote by the House.

Thurston County School Retirees' Association request legislation to reduce the burden on seniors deferring jury duty is progressing well. An early edit changed the original bill request. It now requires the individual over age 70 to declare the type of medial exemption being requested, but allows them to do so without a doctor's letter. The court must grant the request. This bill, House Bill 1312, passed the House by a unanimous vote and is on its way to the Senate.

WSSRA is supporting numerous other bills to enhance the lives of seniors. Bills to control prescription drug prices, expand the senior property tax exemption, and improve seniors' access to dental care and hearing aids are on the list.

Peter Diedrick, WSSRA Legislative Director

"HARDENING" SCHOOLS

Since the 1999 Columbine High School shooting, more than 331,000 children at 350-plus schools have experienced



gun violence during school hours. Nearly all students today are frequently reminded of the possibility of being murdered at the hands of a gunman. Consequently, school districts nationwide are spending more than \$3 billion per year to "harden" buildings with metal detectors, surveillance cameras, bulletproof windows, panic buttons, and armed guards.

Most schools conduct at least an annual lockdown drill, and many conduct them monthly. Almost all schools have made it harder to enter, requiring a single point of entry, a sign-in at the office, and the wearing of badges. Many schools have installed automatic deadbolts on exterior doors and electronic door locks on classroom doors. More armed security guards are being hired and at least 32 states now allow school staff to carry firearms, and in some instances, with only 24 hours of training. Even with these security measures, someone armed with a semiautomatic weapon can kill 10 or more people in seconds, before anyone can respond.

Many criminal-justice experts and psychologists say the best way to prevent school shootings is to identify and help potential perpetrators beforehand. Nearly all shooters hint strongly of their intent to wreak havoc, either through online forums or other signals. Most schools provide some sort of threat-reporting system. Flagging potential threats, however, only works if the authorities pay attention and act. In 2021, a high school student in Oxford, Michigan, fatally shot four peers after a teacher observed his drawings of guns with captions like "The thoughts won't stop. Help me." His parents refused to take him home, and no one searched his belongings. Hours later, he pulled a semi-automatic handgun from his backpack and began firing into a crowded hallway. And there is the recent instance of the 6-year-old who brought a gun to school and shot his teacher.

What's the answer? I personally believe the abundance of semi-automatic rifles and handguns is the real problem, but that's another issue that desperately needs to be addressed.

ZiNita, Carrell, Education Committee Co-Chair

Each month we 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:



Ryan Aufort
North Thurston Public Schools

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

PRACTICING RESILIENCE

Resilience is the ability to cope with and recover from setbacks. These setbacks may include illness, job loss, medical emergencies, natural disasters, financial issues, divorce, or death of a loved one. Resilient people use their skills and strengths to respond to life's challenges. In "What is Resilience," by Kendra Cherry in verywellmind.com, published October 17, 2022, the author states, "People with resilience do not experience less distress, grief, or anxiety than other people do. Instead, they use healthy coping skills to handle such difficulties in ways that foster strength and growth, often emerging stronger than they were before."

What are six coping skills that help resilient people weather life's challenges?

Resilient people view themselves as survivors or fighters rather than victims. They have a positive view of themselves and their abilities and know that they can keep going to make it through difficult times.

Resilient people manage their emotions in times of stress and recognize their feelings are temporary and will pass.

Resilient people have a strong center of internal control and are confident that they can act to determine part of the outcome of events.

They use problem-solving skills to look rationally at a situation to come up with solutions that can lead to improvement. They have the capacity to make realistic plans and stick to them.

They treat themselves and others with kindness, showing acceptance and compassion.

Resilient people have a solid supportive social network and know when to ask for help.

In her article, "10 Ways to Build Resilience," in verywellmind.com published October 6, 2022, Kendra Cherry says that you can build resilience by:

*Finding purpose. Examples include: a. Building a support system of loved ones; b. Giving voice to a social movement; c. Leading a healthy lifestyle; d. Learning about different cultures; e. Making art or music; and f. Serving your community. Living with a sense of purpose can help you stay resilient.

*Believing in yourself. Remind yourself of your strengths and accomplishments to strengthen your self-esteem.

*Developing a social network. It helps to have someone to confide in and to get support.

*Embracing change. Flexibility is an essential part of resilience. It helps you to adapt and thrive.

*Being optimistic. It is important to remain hopeful and positive about a brighter future, knowing that setbacks

are temporary and that you have skills to meet challenges head on.

*Nurturing yourself. By taking care of your own needs, including eating healthy foods, exercising and getting enough sleep, you can stay resilient to meeting life's challenges.

*Developing problem-solving skills. Whenever you encounter a new challenge, think of potential ways you could solve the problem. Experiment with different strategies and develop a logical way to work through problems.

*Establishing goals. In a crisis situation, you can brainstorm possible solutions and then break them down into manageable goals.

*Taking action. Being proactive helps you make your goals a reality.

*Committing to building skills over time. Practice the skills of resilient people. Talk to your healthcare provider or a mental health professional if you need help.

After 3 years of coping with the COVID-19 Pandemic, our resilience has been tested, and our strengths and weakness have become apparent to us. We know that future—challenges, including our own aging, efforts to damage our democracy, and various climate crises—will call upon us to continue to build our personal resilience in order to protect ourselves, others and the earth. Strong personal resilience will help us realize our higher potential and use our personal gifts to further a more harmonious and sustainable existence with other life on this planet.

Pat McLachlan, Health and Member Services



THE OTHER BANK

At our last luncheon attendees were invited to enter a drawing for a Valentine basket, with all proceeds given to The Other Bank specifically for diapers.

The rationale for choosing diapers was that they are essential hygiene items for babies and toddlers. They are expensive and cannot be purchased with WIC funds or food stamps. Some of the parents who need and cannot afford diapers

(Continued on page 4. See "THE OTHER BANK.")

In Memoriam

We note the passing of **Kathleen Johnson, Anne Ozmun,** and **Gerald Schmidtke.** We offer sincere condolences to their families and friends.

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Happy
St. Patrick's
Day.

THE OTHER BANK (Continued from page 3.)

include teen moms, single moms, abused moms, military families, grandparents and other kin raising children, and poor families who don't qualify for federal and/or state assistance because they are not "poor enough." Low-paying jobs and the ever-increasing cost of living can put these families in a Catch-22 situation.

I visited with Berenice Plazas, the Client Services and Basic Food Coordinator at The Other Bank and learned that diapers are just one part of an entire distribution system. There are three basic programs:

Once a month toiletries and household products are given out. These are full-sized items such as toothpaste and shampoo, and cleaning products such as dish soap, laundry soap, and paper products.

Twice a month The Other Bank distributes personal hygiene products for people of all ages. Diapers of all sizes, from newborn to toddler pull-ups, are given out, as well as feminine care and incontinence products.

The third program is called "new baby bags." These bags are given out as needed to expectant mothers at 37 weeks and moms with newborns up to two months old. They include an amazing array of items, depend-

ing on what has been donated. Every effort is made to include diapers and provide other baby essentials such as non-perfumed shampoo, lotion, body wash, bottles, pacifiers, and wipes.

Although it is not a part of The Other Bank, I would be remiss not to mention the "birthday bags" assembled and given to children from one—twelve-years-old by the food bank. Cake mix, frosting, and candles are "de rigueur," and other party items are included to increase the festivity level for the birthday child.

Since the Little Red Schoolhouse no longer needs our sock donations, I propose that besides continuing to bring small toiletry items, we bring one item for The Other Bank to the luncheons, as the spirit moves us.

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: Pat Slosson, 360-561-3232.

Information for the April 2023 issue is due by March 15.