

Bits & Pieces

www.wssra-units.org/thurstoncounty/

April 2023

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

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

TCSRA committees have had a busy spring. The work of the Nominating and Finance Committees appears elsewhere in the newsletter. The Communications Committee updated the Unit 28 rack card, originally designed by students at New Market Skills Center, and prepared and ordered business cards for board members.

This winter, the Bylaws Committee reviewed the 2018 TCSRA Bylaws. Periodically, bylaws must be updated to reflect organizational changes in practice and policy. Our bylaws also need to be reviewed for alignment with those of WSSRA. Units within WSSRA are independent, though affiliated, bodies. Therefore, our bylaws provide direction and protection as we do TCSRA business. Circumstances dictated by COVID-19 shaped many of our activities over the last three years. Some of those changes were so successful that they are now incorporated into the proposed amendments. Other changes clarify intent, correct language usage, remove redundancies, and, in a couple of instances, add articles on necessary topics such as non-discrimination and whistle-blower protections.

Here are examples of some proposed changes and the reasons for them. Our unit treasurer has not collected dues for years, although this was a past practice and remained in the bylaws. WSSRA receives our dues. The amendments make this correction. The amendments allow for electronic meetings, e.g., Zoom, and remote voting using email or USPS. Remote voting increases opportunities for all Unit 28 members to participate, rather than only attendees at a meeting. One over-arching concern has been to provide flexibility in an effort to accommodate future needs. For example, we could not fill the position of president-elect or vice president this past year. The amendments allow flexibility in an effort to fill some positions.

Voting on the proposed amended bylaws will occur in May; instructions for remote voting by email or USPS will be in the May *Bits & Pieces*. The deadline for voting is May 14. The proposed amendments to the current bylaws are posted on the TCSRA website. Paper copies will be mailed to members who request them.

Sue Shannon, TCSRA President

IT'S A PARADE OF PROJECTS!

TCSRA received 39 elementary and 16 middle/high school applications for mini-grants, several from TCSRA members. The applications described a variety of worthwhile projects, covering a wide array of areas. This year, we were able to fund all requests, for a total of \$13,061.

One applicant requested sports equipment for a program where classroom teachers teach skills such as problem solving, cooperation, and communication. Creating "Calming Corners" in Olympia classroom spaces was a grant winner. Students have real-time access to a space and materials to practice emotional skills and reduce class disruptions. After-school enrichment was a popular request. Art club for grades 3-5 in Tenino serves 15-30 different students per session. The Sphero Robot is an educational robot requested in Tumwater and Rochester for science enrichment. It is a great entry into robotics for beginners. Students learn coding and computational thinking. Many classes asked for books and headphones, and one class is building a school garden.

At our luncheon on Friday, April 21, we'll look at photos and hear from a few of these teachers. It's fun to learn what is happening in our schools. Bring a friend, and be sure to make reservations for your entire party. [See page 2 for reservation information]

Nancy Zabel & Patti Colombo, Elementary Mini-Grant Co-chairs; Karen Keller, Secondary Mini-Grant Chair

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Friday, April 21, 2023—12 noon

The Ember's Restaurant

Indian Summer Golf and Country Club

Cobb Salad, field greens, sweet red onion,
blue cheese, black olives, bacon, tomato,
avocado, chicken, blue cheese dressing

OR

Italian Vegetarian salad

Dessert: Chef's Choice

(\$20 includes tax and gratuity)

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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, April 14.**

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

2023–2024 TCSRA BUDGET

The TCSRA Executive Board has approved a 2023-2024 budget to be submitted to the membership. Income projections for the new year are \$72,731.00, an increase over the projection of \$63,690 for this year. The main reason for the increase is that our carryover has grown due to the decrease in activities during the years of COVID. The projected expenses for next year are \$72,731.00 with \$18,000 expected to be carried over to the 2024-2025 budget.

Mini-grant levels have returned to the pre-pandemic level with a 10% increase. Elementary mini-grant award fund will be \$7,700 and the secondary mini-grant award fund will be \$4,950.

TCSRA will continue to award three scholarships, including a donation to the Gene Forrester scholarship for seniors who plan to major in Agricultural Education at WSU.

You can review the complete budget plan on our website at www.wssra-units.org/thurstoncounty/. A copy of the budget will also be available at the luncheon on April 21st at Indian Summer. Voting by email or USPS occurs in May.

Please direct any questions that you have about the budget to **Patty Gee** at grandmotherpatty@aol.com.



In Memoriam

We note the passing of **Marjorie Pedersen** and **Joyce Walburn**, and we offer sincere condolences to their families and friends.

LEGISLATIVE REPORT

The Washington State Legislature is scheduled to adjourn on April 23—Legislative Day 105. As is typical, the legislature is poised to provide some, but not all, of what retirees have requested.



Plan 1 retirees are well-positioned for a COLA this summer, but legislators are insistent on capping it at 3%. Two technical bills to improve Plans 2 and 3 look like they'll pass. Other legislation to improve hearing aid coverage, prescription drug coverage, and dental benefits is currently up in the air.

All signs point to the legislature passing a 3% Plan 1 COLA capped at \$110 per month. WSSRA is advocating for extending this to provide a multi-year COLA to provide more certainty for retirees.

The House of Representatives passed House Bills 1008 and 1056. House Bill 1008 improves TRS/PERS/SERS 2 retiree health insurance options to match what is available for TRS/PERS/SERS 3 members. House Bill 1056 changes retirement rules so that all retirees may work a minimum of 867 hours per year in retirement without losing pension benefits. WSSRA is now advocating for Senate passage of both bills.

WSSRA is also supporting retiree dental legislation this year. Some of our members are experiencing sticker shock at out-of-network billing for hygienist services provided in long-term-care and memory care facilities. WSSRA is supporting efforts to expand dental services to accommodate our members living in facilities. It remains to be seen if this legislation will pass.

This is the last push. Thanks to everyone who contacted their legislators this session. If you're willing, it is not too late for one final round of lobbying on the issues you care about.

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. Last year we gave \$28,000 to legislative candidates. Now we need to begin rebuilding for the next election. The PAC needs contributions from TCSRA and WSSRA members. Go to www.wssr-pac.org or to page 5 in the recent issue of *The Journal* for information. You can send a check or donate online.

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:

Heidi Center
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 2023–2024:

President: Sue Shannon
President-elect: Patty Gee
Secretary: Lorene Rang
Fiscal Treasurer: Will Gentz
Membership Treasurer: ZiNita Carrell
Nominating Committee: OPEN

Gail Feagins, Patty Gee, and Sue Ballard
Nominating Committee

NOMINEE BIOGRAPHIES

Lorene Rang, Secretary: Lorene served as the TCSRA Membership chair for two years and was instrumental in recruiting over 100 new members for our organization. Lorene graduated from Fife High School and then earned her AA at Tacoma Community College and her bachelor's degree from Central Washington State University. Upon graduating, Lorene taught junior high, middle school, and high school health and physical education in Tacoma Public Schools for 20 years. She also coached volleyball and softball at all the levels. Lorene then earned her master's degree in Educational Leadership from the University of Puget Sound and began her 15-year administrative career as Yelm Middle School principal. Upon retirement from Yelm, Lorene worked for Pacific Lutheran University as an instructor in Educational Leadership, overseeing school administrators as they earned their Administrative Pro-Certification. Lorene loves to travel in their motorhome, aspiring to visit all of our National Parks. She enjoys spending time with her family, including her four grandchildren. She loves the outdoors—walking, hiking, golfing, and tennis.

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

OFFICER ELECTION PROCEDURE

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 or mail a written response to TCSRA, PO Box 3051, Lacey, WA 98509-3051.

The deadline for voting is April 14.



HEALTH CARE UPDATES ~ 2023

GOOD NEWS—under Medicare Part D:

*The price of insulin will be capped at \$35 a month.

*Vaccines approved for adults by ACIP (Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices) will be free. If you've been putting off getting the shingles shots because of the expense, they are now free. This also applies to any COVID shots or future boosters.

*In 2024 there will be no out of pocket costs when one hits the catastrophic phase of the drug benefit.

INFLATION REDUCTION ACT: In 2023 drug-producing companies will be penalized if they raise their prices more than the rate of inflation. The penalty will be the amount the price was raised above inflation multiplied by what Medicare paid for the sales. They will have 30 days to pay Medicare. If not, they will pay a penalty of 125% of the rebate they owe.

BAD NEWS

*After May 11 when the public health emergency ends, OTC COVID tests will no longer be covered. Those who have private insurance or Medicare Advantage Plans may still have some coverage. Free tests may also still be found at free clinics, community health centers, public health departments, libraries, or other local organizations, or by mail through the USPS while supplies last.

*Medicare beneficiaries may have a cost share for COVID treatments such as Paxlovid. Any treatments the federal government purchased will still be free depending on the availability of the supply. Lab and antigen tests ordered by a physician or other health care provider will still be covered.


MORE NEWS: Washingtonians will still be able to order free COVID-19 home test kits from the Say Yes COVID Test website. However, starting March 13 eligibility is based on Washington communities that are most in need. Check www.sayyescovidhometest.org to see if you are eligible for 5 test kits delivered monthly to your home.

Gail Feagins, Health Committee Co-Chair

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

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ADDRESS SERVICE REQUESTED



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
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*.

2023–2024 DIRECTORY

One of the important ways that members of our group stay in touch with each other is through our directory. We will working on our 2023–2024 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 2022–2023 directory. If you'd like us to make a change, let us know by contacting us at sed6501@outlook.com or at 360-438-5351.

Sharon Dennis & Pat Slosson, Directory Co-editors

COMMUNITY SERVICE NEWS

I was recently inspired by a sign in a local store that reads:

"Be the reason that someone smiles today."

It doesn't take much effort to pay someone a thoughtful compliment, to let someone with only a couple of items go ahead of you in the grocery line, to open a door for someone, to offer to help carry a heavy load, or to write and mail an actual thank you or thinking-of-you note. But the easiest thing of all is simply to smile when you encounter others.

Smiles are contagious.

Sally Jones, Community Service Chair

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Information for the May 2023 issue is due by April 12.

Please email copy to editortcsra@gmail.com