



# Bits & Pieces

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

September 2023

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

## PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE



Welcome to a new season of TCSRA activity. With the start of the school year, we kick into gear with our meeting schedule and service projects.

My sincere thank you to 2023-2024 TCSRA officers and committee chairs. We have a full roster, a goal we have not met for a few years. I am indeed grateful.

I want to continue the focus I identified last fall: developing and sustaining relationships. I believe strong, positive relationships are foundational to our success as an organization. We saw the fruits of those relationships last year as we successfully supported legislation to benefit retirees, provided scholarships for high school graduates, completed community service projects to assist fellow citizens, and conducted the official business of Unit 28. We continue to strengthen the frameworks for our unit's work. Last spring we updated our bylaws. This summer we revised our job descriptions to meet our current practices.

In August I convened the board to take on challenges issued by the WSSRA convention keynoter. Amina Makhdoom Lynch provided ideas and guidance for engaging membership and planning for leadership succession. We endeavored to think of the "customer's experience" in relation to current and potential members. We looked at ways to develop a "bench" of potential leaders whom we may seek and nurture to fill our future officer ranks. These will continue to be areas of emphasis.

Please join us at our picnic in September. We look forward to seeing you there.

*Sue Shannon, TCSRA President*

## WELCOME TO A NEW YEAR! WE CAN'T WAIT TO SEE YOU!

It's picnic time, a time to catch up with old acquaintances, meet new members, and hear all the news of our unit!

We will once again meet at the Woodland Creek Community Park, adjacent to the Lacey Community Center. We will be located in "Shelter B."

Luncheons in October through May will be at the Embers Restaurant at Indian Summer Golf and Country Club.

We have an exciting slate of programs for the year. **For the list, check out page 9 in the new 2023-2024 TCSRA Directory.**

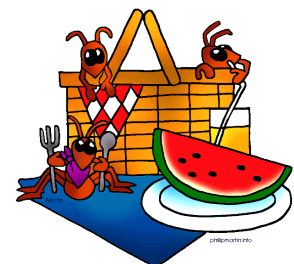
We look forward to seeing you soon! Bring a friend and be sure to make a reservation! [See page 2.]

*Hospitality Committee*

**Friday, September 15, 2023**  
**It's a picnic!**

**Woodland Creek  
Community Park,  
Shelter B  
Luncheon at Noon**

**Boxed lunches,  
catered by Bayview  
\$20 per person**



## TCSRA 2023-2024 Directory

With this newsletter, you received our annual directory. Please read the article on page 3, which gives details about the small cover pictures.

## 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, September 8.**

If you **do not receive an email**, or if you **need to cancel or add to your** reservation, email me at [dazicar88@gmail.com](mailto: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're back! Hopefully you've had an enjoyable summer and are watching the kids go back to school from the comfort of your front porch.

The legislature is getting back to work as well. Legislators are still in their home districts, but the professional staff is in Olympia preparing for the 2024 Legislative Session. It's been slower over the summer; however, there were some important developments.

The Select Committee on Pension Policy (SCPP) met in June and July. That body seems poised to recommend a 3% Plan 1 COLA for 2024. The Committee is also scheduling time to study implementation of a permanent, automatic COLA for Plan 1. It's well past time, but we applaud their decision to tackle the matter. Further action is expected at the October, November, and December SCPP meetings.

The Washington State Healthcare Authority—the agency managing state retiree insurance—has put out a plea to Washington's congressional delegation regarding subsidies for retiree insurance. The way the Social Security Act is written, Medicare Advantage plans are eligible for more subsidies than traditional Medicare plans. The state has asked Congress to equalize those benefits. WSSRA fully supports this effort to drive down premium costs. If you have the opportunity, please raise this issue with your Member of Congress.

As always, thanks for your efforts. Our lobbying efforts are valueless without you.

*Peter Diedrick, WSSRA Legislative Coordinator*

## ISSUES FACING PUBLIC SCHOOLS

Every year there are issues that teachers, education leaders, and students face. This year will be especially challenging. Educators will be tasked with teaching content, attempting to get students caught up after COVID, feeding them when they come to school hungry because of living in poverty or in a homeless situation, and teaching them what to do if an active shooter enters the school. Here are other issues educators will be facing:

- **Politics in education**: States like Arkansas, Oklahoma, and Florida have governors or secretaries of education who want to ban conversations around equity, race, and social-emotional learning. Groups of parents want to decide what can and can't be taught and which books to remove from school libraries.
- **Substitute teachers**: In many states it is no longer required that subs have even an Associate Degree. Some states have lowered the requirement to a high school diploma, and there is still a shortage.
- **Teacher shortage**: The United States, and even countries around the world, are struggling with a shortage of teachers. How are colleges and universities recruiting prospective teachers, and how do we hold on to the ones we have?
- **Poverty**: According to the National Center for Children Living in Poverty, there are 11 million children in this situation. Many schools around the country are responsible for feeding students breakfast and lunch in order to ensure that they stay in school and are ready to learn.
- **The flu and other sickness**: According to the CDC, millions of children each year get the flu. RSV and COVID will also make the rounds. Considering the COVID learning-loss issue, children don't need to be missing more school.
- **Tutoring programs**: Due to learning loss from COVID and other transmittable illnesses in public schools, tutoring as a means of catching kids up is going to be a **big** topic in 2023-2024.

And this is where we come in! If you are a retired educator and find yourself with time on your hands and that old desire to work with kids, why not consider volunteering, or even substituting, in your local school district. **YOU ARE NEEDED!**

*ZiNita Carrell, Education Co-chair*

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:



**Brenda Chrisman**  
North Thurston Public Schools

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

## ELEMENTARY & SECONDARY MINI-GRANTS



**It’s Mini-Grant time!** If you know teachers or school employees in Thurston County with great ideas for helping students become more successful (and who doesn’t?), remind them to apply for a mini-grant. Applications can be completed on our website beginning **October 2, 2023**. Applications will close on **October 27, 2023**

Applicants are asked to describe their project, detail the costs, and summarize how the project promotes student learning while meeting district goals.

Apply for elementary, middle, and high schools grants at [www.wssra-units.org/thurstoncounty/](http://www.wssra-units.org/thurstoncounty/)

**Nancy Zabel & Patti Colombo, Elementary Co-chairs**  
**Karen Keller, Secondary Chair**

## RECOGNIZE ANYONE?

While your new directory is handy, take another look at the three small photos on the cover. For the first time, all of those feature TCSRA members.

The group on the left are TCSRA volunteers at the Thurston County Food Bank’s *Big Thanksgiving Box Build* in November 2019. Clockwise from the foreground are **Sally Jones**, Community Service chair, **Cathy Healy**, and **Ann Chenhall**.

The middle photo is of **Kevan Hagen**, when he was librarian at Bush Middle School in Tumwater. A member since 2018 and now retired, Kevan was a mini-grant recipient in 2017, 2019, 2020, and 2021.

If you’ve attended TCSRA luncheons for many years, you’ll probably remember **Margaret Bland**, who was “bland in name only,” as she would say. Margaret received the Stan McNaughton Outreach Award at the WSSRA convention in 2011. She passed away in 2012.

**Sharon Dennis, Directory Co-Editor**

## RSV AND THE NEW VACCINE

RSV or respiratory syncytial virus causes infection of the lungs and respiratory tract. Most children will get it by the time they are two years old. However, some adults 65 and over can have more severe symptoms. Many were sickened by RSV in the winter of 2022.

At high risk are those adults who have chronic lung or heart disease, or weakened immune systems. It can make those with asthma, COPD, or congestive heart failure worse.

Symptoms include congested or runny nose, dry cough, low grade fever, sore throat, sneezing, and headaches. Severe symptoms are fever, severe cough, wheezing, rapid or difficult breathing, and bluish skin color. Medical attention should be sought if there is a high fever, difficulty breathing, or blue color to the skin, especially on the lips or the nail beds.

To avoid infection, take the same precautions you would use for other respiratory tract infections: wash hands often, keep hands away from face, avoid close contact with sick people, cover coughs and sneezes, clean and disinfect surfaces, and stay home when sick.



There is a new approved vaccine called ABRYSVO to help prevent infection of RSV in people 60 and over. It may be available to you at no cost under the Inflation Reduction Act. Some side effects of the vaccine for those 60 and over have been fatigue, headaches, muscle pain, and pain at the injection site. Consult with your doctor to see if this vaccine is right for you.

**Gail Feagins,**  
**Member & Health Services Committee Co-chair**

## In Memoriam

We note the passing of **Leslie Fosmire, Judith Porter, Mary Gallagher, Michael Rawls, Carolyn Fisher, Anne Ferguson, and Jane Harbison**. We offer sincere condolences to their families and friends.

Please contribute to the WSSR-PAC today!

Online at: [www.wssr-pac.org](http://www.wssr-pac.org)

Mail check to: WSSR-PAC Treasurer  
c/o Lora Brabant  
125 West 11th Street  
Port Angeles, WA 98362

Make check  
payable to:  
WSSR-PAC

## COMMUNITY SERVICE



Community Service is one of the defining goals of TCSRA. It keeps us involved and shows that retired members can contribute valuable service to the community in new and different ways.

As an organization we can choose what to support from a long list of identified local needs.

To that end, TCSRA traditionally supports the Thurston County Food Bank and the Salvation Army with cash donations in November and December.

We have also collected small toiletries for the YWCA throughout the years, but their program has grown into a much larger distribution hub called The Other Bank, housed at the food bank. Full-sized toiletries, household paper and cleaning products, and baby items are now given out on a regular schedule. We will continue to collect the small toiletries at every luncheon, but members may also bring additional larger items.

For the past couple of years we have assembled "mom bags" with small gifts for the moms of the families which are supported by the Salvation Army at holiday time. I plan to coordinate this project again for 2023. It is not too early to begin collecting items for the mom bags.

As chair of the Community Service committee, I am looking for members who have ideas for future service projects and who would be willing to help coordinate them. I especially hope to find projects that involve doing service as opposed to just collecting items and/or cash for different organizations.

**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 October 2023 issue is due by September 13.**

Please email copy to [pslosson1@comcast.net](mailto:pslosson1@comcast.net).

## WSSRA CONVENTION HIGHLIGHTS

Unit 28 delegates experienced three busy days at the WSSRA Convention in Pasco. Our unit's own **Ron Crawford** assumed the position of state President. Convention speakers included Dana Miles, Washington State Teacher of the Year from the Vancouver School of the Deaf; Amina Makhdoom-Lynch, a well-known presenter on leadership and membership; and Mike Pellicciotti, State Treasurer. Doing the business of the organization included approving bylaw changes and the budget, as well as small work sessions. WSSR Foundation baskets are always a big hit, and our delegates brought many home. Next year's convention is scheduled for June 3-5 in Wenatchee.



**State Treasurer Mike Pellicciotti (L) and Dana Miles (R) present at the convention.**



**Proceeds from the WSSR Baskets and the silent auction (shown here) go toward scholarships. Scholarship recipients' pictures are displayed on the wall.**

**Baskets shown below were won by Unit 28 members:**

**Row 1: ZiNita Carrell, Gail Feagins, and Pat McLachlan**

**Row 2: Karen Keller and Will Gentz**

