



Bits & Pieces

www.wssra-units.org/thurstoncounty/ December 2023

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

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

The holidays are especially joyous when shared with children. I spent a few days in early November basking in the company of two in Kansas City, my great niece and nephew, ages 13 and 12, respectively. Folks who know me well know I have no grandchildren, so I have to borrow from other people, most often my sister. Kamea and Kai are bright, talented, affectionate youngsters on whom "Auntie Sue" loves to dote.

As school employees, students—children and young people—are the reason for our existence. TCSRA members have devoted their lives to the young through the various roles in which they serve or have served: teachers, counselors, administrators, office professionals, bus drivers, cooks, and all of the myriad other special positions they have held.

TCSRA continues to touch many lives. Among our service projects, we donate to the Thurston County Food Bank and to the Salvation Army. These donations help support children and families in our area. At our November luncheon, our generous members donated \$1,425 for the Food Bank!

Mini-grants for students provide more direct support to students. We are pleased to award 59 projects this fall representing all eight school districts in Thurston county to total \$12,657. These projects will touch dozens of students, perhaps hundreds.

During the holidays, in addition to remembering current and past youth, perhaps members can reach out and make new connections through volunteer efforts or gifts that we may be able to provide.

And, of course, let's remember one another at this festive time of year. Developing and maintaining relationships remain a priority for me.

Happy holidays and warm regards to all TCSRA folks!

Sue Shannon, TCSRA President

JOIN US FOR HOLIDAY MUSIC



TCSRA is honored and excited to welcome the NTHS Jazz Choir, directed by Caitlin Van Zee to entertain us at our December luncheon.

The Jazz Choir is the top auditioned choir at North Thurston High School. These students, sophomore through seniors, are hard working, fun, dedicated, and busy young people. They are not only involved in choir but also in numerous activities, volunteer opportunities for the community, and jobs. They all share the goal of spreading the love of music to others!

Caitlin Van Zee has been the choir director at North Thurston High School for eleven years. Caitlin grew up in Spokane and attended Eastern Washington University receiving her BA in Music Education. She then completed her Masters in Curriculum and Instruction at Washington Governors University. Caitlin loves teaching music and is the Vocal Arts Coordinator for the district.

In her free time she enjoys playing billiards, reading, and being with her husband and five-year-old son.

Fun Fact: Caitlin received a WSSR Foundation Scholarship as a high school senior.

Bobbie Andreas, Hospitality

[Bring a friend, and be sure to make reservations for your entire party. See page 2 for reservation info.]

Friday, December 15, 2023—12 noon

**The Ember's Restaurant
Indian Summer Golf and Country Club**

Menu: Roasted Pork with a Mushroom Herb Au Jus,
served with oven-roasted potatoes and vegetables

OR

Pesto Tortellini (V)
Baked cheese tortellini with pesto cream sauce
served with fresh vegetables

Dessert: Chef's Choice

(\$20 includes tax and gratuity)

MINI-GRANT RECIPIENTS NAMED

In 1997 TCSRA began awarding mini-grants to school employees in order to supplement and enrich the educational environment. This year TCSRA received 48 elementary and 31 middle school/high school applications, including 17 from TCSRA members. The applications described a variety of worthwhile projects, covering a wide array of academic areas. We were able to fund 59 requests, totaling \$12,657. Congratulations to the recipients! Best wishes for a successful year ahead.

Tumwater School District:

| | |
|------------------------|--------------------------|
| Karlie Pasion | Michael T. Simmons Elem. |
| Carisa Shaw | Black Lake Elementary |
| *Sarah Haseman | Black Lake Elementary |
| Gabi Jones | Black Lake Elementary |
| Katie Frazier | Black Lake Elementary |
| Kathy Spieles-Flaatrud | Bush Middle School |
| Laurie Harris | Tumwater Middle School |
| Emma-Kate Schaake | Tumwater High School |
| *David Heywood | Black Hills High School |

Olympia School District:

| | |
|-------------------------|--------------------------|
| *Catherine Annie Bailey | Margaret McKenny Elem. |
| *Keary McCowan | Madison Elementary |
| *Patti Francis | Margaret McKenny Elem. |
| Angi Swan | Hansen Elementary |
| *Rebecca Rutzick | Hansen Elementary |
| *Molly Sjoboen | Garfield Elementary |
| *Marti Buck | Transitions Academy |
| Bryan Keister | Capital High School |
| RoAnn Gutierrez | Washington Middle School |

Griffin School District:

| | |
|------------------------|-----------------------|
| Frank Joseph Ehresmann | Griffin Elementary |
| Johanna Dowler | Griffin Elementary |
| Wendy Potkonjak | Griffin Elementary |
| Jenna Anderson | Griffin Elementary |
| Suzanne Stottlemyre | Griffin Middle School |

Yelm Community Schools:

| | |
|--------------------------------|-------------------------|
| *Linda Crawford | Fort Stevens Elementary |
| *Susan Buchmiller | McKenna Elementary |
| *Cyndy Freshour-Johnson & Team | Prairie Elementary |
| Mylisha Lanegan | McKenna Elementary |
| Jo Foley Robles | McKenna Elementary |
| Hillary Hull | Yelm High School |

Rochester School District:

| | |
|-----------------------------|------------------------------|
| Robert Fry | Grand Mound Elementary |
| Kay Marquez, Karey Richards | Rochester Primary School |
| Christina Bailey | Grand Mound Elementary |
| Echo Quarnstrom | Grand Mound Elementary |
| Shaundi Robarge | Grand Mound Elementary |
| *Velynda Renee Hubbard | Rochester Middle School |
| *Susan Holmes | Rochester Middle School |
| *Amy Norton | Rochester Middle School |
| *Carrie Black | Rochester Middle/High School |
| Amber Parsons | Rochester Middle School |

Tenino School District:

| | |
|----------------|---------------------|
| Colleen Taylor | Parkside Elementary |
| Brooke Hart | Parkside Elementary |
| Noreen Ryckman | Parkside Elementary |
| Andrew Bowerly | Tenino High School |
| Cecelia Meade | Tenino High School |

North Thurston Public Schools:

| | |
|---------------------------|------------------------|
| *Carly Stigall | South Bay Elementary |
| Krista Mikealson | Seven Oaks Elementary |
| Denise A. Whitesel Mallek | Seven Oaks Elementary |
| Katie Tingle | Ignite Family Academy |
| Ami Smith | Horizons Elementary |
| *Mathew Landers | Pleasant Glade Elem. |
| Anndria Cook | Woodland Elementary |
| Carol Richardson & Team | Evergreen Forest Elem. |
| Dena Green | Salish Middle School |
| Mindy Atkinson | V.O.I.C.E. Program |
| Jimi Sharp | V.O.I.C.E. Program |
| Veronica French | Salish Middle School |
| Scott Gagnon | Salish Middle School |

Rainier School District:

| | |
|---------------|--------------------|
| Kate Gurnsey | Rainier Elementary |
| Shanna Martin | Rainier Elementary |

*** TCSRA member**

Elementary Mini-Grant team: Nancy Zabel, Patti Colombo, Sue Koch, Laurie Jones, Laurie Gieblehaus

Secondary Mini-Grant team: Karen Keller, Duane Olson, Will Gentz, Linda O'Shaughnessy, Diane Kildow

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COMMUNITY SERVICE

Though some who live in neighborhoods may regard October as the start of the giving season (i.e., when “how many kids came to your house?” becomes a common thread of conversation), December marks the true crux of our collective charitable nature. We at TCSRA gave to the food bank in November, but December is when we seem to feel most acutely the need to give. The airwaves, retailers, holiday decorations, bazaars, concerts, parties, and multiple ubiquitous Santas conspire to remind us that this is the season of giving, even though kindness and charity are not necessarily the impetus for all of this activity. However, many do respond in a true spirit of generosity. In December at TCSRA we will collect monetary donations for the Salvation Army.

And for the past two years we have responded by making “mom bags” for the moms of the Salvation Army Adopt-a-Family program, believing that moms often tend to deny themselves in an effort to give their kids the best possible holiday. In December 2022, we gave 50 “mom bags” jointly with a group from the Olympia Christian Reformed Church, organized by TCSRA member



Terry Lowe. In order to continue this project for 2023, your donations of small gift items or cash to purchase some are needed by December 10, which is, alas, before the December luncheon. So there will be collection boxes at the WSSRA office, at Gull Harbor Lutheran Church—open in the mornings, Monday through Friday—and at my house. In addition, I will gladly pick up donations from your homes beginning December 1. Contact me at: 360-866-8039 or 360-480-0972 (call or text) or by email at sljonz@gmail.com.

Should you enjoy the creativity of filling an entire bag (or bags) on your own, I will pick them up or you may deliver them directly to the Salvation Army on 4th Avenue in Olympia by December 13.



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.

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Please email copy to pslosson1@comcast.net