

# Bits & Pieces

[www.wssra-units.org/thurstoncounty/](http://www.wssra-units.org/thurstoncounty/) September 2024

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

## PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE



A new school year is upon us and, even though I am retired, I feel my energy increasing as students return to the classroom. Let me introduce myself. I am **Patty Gee**, newly elected president for our Thurston County School Retirees' Association. I am a retired Speech and Language Pathologist, and I have worked in all schools within the North Thurston Public Schools during my 22 years of service. An interesting fact is that my retired teacher husband, Jerome, and I were called to be missionaries together in Japan from 1995 to 1998, a life changing experience.

As I step into the president position, I do so with a heavy heart. Our immediate past president, **Sue Shannon**, passed away suddenly last May. Many folks from Timberline High School, from the North Thurston school district, from the North Thurston Education Foundation, from ESD 113, and from our Washington State School Retirees' Association, including TSCRA, continue to grieve, missing her bright smile and compassionate heart.

As TCSRA begins 2024-2025, 58 individuals within 20 committees continue to volunteer for our unit. As the new president, I am encouraged by this group of retirees, who volunteer to help each other in the work, and do what they say they are going to do. And, we like each other.

There is always room to add members to any of our committees, and we continue to recruit. Interested? Let me know!

A change in WSSRA leadership occurred on July 1, 2024. **Peter Diedrick** assumed the position of Executive Director of WSSRA, following Alan Burke's retirement. Replacing Peter in the position of Legislative Coordinator is **Emmitt Mills** who has lobbying experience with another non-profit.

AARP Tip of the Month: Write your passwords down on paper. The old-fashioned approach works best.

**Patty Gee, TCSRA President**

## WELCOME TO A NEW YEAR! LET'S CATCH UP AT A PICNIC!

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

For a third year, we will 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 2024-2025 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 20, 2024**  
**It's a picnic!**

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

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



## ELEMENTARY & SECONDARY MINI-GRANTS

If you know school employees in Thurston County with great ideas for helping students become more successful, remind them to apply for mini-grants. Applications can be completed on our website, [www.wssra-units.org/thurstoncounty/](http://www.wssra-units.org/thurstoncounty/), beginning October 1. Applications close October 31.

## 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 13.**

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, September 13 at (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

As the 2024 interim progresses, some of WSSRA's top priorities are gaining traction. However, much is still uncertain about the 2025 Legislative Session.

On November 5, elections will be held for all statewide offices and three quarters of the state legislature. The outcomes of these elections will determine the tone of the 2025 session.

Voters will also decide the fate of two initiatives that would have a major impact on state revenue. If either Initiative 2109 (repealing the Capital Gains Excise Tax) or Initiative 2117 (repealing the Climate Commitment Act) passes, the state will lose billions of dollars of revenue per biennium.

Regardless, revenue projections released in late June anticipate a budget shortfall. While there is plenty of time for projections to improve, low revenue will limit opportunities to pass proposals that require new spending. WSSRA is currently working with the Select Committee on Pension Policy (SCPP) to develop a proposal to restore an ongoing cost-of-living adjustment (COLA) for TRS 1 and PERS 1 retirees. There are two main questions to be answered:

What will the benefit increase look like?

How will the benefit increase be funded?

WSSRA and other public sector retiree groups are jointly supporting a proposal that would give Plan 1 members an annual benefit increase identical to the benefit increase received by members of Plans 2 and 3: a CPI based COLA of up to 3% with a banking provision. In light of a possible revenue shortfall, the coalition is supporting a funding structure that would refinance the costs of previous one-time COLAs and pay for past and future COLAs at a fixed rate over a 15-year period. While this option increases overall long-term costs, it reduces short-term costs, potentially making it more appealing to budget writers. The

## SUBBING: MORE QUESTIONS THAN ANSWERS

If you sub in any position and you work more than 630 hours for a single school district, your health insurance could be negatively affected. On June 1, 2024, the Health Care Authority of Washington State changed the rules for enforcement of health care rules for retired employees.



### What you need to know now:

- A. If you retired in Washington and you are not an administrator, you may work up to **1,040 hours** and not lose any retirement benefits. If you are an administrator, the limit is 867 hours. 1,040 hours is approximately 138 days. There is nothing new about this, but it is important to keep those numbers in mind as you plan your subbing schedule. If you didn't retire in Washington, there is no limit to the number of hours you may work. However, Provision B (below) applies to anyone who works in the public school system
- B. If you work **more than 630 hours** for one employer (approximately 84 days if you are a teacher), your health care coverage will be switched from PEBB (Public Employees Benefits Board) to SEBB (School Employees Benefits Board). In the past, substitutes could apply for a waiver of SEBB benefits, but that waiver option ended on June 1, 2024.
- C. If you work **less than 630 hours** for one employer and fewer than 630 hours for a second employer (or multiple employers), your health care coverage will not be transferred.

I have been seeking to understand how the rules will affect employees, but as of our deadline there remain unanswered questions.

- When an employee crosses the 630-hour threshold will the transfer from PEBB to SEBB be seamless and automatic, or will the employee be required to submit new paperwork?
- Will there be gaps in coverage during the transfer? (*In my case, we were without health care coverage for 11 days.*)
- What will happen in the following year when the employee continues to sub, but nobody knows if they will cross the 630-hour requirement? Will the employee be automatically transferred back to PEBB, or will more paperwork be required? Will there be gaps in coverage?
- How will this rule affect long-term substitutes who frequently work more than 89 days?

Best advice for now: 1) If you work for more than one district, set up your own spreadsheets to track your hours. You will need to know the hours you worked for each district **AND** the total hours worked for all districts. 2) Check with your employer to make sure

(Continued on page 4. See "Education.")

Continued on page 3. See "Legislative Report."

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:



**Pamela Solarz**  
**North Thurston Public Schools**



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

## ABOUT OUR NEW DIRECTORY

You may have been surprised by the major change in our new directory, particularly if you missed our announcement in the *April Bits & Pieces*. Breaking with a long tradition, we have listed only the names of members in the section beginning on page 13, instead of including addresses, telephone numbers, or email addresses. For your convenience, however, we have included contact information for officers and committee members. A few members have asked not to be listed in our directory at all, and we have continued to honor those requests.

After considerable deliberation, the TCSRA Executive Board voted in favor of making this change for the safety and privacy of our members, which seems particularly important for those who are still working in schools. As a bonus, printing and mailing costs will be significantly lower, amounting to a savings of more than \$1,000.

Also, did you notice the three small photos on the cover? About one third of TCSRA members are still working in public schools, and although these are not photos of actual members, they represent the range of those employees who belong to our organization. Those members include teachers, of course, but also administrators (superintendents, principals, OSPI employees, etc.), professional support staff (nurses, psychologists, physical therapists, speech therapists, etc.), and those in classified positions (para-educators, secretaries, clerks, custodians, cooks, bus drivers, etc.).

We hope you’ll take some time to get acquainted with the information in this new directory.

*Sharon Dennis & Pat Slosson, Directory Co-editors*

## LEGISLATIVE REPORT (Continued from page 2.)

SCPP could decide the shape of the ongoing COLA policy at their meeting on September 17. WSSRA members will be asked to sign in online in support of the agenda item.

WSSRA works closely with elected officials to position our priorities for 2025. Success depends on members across the state engaging their legislators to discuss our priorities.

*Emmitt Wills, WSSRA Legislative Coordinator*

## FALL VACCINES

It’s fall and not too early to start thinking about vaccines to protect you during the winter season. Vaccines have greatly reduced diseases that used to routinely kill people and can prevent you from becoming seriously ill or ending up in the hospital. It is important to stay up to date on vaccines as in some cases immunity wanes.

**Routine vaccines are:**

### COVID 19

This fall there will be a new vaccine which will target the FLiRT variants that are currently in circulation. Recommended for everyone 6 months and up.

### FLU

Recommended for everyone 6 months and up. If you’re 65 and up, you should ask for the high-dose vaccine. It’s ok to get the COVID and flu vaccines at the same time.

**TDAP** (tetanus, diphtheria, pertussis)

Needs to be updated every 10 years.

**Other vaccines:**

### RSV

Recommended for those 75 and up or adults 60-74 who are at an increased risk of contacting RSV. This is not an annual vaccine, so if you have already had it, it is not necessary to get another one at this time. Should be spaced apart from the COVID vaccine.

### SHINGLES

Recommended for those 50 and up. Consists of two shots spaced two to six months apart.

### PNEUMONIA

PV15 or PCV20 recommended for adults 65+ who’ve never received a pneumonia vaccine. If PCV15 is used, you should follow with a dose of PPSV23 one year later. Those who’ve received an earlier PCV 7 or 13 should talk to their vaccine provider to find out the options to finish up the vaccine series. Those 65+ can get PCV20 if they already had PCV13 (but not PCV15 or 20) at any age, and PPSV23 after 65.

You should consult your health care provider for any questions you might have about vaccines.

**SPECIAL NOTE:** A PEBB webinar is scheduled for September 19 at 2 PM. Go to [wssra.org](http://wssra.org) and click on webinars to register. The program will be recorded for future viewing. Open enrollment for PEBB medical plans will happen earlier this year, starting October 28 and ending November 25.

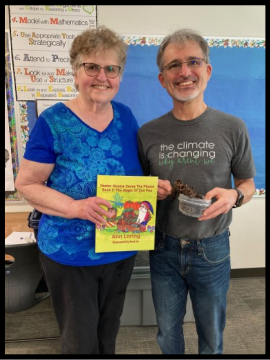
*Gail Feagins,  
Member & Health Services Committee Co-chair*

## In Memoriam

We note the passing of **Sue Shannon, Lois Sheppard-Gerig, Betty Lou Berry, Lee Johnson, Sharon Moorehead, and Phil Lonborg**. We offer sincere condolences to their families and friends.

## MEMBERS TEACHING ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY

**Ann Loring**, a long time North Thurston Kindergarten



teacher, now retired, and her paraprofessional **Boni Jo** have teamed up to write their second children's book about environmental issues. Ann Loring is the author and Boni Jo does the illustrations. This second book is about composting and is called *Nester Gnome Saves the Planet, Book 2: The Magic of Zoo Poo*. Her first book in the Nester Gnome series was about recycling. Both *Nester Gnome Saves*

*the Planet* books are available on Amazon. Ann and Boni Jo did a book reading in the spring at Pleasant Glade Elementary.

Another TCSRA member, **Matt Landers** of Pleasant Glade, received a mini grant for his students' worm beds, another application of composting. Many of his fifth graders are in the Environmental Club he formed. Matt's students collect food waste from the cafeteria to feed the worms. At Pleasant Glade Elementary nearly 100% of the food waste is diverted to worm bins for on-site and off-site composting.

These teachers, one retired and one active, continue to teach students about problem solving and how they can benefit our planet.

*Ann Chenhall, TCSRA Legislative Chair*

## EDUCATION (Continued from page 2.)

that you are properly coded with Department of Retirement Systems (DRS). If you are not an administrator and you are eligible to work up to 1,040 hours, the "type code" number is 93. (You might want to call DRS in October and check your coding.)

Later in the school year, as you near the maximum number of hours you may work, you should log in to your DRS online account at [www.drs.wa.gov.oaa](http://www.drs.wa.gov.oaa), and check the hours reported. Sometimes days and hours do not translate by a simple division so you will want to know exactly what the school districts reported, and what DRS believes is correct. DRS will send you letters when you start to get close to the maximum number of hours, but the information in the letter can be as much as 30 days behind your actual totals.

As you can see, the rules can be complicated and the penalties for failure to comply can be very expensive and inconvenient. **This article is meant to alert you to possible problems. In every case you should consult with your payroll department to ensure that you are in compliance with the rules.** Next time: Why the waivers are no longer allowed and (hopefully) answers to the questions.

*Jim Slosson, Education Chair*

## THOUGHTFUL VOTING, COMMUNITY SERVICE!

As I write, we are in the throes of the Olympic games and the constant cacophony of biased political rhetoric. Our athletes unabashedly swell with pride and patriotism for our country, but they also demonstrate the value of fair play and respect for their opponents.



Aside from the pure joy and exhaustion in their faces, what do we frequently see as the winners are announced? Hugs! Hugs all around, often with their fiercest competitors regardless of race or gender. Sincere acknowledgement of a job well-done.

How can we, in our very ordinary lives, emulate such an extraordinary display of respect, pride, and patriotism? Vote! Thoughtfully voting in the critical upcoming election is a valid kind of community service.

Thoughtful voting requires some, though not herculean, preparation. Are you and your family registered to vote? If not, now is the time to do so. Excuses about your vote not counting are unacceptable. There are countless examples of elections being won by the slimmest of margins. Recently, here in Washington, a local candidate lost by one vote. He had failed to vote for himself! The voters' pamphlet is a good source of information explaining how to register.

After registration comes the thoughtful part of becoming an informed voter. A constant diet of any single news source will not necessarily provide the most even-handed presentation of the facts. Branch out to other sources such as NPR (National Public Radio), PBS (Public Broadcasting Service), and the League of Women Voters, or some of the other national and local newspapers online. AARP researches candidates and issues with particular attention to the welfare of senior citizens. NEA does the same for educators. Ultimately, there's no avoiding the candidates' actual speeches. What do they say? How do they say it? Do they express and actually display the values of the Olympics in their behavior: fair play in competition, respect, and civility, if not hugs?

Encourage everyone you know to vote, especially if you know young people who have not registered. As experienced educators, we are generally comfortable with young people and could go a long way towards inspiring them to register and vote.

*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 2024 issue is due by September 12.**

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