

Bits & Pieces

www.wssra-units.org/thurstoncounty/

April 2025

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

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Five years ago, during the COVID-19 pandemic, everyone faced being isolated within our homes during those months. As you remember though, those in care facilities were especially affected as family or friends could not visit. Life for the elderly is often lonely, but extreme aloneness we now know affects the brain in physical ways.

Mental health in older adults often slips under the radar because it is unidentified or unnoticed. Some think that depression and anxiety are just the normal part of getting older, but it is not. According to the CDC, major depression in older adults occurs in 5% of older adults who live in the community, in 11.5% of those who are hospitalized, and in 13.5% of those who require home care or nursing care. Those who are clinically depressed experience intense feelings of hopelessness and sadness that will not go away, but they can be helped.

Thinking about caring for the mental health of our baby boom generation or older is not always comfortable, whether it is through counseling, medication, group therapy, or exercise. Research has now determined that mindfulness practice for the elderly can improve and maintain mental health. (BMC geriatrics, Program in Physical Therapy, Washington University)

Mindfulness entails entering a state of focused attention, combined with non-judgmental observation of our inner and outer experiences. A few mindfulness activities for seniors are: slow down, tune into your body, stop negative thoughts, focus on your breath to improve self-awareness and reduce stress, pay attention to how your body feels from your toes to your head, and eat mindfully, savoring each bite.

Patty Gee, TCSRA President

SHOWCASING OUR MINI-GRANTS

In April we will be honoring the recipients of the 2024 TCSRA mini-grants. Two receptions will be held: on Friday, April 18 from 11:30 a.m. to 1:30 p.m. our guests will join us for our luncheon at Indian Summer Golf and Country Club. You will have a chance see the recipients' projects or talk to them about their grants and how they used them in their rooms.

An alternative reception will be held Monday, April 28, at Friendly Meetinghouse, 3201 Boston Harbor Rd NE, Olympia. This is a drop-in event between the hours of 4–6 p.m. Light refreshments will be served. You will have an opportunity to chat with our recipients about their projects and their classroom experiences.

Both opportunities are open to everyone. We hope you will come and support our active school employees. To attend the luncheon, please reply to the email sent out before the event. To attend the drop-in reception, please send an email to Nancy Zabel at elemminigrant@gmail.com so we can plan for the food and space.

Thank you to both teams who made the tough decisions and who delivered checks to happy teachers!

Nancy Zabel, Elementary Mini-Grant chair

Karen Keller, Secondary Mini-Grant chair

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Friday, April 18, 2025 —12 noon

Indian Summer Golf and Country Club

Caesar salad with chicken
OR
Caesar salad with plant-based chicken (V)

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 11.**

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, April 11, 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

2025–2026 TCSRA BUDGET

During its March meeting the TCSRA Executive Board recommended the proposed 2025-2026 fiscal budget be submitted to the membership for a vote. Income/revenue is projected to be \$66,260.50, a decrease from the 2024-2025 projected \$66,270.48. This decrease is the result of lower checking account interest. Projected expenses next year are \$60,975, an increase from the \$58,915 projected for this year. The largest differences in expenses are the increases in both elementary and secondary mini-grants, totaling \$2,400.

Other differences between expenses for this year and next year are \$100 less for SW4 Coordinating Council meals, \$10 more for PO box rental, \$600 less for directory printing, \$250 less for membership recruitment and marketing, and \$100 more for luncheon expenses. The apparent \$450 increase in newsletter mailing expenses is actually an increase of \$250 and \$200 transfer from membership recruitment and marketing

You can review the budget plan on our website at www.wssra-units.org/thurstoncounty/. Watch for instructions for the voting that takes place in May in the next *Bits & Pieces*. Please direct any questions to Will Gentz at mandwgentz@comcast.net.

Will Gentz, Finance Committee Chair

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:

Kevin Bogatin

Tumwater School District

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

COMMUNITY SERVICE NEWS

Become a Lunch Buddy: Just one hour per week can impact a student for life!

Do you remember that special adult in your life who had a positive impact on your childhood, self-esteem, or career?

Now you have the chance to make that same difference in the life of a student by volunteering just one hour a week as a Lunch Buddy, a mentoring program in North Thurston Public Schools. The program includes K-8 grade levels.

“A Lunch Buddy provides weekly support to a student who needs a little extra one-on-one attention from a positive, caring adult,” explained Courtney Schrieve, Mentor Program Liaison. “We play games, do art projects, and build friendships. It’s the best way you could ever spend a lunch hour!”

Studies show that students with mentors have increased graduation rates, better attitudes about school, and improved attendance, academics, and behaviors. Students are generally referred by their counselor or teacher, but parent referrals are acceptable, too.

“Mentoring programs support and empower students by providing them with positive role models who can help them with decision-making, goal setting, social awareness, and relationship skills,” said Schrieve, who is a mentor herself. “Sadly, 1 in 3 young people will grow up without a mentor.”

The Lunch Buddy program trains and matches a caring adult with a student for extra one-to-one attention and friendship one day a week over the lunch/recess hour at the school. It is not a tutoring program.

The Lunch Buddy program is currently seeking new mentors for the 2024-25 and 2025-26 school year. Matches do not meet during the summer. An approved NTPS [volunteer application](#) (and background check), 1 hour mandatory mentor training online, and mentor application with references, are required.

Visit the mentoring page website to get started and fill out an interest form. <https://www.nthurston.k12.wa.us/community/mentors>

You can also email mentoring@nthurston.k12.wa.us or call 360-412-4487 to learn more.

Courtney Schrieve, NTPS Mentor Program Liaison

Sally Jones, Community Service Chair

NOMINATING COMMITTEE NEWS



The Nominating Committee is pleased to recommend the following members as officer candidates for 2025–2026:

President: Patty Gee

Vice President: Gail Feagins

Secretary: Diana Kildow

Fiscal Treasurer: OPEN POSITION

Membership Treasurer: ZiNita Carrell

Nominating Committee: Lorene Rang

NOMINEE BIOGRAPHIES

Gail Feagins, Vice President: Gail Feagins has been chair of TCSRA's Member & Health Services Committee for 12 years and has written many excellent articles regarding health and consumer issues for Bits & Pieces. She also has served on WSSRA's state Health Committee, and she has finished a three-year term as the SW-4 district representative on the WSSRA Executive Board. Born in Canada, Gail grew up in Yakima and graduated from Central Washington University. She taught in the North Thurston School District for 31 years, mainly at Chinook Middle School. Over the years she taught French, language arts, social studies, and calligraphy. Through a grant from the University of Washington, Gail spent six weeks in Egypt, along with 17 other social studies teachers from the Pacific NW. Since retirement in 1998, Gail has volunteered at the Tax Center at Fort Lewis, the Washington State Attorney General's Office, and the Thurston County Food Bank. She has made several trips with Global Volunteers, tutoring English on a short-term basis, throughout the US, Europe, Asia, and the Caribbean. She also made a humanitarian trip to Tanzania with the Safi School project. Besides traveling, Gail enjoys reading, walking, and skiing.

Diana Kildow, Secretary: Diana was born and raised in Spokane, WA. She attended Whitworth College and graduated from Centralia College, Eastern Washington State College, and Seattle Pacific University. She retired in 2004 after 33 years of teaching with the Mossyrock and Chehalis School Districts. Her primary focus was working with 1st–3rd grade students with learning/language disabilities. Diana currently serves on the TCSRA Budget Committee and assists with the Legislative Committee. Diana has been associated with the Olympia Highlanders Bagpipe Band since 1992 and served as board member, band manager, quartermaster, and bagpiper. As secretary and president of the Tacoma Highland Games, Diana promoted the yearly Scottish event at Frontier Park in Graham, WA. She also served many years as

secretary of the Slingerland Institute for Literacy. After retirement, Diana became a Girl Scout leader. Her current volunteer efforts continue to focus on helping others with church activities, the South Sound Reading Foundation, and as a Reading Specialist at Sunrise Beach Elementary School in Olympia.

Lorene Rang, Nominating Committee: Lorene Rang has been an educator since 1973. Upon graduating from Fife High School, Lorene attended Tacoma Community College where she obtained her associate's degree. From there she went to Central Washington State College where she earned her bachelor's degree in health and physical education. She earned her master's degree in educational administration from University of Puget Sound. Lorene taught health and physical education for the Tacoma School District as well as working in their district office from 1973–1994. Upon leaving the Tacoma School District in 1994, Lorene was the Yelm Middle School principal from 1994–2009. From there she worked at Pacific Lutheran University as an adjunct professor. Lorene has served in multiple positions for the Thurston County Schools Retirees' Association, including vice president, secretary, and membership chair. A resident of the Jubilee community in Lacey, Lorene is actively involved as their village and block captain for emergency preparedness. Lorene loves to snowmobile, travel in their motorhome, and spend time with family.

Biographies of the other nominees for office—**Patty Gee** 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

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 11.


In Memoriam

We note the passing of **Barbara Baar**, and we offer sincere condolences to her family and friends.

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

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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*.

LEGISLATIVE REPORT



We have exciting news to share! On Monday, March 3, the Washington State Senate passed legislation to restore an ongoing COLA for TRS 1 and PERS 1 retirees. Substitute Senate Bill 5085 would give TRS 1 and PERS 1 retirees the same annual benefit increase that members of TRS/PERS/SERS plans 2 & 3 receive. This would be achieved by merging TRS 1 and PERS 1, which are both underfunded, with Law Enforcement Officers and Firefighters (LEOFF) Plan 1, which is substantially overfunded. In addition to providing an ongoing COLA, the bill would fully fund all pension plans and help the state balance the budget, saving \$600 million over the next four years.

The bill passed with the support of 28 of 30 Senate Democrats. Senator Marko Liias (D-Edmonds) and Senator John Lovick (D-Mill Creek) joined all 19 Senate Republicans in voting against it.

SSB 5085 must now pass the Washington State House of Representatives, where it faces an uphill battle. The House has its own plans for the LEOFF 1 surplus. Instead of merging TRS 1, PERS 1, and

LEOFF 1, House leaders want to transfer the entire LEOFF 1 surplus into the general fund via House Bill 2034. This would effectively block us from restoring an ongoing COLA this session.

As the Senate and House have differing approaches to the issue, an agreement likely won't be reached until Democratic leaders in both chambers negotiate a final budget near the end of April. From now until then, we must work harder than ever to convince our State Representatives to pass SSB 5085. Please keep an eye on your email for opportunities to get involved. If you haven't received any emails from us, please visit www.wssra.org to join our email list.

Emmett Mills, WSSRA Legislative Coordinator

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 May 2025 issue is due by April 14.

Please email copy to editortcsra@gmail.com