



Bits & Pieces

www.wssra-units.org/thurstoncounty/ September 2025

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

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE



It's September! Welcome back! At TCSRA we are looking forward to a busy and productive year! Mini-grants, scholarships, fundraising, interesting luncheons, legislative work, community service—important work with the added reward of time to renew and maintain our relationships with each other.

The Executive Board (officers and committee chairs) met in August to make plans for the coming year, particularly as they relate to membership. Throughout the year, you will hear more about those plans and how you can be involved.

At this meeting, we appointed **Diana Kildow** as our fiscal treasurer. Diana was elected secretary in our May election, but as it became abundantly clear that she had the skills needed to do the treasurer's job, a switch was proposed.

Now we are looking for a secretary. What does the unit secretary do? The highlights of the job description are:

- Attend board meetings on the 2nd Friday and luncheons on the 3rd Friday of each month, September through May
- Take the minutes at board meeting & luncheons
- Keep a record of attendees at board meetings
- Lead board meetings when the president and vice president are absent
- Attend meetings of the Coordinating Council (September, January, and March)
- Attend the annual WSSRA Convention (June)

Would **you** be interested? Please contact one of our officers to find out more!

Along with this newsletter, a new directory was delivered. Please take a look at the opening pages of the directory. This is a great time to get to know a little bit more about our organization. The directory has a wealth of information about officers, committees, the Executive Board, etc.

Do you feel it in the air? Summer has ended. It's September. Time to get to work!

Patty Gee, TCSRA President

WELCOME TO A NEW YEAR!

LET'S CATCH UP AT A PICNIC!

September is a time for beginning again, renewing acquaintances, meeting our new members, and jumping into new activities. And what better way to get started than at our annual picnic!

We will meet at the Woodland Creek Community Park, adjacent to the Lacey Community Center, on Friday, September 19, at noon. We will be located in "Shelter A." Bayview will once again cater our picnic with boxed lunches.

Luncheons in October through May will be at the 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 2025-2026 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 19, 2025
It's a picnic!

**Woodland Creek
Community Park,
Shelter A
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/, beginning mid-November.

LUNCHEON RESERVATIONS



I will be sending out emails to remind you of our upcoming luncheon/picnic. Please respond to that email if you plan to attend. We need our reservation count by **noon on Friday, September 12.**

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, September 12 at (253-381-2592).**

To be added to the email list for notification, please send me your email address.

ZiNita Carrell, Email Committee Chair

LEGISLATIVE REPORT

Please read through to the end of the article, as it contains an important call to action.

As you may already know, earlier this year, the Washington State Legislature came very close to passing Senate Bill 5085, which would finally restore an ongoing COLA for TRS 1 and PERS 1 retirees. The bill would merge TRS 1 and PERS 1, which are both underfunded, with LEOFF 1, a pension plan for law enforcement officers and firefighters that is overfunded by around \$3 billion. While the Senate passed the bill over loud opposition from firefighters and police officers, the House wouldn't go along, favoring a different bill that would move the \$3 billion pension surplus into the general fund. At the end of session, neither bill passed, and the legislature ordered both SB 5085 and the House's pension bill to be studied by the Select Committee on Pension Policy (SCPP), a special committee that meets when the legislature is not in session. Our goal is to have the SCPP formally recommend that the legislature pass SB 5085 in 2026.

So far, the SCPP's work has gone as well as we could have hoped. Presentations by committee staff have highlighted two crucial points: First, LEOFF 1 members would not lose any benefits under SB 5085. Second, the extra money in LEOFF 1 came from the state, not from police officers and firefighters. Unfortunately, retired LEOFF 1 members continue to show up to every SCPP meeting in large numbers, claiming ownership of the funds. We need to show the SCPP that retired school employees are paying just as close attention to their work.

Call to action: Attend the next SCPP meeting to show committee members that retired school employees are paying attention. All you need to do is show up!

When: Tuesday, September 16, 10:00 a.m.

Where: House Hearing Room A, John L. O'Brien Building, Washington State Capitol Campus

Emmett Mills, WSSRA Legislative Coordinator

IN DEFENSE OF PUBLIC EDUCATION

In 2021 under Biden, we had a new U.S. Secretary of Education, Miguel Cardona. Bi-lingual, bi-cultural with Puerto Rican roots, he had to learn English in public schools as a child living in the projects. He was first a 4th grade teacher and then the youngest principal in Connecticut—when he was named state Principal of the Year—before working his way up to assistant superintendent. His focus was culturally-diverse education, closing the Achievement Gap, and fostering success, housing, and nutrition for all students regardless of zip code. Other foci were raises for educators, easing student debt, and universal Pre-K.



His predecessor was billionaire Betsy DeVos, never a teacher but a champion of private schools over public education for all.

His successor today is Linda McMahon whose education credential is having served 1 year on the Connecticut Board of Education after lying about having an education degree. Her background is mostly CEO of WWE (Wrestling Entertainment), a corporation with shady business practices. Her sole focus is to privatize public education—much like Betsy DeVos.

McMahon proudly intends to: expand voucher programs, robbing our public schools of resources and hurting our most vulnerable students; return to local control of schools/programs; and reduce both "the Federal Education Bureaucracy" and "political indoctrination in schools."

McMahon is helping dismantle the very cabinet agency she's in charge of, including Title 1 funding, and reducing grants to states by 2/3. Also on the agenda is slashing college aid funds (including work study and Pell Grants), IDEA support, and more. Two thousand employees—over half—are to be dismissed, thus gutting oversight of education programs, including student civil rights. The Supreme Court has given a green-light to this agenda.

These are the facts. May they help inform your votes in local, state, and national elections ahead of us: school boards, funding measures, state representatives, and more.

Please vote like our education future depends on it, because it does. Convey your thoughts to your Congress persons on behalf of the youth and the educators of today and tomorrow.

Gery Gerst, Education Chair

In Memoriam

We note the passing of **Margaret Sogge, John Willmarth, Rene Herron, Diana Gonion, Tryna Norberg, Jon Esarey, and Raymond Burke.** We offer sincere condolences to their families and friends.

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:
Michael Larsen
North Thurston Public Schools



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

ABOUT OUR NEW DIRECTORY

Did you notice the three small photos on the cover? These are a few of the mini-grant recipients who attended our first late afternoon reception in April to tell us about their projects. *Left to right, first photo:* James Alviar, Laura Bates, Carrie Black, and Heidi Toepke. *Second photo:* Erin Crabtree. *Third photo:* Retirees Gail Feagins, Laurie Giebelhaus, and Patti Columbo speak with Carrie Black.

Once again, we have listed contact information for TCSRA officers and committee members in this directory but only names for our full membership, beginning on page 13. This is to protect privacy and to reduce our printing and mailing costs significantly. If you need contact information for another member, we may be able to help you. Please contact Sharon Dennis, sed6501@outlook.com or 360-438-5351.

We hope you'll take some time to get acquainted with the information in this new directory. Check out our lineup of luncheon programs on page 9, and think about volunteering for one of our committees!

Sharon Dennis & Pat Slosson, Directory Co-editors



CHECK OUT OUR WEBSITE!

Our TCSRA website has been updated for the 2025–2026 year. For example, you'll find a new photo page and new information on the officer and program pages.

Of particular interest could be links to WSSRA's recorded webinars, including pre-retirement sessions from last spring, a webinar titled “Vigilance Against Cybercrime,” and another on “Financial Health for Seniors and Estate Planning.” For these, scroll down to the bottom of any page and click on **Pre-Retirement & Other Webinars**.

Go to www.wssra-units.org/thurstoncounty/ to explore the many features of our organization!

Sharon Dennis, TCSRA Website Editor

OLDER ADULTS AND DEHYDRATION

“Dehydration occurs when the body uses or loses more fluid than it takes in. Then the body doesn't have enough water and other fluids to do its usual work. Not replacing lost fluids leads to dehydration.” (www.mayoclinic.org)

It may be “a real risk for all adults over age 65. As you get older, your sense of thirst is blunted, so you may not recognize your body's needs for fluids,” says Dr. Ardeshir Hashmi, with the Center for Geriatric Medicine at Cleveland Clinic. Also, as adults age, their ability to retain water in blood vessels decreases. In addition, health conditions causing diarrhea, vomiting, a high fever, diabetes, incontinence, or cognitive decline may contribute to water loss. Finally, taking certain medications, such as diuretics, or being exposed to elevated outside temperatures can contribute to dehydration.

In “8 Signs of Dehydration You Shouldn't Ignore,” Michelle Crouch writes, “Unchecked, dehydration can have grave consequences, doctors say. It can cause confusion and weakness or prompt your blood pressure to drop so dramatically that you could get dizzy, fall, and break a bone.” (www.aarp.org/health/conditions-treatments/dehydration, article updated June 19, 2024)

Eight signs of dehydration to watch out for are:

- **Thirst.** If you are age 65 or older and feel thirsty, you are probably already dehydrated. Throughout each day, older adults should drink at least six 8-ounce glasses of fluid a day. Water, juices, non-caffeinated sodas, sports drinks, and flavored waters or seltzers qualify. Also, consuming foods containing a lot of water such as broth, soup, cantaloupe, watermelon, and cucumbers will help.
- **Dark Urine.** Dark yellow or brownish urine or a stronger odor than normal is a sign of dehydration.
- **Dizziness or fainting.** If you feel dizzy upon sitting up after lying down or standing up after sitting, you may be dehydrated.
- **Muscle cramps or weakness.** These symptoms may be caused by electrolyte imbalances and reduced blood flow to those muscles.
- **Constipation or less frequent urination.** Urinating every two or three hours and having regular bowel movements show that the body has enough fluid to flush out toxins and run the digestive system.
- **Dry skin or lack of skin elasticity.** Dehydration may cause the skin to be dry and look sunken in some areas, such as under the eyes.
- **Dry mouth.** Reduced amounts of saliva may be caused by dehydration. Mouth sores may show this.
- **Fatigue, headache, or confusion.** A drop in blood pressure and low blood flow due to dehydration may cause these symptoms. Taking in fluids may be a good first remedy to try.

Pat McLachlan,
Member & Health Services Committee Co-chair

WSSRA CONVENTION HIGHLIGHTS; THOUGHTS ON COMMUNITY SERVICE

If you've never been to a WSSRA convention, you might want to think about it next June. It can be edifying, inspirational, and fun.

The main speakers are always highlights, and this year was no exception. Two eighty-year-old women, the Traveling Nanas, who have traveled the world together, presented a fascinating and humorous illustrated travel log. It was an inspiration to consider that age doesn't necessarily have to stop us from pursuing adventure. Granted, most of us would not likely choose such strenuous experiences, but simply stepping out of our comfort zone to try a new activity or learn something totally new can become an adventure.

Another highlight was celebrating TCSRA's participation in the Foundation's silent auction and basket raffle. We contributed ten auction items and eight raffle baskets which included everything from a Thai sun hat to Taylor Swift paraphernalia to local vinegar. Our auction items alone raised \$500! All the proceeds go towards scholarships and grants for future educators.

The last highlight for me was seeing two of our members receive state-wide awards. **Gail Feagins** won the 2025 McNaughton Outreach award, and **Lee Ozmun** received the 2025 Wilfong Legislative

Advocacy award. TSCRA can be very proud of Gail and Lee.

Community Service: On another note, I would love to hear from members about which community service activities are, for them, the most meaningful and/or enjoyable. Many projects require monetary expenditures of certain items for certain charities, such as gifts for the mom bags, toys for the Food Bank birthday bags, items for The Other Bank, and cash donations for the Salvation Army and the Food Bank at holiday time. In an effort to avoid constantly asking for donations, I have tried to plan activities that involve giving of our valuable time instead. For example, wrapping "silverware" in napkins for the Community Kitchen, cleaning kids' books for the South Sound Reading Foundation, and filling bags of weekend food for All Kids Win.

Please let me know if you are comfortable with these community service opportunities or if you'd like to see a change, especially if you have something new to suggest and help plan.

Contact Sally at sljonz@gmail.com, text 360-480-0972 or by phone 360-866-8039.

Thank you for all that you do!

Sally Jones, Community Service Chair



From left: **Lee Ozman**, 2025 Wilfong Legislative Advocacy Award recipient, with Edie Moersch, Past WSSRA President.

Ann Chenhall was an excited basket winner.

Gail Feagins was awarded the 2025 McNaughton Outreach Award.

From left: **Diana Kildow**, newly appointed Fiscal Treasurer, shows off her basket. Out-going Fiscal Treasurer, **Will Gentz**, enjoys his time at this year's convention.

BITS & PIECES, the newsletter of the Thurston County School Retirees' Association, is published nine times a year, September through May, as a membership service. **Information for the October 2025 issue is due by September 11.**

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