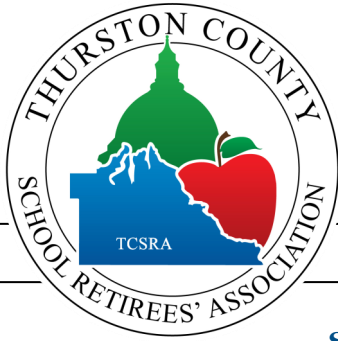




Bits & Pieces

www.wssra-units.org/thurstoncounty/

October 2025

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

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Happy 71st Birthday, TCSRA! Many of us were very young (I was 6) or not even born yet in 1954. A couple key events in 1954 were: Brown v. Board of Education declared that school racial segregation is unconstitutional, and the polio vaccine was found to be effective against polio.

The number of relationships we have had and lost over the years are probably too many to count, but throughout our lives new ones are made and can often work toward supporting those around us. TCSRA's volunteer leadership relationships continue to work together to provide mini-grants for Thurston County public school employees and scholarships for high school seniors entering the field of education.

This year several of our TCSRA's team have moved on to other opportunities, and we wish them many years ahead of fun and connections with friends and family. **Will Gentz** is leaving the board after five years as TCSRA's extraordinary treasurer; **Nancy Zabel** has been an active member of the elementary mini-grant committee for six years, being chair for the last five years; **Dorn Barr** has been an invaluable member of the TCSRA team serving as chair of the membership committee; and **Paula Hughart** leaves after serving as our 2024-2025 TCSRA secretary.

The TCSRA Executive Board is comprised of officers and standing committee chairs. The 2025-2026 board includes **Patty Gee**, President; **Gail Feagins**, Vice-President; **Diana Kildow**, Fiscal Treasurer; **Zinita Carrell**, Membership Treasurer; **Pat Slosson**, Immediate Past President; **Ann Chenhall**, Legislative Chair; **Sharon Dennis**, Communications Chair; **Karen Keller**, Mini-Grant Chair; **Ron Crawford**, Retirement Planning Chair; **Vicki Carter**, Hospitality Chair; **Sally Jones**, Community Services Chair; **Pat McLachlan**, Member and Health Services Co-Chair; **Gery Gerst**, Education Chair. The secretary position is still open.

Patty Gee, TCSRA President

WELCOME COURTNEY SCHRIEVE, NTPS MENTOR PROGRAM LIAISON



Courtney Schrieve, our October luncheon speaker, will present us with another invitation to lunch and thereby to service. As the Mentor Program Liaison for the North Thurston Public Schools, Courtney directs the Lunch Buddy program.

We all know that a mentor who takes a special interest in someone at any stage of life can be a truly positive influence on that person. All the more for a child. A mentor's genuine interest can be profoundly positive in terms of a child's attitude and self esteem, even leading to improved behavior.

Courtney's invitation is to become a child's lunch buddy at school. She will outline the program and encourage us to seriously consider becoming mentors. As frequently happens in a giving situation, the giver is blessed just as much or more than the receiver.

Courtney has been a lifelong advocate for kids in both her career and private life. If you remember the days when signs posted in public places encouraged parents to "read to your child twenty minutes a day," that was when Courtney Schrieve became the first director of the Sound Sound Reading Foundation. The SSRF flourishes today.

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

Friday, October 17, 2025—12 noon
Indian Summer Golf and Country Club

5900 Troon Lane SE, Olympia

Honey Dijon Chicken (GF, DF)

OR

Tofu Vegetable Stir Fry (V, GF, DF)

Soy and ginger marinated tofu, stir fried with white rice and veggies

(\$20 includes tax and gratuity)



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, October 10.**

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, October 10, 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

The Select Committee on Pension Policy (SCPP) had a busy meeting in September. First, the committee received a report on the financial status of all state managed pension plans. When viewed in aggregate, they are nearly 100% funded. However, at the plan level, TRS1 and PERS1 remain 91% and 87% funded, respectively, while LEOFF1 is 160% funded.

Next, the committee reviewed the state's long-term economic assumptions and made recommendations. The committee recommended raising the assumed inflation rate to 3% (from 2.75%) and raising the assumed general salary growth rate to 3.5% (from 3.25%), while holding investment rate of return and membership growth at 7.25% and 1%, respectively. If these recommendations are followed by the Pension Funding Council and the Legislature, it should result in pension contributions increasing for employers and employees.

Finally, the committee received an update on the study of two proposals affecting the surplus in the LEOFF1 pension plan. As discussed in previous articles, SB5085 would merge TRS1, PERS1, and LEOFF1, while restoring an ongoing COLA for TRS1 and PERS1 retirees. HB2034 would sweep the LEOFF1 surplus into the State's general fund. So far, feedback has been received from three of the six entities that will be contributing to the report. The Department of Retirement Systems reported that both proposals would be implementable, although HB2034 would be easier to implement. The Office of the State Treasurer recommended caution with both bills, but would be more comfortable with SB5085. The Washington State Investment Board determined that HB2034 would require advance planning and result in transaction fees, while SB5085 would not affect its work. The final report will also include feedback from the Office of the Attorney General, the Office of the State Actuary, and Ice Miller, a law firm contracted with the state. We expect the final report by November 18. WSSRA is pushing the committee to officially recommend SB 5085 to the Legislature.

Emmett Mills, WSSRA Legislative Coordinator

CURRENT EVENTS HOLD GOOD NEWS AND CHALLENGES



As educators and students return to schools, we realize that anxiety over class size, or having enough supplies, or "will I have a Para?" or enough busses, has been replaced by "Are the children safe?" and "What if THAT happens in my school or classroom?" News about another school shooting shows that it is not just "in THAT city or state" but anywhere. Money needed for buses, supplies, lunches, and students with special needs, is now used to fund fortifying entrance doors, installing cameras, and putting bullet-proof glass in offices. Money and programs are under attack as the White House dismantles the Department of Education and programs' funding.

In that environment our colleagues and children are expected to thrive and "meet standards." My own grandkids and my former students-turned-educators express tension about what should be an exciting return to school. Let us all support as we can. Send a note of thanks for what the educator you know is bravely doing for kids' futures. Help a child express what they're feeling and doing this school year. Email your congress person on what needs to be done about this; urge others to also. Vote for people and measures that will bolster education and funding. Express your support of kids, parents, and educators via social media. Now's the time to give voice for our kids, colleagues, and future generations. Keep your foot on the gas.

Now good news: There are local grants to help teachers cover classroom expenses such as supplies or teaching aids. TwinStar Credit Union (soon to be renamed Peak Credit Union) offers \$200 to K-5 teachers in Thurston County and beyond through its Classroom Cash Program; it has helped teachers with hundreds of thousands of dollars since year 2000. The grant may be used for furniture, books, school supplies, or other needs. Permanent K-5 teachers, counselors, and librarians, who are 18 or older, U.S. citizens, and Peak Credit Union members may apply. Check it out on their website. This year's deadline was September 30, but keep this in mind and plan to apply next year. TCSRA also has mini-grants available. Applications will go "live" on November 1. See article on page 4 and check our TCSRA website.

Gery Gerst, Education Chair

Each month we randomly draw the name of an "active" (not-yet-retired) member, who will receive a Starbucks gift card in the mail.

This month's winner is:

Scott Rang
Tumwater School District

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

BOOST UP FOR WINTER

It may be hard to think of getting shots again for winter, but the time is coming. Vaccines help prevent us from getting seriously ill. It takes a couple of weeks for vaccines to become effective, so the recommendation is to get them by the end of October.

VACCINE	AGE	COMMENTS
COVID-19 (2025-2026)	Varies 2 doses yearly for those 65 and up	The CDC has narrowed their recommendation to those 65 and up and those with high-risk health conditions. The Washington State Department of Health issued a Standing Order on September 5th reaffirming that everyone 6 months and older, including those pregnant, should get updated COVID vaccines. This allows most residents to obtain the vaccine without a prescription and the cost will be covered by most private insurers.
FLU	6 months up	One dose every fall. Seniors should get the high-dose shot.
RSV	75 and up	One dose, one time
Shingles	50 and up	Two-dose series one time; each given 2-6 months apart
Pneumococcal	65 and up (50-64 for those with underlying medical conditions)	Current recommendation is a single dose of PCV21. Medicare Part B will cover the vaccine.
Tdp/Td booster	First dose in childhood, then every 10 years	Tdap protects against typhoid, tetanus, and pertussis (whooping cough). If you have young children in your life, get Tdap to protect them.

**Gail Feagins, Member and Health Services
Committee Co-Chair**

COMMUNITY SERVICE NEWS

I'm planning to actually go to a movie theater and pay an exorbitant amount to sit in a plush reserved seat with a cupholder to see the Downton Abbey Finale. Why? Because I watched and enjoyed all six seasons of the program on PBS. I still watch PBS, now called Cascade Media, almost exclusively because it provides the best, most intellectually stimulating programming on the air—and it's free. There's no need to choose a streaming service (or two or three) and pay monthly.

Cascade Media is a nonprofit and, as such, is struggling financially due to recent federal funding cuts to public media. These cuts have infiltrated our lives to such an extent that I would suggest that the local community would be well-served by our increased financial support of the many nonprofits that are being adversely affected.



Some of the local organizations that receive federal funding have already lost or are threatened with the loss of income to carry on their services. Some even face closing altogether.

Among the nonprofits that receive federal funding to some degree are: the Thurston County Food Bank, the Washington Center for the Performing Arts, the Salvation Army, the Hands on Children's Museum, the Tacoma Art Museum, the Washington State History Museum, the Deschutes Estuary Restoration Project, the Thurston County Boys and Girls Club, the state library—and by extension rural, tribal, and prison libraries—and the YWCA of Olympia. The YWCA has put out a public appeal for community support to stave off total closure. They have been reduced to one paid employee. Likewise, Cascade Media routinely airs appeals for additional financial support in order to maintain its level of programming and trustworthy news. NPR, another source of actual unbiased news, relies almost entirely on public support.

If you or someone you know has ever benefited from a nonprofit program or service, it would be an act of community service to support that organization. Volunteer! Advocate! Give!

Sally Jones, Community Service Chair

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If you are leaving for your Snowbird location, please let the WSSRA office know to change your address or temporarily to stop your mailings.

Email michele@wssra.org, or call **360-413-5496**.

Remember, the Post Office charges our unit for each forwarded or returned copy of *Bits & Pieces*.

If you would like to receive *Bits & Pieces* via email only and discontinue paper copies, please contact Sharon Dennis at sed6501@outlook.com.

CHANGES COMING TO OUR UNIT'S MINI-GRANT PROGRAM



Last spring the Thurston County School Retirees' Association voted to offer mini-grants to TCSRA members only. We are now in harmony with all the other units around the state, as they give grants only to members. For decades we have offered grants to all, regardless of membership. But now, we consider this a potential membership benefit for those who pay dues.

This year's applications will be "live" online beginning November 1 through November 30.

Recipients will be notified before the holiday break, but checks will be distributed in January. Individuals may ask for **up to \$400**, and it is our intention to award the amount the applicant requests, with no deduction as we have been forced to do in the past. However, some requests may not be funded due to our limited resources.

Begin thinking about what kind of experiences and materials you'd like to have for your students. Just a reminder: We do not fund food unless it is an integral part of lessons or units.

Karen Keller, Mini-Grant Team Leader

BITS & PIECES, the newsletter of the Thurston County School Retirees' Association, is published nine times a year, September through May, as a membership service. It is a means of communication between officers, committees, and both retired and active (not-yet-retired) members.

Letters to the editor from members are welcome and will be published when space is available. The editor will determine when letters will be published and when in doubt, shall consult with the president. The following guidelines are specified for letters to the editor:

- Letters must not exceed 150-200 words.
- Only one letter per year from the same writer will be accepted.
- Information must be accurate.
- Language must be appropriate.
- Content should be of general interest to the membership.
- Opinions expressed by the writer do not necessarily reflect policies or positions of WSSRA or TCSRA.
- Name, address, phone number must be included.

Editor: Pat Slosson, 360-561-3232.

Information for the November 2025 issue is due by October 13.

Please email copy to pslosson1@comcast.net.