

# Bits & Pieces

[www.wssra-units.org/thurstoncounty/](http://www.wssra-units.org/thurstoncounty/) December 2025

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

## PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Christmas is my favorite time of year. We get the decorations out earlier and earlier, and this year we are already planning where they will go. A big change is ahead for us because my son has accepted a position at the Univ. of Copenhagen-South, Denmark which means my 1 and 3 year old grandchildren will be leaving. It will be a difficult adjustment as I see them almost everyday for preschool time.

TCSRA members have devoted their lives to the young through the various roles in which they serve or have served. TCSRA continues to touch many lives. We welcome all school employees into our association.

One of our projects is to provide mini-grants to current public school employees who are members of TCSRA. Though the application window is now closed, the mini-grant committee will be reading the applications and awarding the grants during December.

One way you can help us continue to increase the number and amount of our mini-grants is to allocate some of your IRA yearly distribution to our Community Foundation Account. The check is written by the bank where your distribution is and made out to the Community Foundation-TCSRA Endowment Fund by them. It is sent directly to the Community Foundation. 212 Union Ave SE, suite 102, 98501.

We wish you all a joyful Christmas season.

*Patty Gee, TCSRA President*

**Friday, December 19, 2025—12 noon**

**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)



## GET READY FOR AN ENTERTAINMENT EXPLOSION!



**We are in for a real treat for our December luncheon! Here is a little bit that you should know about Entertainment Explosion:**

"We are a non-profit performing troupe of honored citizens, 50 years and older. We have been entertaining in the greater Puget Sound area for over 20 years. We have various sized singing groups as well as soloists and feature a potpourri of music from the last 50 years, including show tunes, standards, rock and roll, and pop rock.

There are currently 26 members in our group and our mission is to contribute to worthy causes through performances for senior communities and facilities, special events and fund-raisers. In the past twenty years Entertainment Explosion has raised over \$400,000 for the kids in need of Thurston, Mason and Lewis Counties. Also, to promote elder health, we offer our seniors a chance to rehearse and perform in friendly and supportive settings. It's a win-win for both generations!

Presently we are working on a scholarship program for high school students who want to pursue music and are unable financially to do so. Through the Community Foundation, we are working on scholarship donations to SOGO (Student Orchestra of greater Olympia). This program was suggested to honor the legacy of past Entertainment Explosion members.

We are looking forward to performing for the Thurston County School Retirees' Association and just so you know, we are always looking for new members! Be sure to let us know if this is something that might interest YOU!"

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

*Bobbie Andreas, Hospitality Committee*

## 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, December 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](mailto:dazicar88@gmail.com), or call me **no later than noon on Friday, December 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

On November 18, 2025, the Select Committee on Pension Policy concluded its study of two bills affecting the overfunded LEOFF 1 pension plan. The first bill, SB 5085, which WSSRA strongly supports, would use the LEOFF 1 surplus to provide an ongoing COLA to TRS 1 and PERS 1 retirees. The second bill, HB 2034, would transfer the LEOFF 1 surplus into the state's general fund, allowing lawmakers to spend it.

While the committee was not required to recommend a course of action to the legislature, WSSRA was vocal in urging it to endorse SB 5085. There was hope that the committee would listen after it received legal guidance that identified SB 5085 as the option that presented less risk. However, after a debate, the committee decided to make no recommendation to the legislature regarding the two bills.

Ultimately, the committee did recommend a separate piece of legislation to provide a one-time COLA to TRS 1 and PERS 1 retirees in 2026. However, with the legislature preparing to address another budget deficit in 2026, this bill will likely face a difficult path forward. WSSRA will advocate for TRS 1 and PERS 1 retirees to receive a COLA in 2026, either through SB 5085 or the one-time COLA bill.

As the 2026 legislative session draws near, the WSSRA Legislative Committee is preparing to go to work on your behalf. Due to the state budget deficit, we will also advocate to protect the subsidy that the state provides to all Medicare-eligible retirees who purchase insurance through the Public Employees Benefits Board.

*Emmett Mills, WSSRA Legislative Coordinator*

Each month we 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:

**Geraldine Maxfield  
Tenino School District**

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

## A WALK THROUGH TIME



Walk with me through a time portal from 1900: We start in a one room schoolhouse with a blackboard. There are no ELL (English Language Learners) or ESL (English as a Second Language) or SpEd (Special Education). The 3Rs (Reading, wRiting, aRithmetic) curriculum is heavy on memorization.

The 1920s finds the use of a radio in teaching, while using penmanship, history, math. In the '30s we begin the use of overhead projectors and then reel to reel films. In 1939 the first TV was used in a class, in California.

In the 1950s we begin to use headphones in language labs and video cassette tapes in classes. In the 1960s we say goodbye to chalk dust and start using white boards. BASIC computer language begins and is closely followed by the handheld calculator.

Classroom software emerges in the 1970s, and Scantrons allow us to auto-grade multiple choice exams. Women employees start to get equal pay. In the 1980s keyboard typing is common in schools (pencils were sad) and the Apple Macintosh emerges along with laptops.

The 1990s bring in CDs created for storage. SMART boards show up in schools, followed in the 2000s by internet in classrooms, iPads, and STEM focus.

Do you remember chalk, erasers, encyclopedias in the library, (fill in your fav)? We've gone from "Sage on the Stage" to "Guide on the Side" but also standardized testing.

What hasn't changed? Kids' need for: affirmation, to feel cared about, to have educators who value and guide them to their potential, critical thinking skills, boundaries, a listening ear and heart, and one-on-one contact. In short, what is bedrock to education since whenever is educators who provide personalized social-emotional learning and support, not just cognitive or physical skills. No A-I can replace that as educators build human-becomings, one at a time, every day. Be proud of your role in that glue that anchors civilization.

*Gery Gerst, Education Committee*

### Welcome, New Members:

*Active, not-yet-retired, members are underlined*

Kyrian MacMichael Linda Kingsley

Leslie VanLeishout Carol Green

Karen Kasmar Wanda Hendricks

Deborah Bordelon James Kramer

Please report any address and telephone number changes to the **WSSRA Office** at: **360-413-5496** or [michele@wssra.org](mailto:michele@wssra.org)

## LIVING GRATEFULLY IN THESE TIMES

"Gratitude is a powerful emotion that can bring many benefits to our lives. Expressing gratitude and cultivating it in ourselves has been linked to increased happiness, improved physical health, greater mental well-being, higher self-esteem, and life satisfaction," states Gene P. in *Benefits of Gratitude: 31 Important Reasons to be Grateful*, July 18, 2025, [www.happierhuman.com](http://www.happierhuman.com).

In this winter holiday season, we have an opportunity to connect with friends and family over feasts, concerts and parties. As we nourish our supporting communities, we are also coping with changes that may impact our day-to-day living. These changes include increasing costs for food and services; and skyrocketing health insurance costs. In addition, many people are experiencing the loss of SNAP funding that helps feed over 40 million citizens; HeadStart, that offers so many services to low-income families with children; and numerous FDA and EPA programs that help protect our food supply and our environment.

The historic lengthy shutdown of the federal government has furloughed many employees for weeks, often with back pay not guaranteed when the government opens again. Services have been totally canceled or restricted necessitating for example airports to cancel flights because of the lack of air traffic controllers willing to work for no pay. Also, expert professional staff have been unavailable to handle calls for Social Security, Medicaid, FDA, and CDC.

Many people are wondering how their future and the future of their loved ones will be impacted by these changes. Some are bewildered. Some are angry. Some are scared. Others are frustrated. All are uncertain. How do we move forward?

The Gratefulness Team at DailyGood.com, responded to COVID-19 with questions that also apply to our present situation. "In the midst of losses, how can we direct our attention toward the gifts that remain in our lives so as to build greater capacity to face what is challenging?"

Some possibilities are:

**Reflect on Goodness:** Think about all the ways people are caring for their fellow human beings during this time in our country and others around the world.

**Wash your Hands:** Yes, with the weakened CDC giving us confusing or no health requirements to prevent diseases and less research on medicine, let's make a ritual of washing our hands with fresh water and soap and mediating on how we can clean up the mess we are in.

**Stay Connected:** Let's be sure to connect in person, or by letter, text, email or phone with friends and family during these holidays and reflect with

gratitude on our relationships. Let people know we care.

**Be Generous:** We can extend compassion to those whose lives are affected by these crises. We can be more patient and kind. We can give to or volunteer with organizations who serve those in need and support local businesses struggling with tariffs and changes in regulations.

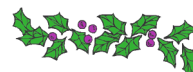
**See the Privileges of the Ordinary:** We can notice all the blessings that remain, "phones, electricity, showers, the beauty and resilience of the natural world, all the parts of your body that work, the services and systems that serve your ability to function," etc.

**Commit to that which Sustains You:** We can stay grounded in the rituals, traditions, and practices that help us preserve our integrity, faith and hope in difficult times.

So, "in the midst of times of uncertainty...gratefulness might help to calm us, reduce fears and expectations, open us to greater clarity and love, and fuel action grounded in our deep intentions...Gratitude may not cure or solve our anxiety or concerns but it can foster ease, connection, kindness, and well-being - all valuable qualities which would be good to 'go viral' these days."

"Love and compassion are necessities, not luxuries. Without them humanity cannot survive." Dalai Lama

**Pat McLachlan,**  
**Co-chair Health and Member Services Committee**



## COMMUNITY SERVICE

TCSRA continues to generously support the Thurston County Food Bank and the Salvation Army. Last month you generously donated to the TCFB. This month at our luncheon, we will be collecting donations for the Salvation Army. Please make checks out directly to the Salvation Army.

For the last few years we have also participated in the Salvation Army's Adopt-a-Family program by preparing small gift bags for the moms of these families assuming that the moms don't always receive many personal gifts because the kids come first.

Suggestions for items to donate include, but are not limited to, the following: special lotions, bath products, knit hats, gloves or mittens, socks, scarves, pretty note pads or cards (preferably not the kind you get from organizations which want your donations), small journals, candles (tea lights and votives aren't much fun without holders), special candy, tea, coffee, cider or hot chocolate mixes, household items such as potholders, tea towels, trivets, holiday themed or not, and especially nice ornaments. Any small gift that you might like yourself or give to a friend would be appropriate. The proviso is that items should be pristine. Re-gifting is fine as long as the item looks brand new.

(Continued on page 4; see "Community Service")

**Thurston County School Retirees' Association**  
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Lacey, WA 98509-3051

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### **COMMUNITY SERVICE** (Continued from page 3)

We have a good start, but the bags must be assembled before the December luncheon. If you wish to donate, the deadline is December 8th. There is a donation box at the WSSRA office on Pacific Avenue, or I will pick things up through the 8th. The goal is 75 bags; we did 73 last year.

If you have questions or need items picked up, please contact me at: cell: 360-480-0972; home 360-866-8039; email [sljonz@gmail.com](mailto:sljonz@gmail.com). Thank you in advance!  
**Sally Jones, Community Service Chair**



Has your phone number changed since you joined WSSRA? Many of us have given up our landlines and I changed my cell phone number a few years back. PLEASE, email WSSRA Membership Coordinator Michele Hunter and update your phone and address. Our communication with you is primarily via these newsletters and email, but we do need correct phone and address as well. This month Michele received 93 pieces of returned US Mail because of incorrect addresses. This is an expense we can limit by keeping the WSSRA office updated when our information changes, including SNOWBIRD addresses. Thank you! [Michele@wssra.org](mailto:Michele@wssra.org)

***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 January 26 issue is due by December 10.**

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