



# Bits & Pieces

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

April 2026

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

## PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

TCSRA: Who Are We? Thurston County School Retirees' Association is a unit of the Washington State School Retirees' Association (WSSRA). TCSRA is one of 19 units dispersed around the state to represent Washington school retirees. WSSRA is the governing body, providing the legal, management, and tax structure for the units. There are over 17,700 WSSRA members, and Unit 28, representing Thurston County, has over 1,040 members.

WSSRA's business is conducted within its bylaws and policies approved by the membership, and the unit's business is patterned after the state association. Each unit, however, operates independently from the state association and has its own executive officers, board structure and budget.

When a person joins the state association (WSSRA), the person automatically joins their local unit and pays dues of \$7 monthly. Most active teachers and retirees choose to have their dues automatically deducted from their monthly teaching check or retirement check.

Thurston County School Retirees Association, Unit 28, uses their allocated dues to provide monthly luncheon meetings and programs, to cover the cost of mailing the monthly newsletter, to cover delegate convention expenses, mini-grants and scholarships.

For more information, contact Patty Gee, TCSRA President, at 360-556-8151.

*Patty Gee, TCSRA President*

## Convention Baskets

Each unit of WSSRA brings at least one theme raffle basket to the annual convention. Proceeds from the raffle go to the support of WSSRA scholarships. The raffle itself is a highlight of the convention.

This year we are again creating a Patriotic themed basket (think 4th of July or the 250th birthday of our nation). We are calling our second basket a "Grandparent Delight," filled with items that will thrill a grandparent and perhaps the grandchildren.

Please bring donations for one or both of these baskets to either our **April 17** or **May 15** luncheon.

For more information, contact Sally Jones.

## SHOWCASING OUR MINI-GRANTS RECIPIENTS

April not only brings showers but also marks the occasion for our mini-grant recipients to attend our luncheon. Recipients will have time to share how they utilized the funds. This event is one of our members' favorites. Although not all 37 recipients can attend, we expect a good turnout. Seeing in person how our recipients have stretched each dollar for the benefit of their students always makes us proud.

We are thankful for the assistance of Nicole Sims, OMB Manager for the Nisqually Tribe. We sincerely thank the Nisqually Tribe for their generous donation which enabled us to award numerous grants, supporting our local schools and fostering strong partnerships.

Thanks to an excellent team that made this a very successful year of grants. I will be acknowledging them at the luncheon.

***Karen Keller, Mini-Grant Committee Chair***

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

\* \* \* \* \*  
 \* **Friday, April 17, 2026 —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)** \*  
 \* \* \* \* \*

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:

**Matt Bell**

*Tumwater School District*

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

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

## WHAT? NO MORE BITS & PIECES?

As I write this article, I am filled with sadness, because we haven't yet found a member who will edit *Bits & Pieces*, beginning with the September 2026 issue. Without an editor, we will not be able to publish this newsletter. What a shame that would be. It's the only way that we communicate with at least 90% of our members. TCSRA has had a monthly, mailed bulletin or newsletter since 1977. That's quite a tradition, all done over 49 years by volunteers!

If you are possibly thinking that this could be in your future, you may be wondering how in the world you'd know how to start. You would inherit a complete, detailed editor's manual; mentoring available from **Pat Slosson** and **Sharon Dennis**, current and former editors; computer files of past newsletters dating back to 2010; and a team of expert proofreaders. This position includes a \$200 annual stipend and a \$300 annual expense account, with which you may want to buy a stand-alone copy of Microsoft *Publisher*, a keyboard with a numeric keypad, printer paper, ink, etc. Yes, we've been using *Publisher*, but it can also be done with Microsoft *Word*. Our files contain past issues using both programs.

If you would like more information, or perhaps a copy of our editor's manual to review, please contact **Pat Slosson** at [pslosson1@comcast.net](mailto:pslosson1@comcast.net).

*Sharon Dennis, Communications Chair*

## COMMUNITY SERVICE NEWS



Last month I related some information about the harmful "plastification" of the whole world which has led to the presence of plastic particles in the food chain, thus harming every living thing. It's no wonder. Estimates indicate that the world uses five trillion plastic bags per year. Americans use fifty billion water bottles and toss out some twenty-five million styrofoam coffee cups per year. We use an average of 365 plastic bags per person per year. The Danes average only four.

Excessive packaging of products is another example of enormous waste, and for my part, a source of personal frustration when I try to open a tightly sealed product encased in hard plastic or receive some small item packed in a box many times larger than necessary and packed with large plastic pillows or styrofoam. Think of the poor fellow who, after searching his whole house for a pair of scissors to open a package of light bulbs, finally gave up and bought new scissors only to realize that he needed scissors to open the new package of scissors.

There are a few ways we can mitigate the proliferation of plastic in our homes and community. We can start with reusable bottles, personal coffee cups, lining garbage cans with old grocery bags and picking up dog "poo" with used produce bags instead of purchasing colorful scented poop bags or trash bags with handles. We can take cloth bags for shopping and look for products with the least amount of packaging.

Last month I also broached the idea of TCSRA participating in the local Lions Club plastic recycling project. Members would simply save the prescribed items which the Lions Club collects and bring them to a luncheon. As the official collector/recycler I will deliver to the Lions whatever members bring.

The main thing to consider is to save and bring only clean and dry stretchable plastic. If it makes a crinkly sound, don't bring it. Items to save include all kinds of plastic bags: grocery, produce, bread, dry cleaning, newspaper, Ziploc and store bags such as those from Macy's or Target. Other items are overwrap from products such as paper towel or toilet paper packages, shrink wrap, air pillows, bubble wrap and plastic envelopes with bubble wrap lining such as the ubiquitous blue and white Amazon packages.

The Lions Club partners with the Nex Trex company which donates a bench made of 95% recycled materials for every 500 pounds of plastic received. We may never "earn" a bench, but it is a worthy goal and whatever we do collect will not end up in the landfill.

(Sources: The Center for Biological Diversity, the EPA and the Earth Day Network.)

*Sally Jones, Community Service Chair*

## THE BEST OF HUMANITY AND COMMUNITY



Diversity, Equity and Inclusion are good things alive in our schools. Here are some inspirational examples:

“Pack the Gym” Night at Tumwater High School celebrated Inclusion in a game between 2 schools in their annual Unified Sports night.

Inclusivity is the objective, not the score; people with and without intellectual or developmental disabilities join on the same team, inspired by a simple principle: training together and playing together is a path to friendship and understanding, and a way that preconceptions are swept away. The opponent is intolerance, not the other team.

River Ridge High School again honored the life and legacy of Billy Frank Jr. This all-are-welcome free event, in partnership with the Nisqually Tribe, promoted Family, Kinship, and Community, with cultural performances and youth.

A CTE instructor at Capital High, Teacher of the Year, teaches courses like Game Design, Cinematography and Music Production; students work on collaborative, real-world projects, critical thinking, and life skills that mirror industry expectations. Tech industries and institutes gobble up his graduates.

Thurgood Marshall MS students learned systems of equations, then did a team hands-on project inspired by the Shark Tank, creating a product, calculating costs and pitching their idea to a panel of “sharks.” Students learned how math connects to real-world business decisions, with a goal of bringing math to life to make it accessible to many more students.

That’s a few. Federal and state budget cuts to education are real; some people malign public education. Rest assured, quality people and programs abide in our public schools.

*Gery Gerst, Education Committee Chair*

### OFFICER ELECTION PROCEDURE

Officer elections will be done via email and USPS mail. The slate of candidates and their biographies will be available on the TCSRA website by **April 20** ([www.wssra-units.org/thurstoncounty/](http://www.wssra-units.org/thurstoncounty/))

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](mailto:dazicar88@gmail.com) or mail a written response to TCSRA, PO Box 3051, Lacey, WA 98509-3051.

**The deadline for voting is May 1.**

## SENIOR MOMENT OR DEMENTIA?

Is cognitive decline a part of normal aging? We’ve probably all experienced issues such as misplacing keys, walking into a room and forgetting why we’re there, forgetting names, or difficulties finding words. Sometimes these are due to stress, multitasking, or lack of sleep. For older adults, sleeping less than four hours a night or more than ten has been associated with lower cognitive function and a higher risk of cognitive decline.

Many suggestions have been made on how to improve memory and avoid dementia. These range from drinking coffee, learning a new activity or language, doing crossword puzzles or word games, reading, especially fiction. Among experts, the top preventatives are physical exercise and social interaction. Physical exercise keeps the blood flowing through your brain and the rest of your body. A correlation has been found between hearing loss and dementia. If one cannot hear, it is difficult to carry on conversations and people will sometimes become socially isolated. This makes it important to address any hearing issues early on.

So when should you be worried about your mental lapses? Cognitive decline refers to normal age-related reductions in memory or thinking speed. You are still able to perform daily tasks; it just might take you longer to do them. Dementia is progressive. It includes significant disorientation, personality changes, and the inability to perform daily tasks. You can’t remember how to read emails or pay bills, you get lost in familiar places, friends tell you that you repeat the same questions or stories over and over again, you can’t recall details about a recent major event you attended. It is important to receive medical evaluation early so symptoms can be managed. Your physician may refer you to a neurologist, a geriatric psychiatrist, or a geriatrician for a thorough workup

*Gail Feagins Co-chair Health and Member Services Committee*

### **Welcome, New Members:**

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

<u>Jacqueline Collett</u>	<u>Lindsay Welsh</u>
<u>Jushua Curtiss</u>	<u>Vin Ho</u>
<u>Chhronng Flores</u>	<u>Kristel Ward</u>
<u>Dena Green</u>	<u>Melodie DeFord</u>
<u>Amanda Herrmann</u>	<u>Robin Youngquist</u>
<u>Deborah Jordan</u>	<u>Doug Comsia</u>
<u>Stacey Lane</u>	<u>Ronald Smith</u>
<u>Riley Olsen</u>	<u>Robert Bach</u>
<u>Aaron Riddell</u>	<u>Elizabeth Cornelius</u>
<u>William Saguil</u>	<u>Rebecca Dillon</u>
<u>Julie Ann Schroeder</u>	<u>John (Ryan) Gerrits</u>
<u>Sunni Twing</u>	<u>Jennifer Halvorson</u>
<u>Annette Wells</u>	<u>Brooke Hart</u>

Please report any address and telephone number changes to the **WSSRA Office** at:

**360-413-5496** or [michele@wssra.org](mailto:michele@wssra.org)

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

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**ADDRESS SERVICE REQUESTED**



If you are returning from your Snowbird location, please let the WSSRA office know to change your address or to restart your mailings.

Email [michele@wssra.org](mailto: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 good news to share! On March 11, the Washington State Legislature released its final negotiated budget. The budget maintains the current funding level for the PEBB Medicare benefit, which is received by all retirees who purchase Medicare supplemental insurance through the Public Employees Benefits Board. This is a major victory, as the budget that the Senate proposed last month would have reduced this benefit, substantially increasing health care costs for retirees.

The budget also incorporates Substitute Senate Bill 5862, which will provide a one-time 3% COLA to TRS 1 and PERS 1 retirees not to exceed \$110 per month. TRS 1 and PERS 1 retirees will see their monthly pension amounts increase at the end of July 2026. All other state-managed pension plans automatically receive COLAs every July. While SSB 5862 was funded in the Senate's proposed budget, it was not funded in the House's proposed budget, and getting it included in the final budget is another big win for retirees.

The budget and the COLA bill now go to the Governor, who has until April 4 to sign them.

Thank you for supporting WSSRA and participating in our advocacy. You helped make this result possible.

**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. 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 May 2026 issue is due by  
April 14.***

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