



Bits & Pieces

www.wssra-units.org/thurstoncounty/

May 2026

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

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Being part of a non-profit organization these days is full of challenges, but for me the last two years as president of Thurston County School Retirees' Association have been worth it.

TCSRA continues to be actively involved in our community. Last year, members **Dorn Barr** and **Ron Crawford** learned about community grants that the Nisqually Tribe awards to non-profits who demonstrate outreach to their community. Dorn and Ron applied for the grant, and TCSRA received \$15,000 in recognition of our mini-grant program. With this grant, TCSRA was able to award 37 educators plus 4 principals up to \$400 each for materials and experiences not otherwise funded. We are encouraged to apply again next year.

As I continue to deal with health and aging concerns, I consider where to focus my energy. Lifestyle writer Lachlan Brown interviewed eighty people in their 80s, who were asked to look back and reflect. Brown found that the same themes kept recurring. *"Most of what you are worrying about right now will not matter."* Eighty-year-olds are not dismissive of worry. Most feel it and then put it in its place. When asked about regrets, the comment most often stated is, *"Not showing up for the people they love or letting friendships fade."* A third is the realization that *"Forgiveness is not for the other person."* People in their eighties who are still carrying resentment from their forties and fifties talked about it like a physical weight. Those who talk of forgiveness are able to let it go and find peace.

And finally, research on wisdom and aging has found that the eighty-year-olds who seemed most at peace are not the ones that have accumulated the most. They are the ones that have figured out that *"You already have enough, and have everything you need for today."*

For all of us, may it be so.

Patty Gee, TCSRA President

OUR YEAR'S END PROGRAM

OFFICER INSTALLATION; MEMBER MEMORIAL

Please join us for our May 15, 2026, luncheon, our final meeting until fall. The program will include two important annual events, the installation of new officers and a memorial celebrating the lives of TCSRA members who passed away during the year.

Congratulations to newly elected officers for 2026–2027: Co-Presidents: **Pat Slosson and Gail Feagins**; Vice President: **Ron Crawford**; Secretary, **Open Position**; Fiscal Treasurer: **Tom Phimister**; Membership Treasurer, **ZiNita Carrell**; and Nominating Committee, **Mary Ann Wright**.

We are pleased to welcome WSSRA 2025–2026 President **Dottie Stevens** to officiate the installation of our 2026–2027 officers. Dottie comes from the Tri-Cities, and she has had many leadership roles in WSSRA prior to serving as president.



. See page 2 for reservation information.

Vicki Carter, Hospitality Committee Chair

Friday, May 15, 2026—12 noon
Indian Summer Golf and Country Club

Chicken Caprese
OR Tofu stir fry (V, GF, DF)

Dessert: Chef's Choice
(\$20 includes tax and gratuity)

CONVENTION RAFFLE BASKETS

Raffle baskets are an important part of the WSSRA annual convention because the proceeds go towards funding WSSRA scholarships. The themes for our baskets this year are: grandparents basket, patriotic basket celebrating the 250th anniversary of our country, and a summer fun basket.

Please bring donations for our baskets to the May luncheon or contact **Sally Jones** at 360-480-0972 to arrange for pickup. There will also be a collection box at the WSSRA office in Lacey. **The deadline is May 25th.**

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, May 8.**

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, May 8, 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



WELCOME, NEW MEMBERS!

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

- | | |
|-------------------------|----------------------------|
| <u>Erika Hedegard</u> | <u>Carey Penn</u> |
| <u>Jenifer Hermes</u> | <u>Paul Rae</u> |
| <u>Eric Jacobs</u> | <u>Natalie Redman</u> |
| <u>Rebecca Johnson</u> | <u>Debbie Reich</u> |
| <u>Brent Kabat</u> | <u>Amelia Richardson</u> |
| <u>Marianne Lang</u> | <u>Haley Sanders</u> |
| <u>Catherine Langan</u> | <u>Christy Schock</u> |
| <u>Meagan Mackenzie</u> | <u>Kristen Soderberg</u> |
| <u>Heather Murphy</u> | <u>Lois Wood</u> |
| <u>Dallas Myers</u> | <u>Tom Phimister</u> |
| | <u>Colleen Moldenhauer</u> |

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

360-413-5496 or michele@wssra.org



THANK YOU, TEACHERS!

Teacher Appreciation Week is May 4-8. TCSRA wishes to thank our active teachers for their unwavering devotion of time, energy, and talent for the sake of our children. Their efforts contribute so much to making this world a better place.

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:

Cara Preuss
Olympia School District

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

LEGISLATIVE REPORT



On March 30, Governor Bob Ferguson signed Substitute Senate Bill 5862, which will provide a one-time 3% cost-of-living adjustment to TRS 1 and PERS 1 retirees not to exceed \$110 per month. This means that every retiree with a state-managed pension—except those who retired after July 1, 2025—will see their monthly benefit increase at the end of July.

The Governor also signed the state's supplemental operating budget, which maintains a critical benefit for Medicare eligible retirees who purchase health insurance through the Public Employees Benefits Board (PEBB). Earlier this year, the Senate passed a budget that would have reduced the benefit from \$183 to \$150 per month. While the proposed cut didn't make it into the final budget, we fear that the legislature might revisit the idea next year. For this reason, it is crucial that current and future retirees understand how the benefit works.

The state subsidizes the Medicare Supplement and Medicare Advantage plans offered through PEBB. The subsidy automatically reduces retiree premiums by 50%, not to exceed \$183 per month. **Without this benefit, all Medicare eligible retirees who purchase insurance through PEBB would see their premiums either double or increase by \$183 per month.** Over the course of a 20-year retirement, the benefit could save an individual retiree almost \$44,000 dollars.

Unlike pensions, our health insurance benefit is not contractually guaranteed, meaning that the legislature could reduce or eliminate it. With another budget deficit likely in 2027, this possibility is very much on the table. Together, we must spend the rest of this year educating our state legislators. All WSSRA units are strongly encouraged to invite their local legislators to their meetings to discuss how the PEBB Medicare benefit keeps health insurance affordable for retired teachers and school employees.

Emmett Mills, WSSRA Legislative Coordinator

In Memoriam

We note the passing of **Audrey Larson, Edward Montermini, and Eugene Nicholas**, and we offer sincere condolences to their family and friends.

RECOMMENDATIONS ON COVID-19 VACCINE

Washington's Department of Health (DOH) has joined Oregon, Hawaii, and California to form the West Coast Health Alliance (WCHA). (See my March 2026 *Bits and Pieces* article for details.) The guidelines for the 2025–2026 season for the COVID-19 vaccine are on the DOH website <https://doh.wa.gov> and are in alignment with the WCHA.

These guidelines recommend that everyone 6 months and older receive an updated 2025–2026 COVID-19 vaccine. A second dose is specifically recommended for individuals 65 years and older, who should receive two doses separated by 6 months.

People 6 months and older who are moderately or severely immunocompromised are advised to get at least 2 doses of the updated vaccine, spaced 6 months apart.

Children 6 months to 4 years may require multiple doses (depending on their previous history) to be fully vaccinated, with a minimum interval of 4–8 weeks for Moderna.

The DOH issued a standing order in September 2025 allowing qualified providers to administer 2025–2026 formulations of Comirnaty (Pfizer-BioNTech), Spikevax (Moderna), and Nuvaxovid (Novavax). There is no recommended preference between these vaccines for those eligible for multiple types.

Always check for the latest vaccine recommendations on the DOH website as they can change based on the disease environment.

Pat McLachlan, Co-chair Health & Member Services Committee

TCSRA VOTING PROCEDURES

This month we will be voting for **both Officers and the 2026–2027 budget**. The Nominating Committee has recommended names for officers to the membership. You can review biographies on our website. Our Executive Board has also recommended a budget for your approval. Information on the budget is also available on our website.

Elections will be done via email and USPS mail. Members for whom we have email addresses will receive a message from **ZiNita Carrell**, asking you to vote "**Yes**" or "**No**" on the slate of officers and on the proposed budget. Please reply to her with your response. If you don't receive an email from ZiNita, please send your votes to dazicar88@gmail.com or mail a written response to TCSRA, PO Box 3051, Lacey, WA 98509-3051.

The deadline for voting is May 5.

TCSRA 2026-2027 Budget Proposal

On April 10, 2026, the TCSRA Executive Board voted to recommend a budget to our membership for approval. The budget is available to see on our website (www.wssra-units.org/thurstoncounty/). You will see three columns: 1) a description of the line item, 2) the amount listed in the 2025–2026 budget, and 3) the proposed amount for the coming 2026–2027 fiscal year.

One big difference is in our communications area. Communicating with our members is a high priority. We want you to know what is happening in our unit, who to contact in our unit, and ways to be involved in our unit activities. To that end we have had a newsletter, a directory, and an email system to deliver time-sensitive information.

Newsletter: The cost of printing, paper, and postage continue to rise, and our budget can no longer support the expense. The board has made the decision to go to an online newsletter. We will use email to deliver our newsletter to those members for whom we have email addresses. If we don't have yours, please send us the information.

Directory: In September all members will receive a printed directory. Responding to our members' requests, we will return to listing the names, addresses, and phone numbers or email addresses for our members. As always, the directory will include officers, committees, and other useful information.

Email system: For many years we have used email to contact members about legislative issues, community service events, and luncheons. We will continue to do this. Again, if we don't have your email, please send us the information.

Another big difference you will see is an increase in the Fiscal Treasurer's stipend. The stipend for this enormous job was increased from \$300 to \$1,200.

Budget ~ Bottom Line: For the current fiscal year (2025–2026), we projected revenue of \$69,000, including carryover, dues, and pass throughs. Our anticipated expenses were estimated at \$61,000. Unfortunately, our carryover was less than anticipated, so our projected revenue was closer to \$60,000. Fortunately, our expenses have been less.

In the 2026–2027 budget that the Executive Board is recommending, we are anticipating \$66,000 in revenue, including carryover, dues, and pass throughs. We are anticipating about \$55,000 in expenses.

TCSRA Executive Board

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

ADDRESS SERVICE REQUESTED

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U.S. POSTAGE
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PERMIT #107**



**ENJOY
YOUR
SUMMER
BREAK!**

CHANGES ARE IN THE WORKS!

We have important news about our publications for next year. The cost of printing and mailing has grown considerably faster than our income, so with heavy hearts, the TCSRA Executive Board has decided, after much thought and deliberation, that it's time to offer only email distribution of *Bits & Pieces*. It will also be available on our website at www.wssra-units.org/thurstoncounty.

We currently have about 725 of our 1,040 members receiving our emails. We need everyone signed up. Please go to www.wssra.org and scroll down to the bottom of the page to fill out and submit the form. You will receive an email from the Washington State School Retirees' Association, and you will need to click on the blue button labeled **Confirm Subscription**. If you don't receive an email, please check your spam folder.

Over the past two years, we have had many complaints about the lack of information in our directory, so the other change is that we will return to including addresses and phone numbers or email addresses in that publication. We know that we don't have current phone numbers for many of you, so if you have changed your phone number in the past

few years, please let us know. Also, some members have asked us to change their 4-line entries, and we will still honor those. Some want just their names and email addresses; others want just their names; a few don't want to be listed at all. Please contact **Sharon Dennis** at sed6501@outlook.com or at 360-438-5351 to personalize your listing.



BITS & PIECES, the newsletter of the Thurston County School Retirees' Association, has been published nine times a year, September through May, as a membership service since 1977.

The first editor was **Lucille Messer**. (See an example of an early newsletter on our website on the Archives page.) Other editors were **Irene Clise**, **Virginia Muntman**, and **Billie Williams**. **Sharon Dennis** took over in 2010 and continued as editor for the next 12 years. **Pat Slosson** began editing *Bits & Pieces* in 2022. Sharon will resume editing in September.

This is the last full, printed newsletter that we will publish. Although you won't be getting the newsletter in your physical mailbox, be sure to check your email inbox. We'll be there in September if you have signed up to receive our emails!