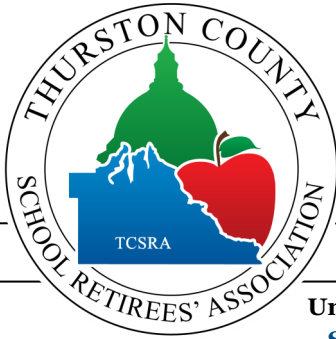




Bits & Pieces

www.wssra-units.org/thurstoncounty/

October 2026

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

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

*"Alone we are sparks,
but together we are fire."
(unknown)*

In September, TCSRA had its first board meeting of the year, and it felt like we were on fire. The energy and warmth in the room was palpable. We generated ideas for recruiting members, filling vacancies, planning community service events, and distributing mini-grants. This year the board will also review our bylaws and revise our job descriptions. We will be busy, and we would love your help!

Our executive board is comprised of elective officers and the chairs/co-chairs of our various committees. All TCSRA members are welcome to attend the meetings on the 2nd Friday of each month, September through May.

We have vacancies that we will be filling during the year: board secretary, membership committee chair, finance committee chair, and members on the committees themselves. We will be asking for volunteers, so start thinking about the activity that might be right for you!

We want to stay in touch with all of our members! We currently have 1,035 members in TCSRA. We rely on email via Constant Contact, a secure email service, to reach all of you with our online newsletter, important legislative news, and announcements about new WSSRA webinars. Currently, about two-thirds of our members, including you, are enrolled in Constant Contact, so we have been contacting the others in various ways to encourage them to sign up. If you know members who are not receiving our newsletter on the 1st of every month, September through May, please refer them to page 9 of our new directory for clear instructions for enrolling in this important email program.

There is a lot happening this year and lots of ways for you to be involved. We hope you will step up and add your spark to our efforts!

Pat Slosson, TCSRA Co-President

WELCOME BACK, ART DOLAN!

We are delighted to once again welcome TCSRA member **Art Dolan** to our October meeting to share a fascinating and timely presentation, *"The Declaration of Independence and its 250th Anniversary in 2026."*

Art Dolan is an active member and Past Commander of the George Rogers Clark Chapter, Sons of the American Revolution (S.A.R.). He is a direct descendant of a Revolutionary War patriot, Jeremiah Fitch, member of the Bedford militia 1775. Art was born near his patriot ancestor's home in Bedford, Massachusetts.



After serving in the military during the Viet Nam war, he became a science teacher in Spokane Public Schools. In 2003 after retiring from teaching, Art relocated to Olympia and began researching his Revolutionary War roots, discovering the S.A.R.

Art has presented five other programs for TCSRA: "George Washington's Secret Navy," "Espionage, The Second Oldest Profession," "Stars and Stripes Revolutionary Road," "Thomas Paine: A Reflection on the Revolution," "Women of the Revolution," and "Discrepant Science Events."

His presentations are always entertaining and informative, and he has let us know that 2026 is his last year for giving these programs. You won't want to miss this one!

Bobbie Andreas, Hospitality Committee

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

**Friday, October 16, 2026—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 9.**

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 9, at 253-381-2592.**

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

ZiNita Carrell, Email Committee 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:

Holly Johnson
Tenino School District



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

LEGISLATIVE REPORT



"Can you feel it in the air? It's getting dark earlier. The leaves are changing color. The mornings are chilly. These are all signs of the inevitable: The state legislative session is only a few months away. Unfortunately . . ." Click [here](#) to read more of Emmett Mills' article!

Also, click [here](#) to go to "Thurston County Seniors Will Benefit from New Tax Bill," an article on Thurston County's website.

NEW WEBINARS FROM WSSRA!



WSSRA is offering two new webinars. The first will be on **October 14, 2026**, for retirees. Special guests from the Washington State Health Care Authority will talk about PEBB insurance and rate changes for 2027.

The webinar on **October 27, 2026**, is for active (not-yet-retired) educators who are interested in early retirement.

Click [here](#) for more information, including how to register for either webinar.

PUBLIC EDUCATION UNDER ATTACK



Due to cuts, the Department of Education (DOE) now has only 2,000 staff members to oversee 68 million students. The President shifted K-12 and the postsecondary education grants to the Department of Labor and Indian education programs to the Department of the Interior; on-campus child care for parents in college to the Department of Human & Health Services (HHS); foreign medical accreditation to HHS; and the international education/foreign language programs to the Department of State.

The Office for Civil Rights staff, which monitors equal access to education for all and combats discrimination, was slashed 90% "to fight DEI and wokism." Plans include cutting \$350 million in grants for minority-serving institutions, especially those with Latino students. The California university system said the cuts will cause "irreparable harm."

Planned changes include moving the student loan debt portfolio, nearly \$1.7 trillion, to the Department of the Treasury and the management of special education, civil rights enforcement, and student financial aid to different departments.

The President's stated top priorities are school privatization and erasing uniform public education standards, so he RAISED funding to private, UN-accountable charter schools to \$500 million public dollars while gutting lifeline grant programs for minority-serving schools, e.g., afterschool programs, meals, building safety updates, and literacy programs. Then he eviscerated education research by \$900 million, eliminating critical data like statistics on school crime and safety, early childhood education, trade schools, and students with disabilities, etc.

Higher education student loan forgiveness for certain public servants, including teachers, firefighters, librarians, and nurses was dismantled. Pending plans include lowering the cap on student loans for specific degrees, like education, nursing, and social work, making college even less affordable and student debt more difficult to navigate.

Next up: destroy public education, slash daycare funding, and remove oversight of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act from the DOE.

Fact: That's what's happening TO the profession we love. Now VOTE!

Gery Gerst, Education Chair

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 November 2026 issue is due by October 12.**

Editor: Sharon Dennis, 360-438-5351.

BOOST UP FOR WINTER

It may be hard to think about getting shots again for winter, but the time is coming. This chart from last year has been updated. Vaccines help prevent us from getting seriously ill. It takes a couple weeks for vaccines to become effective, so the recommendation is that you get them by the end of October. You can go to the Washington State Department of Health website (doh.wa.gov) for additional immunization information. (Sources: AARP Oct/Nov 2024, doh.wa.gov)

Gail Feagins, Member and Health Services Committee Co-Chair

VACCINE	AGE	COMMENTS
COVID-19 (2025-2026)	Varies	Two doses 6 months apart yearly for those 65+ The 2026 Covid-19 formula will include the JN.1 lineage XFG. mNexspike by Moderna is a lower dose vaccine for those 65+ and those 12-64 with underlying conditions.
FLU	6 months and up	One dose every fall. Seniors should get the high-dose shot. CDC approved a new flu vaccine, mFlusiva , for adults 50 and up. It did better in preventing the flu against the flu vaccine for those 50 and up and better than the high dose vaccine for those 65 and up. Ask your doctor which one is best for you.
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 PCV 21 (Capvaxive) or PCV20 (Prevenar 20).
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.

IT'S TIME FOR MINI-GRANTS!



Once again, TCSRA members who are school employees in Thurston County will be eligible to apply for mini-grants. For decades we 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" on our website, November 1 through November 29. You will complete and submit your application online.

Further detailed information about the grant and the application process will be emailed directly to active (not-yet-retired) TCSRA members in October.

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. 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, stickers, toys, or trinkets unless these are an integral part of lessons or units.

Dennis Crisp & Kevan Hagen, Mini-Grant Co-chairs

COMMUNITY SERVICE

For years we have collected small toiletries for the homeless. They are distributed by an organization called The Other Bank which has expanded to giving out full-sized toiletries, cleaning supplies and baby items. Keep collecting the small items, but consider adding a larger item or two. There will be a container at the luncheons to collect items, large and small.

Following up on the Lions Club recycling project that we heard about last October, let's start saving bubble wrap and flexible plastic items such as grocery, produce, bread, drycleaning, and Amazon plastic delivery bags. Bring them to the luncheons, too. Crinkly plastic is not acceptable for this project.

There will be a service project at the South Sound Reading Foundation where we will clean and prepare used children's books for distribution to kids who may never have owned a book of their own. Volunteers are seated at a table with all the necessary supplies and a leader who explains the task.

Date: October 21st
Time: 10 a.m. – 12 noon
Address: 200 Sleater-Kinney RD NE

Sally Jones, Community Service Chair