

# The Journal

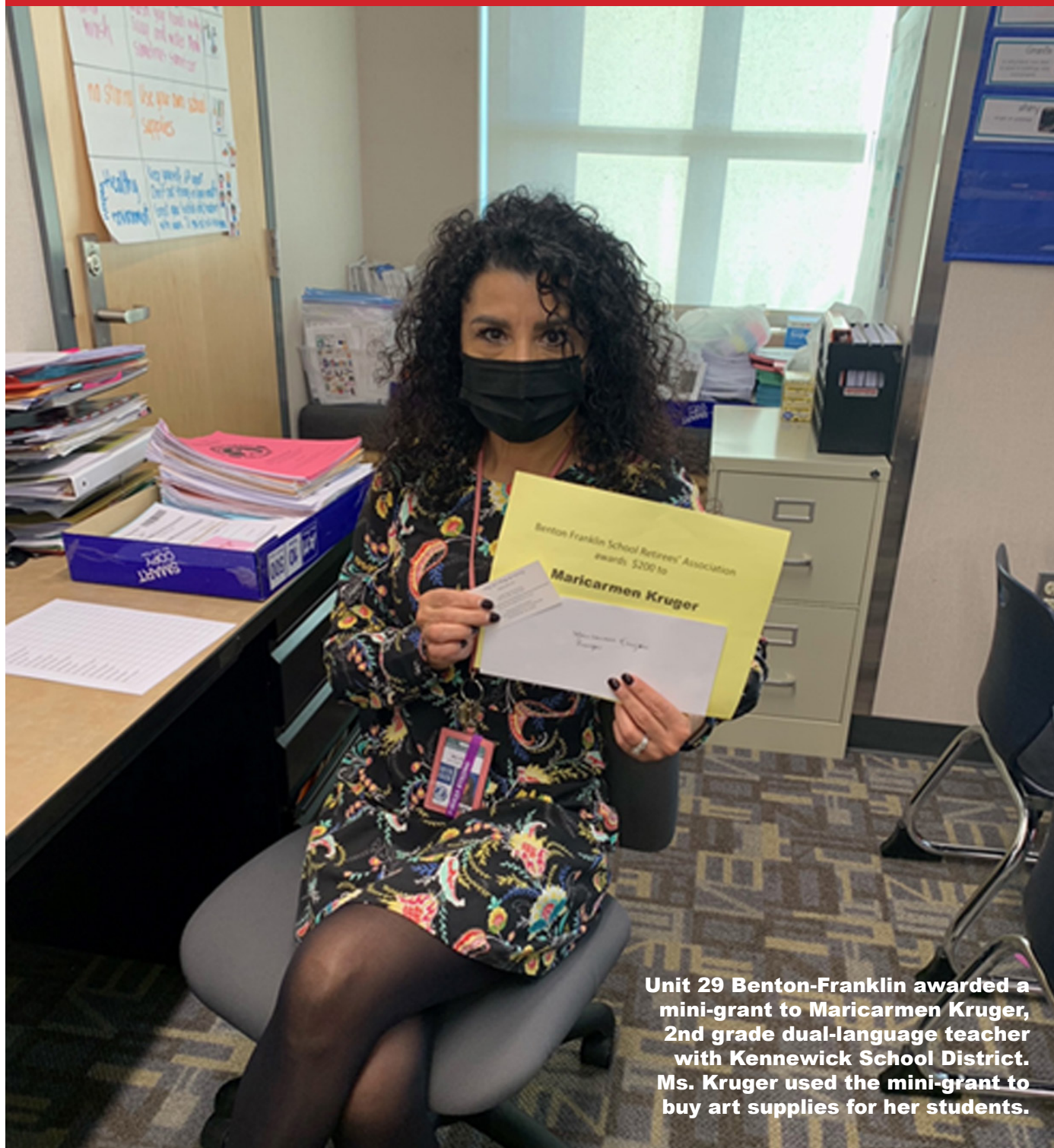
WASHINGTON STATE SCHOOL RETIREES' ASSOCIATION

Affiliated with the National Retired Teachers' Association (NRTA)—AARP's Educator Community



MARCH, APRIL 2021

VOLUME 74, ISSUE NO. 4



**Unit 29 Benton-Franklin awarded a mini-grant to Maricarmen Kruger, 2nd grade dual-language teacher with Kennewick School District. Ms. Kruger used the mini-grant to buy art supplies for her students.**

## WSSRA At Work For You



*A message from the president*

### Continued Connections with "School People"



*by Bob Duke, president*

1947 was quite a year. Notable births that year included Elton John, Paula Dean, Stephen King, Bob Duke and WSSRA. I have been reflecting on the beginning of an organization that has thrived for 73 years. What motivated our founders whose legacy lives on through our current members?

I spent some time reviewing a bulletin written in 1947 titled, "Teaching as a Career," by Benjamin Frazier, and "120 Years of American Education," by Thomas Snyder. The working careers of our founders were marked by challenges our country confronted. Many lived their childhood during World War I. The Great Depression began in 1929. World War II ended in 1944 and the adjustment following the war led to 1947 and the founding of our organization. Through all those times, school remained a constant in the lives of students, parents, and school staffs.

Frazier, in "Teaching as a Career," pointed out that during the war and recession relatively few teachers lost positions involuntarily. Teaching was stable in comparison to other professions. Schools were successful because they were close to the people they serve. In 1947, he reflected, "The teacher constantly draws from the richest, finest, and best in human thinking and feeling."

I think the continued desire to connect with colleagues and higher purpose lead to forming

an association that continues to thrive. Some of our focus has changed over the years but the foundation, so well laid, continues to live in the WSSRA Strategic Plan. Central to the Strategic Plan are three commitments that have remained constant.

**WSSRA will show our support for public education.** We will make it a priority to take a more active role in state and local educational issues.

**WSSRA will provide social and individual opportunities for growth.** We will promote social activities and programs that foster individual growth and make it a priority to recognize the achievements of our members.

**WSSRA will improve the general welfare of our members/communities by the action of our organization.** We will gather information to determine the needs of the membership. Identify and distribute appropriate information to members.

Our organization continues to thrive because our founders saw the wisdom in continuing to be connected to important work and kindred spirits that enriched their lives in school. Being lifted by higher purpose, providing social and individual opportunities for growth, and showing our support for education will ensure our continued success. I am grateful to continue to be associated with "school people." Our founders and today's WSSRA members know how to get things done. Our founders and today's members are connected to each other and to their communities. Our founders and our current members capitalize on the lessons learned from the hours spent in schools with colleagues, students, and parents.

*President, continued on page 5...*



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**JOURNAL INFORMATION**  
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Board, WSSRA President and  
WSSRA Executive Board assume  
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items accepted, articles cannot be  
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Material appearing in The  
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action by the board, councils, com-  
mittees and units, is presented to  
promote the general welfare of  
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of the bylaws.

**JOURNAL articles to:**  
Kristin Murphy, editor  
editor@wssra.org

**Upcoming JOURNAL  
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**April 5, 2021**  
for May/Jun. 2021 issue

**June 15, 2021**  
for July/Aug/Sep 2021 issue

**WSSRA At Work For You**



*A message from the executive director*

## Improving Long-Term Care



by Alan Burke, Ed.D., executive director

Perhaps one of the most overlooked but important outcomes of the COVID-19 crisis has been the universal focus on the plight of nursing homes and the fate of the 1.4 million elderly and disabled Americans who live in them. That focus first took hold in Kirkland over a year ago as the nation watched in horror as resident after resident of the Life Care Center became ill and in 46 instances passed away.

Throughout the country, that scene was played out time and time again as the pandemic stretched from days to weeks to months and now to over a year. For those of us at WSSRA this was particularly painful as we all know friends, relatives, and, in several cases, fellow members living in care facilities who, for all intents and purposes, have been trapped in their residences.

How heart-wrenching it was to see relatives “visit” their kin through sealed windows. How awful it was to watch as coffin after coffin was transferred from a particularly hard-hit nursing home to a local mortuary. And how troubling it is to realize that 52% of the COVID-19 fatalities in Washington State have come from residents of nursing homes or long-term care facilities. Vaccines are helping, but for many they came too late.

So, what to do? Fortunately, our partner organization AARP has been following this closely during the pandemic and, in a recent publication (AARP Bulletin, June 2020), offers several suggestions for improving service standards at nursing homes so that, if a similar COVID-like event happens in the future, the industry will be better prepared. Importantly, these suggestions—really challenges—are aimed at not only handling a health crisis, but also at improving day-to-day services.

- **Improve enforcement of nursing home standards.** According to experts, before the pandemic standards were often not enforced. That has changed with COVID-19, but in many cases too late to halt a crisis. Infection control, particularly, stands out as a problem that needs attention. Add to that way too low staffing levels—especially for registered nurses—and problems mount. Staffing levels need to increase. Standards should be reviewed, strengthened when appropriate, and strictly enforced.

- **Promote Service-at-Home Options.** Americans overwhelmingly want to remain in their homes rather than move to a nursing home. Unfortunately, current law mandates that states use Medicaid dollars strictly for nursing home services, thereby cutting off stay-at-home options for many older folks. To be sure, federal waivers are available to states to circumvent this rule, but the process is long and onerous. Easy to monitor stay-at-home options deserve a second look.

- **Clean up unhealthy environments.** Infectious control breaks down when residents share rooms, showers, and toilets. Facilities need to provide safe distances between residents when facing seasonal flu or something more serious like COVID-19. Again, Medicaid rules and funding are the key challenges here.

- **Provide better pay and working conditions for staff.** Nursing home workers, more than other health care professionals, struggle with low pay and understaffed conditions. Consequently, they change jobs frequently, hoping to move up the health care “food chain” to better pay and less

*Executive Director, continued on page 5...*

## Legislative News



## 2021 Legislative Session Update



by Peter Diedrick, legislative director

### Mid-Legislative Session Update

State legislators have kicked off their first digital legislative session. House and Senate leaders made COVID-19 management, economic relief, social justice, and police reform their priorities for this session. Most legislation receiving attention has fit into those categories. That said, rank-and-file legislators have not let those guardrails deter them – over 1,000 bills have been sponsored in the first four weeks of the legislative session.

WSSRA's priorities all involve money, so the condition of the economy and the state budget are paramount for our group. At the time the *Journal* went to print, there was a roughly \$1 billion state budget shortfall with \$3 billion in emergency reserves. Legislators can expect updated information in March, and they will use that information to craft their 2021-2023 budget.

### WSSRA's Legislative Agenda

WSSRA's legislative agenda for the 2021 session is divided between defending against budget cuts and offering legislation to help K-12 retirees deal with the COVID-19 crisis.

The chief concern for WSSRA's lobbyists is protecting current benefit levels. Current retiree health benefits cost the state \$150 million per year – a tidy sum. Should the state's financial situation deteriorate, that benefit could be cut or eliminated. Similarly, the budget crisis could cause appropriators to skip this year's payment to the state's pension accounts – a terrible financial decision. The response from legislators, in our initial overtures, has been very positive. No lawmakers are currently advocating for those cuts; however, the fiscal situation could worsen before the budget is written. Retirees must stay vigilant.

WSSRA's COVID-19 bills have been drafted, sponsored, submitted, and referred to the House Appropriations Committee. The first, House Bill 1032 by Representative Paul Harris (R-Vancouver), would temporarily lower the retirement age for K-12 employees with thirty years of service. The full retirement age would temporarily be age 60. Also, for K-12 employees with 20-30 years of service, early retirement penalties would be reduced starting at age 60. The second bill, House Bill 1040 by Representative Laurie Dolan (D-Olympia), would create a PEBB retiree insurance open enrollment period for retirees currently locked out of PEBB insurance policies.

### Additional Legislation for Seniors

Other organizations have sponsored some good bills. Senate Bill 5021 would protect school employees from having furlough-related pension reductions. Many districts have furloughed employees during the COVID-19 crisis. SB 5021 would ensure those furloughed employees continue to get full pension credit for that period. As of mid-February, this bill has moved out of committee and is ready for final passage in the Senate.

Senate Bills 5020, 5075, 5076, and 5203 would all work to lower the price of prescription drugs. SB 5020 seeks to penalize drug companies for large price increases that are not based on science or production cost increases. SB 5075 would require pharmacy benefit managers – prescription drug distributors – to honor insurance company pharmacy networks. SB 5076 would make it easier to access mail-order prescription drug services. SB 5203 would allow the state to coordinate multi-state bulk ordering of generic prescription drugs, the way vaccines are purchased. As of early-February, these bills have not been acted on; however, they are expected to be moved out of committee for consideration by the full Senate.

### The Road Forward

Everyone on "the Hill" is ready for in-person meetings. Digital meetings have happily increased access to legislators for constituents who cannot get to Olympia – a positive development. However, face-to-face access to legislators, staff, and experts in Olympia is essentially non-existent due to the closure of the capitol building. There is also a desire to tackle other important issues besides COVID-19. There is a profound hope that the digital session is a one-off event, and all our lives can normalize soon.

The next edition of the *Journal* will feature updated information on WSSRA's goals and the state budget. Please stay in contact with your legislators, and please stay healthy.



**Visit [WSSRA.ORG](http://WSSRA.ORG)  
click on “Legislative”**

**Information about  
legislative priorities,  
contacting your legislator,  
session bill reports, and the  
WSSRA Legislative Podcast**

*...President, continued from page 2*

On behalf of the WSSRA board, I would like to thank each member for keeping the hopes and dreams of our founders alive. During these challenging times our members have stepped up, continuing to serve our communities, our schools and each other. As Louis Armstrong sang so respectfully in 1950, “We are traveling in the footsteps of those who’ve gone before.” Our wise founders left solid footprints on which we travel. I think they would be proud of the path they left and the footprints we continue to follow.

*...Executive Director, continued from page 3*

stressful work. The national average of \$13 per hour will not attract professionals who want to work permanently in this field, nor will facing huge caseloads on a daily basis. Low morale and frequent staff turnover also increases the chances that administrators cut corners on hiring, which can result in bringing poorly trained, or in rare cases, abusive employees to care centers.

- **Offer more long-term care insurance options.** The cost to care for a person in a nursing home is not cheap; Medicaid pays an average of \$6,180 per resident per month. Not many Americans can foot that bill, so long-term care insurance is present to fill the gap. However, that insurance is expensive, spottily offered in the private market, and therefore not frequently purchased. Some countries have subsidized long-term care insurance through the national government, but that has not been occurred in the USA.

Sometimes, a good crisis offers just the right amount of motivation to solve a major problem. Hopefully COVID-19 will

provide the impetus to improve the nursing home industry. The home health care option, particularly, has merit and would be popular with seniors.

Reducing resident density, improving the pay and benefits for staff, enforcing established regulations, and implementing stronger infection control procedures will help as well. These changes come with costs, and undoubtedly will need some state and federal help to accomplish. In Washington State, HB 1218 is the current legislative vehicle to address some of these issues.

Almost all of us have experience with observing as loved ones find themselves in a nursing home, typically toward the end of life. Often, those observations have left a bad taste in our mouths about the overall state of nursing home residency—and has caused many of us to set a personal goal of not ending up in one. Of course, anyone could require care center services at some point down the road. If that day ever comes, hopefully the 2020-21, COVID-induced, re-look at nursing home services will have resulted in positive changes.

## WSSR-PAC News



## WSSR PAC: Our PAC Needs Your Help!



by Edith Ruby, WSSR-PAC vice president and Mary Wallon, WSSR-PAC secretary

Last summer WSSR-PAC contributed to the campaigns of 38 legislative candidates. Thirty-five of these candidates are now in our legislature. These legislators will vote this year on whether Medicare eligible retirees will continue to receive their healthcare benefit and if the full amount recommended by the state actuary will be added to state pension funds. In future legislative sessions they will be deciding on a variety of legislation that can harm or hurt current and future school retirees.

As our PAC has become more active, we have regained some of what was lost after the 2008 recession. The Medicare Eligible Healthcare Benefit has been restored to its 2010 level, a onetime 1.5% COLA was given to Plan 1 retirees in 2018, and a 3% COLA in 2020. Full contributions to the pension funds have been made without question.

Contributions to candidates in August 2020 emptied WSSR-PAC's coffers. We are near the beginning of a two year period heading towards August 2022 when all positions in the Washington State House of Representatives and half of the State Senate seats will be up for grabs. They will be filled either by incumbents friendly to our goals or those not so friendly, challengers who understand our needs or those who don't. We want to be prepared for that election season by having enough in the treasury to support the campaigns of candidates who will help us. The more legislators who are friendly to our legislative goals, the better chance we have of achieving those goals.

It's been difficult this COVID-19 year to connect with our 17,500+ WSSRA members. Without seeing some members at convention and others at monthly meetings, WSSR-PAC has had little opportunity to remind you of the importance of contributions. A big thank you from all of us goes to our past contributors. And, a big thank you to those of you who provided information last summer about your local candidates. The information helped with making decisions about who should receive contributions.

Now, we must rebuild the treasury in preparation for the campaigns beginning in the spring of 2022. Approximately 2% of all WSSRA members are consistent contributors to WSSR-PAC. What would help most is if a larger number make a contribution, small or large. It's not just the amount contributed, which is important, but also how many are contributing. Legislators

notice - with 17,500+ members, why do only 350 contribute to their PAC? How much more impressive if 1,000 contribute! And if 1,000 additional members gave up buying one latte during 2021 and contributed the cost of that latte to WSSR-PAC, that would allow the maximum allowed contribution to three additional candidates, or smaller contributions to even more. **If you have never donated to the PAC, please try it!** It feels good to be part of our organization's efforts to ensure that retired school employees, present and future, have a secure retirement.

Our vivacious and caring treasurer, Lora, has made it easy to contribute online at [wssr-pac.org](http://wssr-pac.org) where you can sign up to give a small amount each month. That can add up to a substantial yearly contribution! Or, you can send a check to Lora (see box). Make the check out to WSSR-PAC. Your participation is vital to our support of legislators who support us! Thank you in advance for your consideration.



**Please support the  
WSSR-PAC  
by making a  
contribution today!**

**Online: [WSSR-PAC.ORG](http://WSSR-PAC.ORG)**

**Check Payable to: WSSR-PAC**

**Mail to: WSSR-PAC**

*c/o Lora Brabant, Treasurer*

**125 West 11th Street**

**Port Angeles, WA 98362-7709**



## Pre-Retirement Seminar



## Pre-Retirement Seminar a Success



by Alan Burke, Ed.D., executive director

With unprecedented interest, the WSSRA-sponsored virtual Pre-retirement Seminar on February 18 was successful beyond expectations. Speakers from Social Security/Medicare, VEBA, the Department of Retirement Systems, and the Health Care Authority/PEBB provided 1,700 participants with the basics of retirement planning. In the 74-year history of our organization, this was by far the largest audience ever to participate in a WSSRA-sponsored event.

In a normal year, several WSSRA units would have planned similar events, but would have scheduled them on-site, meaning that attendees could see, question and at times meet privately with presenters. Of course, 2021 is anything but normal—thus the single statewide virtual event.

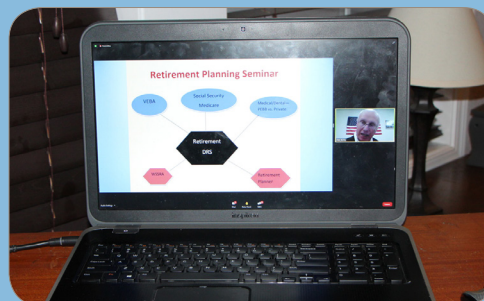
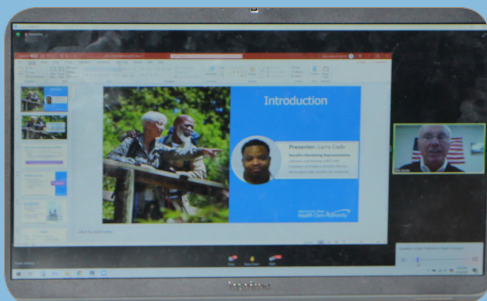
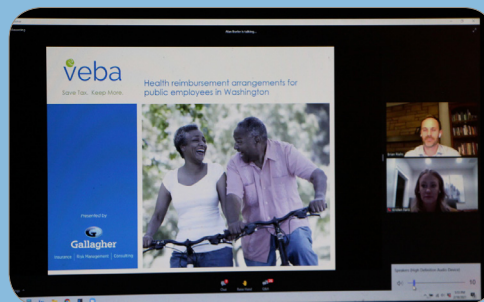
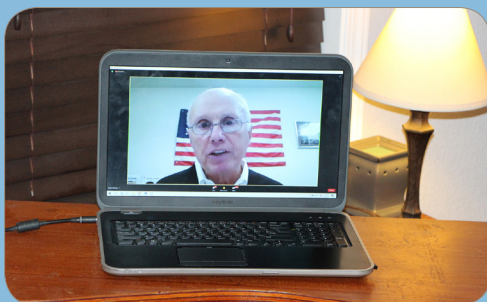
To accommodate those who could not attend, the seminar recording is posted on the WSSRA website, as are presenter

slide decks. In addition, attendees were asked to follow-up with the various agencies if they had situation specific retirement planning questions.

Thanks to unit leadership and active members for encouraging non-member teachers and support personnel to attend the session. Thanks also to Chair Paul Schafer and Retirement Planning Committee, board member Ron Crawford, and the staff—Tara, Peter, Michele, and Debbie—for a job well done.

The interest in retirement planning this year is astounding, due at least in part to the unique challenges in providing online instruction to the state's 1.1 million kids. WSSRA, as always, was there to fill a need for active educators nearing retirement. Attendees appreciated the opportunity, and the support of our organization in providing necessary retirement information.

## 2021 Pre-Retirement Seminar via Zoom Sponsored by WSSRA





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## **2021 Convention**

### **Convention Moved to October**

At its February 3rd meeting the WSSRA Executive Board voted to move the dates of the 2021 Convention from June 6 – 10 to October 3 – 6. The October event will be held at the same venue—the Pasco Red Lion. The board made that decision based on problems with vaccine availability and the realization that holding a large gathering of seniors in June would not be appropriate or safe given ongoing COVID-19 virus concerns.

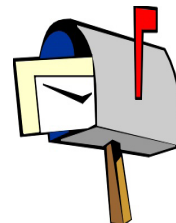


The hope is that COVID-19 worries will be behind us by fall, and that we can hold a safe on-site event. Of course, COVID-19 will determine if that comes to pass. A final go/no-go decision on the October Convention will be made by mid-summer. If it becomes clear that we cannot safely meet face-to-face in October, we will schedule a virtual convention. For now, please hold October 3 – 6 on your calendars.

## **The Journal**

### **More than one Journal in your Mailbox?**

The *Journal* comes out five times each year. WSSRA's longstanding practice is to send a copy of the *Journal* to every member. For those households with more than one member, multiple copies are sent to the same address - one for each member.



If this scenario applies to you and your spouse/roommate and you would prefer to receive only one copy per household, please contact WSSRA Membership Coordinator Michele Hunter, [michele@wssra.org](mailto:michele@wssra.org) or 360-413-5496, ext. 116. She will make the changes to our mailing list.



## Membership: Strength In Numbers

# Looking for Membership Building Opportunities



by Don Parks, state membership committee chair

In spite of what our state and nation have been through in the past year, our WSSRA membership numbers haven't decreased significantly. And for that, we can be very thankful, in my opinion. Our levels have slipped a bit but not to an alarming extent. WSSRA membership, as of February 1, stood at 17,628. That included 12,320 pension deduction members, 4,171 "actives," and 1,095 cash members. By comparison, membership stood at 17,744 on February 1, 2020. That's good considering we haven't been able to do much in the way of in-person membership building in the past year.

AMBA continues to help out, with about 70 new members pending. We are actually maintaining at a relatively strong level. Thanks to everyone who is working on membership in the ways that are possible under the circumstances.

The state and our local school districts are doing their best to move toward returning to regular school operations. I urge membership chairs to be aware of these efforts and do as much as possible to begin scheduling WSSRA presentations at the building and district-level. In addition, presentations to mini-grant recipients and scholarship winners are also effective ways to get the word out about WSSRA. Be on the lookout for opportunities to connect with potential members, especially once things open up again.

The Council of Committee Chairs meeting, which is usually held in April, has been tentatively postponed to August. I look forward to getting together with all of the local and regional chairs as soon as it is safe, please stay tuned. Enjoy the spring, stay smart and safe!

## WSSRA MEMBERSHIP ENROLLMENT FORM

Do you know a school retiree who should be a member? Clip this form and ask them to complete and return the form today!

### DUES DEDUCTION AUTHORIZATION FORM WASHINGTON STATE RETIREES' ASSOCIATION PO BOX 5127, LACEY, WA 98509

Please Print

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Phone \_\_\_\_\_

Mailing Address \_\_\_\_\_ City \_\_\_\_\_ St \_\_\_\_\_ Zip \_\_\_\_\_

SS Number \_\_\_\_\_ - \_\_\_\_\_ - \_\_\_\_\_ Home/Personal Email Address \_\_\_\_\_

Retirement Plan (CIRCLE) TRS1 TRS2 TRS3 PERS1 PERS2 PERS3 SERS2 SERS3

Name of WSSRA Unit (or school district last employed) \_\_\_\_\_

I authorize the Washington State Department of Retirement Systems to deduct the following dues and any future increases as voted by the membership, from my monthly retirement allowance and to pay such deduction to the Washington State School Retirees' Association.

Should I wish to cancel ensuing deductions I will send a written notification of cancellation to Washington State Department of Retirement Systems and WSSRA.

**DUES DEDUCTION: \$7 per month or CASH DUES: \$84 per year**

Date \_\_\_\_\_ Signature \_\_\_\_\_

01—Clarkston/Asotin/ Pomeroy	Pacific	11—Lewis County	19—Renton-South King	25—Spokane	31—Walla Walla- Columbia
02—Chelan/Douglas	06—Southwest King	12—Lower Columbia	20—Seattle	27—Pierce County	32—Whatcom County
03—Clallam County	07—Jefferson County	14—Mason County	21—Skagit/Island/San Juan	28—Thurston County	33—Whitman County
04—Columbia Basin	08—Kitsap County	15—Okanogan County	22—Sno-Isle	29—Benton-Franklin	34—Yakima County
05—Grays Harbor/	09—Kittitas County	16—East King	23—Sno-King	30—Southwest Wash- ington	
	10—Columbia Gorge	18—Pend Oreille			

Contact WSSRA for membership information: Michele Hunter, [michele@wssra.org](mailto:michele@wssra.org) or 360-413-5496, ext 116

## Supporting Future Educators



# WSSR Foundation: Baskets and Auction Items



by Paula Buck Nichols, WSSR Foundation chair

We would like to thank everyone that has donated to the foundation so far this year. We really appreciate your support.

This is the time of the year we encourage everyone to get their baskets and auction items ready for the annual WSSRA convention. Even though our convention might be moved to October, now — during this stay at home period — would be a good time to work on those baskets or make something spectacular for the silent auction.

All proceeds from the baskets and auction items go to scholarships for graduating high seniors who plan a career in education.



## DONATION FORM

### WASHINGTON STATE SCHOOL RETIREES' FOUNDATION

PO Box 5127, Lacey, WA 98509

Please Print

Donor Name \_\_\_\_\_ Phone \_\_\_\_\_

Mailing Address \_\_\_\_\_ City \_\_\_\_\_ St \_\_\_\_\_ Zip \_\_\_\_\_

Donation \$ \_\_\_\_\_ In Honor \$ \_\_\_\_\_ In Memory \$ \_\_\_\_\_

NOTE: If you would like the person notified of this gift, you must include their full name and address below.

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Name _____		
Person to be Notified _____		
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City _____	State _____	Zip _____

<input type="checkbox"/> In Honor	<input type="checkbox"/> Memorial	\$ _____
Name _____		
Person to be Notified _____		
Address _____		
City _____	State _____	Zip _____

☐ Please check box if you would like to receive a receipt for your records. The WSSR-Foundation is a 501(c)(3) and donations are tax deductible within the limits of the law.

Check \$ \_\_\_\_\_ # \_\_\_\_\_  
Cash \$ \_\_\_\_\_

## ONLINE FOUNDATION DONATION

**wssra.org** Foundation link > Donation Form

## Foundation Contributors

Carolyn Bjerke - in memory of Carolyn Patterson

Mary Brown - donation

Kathleen Dyblie - donation

Ann Chenhall - in memory of Gene Forrester

Theresa Cowger - donation

James and Shirlee Hall - in memory of Gene Forrester, Suellen Musgrove, donation

Barbara Landrock - in memory of Inez Boffey

Ellene Mardesich - in memory of Sharon Green

Laurel Powell - in honor of Holly Call

Gary Radliff - in memory of John Thompson

Patricia Siggs - in memory of Joan Trunk

Mona Stacy - in memory of Don Stacy

Gary Wargo - in memory of Lloyd Olson

Gary and Rosalie Williamson - donation

Chelan-Douglas SRA - in memory of Al Pflugrath, Charles Sears, Danice Brown, Gene Hoon, James Norton, Julie Hartog, Lygena Schons, Racel Rediger, Ron Kerby

Grays Harbor-Pacific SRA - donation

Lewis County SRA - in memory of Blanche Jobes, Laurel Pickett, donation

Pend Orielle SRA - in memory of Cindy Hoisington, Edith Jones, Fred Vogel, James Mathis, Mary Hays, Mick Schultz, Orlando Nicholson.

Skagit-Isle-San Juan REA - in memory of Andrine Knapp, Charleen Relyea, Henrietta Brooks, Lidabeth Hicks

Sno-King SRA - in memory of Gene Forrester

Southwest King SRA - in memory of Donna Mills, Nancy Murray

Southwest Washington SRA - in memory of Gene Forrester

### Contributions to the Gene & Vivian Forrester Memorial Scholarship

Mike & Sharon Boring

Alan & Pamela Burke

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Matt Grant

James & Shirlee Hall

Jon Halvorson

Jerry & Jean Hendrickson

Karen Keller

Barbara Landrock

Jeannette Maass

J.P. Martin

Edie & Ed Moersch

Caroline Nielson

Marni Pilcher

Rita Requa

Kathy Schoultz

Carolyn Stella

Eileen Wascisin

Lewis County SRA

Pierce Co. SRA



## Convention Baskets





## WSSRA Connections

## The Other Epidemic



by Doug Shadel, AARP-WA State Director



### ***Widespread worry is sparking a huge wave of scam activity in America***

Back in April, I was in a panic. The COVID-19 crisis was growing, and I was unable to find face masks for my family. But then I started seeing ads for them on Facebook. Normally, I'd never

consider such an offer, but in desperation, I clicked through, ordered three masks for \$26 and ... never heard from the "seller" again. Yours truly was deceived by a scammer!

Since then, I've heard story after story about bad consumer decisions made since the pandemic began. At the AARP Fraud Watch Network, our help-line has been ringing off the hook since March [2020], with members reporting rip-offs. What's going on? It appears that the crisis is making us crazy emotionally. And as I've often said, strong emotions can hijack our logical reasoning. For years, every fraudster we've interviewed has told us that the key to cheating people is to get them into a heightened emotional state so they can be more easily manipulated.

A while back, AARP partnered with the Wall Street regulator FINRA and Stanford University to test the emotion-fraud connection. We had subjects play a computer game. A third were rigged to make the player lose money; another third were rigged to win; the last third were rigged so players

roughly broke even. The goal: Deliberately spark the first two groups' emotions.

Next, we asked them to review several ads for fraudulent offers. The result: Significantly more of those in a heightened emotional state (both positive and negative) said they would buy the products.

Fast-forward to now. How many Americans are not in a heightened emotional state over the pandemic, the economy, our future? Sadly, that makes this a harvest season for scammers. They don't even need to be cunning; merely offering a face mask worked on me. You know the solutions:

- Be aware of your emotions before clicking on a link or buying something from an unknown seller.
- Always wait 24 hours before making a big purchase.
- Use established, well-known retailers that stand by their products.
- Don't answer a call if you don't recognize the number! Let the caller leave a message for you to assess.
- Be extremely dubious of any caller claiming to be from a government agency or tech-support company. This is almost always a fraud.

In short, give the thinking part of your brain a fighting chance against the clouding effects of pandemic-induced emotions, so you can make decisions that are best for you.

**Have questions related to scams or think you're a target?**

**Call the AARP Fraud Watch Network Helpline,  
toll-free at 877-908-3360**

**[aarp.org/wa](https://aarp.org/wa)**

## Tax-Aide Offers Tax Prep Help in Washington

by Bruce Carlson, AARP-WA, Associate State Director of Communications

AARP Foundation Tax-Aide began taking appointments for its free tax preparation and e-filing services, beginning February 12, 2021. Due to the limitations of the COVID-19 pandemic, the traditional face-to-face preparation with a Tax-Aide counselor is being replaced with a Contact-Free approach.

Anyone wishing assistance with their tax preparation needs must first make an appointment. Appointments for taxpayers living in Washington can be requested by calling 888-OUR-AARP (888-687-2277) and leaving a voicemail. A volunteer will call back to set up an appointment. Assistance may also be requested through the AARP Foundation Tax-Aide website ([www.aarpfoundation.org/taxaide](http://www.aarpfoundation.org/taxaide))

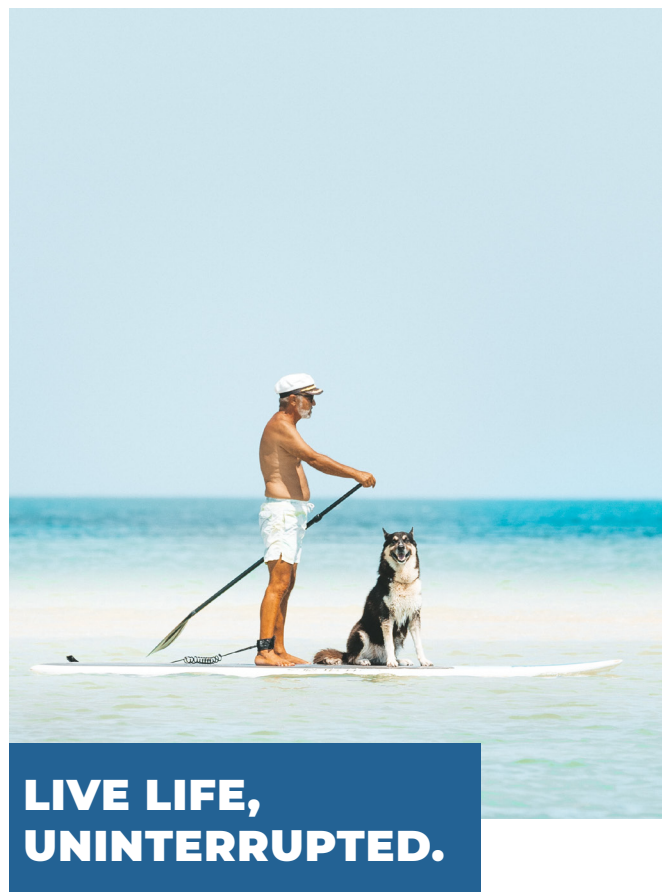
All Tax preparation interaction with taxpayers will take place via telephone and video conferencing. The service will be offered through April 15 and is completely free. Tax-Aide is capable of processing most personal tax returns with some limited exceptions.

“Tax-Aide is a free service for anyone who needs help completing their tax return and filing it electronically,” said Terri Jones of Vancouver, AARP Tax-Aide Washington state coordinator. “Our dedicated and certified volunteers will provide the same high-quality service as in years past, just in a different way to accommodate COVID-19.”

Tax-Aide is an all-volunteer organization whose tax counselors are trained and certified by the IRS. Last year, AARP Foundation Tax-Aide volunteers helped more than 25,000 taxpayers in Washington before all sites were closed in mid-March.

AARP Foundation Tax-Aide operates the nation’s largest volunteer-run free tax preparation service. Volunteers are trained and IRS-certified every year to ensure they understand the latest changes to the U.S. Tax Code.

In 2020, 1.5 million taxpayers who used AARP Tax-Aide Foundation received more than \$1 billion in income tax refunds. They also avoided any tax preparation fees and pitches for high-interest tax credit or “refund loans.” The service is offered in conjunction with the IRS, and AARP membership is not required.



Keep living your way. You can, with these benefits and discounts from **WSSRA & AMBA**:

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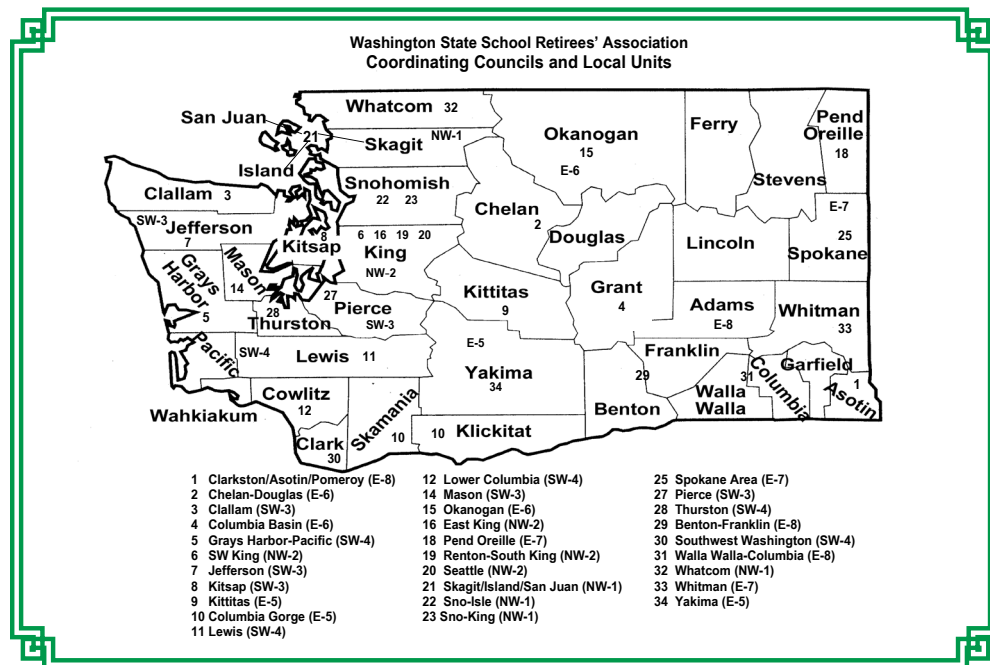
**[myambabenefits.info/wssra](http://myambabenefits.info/wssra)**



## WSSRA Around The State

# What's happening in...

## From the Coordinating Councils and Local Units



*Note: Given the public health concerns caused by the coronavirus pandemic, most WSSRA units have been unable to meet in-person for several months. As we look forward to a time when WSSRA members can safely gather for meetings, luncheons, field-trips, volunteering, etc., please explore ways to stay connected, such as online (such as Zoom), by email, or phone.*

## NORTHWEST-1

### Unit 21 Skagit/Island/San Juan:

A unit member sent the following in an email, "When I retired I immediately joined WSSRA (I think under a different name at that time.) The monthly luncheons were held at a church in Allen. I've always enjoyed the times the retired employees were together. The magazine has always been informative and given us needed information on the legislative sessions."

Oh for the good old days when we could gather together for meetings and social gatherings. Those days will return, but in the meantime, the unit continues to function. Members have been educating themselves on the nuances of Zoom and are using it to hold board meetings and communicate with local legislators. Who says you can't teach an old dog new tricks? Maybe this is one of the advantages of having worked in the public school system, where change was a common theme.

This year, the frequency of the unit's newsletter was increased to help keep members informed. More money in mini-grants has been given out than ever before. The unit is looking at doing more this spring in order to help those working in public education be successful during this time of remote or hybrid learning. Several members have also agreed to join the "legislative buddy system" for sending letters to local legislators. In the meantime, plans are being made for future events that

can be held in person. Hopefully, we can see each other in the near future.

### Unit 23 Sno-King:

The SKSR board has continued meeting via Zoom. The unit's bi-monthly, "Bulletin," features health articles by Robin Randles and legislative information from legislative committee member **Tim Knopf**. The "Bulletin" editor, **Jo Caldwell**, always presents the information for members in an excellent format.

Several members have volunteered to be "legislative buddies" and write to their state legislators on a weekly basis. The unit has new scholarship readers to assist in reading scholarship applications for the in NW-1 Coordinating Council and for the unit scholarship.

The Humanities Washington webinar set-up by **Roberta Hawkins**, in February was very successful. David Buerge provided an excellent presentation on Chief Seattle, who he has studied for more than 20 years. The webinar was hosted by SKSR with WSSRA assisting with Zoom. There were over 114 attendees.

The unit opened a second grant period for active educators to use the grant money not used in the first round in October. **Karen McElliott**, grant coordinator, assisted by



## WSSRA Around The State

**Jan Phillips**, read the eight applications. They approved all and the teachers received \$1,951 in grant funds.

### ***Unit 32 Whatcom County:***

Unit 32 continues to hold virtual meetings. On Thursday, March 18, 2021, Unit 32 will have Legislative Director **Peter Diedrick** update members on legislative happenings. An AMBA representative will give a short presentation on what is available for members and their role.

On May 21, Superintendent of Public Instruction Chris Reykdal (OSPI) will give a presentation on current happenings in Washington schools and how school districts are adapting to the changes caused by the pandemic.

The Unit 32 board continues to look at more ways to support students and teachers in Whatcom county schools.

Checks were mailed to unit grant recipients in the Federal Way, Vashon, and Highline school districts for school supplies to enrich their classes and programs.

Some of you may have attended the retirement seminar held in February and remember if you worked as a paraprofessional before becoming a teacher you may be able to collect two separate retirement plans. Notify the state if this is your situation.

Thank you to unit board members that have continued on this year: Vice President **Kerry Lohr**, Treasurer **Carol Brandt**, Secretary and Membership **Nancy Tracy**, along with Karen Juhl - grants facilitator, **Karen Richter**, RN - health committee, **Nell Hepburn** - member-at-large, and **Keitha Bryson** - legislative representative.

### ***Unit 16 East-King:***

Due to the challenges facing educators because of COVID-19, East-King's mini-grant applications were due earlier than in the past. Fourteen grants were approved for a total of \$3,620.

Several teachers working with special education students faced unique situations. One learning center educator sought interactive math cards that gave students feedback and tracked their progress. Two others asked for funds

to get special books into the hands of their students. A reading specialist for below-grade youngsters needed phonemic resource materials and accompanying equipment for remote learning.

A high school teacher requested funds to purchase a special camera so he could make videos demonstrating manufacturing processes to be used for remote learning. A middle school teacher received funds for digital math bundles so that sixth and seventh graders could practice various math skills and concepts remotely.

In other cases, primary teachers sought grants to supply their students with art supplies, manipulatives to be used only individually, and specialized books for STEM lessons.

Three librarians received funds, one for genre studies, and two for books that show diversity. Another grant went to a middle school orchestra teacher seeking manipulatives to help her students with rhythm. The last went to a school with many low-income families who were in dire need of hygiene supplies.

At the last East-King executive board Zoom meeting, **Jeani Goodrich** sought a donation for funds for socks and jackets for homeless youth at New Bethlehem Place. The motion passed unanimously.

### ***Unit 20 Seattle:***

The SSRA board met via Zoom on January 25 to bring everyone up-to-date. Up for discussion was future planning for member luncheon-meetings and programs, which haven't been held since last March.

The unit issued a new edition of SSRA's newsletter, "The Bulletin," also in January, which was both mailed to members and posted on the SSRA website ([www.seattlesra.org](http://www.seattlesra.org)).

The scholarship committee has completed its 2020-2021 work by issuing scholarships to both high school graduates interested in pursuing work in education and for college internships for student teachers.

The entire SSRA board wishes to thank those who made generous donations to the unit's Scholarship and Grant fund, many made in memory of those recently deceased members.

The unit's legislative committee continues to update members on the latest issues and happenings in the Washington State Legislature. They also regularly submit informative articles for "The Bulletin."

## NORTHWEST-2

### ***Unit 6 Southwest King:***

The January newsletter went out to all unit members announcing the Zoom Humanities Washington program featuring speaker Tessa Hulls (Strong Women in the Early 20th Century). The unit had 100 participants sign-up to attend this informative event.



## WSSRA Around The State

### SOUTHWEST-3

#### *Unit 3 Clallam County:*

Clallam County School Retirees' Association met via Zoom on January 19, 2021. There were two guest speakers. One was the WSSRA executive director, **Alan Burke**. The other was Monica Dixon from the Olympic Peninsula Healthy Community Coalition.

Monica spoke about a health program across the peninsula, which is called 5210. It stands for 5 servings of fruits and vegetables a day, a limit of 2 hours of screen time, at least 1 hour of physical activity, and 0 drinks with added sugar. It started out as a program for

kids but is something that is beneficial at any age.

The unit has been able to serve the community through mini grants and scholarships to the tune of \$55,300 in the past year. Most recently, in January, five mini grants totaling \$2,300 were awarded to teachers in five Clallam County school districts.

On February 16, another unit meeting was held via Zoom. Since restaurant restrictions were still in place, a guest speaker with an extensive slide show was postponed until next year. Instead, members attending were given the opportunity to discuss what and how they are doing during the pandemic.

#### *Unit 8 Kitsap County:*

Kitsap County School Retirees Association has had a busy year. The unit's September meeting honored members over 80 years old with flowers. In October, the unit gave \$100 to Bremerton Food Bank. Unit members also gave \$700 worth of hats, gloves, scarves, mittens, etc. to Kitsap County Resources for those in need. A Christmas get-together was held at Kitsap Mobile Home Park Community Room with pizza being delivered. In December, unit members gave \$1,500 worth of unwrapped toys to Kitsap Community Resources for those families in need.

In January, the unit met again at the Kitsap Mobile Home Community Room. Members voted to donate \$100 to The Food Line in Poulsbo. **Craig Miller** is the unit's new parliamentarian and reviewed Robert's Rules of Order with the group. Unit Historian **Cheryl Miller** is working on gathering photos from previous unit meetings and gatherings. If unit members have any pictures to share from previous times, please get in touch with **Cheryl**. She is planning to put together a book for all to enjoy.

On February 25, the unit held a meeting via Zoom. The unit plans to continue holding meetings via Zoom until further notice and is hoping more people will get involved.

#### *Unit 14 Mason County:*

As of February, Mason County remains in Phase 1 with Kitsap, Jefferson, and Clallam Counties. The region cannot have in person meetings in restaurants until it is moved to Phase 2. Because of these restrictions, MCSRA membership meetings have continued to meet by Zoom and phone for the January, February, and March unit meetings.

The January 5, 2021 meeting had a technical issue, which prohibited the guest speaker from the YMCA from joining the meeting. The speaker has been rescheduled for the April 6, 2021 meeting. The membership continued with the business portion of the meeting. Donations to local food banks were approved for \$700, to be dispersed to food banks in Shelton, Hood Canal, Brinnon, Belfair, Matlock, and Turning Pointe Domestic Violence Center. Treasurer **Tedd Davis** delivered all checks to the food banks. He also delivered checks to local school districts for the 15 approved mini-grants.

The guest speaker for the February 2, 2021 meeting was Michael Marstrom, principal, Mary M. Knight School. He gave an update on the progress this small rural district has been able to make to reach all students. They noticed a regression in student learning through the Benchmark tests. The school board decided to begin small group instruction in a hybrid model in No-



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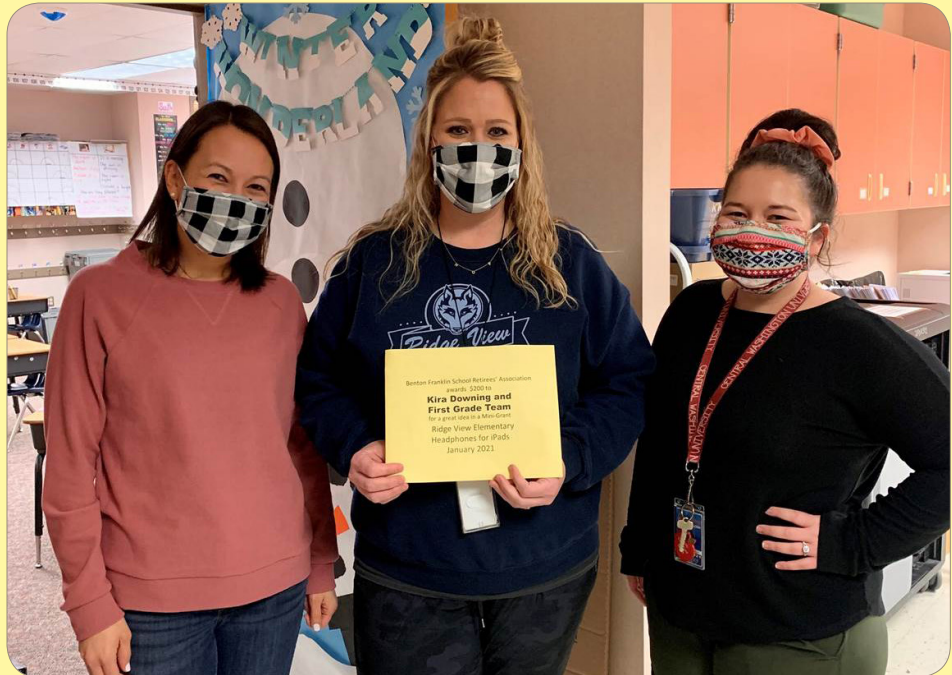
## WSSRA Around The State

vember for younger students after a successful opening in September to students with disabilities. Prior to that, they used learning packets, the grange for tutoring, set up Wi-Fi hot spots for students without internet at home. They only lost two students. In January, they opened K – 8 for small group instruction, and are planning high school returning in the middle of February. Mr. Marstrom attributed success to resilient students and parents, group projects for on-line learning, which involved families, and no staff turnover. The COVID-19 restrictions actually gave staff an opportunity to be innovative. WSSRA Director **Alan Burke** also joined the meeting and gave a brief update on legislative actions and insurance opportunities.

**Dr. Burke** was the guest speaker for the March 2, 2021 meeting. The unit is hoping to return to restaurant dining as a social gathering in April 2021. Members are missing face-to-face interaction.

### ***Unit 27 Pierce County:***

In this year of COVID-19, the PCSRA membership team is being creative in generating membership growth. Recruitment is being encouraged by a contest! The unit member who recruits the most members will receive a \$50 gift certificate and a gift basket, and second and third place winners will get a gift certificate to a local restaurant.



**Unit 29 Benton-Franklin:** Grant recipients, Maylen Anderson, Kira Downing, and Amy Pang, a first grade team at Ridge View Elementary in the Kennewick School District, were awarded a \$200 grant from the Benton Franklin School Retirees' Association. The team will use the funds to buy headphones for iPads.

**Pat Kennedy** and **Barbara Church**, membership chairs, chose gift certificates as a way to support local businesses. Members were apprised of the contest at the February meeting and through the newsletter.

The February virtual meeting, "Overview of a Stroke, What You Need to Know," featured Carmen Lewis from the CHI Franciscan's Stroke Program. Stroke is the number five cause of death and a

leading cause of disability in the United States. Carmen is a "stroke navigator," and she monitors the care of stroke patients in the hospital, following their progression of care, and provides patients and staff with stroke education in hospital and after discharge. Highlights of her presentation included stroke prevention and recognition of symptoms.

PCSRA continues to explore different ways of communicating with members since

in-person meetings are not occurring. In addition, a second round of mini-grants are being offered and awarded this spring.

## SOUTHWEST-4

### ***Unit 11 Lewis County:***

While still unable to hold in-person meetings, the unit was able to send out a winter newsletter providing legisla-



## WSSRA Around The State

tive information and promoting the February Retirement Zoom webinar.

The unit is making substantial contributions to the WSSRA Foundation, the Gene Forrester Scholarship Fund, the Centralia College Foundation, and the Dolly Parton Imagination Library for Lewis County. Additionally, the unit expects to have students in the area seeking scholarships.

### ***Unit 28 Thurston County:***

The in-person monthly unit luncheon meetings have been replaced with a monthly Zoom gathering. In addition to the usual meeting activities, there are special guests making presentations. One of the scheduled presentations will be a program titled, "Twenty Books in Twenty Minutes," delivered by Washington State librarian, Carolyn Petersen. Another scheduled program by well-known historian, Art Dolan is titled, "The History of the American Flag."

Elementary and secondary mini-grants for school employees in Thurston County have been awarded. Many thanks to elementary and secondary committee chairs, **Nancy Zabel, Patti Colombo, and Pat Slosson** for their hard work in evaluating and awarding the mini-grants.

The unit is still collecting email addresses. If you need to submit yours, go to the WSSRA website ([www.wssra.org](http://www.wssra.org)) to complete the simple form at the bottom of the homepage.

### ***Unit 30 Southwest Washington (Vancouver):***

Good news, Unit 30 has 516 members with three people pending. Things are moving right along. **Michele Hunter** sent **Mina Milligan** e-mails and addresses for those who don't e-mail. We used these to keep everyone updated.

**Linda Bannon**, Unit 30's president, prepared an entertaining program for the March Zoom unit meeting. The meeting featured singers, and various members read limericks.

## Join the WSSRA Email List

Now, more than ever, technology has become a critical way to connect with people and stay informed.

Email is a simple, quick, and inexpensive way for WSSRA to connect with members.

### **Join the email list in 3 easy steps:**

- 1. WSSRA.org**
- 2. Scroll to bottom of the page**
- 3. Join Our Email List**

### **Connect and Stay Informed...**

- Legislative updates
- Zoom events
- Unit happenings
- and, more!

WSSRA does not share email addresses outside the association.

### Join our email list!

**\* Email**

**\* First Name**

**\* Last Name**

By submitting this form, you are consenting to receive marketing emails from: WA STATE SCHOOL RETIREES' ASSOCIATION, PO BOX 5127, LACEY, WA, 98509, US, <http://www.wssra.org>. You can revoke your consent to receive emails at any time by using the SafeUnsubscribe® link, found at the bottom of every email. [Emails are serviced by Constant Contact.](#)

Submit

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## WSSRA Around The State

The unit has awarded several mini-grants to teachers in Camas. The unit made \$1,000 contributions to the Vancouver School District Foundation, the Evergreen School District Foundation, and Cascadia Technical Academy Skill Center. In addition, the unit sent \$2,000 to the WSSRA Foundation in **Don Rifenbery's** honor, and \$300 in honor of Gene Forrester.

**Dr. Alan Burke** and **Ron Crawford** attended a recent unit Zoom meeting. Both greeted everyone with their positive and cheerful manner. **Dr. Burke** reported that the annual convention could be moved from June to October 3-6. He stressed the following legislative points: protect retiree medical benefits, make the actuarially recommended pension payment, re-open the PEBB enrollment window for retirees who opted out or were not able to join PEBB at the time of retirement, and reestablish a permanent Plan 1 COLA. **Ron Crawford** led a spirited conversation concerning the virus. He also talked about scholarships.

**Fran Person** explained the number one cyber-scam that older adults need to avoid is "tech support" scams. These types of scams can manifest themselves as "pop-ups" that appear on your computer screen and look like legitimate offers for computer service or help. In addition, criminals could get your telephone number and call to claim they

are representing a reputable company such as Microsoft. If you get such a call, it is best to hang up and call the company yourself to verify the person on the telephone is legitimate. Be wary of security updates from pop-up ads or emails. They may actually be malware that could infect your computer. If you get a phone call you didn't expect from someone who says there is a problem with your computer, hang up. Never call a number in a pop-up that warns you of computer problems. Real security warnings will never ask you to call a phone number. Log out. Remember to log out of apps and websites when you are done using them. Leaving them open on your computer screen could make you vulnerable to security and privacy risks. If you spot a tech support scam, tell the FTC: [www.ftc.gov/complaint](http://www.ftc.gov/complaint). Visit [ftc.gov/techsupportscams](http://ftc.gov/techsupportscams) to get tips on what to do if you were scammed.

### EAST-5

#### *Unit 9 Kittitas Co.:*

Although the local board hasn't met recently, Grant chairperson **Tim Bow** has been busy. In response to applications being sent out, 39 teachers applied for grant money. The Kittitas County Association, not having spent money on typical operations, is in a position to grant all of these requests. Seventeen ac-



**Unit 21 Skagit/Island/San Juan: Trumpeter Swans socially distancing themselves in the Skagit Valley this winter.**

tive member teachers received \$200 awards and twenty-two active non-members were awarded \$100 grants for a total of \$5,600. A wide variety of purposes and many grade levels will be served. Easton, Ellensburg, Cle Elum, and Kittitas School Districts were represented. Teacher support is particularly important in the present challenging education world.

A previous article misrepresented the date for the extension of the KVH contract with Kaiser Permanente. It was extended until December 31, 2021. In the meantime, there may be more negotiations to extend the contract beyond that. It's important for active and retired employees to have

more than one choice when selecting a medical plan.

There are no plans to resume luncheon meetings at this time. There is some hope they might resume by fall if enough persons are vaccinated. Meanwhile, stay well, stay busy and do what all good educators should do—believe in the future.

### EAST-6

#### *Unit 2 Chelan-Douglas:*

The Chelan-Douglas SRA board met via Zoom in December. Many requests for community grants were reviewed and decided upon, including: \$1,000 to the

## WSSRA Around The State

Chelan-Douglas County Extension/4H Snow School Project, \$1,000 to Thrive Chelan Valley to meet basic needs for local at-risk youth, \$1,000 set aside for the Small Miracles Project to feed needy children during the summer vacation. A fund of up to \$2,000 was designated for starting a community care outreach project headed by **Billi Kraft**, **Deb Lacy** and **Mary Perkins** will assist her as they work to connect those in need with available community resources. If resources are not

available, the fund could be used to help.

A "Connections" project was implemented this holiday season to connect with older members who have been feeling lonely during this COVID-19 situation. A group of members sent holiday cards, made, and delivered "goody bags" to members living alone or living in care facilities.

A number of thank-you notes were received from active members who are using their

fall "mini-grants." Currently, unit membership is 882; this drop is due to the inability to visit schools. The Legislative committee reported that the WSSRA focus this session will be to protect retiree medical benefit and make the actuarially recommended payment to the pension funds for retired school employees. Zoom meetings are scheduled for February 2021 and March 2021.

### *Unit 4 Columbia Basin:*

Columbia Basin Unit 4 members have not met in person for many months, but some of their projects have been continuing, almost as usual. The Books for Babies committee has been preparing book bags and delivering them to hospitals in Moses Lake and Othello, to be presented to parents of newborn babies as they go home. The scholarship committee presented a \$500 scholarship to Karyn Becker, who completed her student teaching at Grant Elementary School in the Ephrata School District.

In addition, the Education Grants committee has presented sixteen grants to local educators. The recipients, their schools, and projects are as follows:

Moses Lake School District- Endeavor Middle School: **Brian Sargee** (tactile drawing kit for blind student).

Knolls Vista Elementary: **Bill Bertram** (model rockets 103, covid edition), **Meghan Lamb** (incentives for positive behavior).

Knolls Vista/Park Orchard Elementary: **Brenda Welch Mathis** (3 sets of dry erase boards).

Lakeview Terrace Elementary: **Sue Stuart** (music instruments traveling cart).

Longview Elementary: **Kim Francisco** (headphones) and **Kandace Klenz** (STEAM supplies for online lessons).

North Elementary: **Kelly Frederick** (family drive-through holiday craft), **Candice Pitts** (healthy snacks for low-income students), **Carina Cruz** (life-size building blocks for dramatic play and math).

Park Orchard Elementary: **Cynthia Swan** (Heart Math items), **Prelita Owen** (fidget items, manipulatives, and auction items), **Emerson Ferguson** (science project).

Peninsula Elementary: **Joan Dopps** (2nd grade pumpkin field trip), **Debbie Horney** (supplies for sensory path).

Sage Point Elementary: **Anna Davis** (reading kits).

Quincy School District - Quincy Middle School: **Tina Mullings** (incentives).

Wilson Creek School District: **Jackie Floetke** (prizes for Zoom games).

Youth-Senior Connection Program: **Wanda Harris** (tutoring program).

## RETIREE RESOURCES

**WA Dept. of Retirement Systems** (TRS, PRS)  
1-800-547-6657                      DRS.WA.GOV

**PEBB and Health Care Authority**  
(health insurance)  
1-800-200-1004                      PEBB.HCA.WA.GOV

**SHIBA - Statewide Health Insurance Benefits Advisors**                      1-800-562-6900  
INSURANCE.WA.GOV/SHIBA

**Social Security Administration (SSA)**  
1-800-325-0778                      SSA.GOV

**AARP Washington Office**  
1-866-227-7457                      AARP.ORG  
Jim Ko, state president  
Doug Shadel, Washington state director

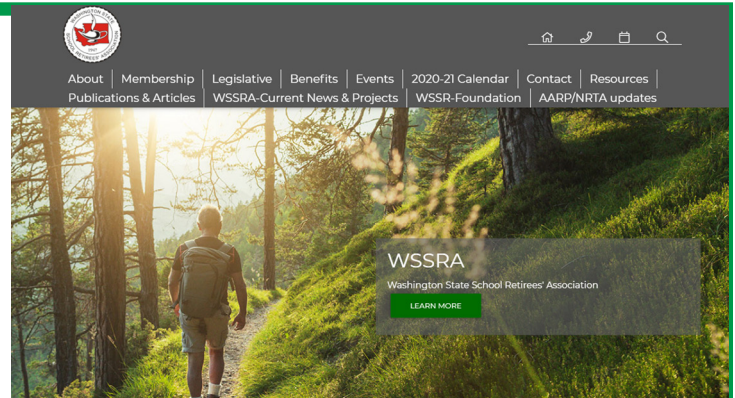
**Senior Citizens' Lobby**  
360-754-0207                      WASENIORLOBBY.ORG



## WSSRA Around The State

### Keeping You Informed

In order to keep members informed of WSSRA news and activities between *Journal* publishing dates, a new feature has been added to the WSSRA website. From time to time updates will be posted under the "WSSRA—Current News and Projects" tab. Currently, there is a February 2021 update posted that will be revised as the year unfolds.



> **WSSRA.ORG**

>> **WSSRA-Current News and Projects**

>>> **2021 WSSRA Update**

#### **Unit 15 Okanogan:**

Community Service Chairs, **Carol Payne** and **Jennie Hedington**, proposed giving \$100 to the Nespelem Food Bank; \$250 to the 509 Restaurant, Okanogan, for gift card(s) to be delivered to OKSD Homeless Liaison(s) to be distributed to homeless students for take-out meals; \$250 to Red Rooster Restaurant, Omak, for gift card(s) to be delivered to Wenatchee Valley College-Omak for distribution to students for take-out meals. Board members voted via email unanimously for this community service proposal.

The OCSRA scholarship trustee board has announced a \$1,500 scholarship available to an Okanogan County graduate who is at least a college junior working toward an initial certificate in

an educational field to work in public schools. Deadline for submitting applications is May 1. The application is available at the OCSRA website, okanogancsra.com. Current scholarship trustees are **Donna Sanford** and **Dee Blank**.

While the unit is not meeting face-to-face, **Marcelle La-Grou** reports continuing to contact members and previous members from lists sent by **Michele Hunter**, WSSRA membership coordinator.

#### **EAST-7**

##### **Unit 25 Spokane Area:**

At the present time, the SAREA board continues to meet virtually on Zoom. The most recent meeting was on February 10. In addition, the

pandemic curtailed having the general meeting last fall. A virtual general meeting is being planned for May, thanks to WSSRA. The topic and Zoom instructions will be published in the unit's April newsletter, because of the lack of email addresses for many unit members.

Outreach: PAW's Scholarship – The scholarship supports a high school senior who has demonstrated the following traits: PAW=P-perseverance", A-academics, W-worthiness. These students typically have multiple issues that have impacted their ability to compete for the scholarships WSSRA offers yearly. Given the opportunity, these individuals have qualities, which are valuable to become excellent teachers in the state of Washington. Normally, donations for a PAW scholarship are made

at the retirement conference each year. Since the conference was cancelled because of COVID-19, a request by the board in SAREA "Highlites" newsletter encouraged unit members to make a \$10 donation for the scholarship. Checks made out to SAREA continue to arrive at the unit treasurer's mailbox. Thank you to those who contributed!

#### **EAST-8**

**Unit 1 Clarkston/Asotin/Pomeroy:** Unit 1 will be starting a new charity drive by collecting pop can tabs for the Ronald McDonald House in Spokane. This is planned to be a continual outreach project for years to come.

Secretary **Bonnie Hill**, Vice President **Judie Hanley**,

## WSSRA Around The State

President **Kay Andersen** attended the E-8 meeting virtually. Besides sharing what the area E-8 units are doing at meetings, each unit was asked to supply a “legislative buddy” for each local state legislator. Thank you to **Kay Andersen, Allison Hays, and Sharon Hoseley** for taking on this responsibility. This entails sending an email for seven weeks to legislators in Olympia.

**Bonnie Hill**, unit scholarship chair, made great efforts to make sure that each school in the unit received the updated scholarship application. Scholarship readers are looking forward to reading the upcoming responses and choosing scholarship recipients later this spring.

The unit is disappointed that its local pre-retirement workshop cannot be offered in person this spring. **Kathi Meshishnek**, unit retirement chair, has done a great job of contacting the schools so the word has been spread well.

**Unit 29 Benton-Franklin:** Zoom board meetings, under President **Victoria Russell**, continue as necessary business is conducted each month.

Members enjoyed a presentation by the superintendents of Kennewick, Richland, and Pasco giving an overview of how the school districts are coping with in-person, hybrid, and remote learning. Plans are being made for a

Zoom meeting or in-person, if possible, for the installation of 2021-22 officers and the celebration of life ceremony.

Legislative committee members, **Jim and AJ Foster, Elaine Banks, and Allison Hayes** are in constant communication with the nine local legislators. Members are encouraged to send comments promoting current issues as well.

The second E-8 meeting, via Zoom, was led by Chair **Dottie Stevens**, in mid January. Committee chair reports were shared among the attendees.

BFSRA scholarships were finalized and awarded, according to **Tom Callahan**, scholarship chair. Several thank you notes were shared in the monthly newsletter.

The membership directory was updated and the booklet was provided for all members by Chair **Diana Baker**. For the health committee, **Jody Freepons** joined **Sam DeRosa** as co-chair of the committee.

Mini-grants continue to be awarded as the applicants apply. More than half have been awarded. Where possible, a certificate and stipend are delivered to the school for the recipient by **Dottie Stevens**, chair.

Current/future program information and news can be

found on the webpage <http://bfsraunit29.blogspot.com/> and in the monthly newsletter.

**Unit 31 Walla Walla/Columbia:** The unit’s January meeting, had its largest group for Zoom. **Dr. Wade Smith**, Walla Walla superintendent, presented the program on the district’s plan for reopening the schools. The opening will be staggered with grades K-5 opening first, followed by middle school, and then high school.

Blue Mountain Community Foundation in Walla Walla offered a program called, “COVID-19 Response Fund.” All donations were matched by All In WA (this is a grant from Amazon). The unit had \$2,338 donated in the name of WWCCSRA. A check was received for that amount, and then the first of March will receive another check for the exact amount.

A drawing for sixteen \$200 mini-grants, awarded by the unit, was held on February 8.

The unit wanted to show active members appreciation for all they have done during this pandemic. It was decided to give each active unit member a \$10 gift card to a local coffee shop.

In May, the unit is hoping to gather for an outside meeting at Fort Walla Walla.

### ADDRESS CHANGES

*Please Notify:*

**Membership Coordinator**  
**Michele Hunter**  
**michele@wssra.org**

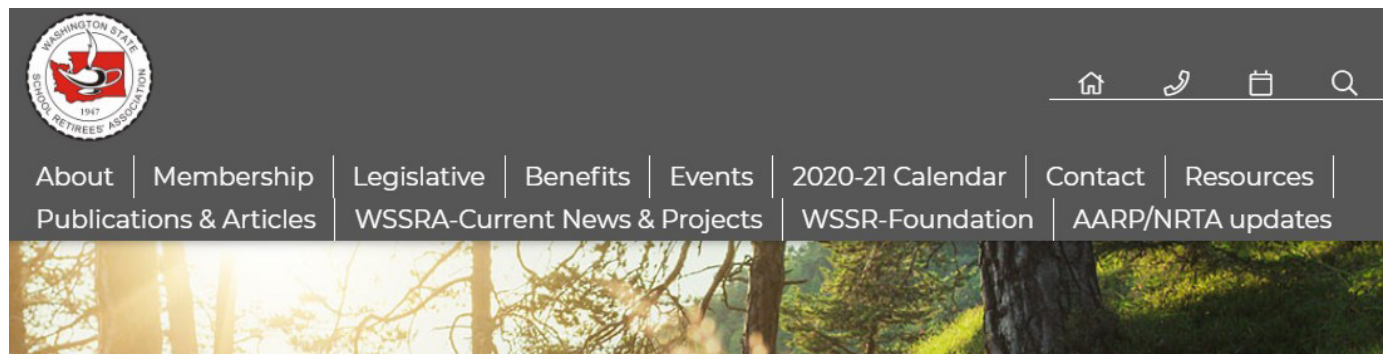
**Phone: 360-413-5496, ext 116**

**WSSRA, PO Box 5127**  
**Lacey WA 98509**


*Also, if your household receives more than one copy of the Journal in the mail each time, you can let Michele Hunter know if you prefer to receive just one copy per household.*

## WSSRA Website

# Hints to get the most from the WSSRA website WSSRA.org



1. Start by going to the WSSRA webpage. <https://wssra.org>
2. Hover over the menu for each of the categories listed below.
3. Click on the item from the menu. (You can hover then use the down arrow key to scroll down the menu.)

	<b>Membership</b>	Member Forms and Applications Do you need to renew your dues? You can pay online with a debit or credit card, print a cash form, or print a pension payroll deduction form.
	<b>Legislative</b>	Legislative Advocacy Center Find your legislators, pension advocacy resources, in-session weekly updates, legislative podcasts, and more.
	<b>Benefits</b>	Member Benefits WSSRA partners with Association Member Benefits Advisors (AMBA) to provide exclusive insurance programs for members.
	<b>Calendar</b>	Annual Calendar- WSSRA Meetings Local unit, state committee and statewide leadership meetings are listed here.
	<b>Resources</b>	Online Resources WSSRA governance documents plus unit and state committee forms can be found here.
	<b>Publications &amp; Articles</b>	Journal WSSRA publishes a top-quality Journal five times per year. Journal archives are also stored here.
	<b>WSSRA Current News &amp; Projects</b>	The latest WSSRA news and projects are posted here. This tab is updated weekly.
	<b>WSSR-Foundation</b>	Scholarships Information about the WSSR-Foundation and scholarship applications can be found here.
	<b>AARP/NRTA</b>	Keep informed with articles from AARP/NRTA A wealth of information about senior advocacy (particularly on health care and prescription drugs) is posted here and is frequently updated.





Change Service Requested

# Ask a friend to join us



## Vision

WSSRA will provide leadership  
and promote action relevant  
to all retired and active school personnel.

Washington State School Retirees' Association  
*Dedicated to preserving, protecting and improving  
the benefits of educational retirees.*

The mission of WSSRA is to...

- develop, propose and implement action that will benefit all school retirees.
- propose legislation and legislative action that will enhance school retirees' lives.
- provide the support necessary to strengthen local units of WSSRA.
- foster involvement by school retirees in educational and community activities and organizations.
- communicate to local units the activities and priorities of NRTA, AARP and other entities that affect retired school personnel.
- represent all present and future Washington state school retirees, both classified and certificated.

## Don't delay – ask today

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