

The Journal

WASHINGTON STATE SCHOOL RETIREES' ASSOCIATION

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



MARCH, APRIL 2026

VOLUME 79, ISSUE NO. 4



WSSRA MINI-GRANTS

Unit 28 Thurston County
Member Dennis Crisp
presents a mini-grant
to Littlerock Elementary
Principal Tamara York.
The grant will be used for
the school's library.

WSSRA At Work For You



A message from the president

Thinking of Convention



by Dottie Stevens, president

Many thanks to all who went in-person during the short legislative session to visit with legislators, and to those who sent in messages. It matters, and House Bill 1474 and Senate Bill 5862 matter to our COLA's for TRS 1 and PERS 1. *(This information may change as I submitted this on 2/5/2026.)* Information from Legislative Coordinator Emmett Mills, on page 4, gives us more information on the status of these important bills. One of our largest WSSRA committees is the Legislative Committee, meeting most Fridays at 10:00 a.m. with current sharing and recommendations for action.

WSSRA Convention Coming Soon

We are thinking about our annual WSSRA Convention which will be in Grand Mound at the Great Wolf Lodge, June 8-10, 2026. What makes it interesting and beneficial for you, the members? With that in mind, we are planning senior issue presentations you have recommended, including these topics – legacy downsizing, unit rejuvenation, and elder law (these will be offered in repeating sessions on Monday afternoon during convention). Additionally, we are considering presentations on artificial intelligence (AI) and cyber security, both are based on recent presentations that were well received.

It's not too early to start planning for your unit members to attend the annual WSSRA Convention. While the last half day of convention, on Wednesday, focuses on leadership support, most of the convention events and activities are for general membership interests.

Throughout the convention, we will have baskets for drawings and good stuff for the silent auction – both benefitting the WSSRA Foundation. I know many are looking forward to a chance to win a beautiful basket, and a choice item for bidding. Units are preparing now. There will also be a hospitality/activity room for opportunities to visit with fellow attendees and enjoy good snacks. Local music and social events will also take place throughout the convention, culminating with a listening and dancing venue on Tuesday evening. Fun, fun, fun!

Update from some WSSRA Committees
Scholarship Committee (chaired by Shirlee Jellum) – updating applications and judge's guidelines for 2026-27. Rules and Resolutions (chaired by Derryl Finney) – updating the association bylaws for consideration by the Delegate Assembly during convention.



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THE JOURNAL

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JOURNAL INFORMATION

Published five times per year by the Washington State School Retirees' Association, a non-profit since 1947.

The WSSRA Journal Policy Board, WSSRA President and WSSRA Executive Board assume no responsibility for items appearing over the signature of any source. While every effort is made to check the accuracy of items accepted, articles cannot be reviewed for technical accuracy.

Material appearing in The Journal, in addition to records of action by the board, councils, committees and units, is presented to promote the general welfare of WSSRA members and otherwise to fulfill the purposes of this association, as defined in Article II of the bylaws.

JOURNAL articles to:

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Upcoming JOURNAL article deadlines:

April 6, 2025
for May/June 2026 issue

June 15, 2026
for July/Aug./Sep. 2026 issue

WSSRA At Work For You



A message from the executive director

Upcoming WSSRA Convention



by Peter Diedrick, executive director

It's time to dig out – or dig up – your wolf ears! As President Dottie Stevens mentioned in her article, the annual WSSRA Convention is at the Great Wolf Lodge in Grand Mound, Washington this year. The dates are June 8-10.

If you don't like having fun, making new friends, learning things, or connecting with your fellow retirees, opportunities await you elsewhere. However, the WSSRA Convention in Grand Mound should be a fantastic time. Those who attend once always plan to return.

Special 2026 convention presentations will include:

- Using artificial intelligence
- Cyber security and protecting yourself online
- Home decluttering
- Rejuvenating local WSSRA units
- Member awards
- College and student intern scholarship awards
- Elder law and legal issues facing seniors

Great Wolf Lodge is home to a massive indoor waterpark. Each room reservation includes waterslide and toddler splash pad passes. If you have grandchildren or you yourself are a child at heart, the water park is a great time.

WSSRA usually has conventions east of the mountains to limit costs to our retirees. Occasionally, a west-side location will offer a great deal to our members. This year was one of those opportunities, so please take advantage of the southwest Washington location if you've been waiting for different convention center.

Please contact your local WSSRA unit if you'd like to attend the convention. Convention delegates are organized by the unit leaders. Guests are welcome as well.

We are excited to see you in Grand Mound this June.

The screenshot shows the WSSRA website with a navigation bar including links for About, Calendar/Events, Forms/Documents, Webinars, Contact Us, LEGISLATIVE, Join WSSRA, Foundation/Scholarships, Benefits (AMBAs), Journals/Action Items, Articles/Resources, and Committees. The main content area features a large image of the WSSRA flag and a section titled 'Who is WSSRA?' which describes the association's mission and membership. A 'LEARN MORE' button is visible at the bottom of the 'Who is WSSRA?' section.

Please visit us at **WSSRA.ORG**

Legislative News



Persistent Advocacy



by Emmett Mills, legislative coordinator



Note: This article was written in mid-February 2026. By the time this Journal edition arrives in your mailbox, the legislative session will likely be over. You can find the latest legislative news at wssra.org.

The first half of the 2026 legislative session has been an exercise in flexibility for WSSRA. As the state legislature tries to balance another multi-billion-dollar budget deficit, we are working to protect benefits for retired teachers and school employees. We are also advancing a bill to make sure that, along with all other public sector retirees, TRS 1 and PERS 1 retirees receive a COLA this year. Despite the challenging budget landscape, we are making steady progress thanks to the relentless advocacy of the WSSRA Legislative Committee and members like you.

Shortly before the session began, we got some disappointing news. We learned that Senate Democrats had given up on Senate Bill 5085, the bill from last session that would have restored an ongoing COLA for TRS 1 and PERS 1 retirees. This proposal relied on a \$3 billion surplus in the Law Enforcement Officers' and Fire Fighters' Plan 1 retirement system as its funding source. The bill passed the Senate last session, but was ultimately blocked by the House, where Democratic budget writers wanted to sweep the pension surplus into the

state's general fund. After failing to reach an agreement last April, it seems that budget writers in both chambers now support moving the pension surplus into the general fund, effectively killing our only immediate path to an ongoing COLA.

With Senate Bill 5085 dead, we quickly pivoted to advocating for a one-time COLA in 2026. We put our energy behind House Bill 1474, a one-time COLA bill that was endorsed by the Select Committee on Pension Policy last November. But while our ongoing COLA bill had its own unique funding source, House Bill 1474 relies on money from the state's general fund, putting it in fierce competition with other budget priorities. Not long into session, we learned that House Democrats did not intend to advance our bill, citing the lack of available funds. We worked with Representative Sharlett Mena (D, Tacoma) to send a letter to House budget writers in support of HB 1474. Twenty-two of Representative Mena's House Democratic colleagues also signed on to the letter.

Time was running out for HB 1474 to get out of committee, and despite Rep. Mena's letter, we still weren't gaining traction. At the last moment, the Senate sprung into action. Senate Democratic budget writers started advancing Senate Bill 5862, a one-time COLA bill sponsored by Senator Perry Dozier (R, Waitsburg). Senator Dozier had been inspired to introduce his bill after attending a meeting of the Walla Walla-Columbia School Retirees' Association (WSSRA Unit 31) last year. On February 13, the Senate passed Senator Dozier's bill on a vote of 48 to 0, with one senator excused. It now heads to the House, where we are pressuring budget writers to advance it.

Another matter of great importance to teachers and school employees across pension plans is the health insurance benefit that Medicare-eligible retirees receive through the Public Employees Benefits Board (PEBB). Without this benefit, many retirees would see their PEBB health insurance premiums double. When the House and Senate release their budget proposals in mid-February, we will be watching closely to ensure that this important benefit is not reduced or eliminated.

Thank you for your persistent advocacy and continued support of our work. It would not be possible without you.

Questions, comments, or concerns? Send an email to emmett@wssra.org or call (360) 413-5496 ext. 2.



Representative Sharlett Mena (D, Tacoma) is leading the charge for a TRS 1 and PERS 1 COLA in the House. She wrote a letter to House budget writers in support of our bill that 22 of her colleagues joined her in signing. She is joined by Patricia Albert, Barb Church, and Emmett Mills. Senator Perry Dozier (R, Waitsburg) is the prime sponsor of our COLA bill. He introduced the legislation after attending a meeting of Unit 31 Walla Walla/Columbia School Retirees' Association. He is pictured with Dottie Stevens.

WSSR-PAC News



PAC Dollars Give Us a Voice in Next Year's Legislature



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



We all count on adequate pensions and affordable medical insurance to keep us secure in our retirement years. We are dependent on our state legislators to make decisions that ensure the integrity of our pension system and the affordability of PEBB medical insurance premiums. Some legislators place a high priority on passing legislation giving state retirees a secure retirement; others do not.

Why do we need a PAC? This November, Washington's voters will elect all 98 members of the state house of representatives and half of our senators. It is in our best interest to elect legislators who prioritize retiree needs. While each of us can contribute to individual candidates, pooling our dollars by contributing to WSSR-PAC allows for larger contributions to candidates we think most likely to help us.

WSSR-PAC board members will meet after August's primary election to decide which candidates deserve our financial support. How many candidates and how much we contribute will depend on WSSRA members' contributions to WSSR-PAC

between now and August. At present, only a small number of WSSRA members contribute to the PAC. Please join them by contributing now. Contributing is easy. Pick up a pen, write a check to WSSR-PAC, put it in an envelope with the form on this page and send it to our treasurer at the address on the form. Or, go to our PAC web site, WSSR-PAC.org, and make an electronic contribution. And we look forward to seeing many of you at our convention WSSR-PAC table.



Retiring WSSR-PAC Treasurer Lora Brabant & Daisy with incoming Treasurer Julie Polworth

The WSSR-PAC is pleased that Julie Polwarth has volunteered to take over Lora Brabant's treasurer's duties. Lora has served the PAC diligently for the past eight and a half years and in July will be stepping up to become WSSRA president. Julie has been a longtime business education teacher at Foster High School in Tukwila. We are happy that she is now putting her business skills to good use in the challenging job of PAC treasurer where she joins President Edith Ruby, Vice President Tim Knopf, Secretary Mary Wallon, West Side representative Carolynne Stella, and East Side representative Larry Scholl on our WSSR-PAC board.

Support the WSSR-PAC — Contribute Today!

Contributor Name and Spouse (if applicable):

Address:

City, State, Zip:

Unit #/Name:

In memory of
(if any):

I certify that this contribution is not organized under the laws of and does not have its principal place of business in a foreign country. This contribution is not financed in any part by a foreign national, and foreign nationals were not involved in making decision regarding the contribution in any way.

Signature: _____

Contribution Amount \$

Can we publish your name on the WSSR-PAC
Wall of Support list? ☐ Yes ☐ No

Mail Form & Contribution to:

WSSR-PAC

**2621 SW 167th Place
Burien, WA 98166**

WSSR-PAC.ORG

WSSR Foundation



Donating to the Foundation



by Kay Andersen, WSSR Foundation president



A user guide for how to donate to the WSSR Foundation for student scholarships.

Over the years, the WSSR Foundation (WSSRF) has worked to strengthen their financial affairs so that they can award as many scholarships to deserving students as possible. This past spring, we awarded \$40,000 to 16 university/college students throughout Washington State who are pursuing educational careers. We would like to be able to grant more scholarships to other students who had just as much financial need as our awardees.

To do that, we are encouraging you to think of our WSSRF when you are making decisions concerning your charitable giving when you reach your distribution age. The IRS allows for two different mechanisms for charitable giving from your tax advantaged retirement accounts.

Required Minimum Distribution (RMD) accounts with regular IRA or inherited IRA's begin requiring minimum distributions as retirees age into their 70's. RMD's can also be sent tax free directly to 501(c)(3) organizations, but there are

more limits than on QCD's. For many of those who currently donate, it is a good business decision.

The **Qualified Charity Deduction (QCD)** is available at age 70.5 years. This set of guidelines allows individuals to donate up to \$108,000 tax free. A great option if you are looking to reduce current or future tax obligations. The caveat is that the money must be sent directly from your financial institution to a 501(c)(3) charitable organization — like WSSR Foundation!

As with any financial decisions that you make, we would recommend you talk to your tax accountant/IRA custodian to make sure that you follow current IRS rules. Enjoy your tax savings, while helping deserving students graduating in educational institutions.



WSSR Foundation
Donations
QR Code

RMD

Required Minimum Distribution

- Age 75 (as of 2026)
- Inherited? Age 72
- Standard penalty if not taken – 25% excise tax
- Taxable income except part already taxed—unless donated directly to a charity
- **Contact IRA custodian or your accountant**

QCD

Qualified Charity Deduction

- Age 70½
- Donation to 501(c)(3), such as WSSRF
- Direct Transfer
- Tax Exclusion
- Annual Limit (\$108,000 per person)
- **Contact IRA custodian or your accountant**

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.

☐ In Honor ☐ Memorial \$ _____ Name _____ Person to be Notified _____ Address _____ City _____ State _____ Zip _____	☐ In Honor ☐ Memorial \$ _____ Name _____ Person to be Notified _____ Address _____ City _____ State _____ Zip _____
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☐ 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 > Online Donation Form

Foundation Contributors

Gail Feagins – in memory of Margit Stakkestad

Jeanne Floyd – RMD

Karen Keller – in memory of Vivian Forrester

Mary Riley – donation

Mona Stacy – in memory of Don Stacy

Doris Troxel Estate – donation

Ann Varkados – in honor of Despo Varkados

Marsha Williams – donation

Unit 6 Southwest King SRA – in memory of
 Carol Brandt, Patricia Hoskinson, Shimeko
 Kitano, Georgia Kunkel, William Lane,

Unit 6 Southwest King SRA (*continued*) – Gerald
 Sather, Thomas Sawyer, Victor Tang, Betty
 Zegel

Unit 19 Southeast King SEA – in memory of
 Jeani Goodrich

Unit 20 Seattle SRA – in memory of Robert
 Ballard, Diane Henry, Donna Peha, G. Neal
 Porter, Robert Stone, Kristi York

Unit 21 Skagit-Isle-San Juan REA – in memory
 of Bonnie Lee, Solveig Lee, Leona McKee,
 Gordon Odegaard

Unit 34 Yakima Co. SRA – donation

For Your Health



Conversations for Life's Journey's End



by Shirlee Hachman-Chatterton, RN BSN (Unit 25 Spokane Area), health committee

"May we love them well in the last season of their lives." – *Mother Teresa*

"Getting older is one of life's journeys few of us sign up for but all of us must take."
– *Peggy Wehmeyer, former ABC News correspondent*

"Very few are prepared for what lies ahead, both the incredible opportunities and the inevitable losses."
– *Mark D. Roberts, PhD, Leadership at Fuller Seminary*

Often times, at the end of life, difficult decisions must be made, whether those decisions are about ourselves or decisions we need to make for a loved one. It's not easy to be prepared for these difficult decisions but there are resources available to help prepare for these times. Most of us will go through that season and will do it better if we know we have already discussed what we want and have someone who cares about us.

In Alice Fryling's book, *Aging Faithfully*, she offers a gentle honest writing illuminating the losses, questions about fears and longings we carry with us into the aging process. Often times, we just don't know how to start the conversation we should be having with our older family or friends about this last season of their lives. In her book, she provides a list of questions for our loved ones who are in different ages and stages of later life.

In his book, *Being Mortal: Medicine and What Matters in the End*, the author, Dr. Atul Gawande, highlights the importance of talking about end-of-life questions with loved ones. He says that being willing to take the risk of asking hard questions is a gift we can give to those we love. He stresses the importance of listening to the deepest desires of the person in your care. These desires can inform decisions needed during the medical process. He notes that it is the discussion, not the list of questions, which matters most.

Dr. Gawande suggests asking questions about topics such as resuscitation, aggressive treatments, antibiotics, and feeding tubes. Further questions can include discussing any fears of palliative care, steps to take if one's condition worsens, what would they find most helpful as they experience a difficult health event. These types of questions, he says are fodder for spiritual direction inside or outside of medical experience. He encourages being a caring, loving listener. You will find that empathy and encouragement help calm them. To be sure, our older friends and family will need medical care as they age, but they will also need to be surrounded by those who will listen with compassion and love.

Another resource is the "Five Wishes: Aging with Dignity" created by John Towey, an attorney with many years of legal experience helping people nearing end-of-life. He was legal counsel and a close adviser to Mother Teresa. He developed "Five Wishes" as an advance care plan to address personal, emotional, and spiritual wishes, along with medical treatment. More information can be found at fivewishes.org.

The Five Wishes document helps you say exactly how you wish to be treated if you get seriously ill. It provides information to support and guide you, your health care team, and your family. With the Five Wishes document, you can put in your own words what you want or don't want, especially the things that matter to you.

The Five Wishes include:

1. Identifying who you want to make health care decisions on your behalf.
2. Identifying which medical treatments you want or do not want.
3. Describing your wishes for how comfortable you want to be – what you do or do not want.
4. Your wish for how you want people to treat you. Letting people know what you would like them to do for you when they are with you.
5. Your wish for what you want your loved ones to know, such as expressions of love, support, forgiveness, recognition, to name a few.

Having conversations and documenting concerns and wishes will bring clarity to our own minds, decision-making, and that of our loved ones. This may help your loved one to support what you want, and how you want things at end of your life. When their wishes are known, and in writing, you can focus on what matters most — cherishing the time you have together.

Membership

Getting the Word Out



by Peter Diedrick, executive director

The WSSRA leadership team owes a debt of gratitude to our Membership Chair, Dr. Alan Burke. In his eighteen months as Membership Chair, Alan has easily enrolled over 500 new members for WSSRA.

Alan's prolific recruiting is based on his use of classroom mini-grant programs. Most of our 30 local WSSRA units offer mini-grants to classroom teachers and assistants, ranging in amounts from \$100 to \$600 each. It's a blessing for our retirees to help distribute the money to educators who need it for their classrooms. Distributing the grants to schools provides wonderful opportunities to talk to school employees about the importance of WSSRA membership.

Please help us spread the word about the mini-grants. If you have colleagues – current or former – who need classroom support, please reach out to your local WSSRA unit. Our unit leaders want to know where the need is.

The WSSRA office is doing everything we can to support our units and membership team. Many units are struggling with burnout issues – they need help distributing mini-grants to schools. Dr. Burke does his best, but our membership chair cannot be at every faculty meeting. If you are interested in taking mini-grant checks to schools, please reach out. Also, we are systematically working with units to bring in some fresh leadership to our units. With a strong mini-grant and membership team in every community, WSSRA will be able to continue the important advocacy and philanthropic work school retirees are passionate about.

Did you know... Every year, local



WSSRA units award thousands of dollars in mini-grants to educators throughout the state. Mini-grants fund special projects, purchase supplies, enhance classroom spaces, and much more!

WSSRA Membership Enrollment Form

Share with a friend today!



WASHINGTON STATE SCHOOL RETIREES' ASSOCIATION
PO Box 5127, LACEY, WA 98509 WSSRA.org
Questions: michele@wssra.org or 360-413-5496

Name (first, middle, last):

Phone:

Email:

Mailing Address:

City, State, Zip:

SS Number:

WA Retirement Plan (circle):

TRS-1 TRS-2 TRS-3 PERS-1 PERS-2 PERS-3 SERS-2 SERS-3

Local WSSRA Unit (if known) or School District Last Employed:

Membership Type (choose one):

_____ PENSION DEDUCTION¹: \$7 per month

_____ PAYROLL DEDUCTION¹: \$7 per month

_____ ANNUAL CASH DUES: \$84 per year

¹FOR AUTOMATIC DUES DEDUCTION: I authorize the Washington State Department of Retirement Systems to deduct dues and any future increases as voted by the membership from my monthly paycheck, or retirement benefit check, and to pay them monthly to WSSRA. Deductions will continue until WSSRA receives written notice of cancellation. Dues are not tax deductible.

Signature:

Date:

For more information...
Use the QR code
and visit WSSRA.ORG



AARP Connection



AARP Tax-Aide Offers Free Tax Preparation Service Open Now

by Charles Humble and Bruce Carlson, AARP

The U.S. tax code is complicated. As a result, many taxpayers overpay, turn to services they can't afford, or don't file — missing out on credits and deductions they've earned. AARP Foundation Tax-Aide provides in-person and remote tax preparation help to anyone, free of charge, with a special focus on taxpayers who are over age 50 and have low to moderate incomes.

Tax-Aide sites are now open throughout the state of Washington to prepare and e-file personal tax returns. This free tax service is available to taxpayers of all ages and income levels and membership in AARP is not required. Appointments can be made online now. Many sites also accept walk-ins. Most sites will be preparing tax returns though the April 15 filing deadline.

“Last year, 1,100 AARP Foundation Tax-Aide volunteers at 116 sites around the state completed and e-filed 40,000 tax returns in Washington with refunds of over \$39.7 million,” said Cindy Gossett, Washington Tax-Aide State Coordinator.

“Tax-Aide helps taxpayers get the refunds and credits they’ve earned, free of charge and with no hidden fees. For many seniors on fixed incomes, that refund can make a real difference in covering everyday essentials, like food, utilities and medicine.”

Taxpayers can find information on Tax-Aide in Washington, including how to prepare for your appointment, at <https://wa1.taxaide.aarpfoundation.org/> or by calling 1-888-227-7669. Help with scheduling appointments is available at all local sites. Tax-Aide sites can be found online at <https://www.aarp.org/money/taxes/aarp-taxaide/locations/>.

Washington Tax-Aide is entirely staffed by volunteers who are trained and IRS-certified every year to assure they know

about and understand the latest changes and additions to the tax code. That includes the new senior bonus deduction — up to \$6,000 for individuals age 65 and older or \$12,000 for those filing jointly — a change AARP helped fight for.

In addition to in-person tax preparation, Tax-Aide offers options for taxpayers who have some computer skills. Taxpayers can prepare and e-file their own taxes at home using Tax-Aide software on their own computer or at a Tax-Aide site using Tax-Aide computers. In both instances, IRS certified counselors are available to answer questions, either in person or via telephone with computer screen sharing. Availability of do-it-yourself tax preparation varies by site.

The free service includes personal federal and full year and non-resident Oregon tax returns, as well as the Washington Working Family Tax Credit. This credit helps Washington residents and their families apply for additional refunds. The refund returns a portion of sales tax paid each year. Last year, nearly 288,000

Washington residents received a total of \$208 million in refunds from the program.

While most typical returns can be prepared by Tax-Aide volunteers, there are limitations based on some forms of business-related income and the complexity of the return. Determination of eligibility is determined at the site.

Charles Humble is an AARP Foundation Tax-Aide volunteer. Bruce Carlson is Associate State Director for Communications with the AARP Washington State Office in Seattle





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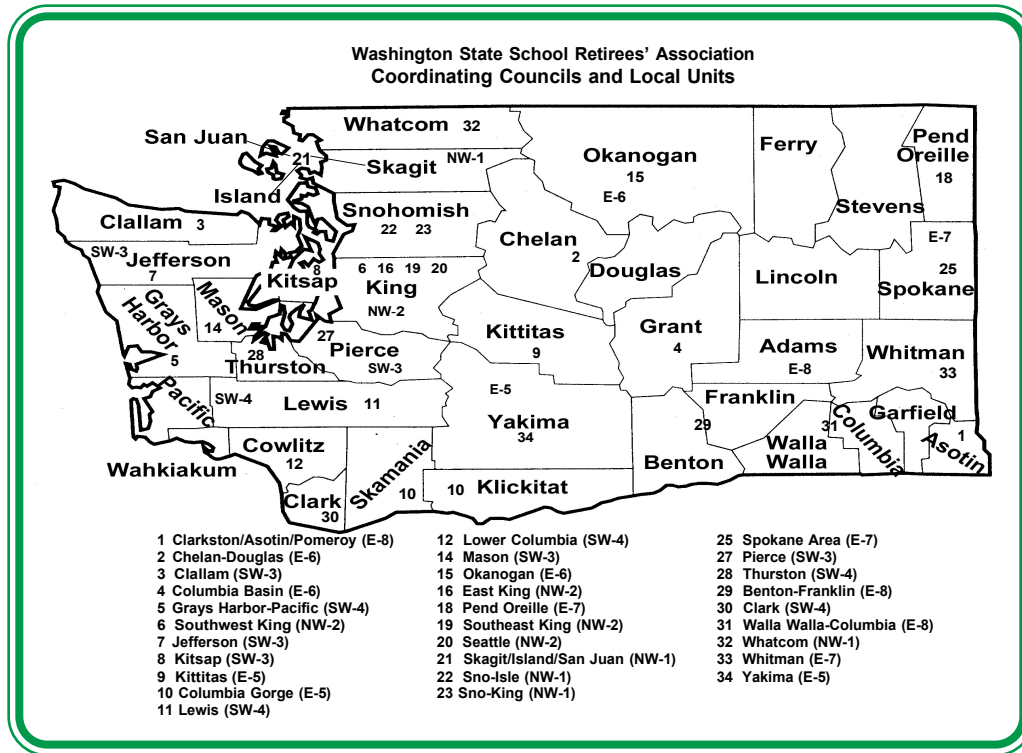
Washington State School Retirees' Association



WSSRA Around The State

What's happening in...

From the Coordinating Councils and Local Units



ditions, and lifeways of the Tulalip Tribes, including The Legacy of the Tulalip People, Canoe Hall, Warriors We Remember, and a full-scale longhouse. The center is west of Marysville, one mile from the I-5 freeway, and is highly recommended. The exhibits change, so even members who have visited in the past saw new things.

Unit 23 Sno-King:

The Unit board met for their annual lunch at the Edmonds Pancake Haus the second week of December.

Members continued to contact teachers in schools that had received mini-grants from the Unit and make framed certificate presentations at staff meetings.

NORTHWEST-1

Unit 21 Skagit/Island/San Juan: The Unit met recently and discussed organizational business committee reports on awarded scholarship recipients. Also, **Diane Visten** was acknowledged as the creator of the scholarship in 2016.

Updates were shared on mini-grants availability beginning on March 23. Reports were given by **Colleen Turk** and **Bruce Boyer** concerning a visit to Concrete School District where thirteen new members were signed up. **Bill DeHon** will be giving

a talk on retirement issues. A League of Women Voters meeting on immigration was announced.

Barbara Robinson and **Diane Visten** shared their participation in the Leveling Up Seniors event in Sedro Woolley in February.

Additionally, a reminder was provided about award nominations for this year's WSSRA convention.

Future Unit events will include deciding on awards for scholarships and mini-grants.

Unit 22 Sno-Isle:

Unit 22 Sno-Isle members were busy in February giving out \$300 grants for classroom and school projects. The 23 recipients in six school districts submitted requests including more books, playground equipment, field trip help, robotics, and a multitude of ideas, all to benefit students.

Sno-Isle members took a field trip to the Tulalip Cultural Center. Members enjoyed a cultural program and guided tour at the Hibulb Cultural Center & Natural History Preserve in Tulalip. Exhibits highlighted the history, tra-

Linda Lee coordinated the Unit's February general meeting with Humanities Washington speaker Felix Banel. He presented a program titled, "All Over the Map: Stories Behind the Names of Washington Places and Things." This presentation was open to the public.

Karen McElliott has set up the Unit's March field trip to the National Nordic Museum in Seattle.

Speakers have been finalized for the Unit's spring activities. The April scholarship luncheon will feature retired Snohomish County Deputy

WSSRA Around The State

Sheriff Jim Scharf speaking on cold cases that he solved using DNA and genetic genealogy.

The May general meeting will include Debbi Demitrie portraying the journalist, Nellie Bly.

Unit 32 Whatcom:

All nine mini-grant awards from the Unit were distributed by **Isabel Farquhar** into the eight schools with recipients receiving their individual checks at staff meetings. This was the first time in several years that the Unit, WCSRA, was allowed to go into each school to make the mini-grant award presentations. Thank you to **Isabel** for your persistence in making the in-person presentations start to happen again in Whatcom County!

The Unit 32 leadership/advisor board met on Thursday, January 5 and started planning for their 2026 activities. Several ideas were discussed including the March 26, general membership meeting and free luncheon at the WECU Education Center in Ferndale. Two guest speakers will share information regarding health care at that Unit 32 meeting.

The Unit's leadership board started to review Unit 32 by-laws and had their final discussion and voted to approve during their early February meeting.

Unit 32 members finished their third and final (of the year) NW 1 Coordinating Council meeting via a Zoom meeting on Monday, March 2, 2026.

WCSRA continued to discuss the upcoming WSSRA state convention in June and will try to get more members to attend.

The Unit 32 annual evening Crab Cruise on Bellingham Bay has been set for Thursday, July 16 from 6:00 p.m. to 9:00 p.m.! Any other unit members are certainly welcome to join in this yummy and special crab cruise! Contact San Juan Cruises to purchase a ticket (\$79) by calling 360-738-8099 or 800-443-4552.

NORTHWEST-2

Unit 6 Southwest King:

The Unit's January meeting was held at Wesley Retirement Community in Des Moines. **Patricia MacGowan**, from Unit 20 Seattle and a member of the WSSRA State Legislative Committee, provided information about House Bill 1474 which would allow a COLA for Plan 1 retirees. Unfortunately, this bill is not likely to pass this year. Several members had questions to ask of her.

The Unit also heard about the scholarships given out to high school students and posters



WSSRA Legislative Committee: Members have been working tirelessly to advocate for school retirees. Many met with legislators at the Capitol in Olympia during the legislative session. Pictured are Mary Wallon, Patricia MacGowan, Julie Polwarth, and Edith Ruby (visiting Senator Manka Dhingra's office). Rocco Gianni with Representative My-Linh Thai.



were brought to distribute to local high schools.

Those attending the meeting shared ideas about speakers and many ideas were suggested. Unit members wanted to hear from teachers about what it is like in schools today. **Julie Polwarth**, Unit 6 member, is the new WSSR-PAC treasurer. She gave a short presentation after the unit meeting adjourned.

The Unit looks forward to more members participating

on SWKSRA committees and on the unit board. Postcards are being sent concerning the Unit's next meeting dates.

The Unit 6 legislative committee has been joined by **Ruth Ballard**, and the unit appreciates her dedication. The Grant Committee was joined by **Marty Shorb**, as he helped decide which grants would be approved. And the Unit could not receive all the grant applications without the help of **Karen Juhl**, who for many years has received

WSSRA Around The State



Unit 6 Southwest King: Maritime High School, in the Highline School District, received three mini-grants delivered by SWKSRA President, Joe Cail. Pictured (left to right): Principal Jamila Gordon, Amanda Adams, Rosalind Echols, and Rebecca Grussgot, and Unit President Joe Cail.

them by email from her home in the Netherlands and then forwarded them to the unit.

The Unit has been trying to deliver mini-grants in person to each staff member and present information about joining WSSRA. Seventy-three mini-grant applications were received, and 52 grant requests were approved. One district did not apply for a grant, but it was decided that a high school in that district would receive a grant for library books. In return, **Joe Cail**, Unit 6 president, was given permission to speak with staff at the school about membership. He also shared information about scholarships for graduating seniors

and informed staff that are near retirement age that there is pre-retirement information available.

Unit 16 East King:

East-King is saddened to report that Unit executive board member and unit legislative chairperson, **Jeani Goodrich**, has passed away. She was a cheerleader for the “Legislative Buddies” program, active with the NWII legislative leadership team, and well respected by the legislators she met with in Olympia.

East-King increased mini-grants to \$500 this year and were able to fund a variety of

projects. The mini-grants will be used for several purposes, including: Updating books for school libraries was a priority for three schools. Headstart preschool materials will help youngsters be ready for kindergarten. Multi-lingual learners will be helped at a middle school as their teachers can learn from a special podcast that will give strategies to aid those learners. An art teacher will be able to provide easels for her students to use. A special education teacher will have sensory regulation tools to aid her middle schoolers to be comfortable and learn. A high school teacher will be able to get necessary tooling for his engineering classes.

Unit 19 Southeast King:

In January, several Unit board members gathered for lunch at the River Rock Grill. The gathering was not a board meeting, not a program meeting, not a business meeting. It was just a chance for board members to visit and share their holiday experiences.

Also, in January, several members supported local high school drama efforts by attending the Tahoma Performing Arts production of, “The Hunchback of Notre Dame.” Members have enjoyed the gift of live local talent by attending several local school productions over the years.

Unfortunately, the Unit’s yearly community action

project, “Love in a Cup” was canceled by the Puget Sound Transitional Care facility due to an outbreak of the Respiratory Syncytial Virus (RSV). For several years, Unit 19 and the Des Moines Garden Club have collaborated with the facility residents to make floral arrangements for their room. This annual February event has been enjoyed by both organizations and will be rescheduled for a later date this spring.

In conjunction with Black History Month, members of Unit 19 Southeast King attended a presentation by Dr. Mona Lake Jones at Lakeshore Retirement. Dr. Jones uses poetry to celebrate living and served as poet laureate for the City of Seattle and Washington State’s King County.

In March, members of Unit 19, along with the residents of Wesley Gardens, Lea Hill in Auburn, enjoyed the many talents of Joel T. Underwood. A history teacher for over 15 years, Joel is an actor, teacher, musician, and historian. He shared the personal story of Woody Guthrie who composed 26 songs in 30 days while riding along the Columbia River and touring the Grand Coulee Dam Project in 1941.

A special thank you to **Linda Hollingsworth** who continues to attend Unit 6 rejuvenation meetings on behalf of Unit 19, and to newly appointed legislative committee members,

WSSRA Around The State

Edward Jones and Gordon Fisher, as well as all committee and board members who work to support Unit 19.

Unit 20 Seattle:

The SSRA meeting at Ivar's Salmon House on March 12th featured Dr. Nancy Koppelman speaking on antisemitism. Dr. Koppelman's talk entitled, "Toward Our Shared Humanity: Understanding Antisemitism," focused on Jewish history, the nature of prejudices against Jews, and how to address antisemitism when it arises.

The Unit's May 14 meeting will honor unit members who are 85 and over and will start at 10:30 a.m. with a social hour followed by lunch and a presentation.

SSRA will provide six \$3,000 scholarships to Seattle high school seniors in June and eight \$5,000 scholarships to teacher interns in September.

Unit 20 SSRA also provides \$25,000 to the Seattle Schools Scholarship Fund that awards scholarships to graduating seniors of Seattle Public Schools in recognition of students who have overcome significant life challenges to achieve their dreams.

The Unit's Seattle Education Enhancement Dividend (S.E.E.D) grants for classroom teachers and librarians are available and provide up



Unit 21 Skagit/Island/San Juan: "Leveling Up Seniors" — Unit members, Diane Visten (*left*) and Barbara Robinson (*right*) attended the "Leveling Up Seniors" event hosted by the Sedro Woolley School District and the University of Washington.

The event connects high school students with senior citizens. The high school students host stations that the senior citizens visit. The students teach the seniors about computer use with subjects such as how to judge if an internet site is fake or authentic. Many seniors have lost money due to visiting and using fake websites. Students also taught about artificial intelligence (AI) and how it can be useful but also can be a scam.

Then, the senior citizens hosted the students and shared their information and life experiences. Some topics included learning to embroider, playing instruments, and how to register to vote. Some senior citizens shared experiences such as a visit to the African people of the Masai or sharing the experience of finding your "roots."

The event included about 60-70 students and 50 senior citizens spending the day together sharing information and experiences. This was cross generational learning at its best. Everyone left with a smile and new friends.... seniors now with young friends, and students with new appreciation for senior citizen friends. It is a valuable event and one that could be duplicated across the state and the nation.



WSSRA Around The State



Unit 19 Southeast King: Unit members gathered for lunch at a local restaurant and enjoyed visiting and sharing recent activities. Pictured (left to right): Bev Bly Addington, Patty Goodspeed, Robin Stroben, Sharon Rasmussen, Joan Morgenstern, Tina Underdahl, Sue Perez, and Rachel Almeleh.

to \$550 in a school year for classroom projects, materials, and field trips. So far this year, 34 grants have been awarded.

Applications for Unit 20 scholarships and teacher classroom grants are available on the Seattlesra.org website.

Thank you, **Pat and Ron Cygan**, for their generous support of the scholarship and grants programs this year.

Edith Ruby, Mary Wallon, Patricia MacGowan, Gordon Fisher and Ed Jones are members of WSSRA Legislative Committee and are contacting legislators regarding the COLA for Plan 1/TRS 1 members – the only retired

public employees who don't receive a COLA.

The Northwest 2 Council meeting on April 24 will be at Merrill Gardens near South-center starting at 9:30 a.m. Please contact **Patricia MacGowan** to confirm attendance at cmacgowan@comcast.net, 206-851-0232.

SOUTHWEST-3

Unit 3 Clallam County: Clallam County School Retirees' Association (CCSRA) met at Joshua's Restaurant in Port Angeles on Tuesday, January 20. Sarah Ketchum, director of the Habitat for

Humanities Stores in both Port Angeles and Sequim, gave a power point presentation about the stores and local Habit for Humanity projects.

In January, twenty-two mini-grants were awarded to school staff members in three Clallam County school districts. The amounts ranged from \$75.88 to \$500. The total amount awarded by the Unit was \$8,870.23. In the past ten years, the Unit has given out \$56,679.46 in mini-grants and Peninsula College scholarships.

Ruth Mollinet from the Law Clerk Program was the guest speaker for the meeting on Tuesday, February 17.

The Unit elected officers for 2026-2027. The current officers will remain in their positions for another year. **Lora Brabant**-president, **Cathy Stordeur**-vice president, **Jill Oakes**-secretary, **Arlene Morganroth**-treasurer.

Unit 14 Mason County:

Unit members welcomed Washington State Treasurer Mike Pellicciotti to the February 3, 2026, meeting at El Puerto de Angeles Restaurant in Shelton at 11:30 a.m. Other community organizations were invited to this important presentation on the Washington State budget. Students from the Shelton School District high school also attended with their teacher. The Unit

was honored to be joined by a Shelton city councilman, Shelton School District business director, a state representative candidate for the 35th Legislative District, WSSRA Executive Director **Peter Diedrick**, WSSRA Legislative Coordinator **Emmett Mills**, SW-4 District Representative **Ann Chenhall**, and interested community members. Treasurer Pellicciotti clearly explained the state of the Washington treasury the legislature will need to work with, including protecting retirement funds and the possibility of funding a COLA for the TRS 1 and PERS 1 Plans.

Also, during the February unit meeting, two teachers from the Shelton High Freshman Academy, Ron Goodale and Garrett Baldwin, presented the accomplishments and purpose of the Freshman Academy. Students are supported by older students and teachers as they begin their high school experience. They have had impressive results helping students from smaller feeder school districts in Mason County adjust to a large school experience.

Unit members ratified updated unit bylaws in addition to other unit business. Members are pleased to hear appreciation from the county food banks and shelters funded. Members participate in the buddy message system WSSRA Legislative Coordinator **Emmett Mills** sends.

WSSRA Around The State

Unit members are pleased to provide community service to food banks and shelters, grants to teachers, scholarships to students, and WSSRA concerns through good communication with the state representatives and senators.

Unit 27 Pierce County:

Unit 27 Pierce County has much to celebrate this year. Teachers consistently go above and beyond for their students, often purchasing supplies out of their own pockets. The Unit proudly completed its second round of mini-grants, this time to the Tacoma School District, investing a total of \$7,769 directly into classrooms. A heartfelt thank-you to the Unit's dedicated mini-grant committee for making this ongoing impact possible.

The Unit is also excited about the continued momentum of its scholarship program, which helps students pursuing careers in public education. Through the **Nina Ball** Memorial Scholarship and the **Chuck Abernathy** Memorial Scholarship, the Unit can support future educators as they prepare to enter the profession.

The Unit's February 11 luncheon, held at La Quinta in Tacoma, was another bright moment. Members enjoyed a delicious buffet lunch followed by an engaging program from Pam Gassman of the Daughters of the American Revolution (DAR). Pam shared how her passion for genealogy led her to the DAR, offering a presentation that was both informative and inspiring.



Unit 3 Clallam County: CCSRA awarded 22 mini-grants to school staff members in three Clallam County school districts. Pictured above are mini-grant awardees, Raena Young, Lora Brabant (unit president), Melissa Holcomb, Evan Murphy, and Jessica Bruning. Pictured right are mini-grant awardees from Sequim Middle School, including Zane Laughborn, Lora Brabant with Daisy (unit president), and Kristen Lunt.



RETIREE RESOURCES

WA Dept. of Retirement Systems

(TRS, PERS, SERS)

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

Ron Chew, state president

Marguerite Ro, Washington state director

Senior Citizens' Lobby

360-754-0207

WASENIORLOBBY.ORG

WSSRA Around The State

Unit members look forward to gathering for the April luncheon, which will feature author Lena Ihara, who will share insights from her book, *Easy Balance Exercises for Seniors: A Holistic Approach to Improve Stability, Prevent Falls, and Maintain Independence for All Abilities*. It looks like an engaging and practical program for all.

Members continue to contact their legislators through the buddy emails provided by WSSRA Legislative Coordinator **Emmett Mills**.

SOUTHWEST-4

Unit 28 Thurston County:

In January, Unit 28 awarded 37 mini-grants (mostly \$400) to teachers in the Tumwater, Yelm, Rochester, Griffin, Olympia, and North Thurston school districts. Awards were also given to the libraries at Salish Middle School, Littlerock Elementary, Parkside Elementary, and Olympia High School. This was all made possible by a \$15,000 grant received from the Nisqually Indian Tribe.

Thanks to **Karen Keller** and her mini-grant committee for selecting and distributing the awards. Recipients will be invited to the unit's April luncheon to talk about and share their projects.

At the January luncheon, the Unit hosted author Sandy Crowell who talked about her book, *The Ravaged Forest*. The book is a biography about Helen Sanders (Mitchell) who was a Chehalis Tribal member. She and Joe Jackson, the Quinault Tribal Chairman formed the Quinault Allottees

Association to sue the Bureau of Indian Affairs over damage done to forests on Indian land.

Seven unit members attended the SW-4 Coordinating Council meeting at the Ribeye restaurant in Napavine on January 26th. Celebrating Chinese New Year, each person who donated to WSSR-PAC received a red New Year's envelope filled with chocolate coins.

The speaker at Unit 28's February luncheon was Joe Miller, Jr., a commissioner of Pro Networking League. He spoke about human connections, networking and finding joy in our later years.

Join the WSSRA Email List

Now, more than ever, technology has been 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**

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Unit 30 Clark County:

Kathy Bounds, unit treasurer and "woman of many talents," took a very deep dive and led the willing into the realms of artificial intelligence (AI). Fourteen unit members attended her two-hour workshop and most left feeling a lot more informed about the topic.

The Unit has been busy visiting school buildings to honor each of the 17 teachers who received a \$400 mini-grant from the Unit this year.

In addition, a team of eight Unit members have been driving the county to deliver scholarship posters to high schools, Clark College, WSU-

WSSRA Around The State

Vancouver, and the Washington State School for the Blind

The Unit's March 12 general membership meeting will be held at ESD 112. The meeting will include a celebration of the John Ziingale, regional teacher of the year. He is a history and social studies teacher at Vancouver iTech Preparatory.

Effie Triol, at ESD 112, has been most welcoming and the Unit will be holding most of their future meetings at ESD 112. It is centrally located and offers great tech support.

EAST-5

Unit 9 Kittitas County:

In November, the Unit met at Rosewood for a lunch of fall

soups and other tasty treats. There was a presentation by a spokeswoman from Kittitas Valley Hospital (KVH) explaining recent fund-raising efforts. Members were also told of services and positives about healthcare in the community.

In December, **Joy Lessard**, unit mini-grant chair, contacted 40 active educators to let them know of the \$100 mini-grants. Participants reported they were used for a variety of classroom needs from STEM manipulatives, classroom library development, art supplies, weather kits, and garden supplies. Membership dues make these mini-grants possible.

It was a decision of the Unit board to omit the February meeting and luncheon.



Unit 14 Mason County: Washington State Treasurer Mike Pellicciotti (center) with Jesse Johnson and Shelton's Pathways Program students at the February unit meeting.



Unit 30 Clark County: The unit awarded mini-grants to three Lacamas Lake Elementary educators. They are using the \$400 to buy books to celebrate diversity, fund a field trip to the Lelooska Tribal Heritage center, and create a mini-golf course.

The Unit will meet next at the Cle Elum Senior Center on Tuesday, April 21 at 12 noon. The program will be a legislative report, by one or two state officers.

The Unit plans to hold a May 19 meeting in Ellensburg. Members should receive a newsletter describing spring activities.

Unit 34 Yakima County:

The first Yakima County School Retiree's general meeting of 2026 was held on Groundhog Day, February 2. Co-presidents **Jan Saxton** and **Coreen Fortin** arranged

the program, which featured chair yoga and mat yoga. The presenter was Cindy Chartier. Cindy began yoga instruction in 2004 and has taught students from 2 years old to 92 years old. It was quite a sight as Cindy led about 40 YCSRA members in a 15-minute session of stretching and yoga movements! These chair movements can help improve strength and maintain muscle mass as well as increase flexibility.

The Unit awarded 26 mini-grants recently to Yakima County active teachers. Recipients garnered up to \$500 each. Six public school districts and one private school

WSSRA Around The State



WSSRA Legislative Committee: Ed Jones and Gordon Fisher, from King County area, are new members on the WSSRA Legislative Committee. They visited the legislature this session and lobbied alongside their wives, Karen Jones and Laurie Fisher.

were included. Thank you to **Linda Sumner** and her committee for coordinating the mini-grants process.

EAST-6

Unit 4 Columbia Basin:

The Unit recently presented 31 mini-grants to educators from three local school districts. In the Moses Lake School District, four grants were presented at Garden Heights Elementary to **Sheena Moore, Ann Ford, Lynette Zimmer**, and Joy Fry. Groff Elementary recipients were **Candace Pitts, Jerrianna Mata, Regina Doremus, Kim Francisco**, and **Jannette Serrano-Vasquez**.

Knolls Vista Elementary grants were given to **Bill Bertram** and **Brenda Welch**. The five Lakeview Terrace Elementary recipients were **Amy Nelson, Rena Janke-Kilmer, Alison Shelton, Kelly Jolley**, and **Brittany Hedrick**. Four grants were presented at North Elementary to **Amy Utter, Jenny Woodall, William Thurmond**, and **Stacy Steen**. **Debbie Horney**, from Peninsula Elementary, **Emerson Ferguson**, from Park Orchard Elementary, **Dorian Shank**, from Columbia Middle School, **Brian Sargee**-vision specialist, and **Joan Dopps**, a retired teacher, completed the list of Moses Lake list grant recipients. Five educators received grants in the Ephrata School District.

They were **Ronda Billingsley, Kristine Stewart, Judy Dillin** and **Jill Hernandez**, all from Columbia Ridge Elementary, and **Tina Mullings**, from Ephrata Middle School. **Jackie Floetke**, from Wilson Creek School District was also a recipient.

Unit 15 Okanogan:

Unit 15 has been enjoying the unusual winter weather and looks forward to presenting spring mini-grant checks to four active teacher members.

May will find the Unit awarding the year's scholarship recipient \$2,000.

Six new members are welcomed to the Unit: Brewster School District – **Esmeralda Barboza** and **Anali Her-**

nandez; Okanogan School District – **Jeremy Clark**; and Omak School District – **Carissa Crum, Nicole Pearce**, and **Amy Porter**.

EAST-7

Unit 25 Spokane Area:

The Unit's annual holiday luncheon took place at CenterPlace, in the Spokane Valley. Members were pleased to have WSSRA Executive Director, **Peter Diedrick**, in attendance. **Emilly McKinney**, Mead High School's jazz choir director, and her jazz choir entertained the gathering with a variety of holiday offerings.

One of the Unit's community service projects supports Operation Warm sponsored



Unit 25 Spokane Area: Every year the Unit supports "Operation Warm" by donating warm coats, hats, and gloves for students in the Spokane area. Pictured are **Kathy Beal, Dixie Eggleston, Carol Hayes**, and **Marilyn Shaw**.

WSSRA Around The State

by the Spokane Valley Fire Department. They partner with the local schools who identify students in need of hats, coats and gloves donated by Unit members. Members are always generous with their donations.

Ruth Parman, who is 106 years old, brought a prospective member to the luncheon. **Ruth** is the Unit's oldest member and continues to support events!

EAST-8

Unit 1 Clarkston/Asotin/Pomeroy: Unit 1 took the month of January off because usually the weather is challenging. Traditionally, in January, the Unit's executive board meets to plan for the second half of the year and tries to make sure everything goes smoothly.

Luckily, last year, the Unit was able to secure Brian Bailey, a local Edward Jones financial planner, as sponsor for the newsletter. The sponsorship enables the newsletter to be professionally printed and mailed to the Unit's 300 plus members. The Unit plans to meet with Brian again, in hopes of continued sponsorship.

The Unit is planning for items that could be taken to the WSSRA Convention in June – for the silent auction and

WSSR-Foundation baskets. One theme will be, "When life gives you lemons, make lemonade." Another will be a Hawaiian themed basket. Two hand-made leis and a bird carving have already been secured. Members were reminded to think "outside the box" and collect donated items for the WSSR-Foundation basket drawings and the silent auction.

Members brainstormed a list of local businesses to send to the state office as the WSSR Foundation begins to reach out to partners and sponsors as they build up the funds for scholarships.

The Unit's February program featured information about the school-based Health Center coming to Clarkston High School. This is in partnership with Tri-State Health. The presenter was Superintendent **Thaynan Knowlton**.

Unit 29 Benton-Franklin:

The Unit's January meeting was held on January 12th, to allow for a presentation on the upcoming February 10 school levy elections for area school districts. Great food was served including a tri-tip steak for \$20 (with some subsidization from the Unit). Eighty-five attendees enjoyed the fellowship with basket drawings, the optional book and puzzle table for scholarship support, and informational levy presentations. Three



Unit 28 Thurston County: The Unit awarded several mini-grants to educators throughout the county. The special mini-grants were funded by a grant the unit received from the Nisqually Indian Tribe. Unit members Karen Keller, ZiNita Carrell, and Lorena Rang delivered certificates to the mini-grant recipients. Pictured: (top) Salish Middle School - Karen Keller and ZiNita Carrell present Principal David Crane with a grant for the library. (middle) North Thurston CTE teacher Kari Toms with Karen Keller. McKenna Elementary's Mylisha Lanegan with Lorena Rang. (bottom) Karen Keller with Renee Hubbard, Rochester School District special education teacher.

WSSRA Around The State



Unit 4 Columbia Basin: The Unit recently awarded 31 mini-grants to educators in three local school districts. Lanita Pomeroy, Karen Schafer, and Nancy Nishida presented the awards at the schools. Pictured above are mini-grant recipients at Lakeview Terrace Elementary (left to right): Sue Stuart, Lanita Pomeroy, Brittany Hedrick, Kelly Jolley, Rena Janke-Kilmer, Alison Shelton, and Karen Schafer. Pictured at right are mini-grant recipients at North Elementary (left to right): Lanita Pomeroy, Jenny Woodall, Amy Utter, Stacy Steen, and Nancy Nishida.



school district superintendents provided an overview of the facts for four-year levies with brief materials to support their presentations. Presenters included Superintendent **Lance Hansen** of Kennewick School District, Superintendent **Shelley Redinger** of Richland School District, and **Michelle Whitney** of Pasco School District.

The Unit's latest mini-grant was awarded to Sunset View Elementary Teacher Mary Perea for flexible seating. The Unit's February meeting focused on artificial intelligence (AI).

The March meeting featured unit member, **Diana Baker**, and her inspirational and

challenging journey on the Camino de Santiago in Spain.

The April meeting will feature the Columbia Valley Center for Recovery.

The May meeting will focus on a celebration of life ceremony.

Legislative issues have been at the forefront of the Association's thinking. Unit Legislative Chair, **Leona Hassing**, has kept members informed. E-8 Legislative Representative **Jim Davison** has excelled in bringing the issues to life by sharing his own personal story and continuing focus on COLA's for TRS 1 and PERS 1. **Jim** also attends the Friday Legislative Committee meetings and is a vocal participant. He arranged meetings with many of the state senators and representatives for Legislative Districts 8, 14, 15, and 16, in February, as part of the in-person push by WSSRA during the short session.

Newsletters from BFSRA are available upon request. Please contact Newsletter Editor **Helen Bruggeman** at hjbrgg@gmail.com

Unit 31 Walla Walla-Columbia: Unit 31 has been busy over the past few months. January luncheon presentations included Blue Mountain Action Council news (BMAC), with speaker Danielle Gabe Reser. Ms. Reser shared with the members the activities that BMAC is involved in the area. During the meeting, members collected \$572 and four boxes of shelf-stable food to donate to BMAC.

February brought two speakers to the luncheon. Kay

WSSRA Around The State



Unit 31 Walla Walla-Columbia: Senator Perry Dozier (16th legislative district) and E-8 Legislative Representative Jim Davidson.

Senator Dozier recently presented Jim with a letter of recognition for his many years advocating for school retirees.

Senator Dozier wrote, "You've been a trusted and steady voice for those who often have gone unheard. You advocated faithfully week after week, with passion, perseverance, and heart. Your dedication didn't just hope to influence policy; it gave conviction, strength and encouragement to the many people you represented."

Lehmann spoke to the group about Alzheimer's education. Kay serves as a volunteer for the Alzheimer's Association. The second speaker was Mindy Meyers from the Walla Walla School District. Mindy serves as a human resources consultant and shared ways the members can volunteer in the classroom or help para-educators obtain their necessary paperwork.

During the February meeting, the spring mini-grants were awarded. Recipients include: Davis Elementary – Gina Bouvier and Laura Tomscheck. Pioneer Middle School – Wendy Baldwin, Jeff Bartlow, Amanda Bess, Susan Nankonieczny. Touchet Schools – Debbie Ortiz and Kathleen Warner. Waitsburg Schools – Brenda Henderson, Rosy Nechodom, Shannon Schre-

ind, Kimberly McNarland. Carrie Gonzalez (Berney Elementary), Laura Berg (Sharpstein Elementary), Shannon Pearson (Prescott School District), Robin McQuary-Billow (Starbuck School).

The members were given a guided tour of the Southeast Area Technical Skills Center, known as SEATech, facilities during the March luncheon. SEATech operates as a cooperative school of six local school districts, including College Place, Dayton, Prescott, Touchet, Waitsburg, and Walla Walla. SEATech also can serve students from private schools, online schools, and home school students. SEATech provides advanced-level Career and Technical Education programs for the Walla Walla Valley.

ADDRESS CHANGES

Please Notify:

Membership Coordinator

Michele Hunter

michele@wssra.org

Phone: 360-413-5496

WSSRA, PO Box 5127

Lacey WA 98509

Please Note: If your household receives more than one copy of the Journal in the mail each time, if you prefer to receive just one copy per household, please contact Michele Hunter (contact info above).



The Journal

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Vision — Mission — Purpose

WSSRA, a non-profit Association, is dedicated to preserving, protecting, and improving the benefits of educational retirees.

The Association's Vision will provide leadership and promote action relevant to all retired and active school personnel.

The Association's Mission 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.

Ask a friend to join us today...

You'll find inside...

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