

The Journal

WASHINGTON STATE SCHOOL RETIREES' ASSOCIATION

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



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Linda Averill, Sno-Isle president;
Fred Yancey, WSSRA lobbyist;
Don Bunger, WSSR-PAC president;
and Joan Penewell, WSSR-PAC treasurer.

WSSRA at work for you



A message from the president



Hope for the future

by Don Riftenbery, president

I welcome the opportunity to bring you greetings as we begin a new year. We are filled with hope for the future as we look forward, and it makes the present doldrums seem less pervasive than they would otherwise appear to be.

Bad recollections of the last legislative session linger, not only in our memories, but in our pocketbooks! At the time of this writing, in mid-December, we don't yet know what will transpire in the "Special Session," but our Legislative committee will have a program to guide us as we meet with legislators on January 18-19 and on February 22-23. In

the meantime, please help by at least making your email address available to WSSRA Executive Director Ed Gonion, and to contact your local legislators to be sure they understand the urgency of your needs.

Changes in the WSSRA office are most apparent. Karen Keller's happy smile, her quick wit and ready answers are now moved to her favorite railroad network. We will miss Karen, but the membership office is now in the very capable hands of Michele Hunter, whose front-office desk is skillfully occupied by Tara Teitzel. New legislative coordinator Peter Diedrick has Leslie Main's extra-large shoes to fill.

(continued on page 3)



The Journal

Washington State School Retirees' Association
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* **WSSRA Executive Committee**

WSSRA at work for you



A message from the executive director



It's time for *all* members to act

by Ed Gonion, executive director

The state economy continues to decline—and things may get worse before they get better. (Read Scott Nelson's article on pages 4-5.) We know how detrimental the Legislature was in 2011 to state retirees. They eliminated the Uniform Plan 1 COLA, as well as reduced the Medicare Eligible Subsidy from \$183 per month to \$150. The majority party used your funds to backfill a state revenue deficit. What can we do in 2012?

First, act on things that we can control: Membership is at an 18-year high, 17,626. We must continue to do the hard work to contact school retirees and active school employees to join WSSRA. Members are the lifeblood of any organization. Congratulations and appreciation to the local units this fall who have been going after potential members and have gained 454 statewide—Chelan/Douglas leads the way with 98.

Second, continue to build our member email address

(president continued from page 2)

He has already dug deeply into the process and will be offering tremendous assistance to Ed as they make plans with lobbyists Scott Nelson and Fred Yancey to organize the new legislative program. Two stalwarts, office manager Michelle Guerin and accounting/network administrator Debbie Burgess, anchor Director Gonion's formidable staff. We are so fortunate to have such a powerful support staff "holding down the fort"!

If you are already tired of the winter chill, begin looking forward to the warm, dry, gorgeous setting of the "Lilac City"—Spokane. That's the site of our 2012 WSSRA conven-

tion. We have received 1,368 and more come in each week. Please send your email address to me at: ed@wssra.org. We must be able to communicate quickly if urgent action is needed to safeguard your pension and benefits in 2012. We will only contact you by email when it is an emergency. Just because legislators cut Plan 1 in 2011, it does not mean they will not go after retirees again this session.

2012 is an election year. We will remind legislators who are up for election that our members vote. We will support the people who have helped us, and evaluate the people who went against us.

The WSSRA state legislative committee will come to Olympia in January to represent you. They are very able, experienced and dedicated individuals. However, their success in protecting retiree pensions and benefits will depend upon our membership. If our 17,626 members will stand with them and respond to a call for action if needed, we will survive the legislative session. It's up to you.

tion on June 4-6. The Marilyn "twins" (Shaw and Richards), who chair this important activity, report great progress in securing all the necessities, as well as booking several special events for all participants. Details will be made available in subsequent issues of the *Journal*.

As I travel across our beautiful state, I can only marvel at the fantastic effort so very many of you are exerting on behalf of retirees everywhere. We live in difficult times. It would be easy to give in to the temptation to become isolated. But we all know that the best way forward is to pull together—BRIGHTENING HORIZONS !



2011-2012 WSSRA Board

Front row: Barbara Pugh, secretary; Jim Hall, treasurer, Louie Osmovich, past president; Don Riftenberg, president; Richard Anderson, president-elect; Ed Gonion, executive director; Rita Figlenski, E-6. Back row: Rita Requa, historian; Eileen Wascisin; NW-1; Lloyd Olson, E-5; Gary Gleason, SW-3; John Young, E-7; Don Parks, E-8; Mary Wining, NW-2; Jim Leggett, SW-4; Jo Caldwell, *Journal* editor.

On the cover...

Sno-Isle, Unit 22, presented a soup luncheon for members and guests on September 20. WSSRA lobbyist Fred Yancey and WSSR-PAC chair Don Bunger talked about the loss of the Uniform COLA and urged everyone to contact their legislators.

WSSRA legislative news

How bad is “bad” —or is this the year to hope for a lump of coal?

by Scott Nelson, *The Nexus Group*, on behalf of and representing WSSRA

‘Tis the Season to be Jolly—or so we thought when starting this column. Taken with the holiday spirit, we were determined to find some political optimism for the New Year.

Tragically unaware of a single positive political or economic item to pass on, we launched a methodical research campaign—attempting to find the elusive upbeat note upon which to end 2011.

That was a serious mistake. Those of you who want to end the year by giving cheer instead of drinking it, may wish to stop reading at this point and simply accept our sincere thanks for your business in 2011 along with a promise to throw ourselves into your defense in 2012.

You’re still here? Ah, well, you were warned and we did try so hard to find something to fit cheery...

Perhaps, Arun Raha, executive director of the Washington State Economic and Revenue Forecast Council, will have some yet unvoiced positive insights for the future? Er, not so much.

Downside risks

As optimistic as Raha gets in his most recent report to the governor is to say,

“Fear and uncertainty have paralyzed consumers and businesses who continue to sit on their cash.

“. . . it is premature to stop worrying about the future. The level of uncertainty in the baseline is high. Downside risks are still very elevated.”

Worse, he sets forth several **Downside risks** that could worsen the economic situation for the state and nation—almost all of which have since occurred.

- Failure by the Congressional Super Committee to agree upon a deficit reduction deal.
- Greece fails to ratify the debt deal struck with Germany and France.
- Sovereign debt default contagion in Europe and a banking crisis that affects U.S. banks.
- Inflationary pressures from rising wages in India and China.
- Unexpected events—natural disasters, political upheaval, etc. (three governments have fallen since his writing and the US Congress is down to an 8% approval rating).

In short, the worst things that can happen for Washington state are events that erode consumer confidence. As you are probably concluding, that is exactly what has happened.

Negative court rulings

Meanwhile, the “Perfect Storm” continued in the courts. Several weeks ago, courts ruled that Washington could not limit emergency room access for certain Medicare/Medicaid patients—a decision with a negative budget impact of \$40-\$50 million.

This week the judicial hammer fell again—hard.

In the early 1980s, the legislature voted to exempt telephone service from the sales tax. In those days, almost no one used a cell phone. As is often the case, society changed, but the law did not. State and local governments thinking (for reasons having more to do with wishful thinking than logic) chose to consider using the cell phone as an act of commerce rather than a telecommunications service. Ooops! This one may cost government as much as a billion dollars in lost revenue and refunds.

Washington in comparison to other states

So, from all this you might conclude that we are trying to tell you that things are dismal across the nation and particularly here in Washington state. Well, not exactly. Things are actually getting better most places—**except** our state and a few others.

The best newspaper in the English language, the *Financial Times of London*, recently provided an analysis of the state’s fiscal crisis. It peaked in 2010 with a collective deficit of around \$150 billion among the 50 states. Things are much better this year with only four states showing increasing deficits—California, New York, Missouri and Washington.

Put in a local perspective, since 2010 Washington’s deficit as a percentage of the state’s budget has more than doubled to 15.4% (of all revenues including federal grants, it is closer twice that amount of purely state revenue). At this writing, the actual number gap stands at \$2.545 BILLION, and this is not yet counting effects from the cell phone court case.

A flicker of hope

There is a flicker of hope, albeit a sputtering candle. The situation in Europe seems far off. However, in every respect it is not. Should the Euro fail or even a serious collapse occur in the so-called Eurozone, such as the failure of the Italian economy, the U.S. and world economic recoveries will turn into routs; the already limited flow of capital will dry

WSSRA legislative news

up, and we in Washington state will be at the shortest end of a short stick. The flicker? This week (mid-December) European leaders are meeting in a last-ditch attempt to save the Euro. If it works, the United States' markets and Washington state will feel the effects fairly quickly as the first step in rebuilding consumer confidence.

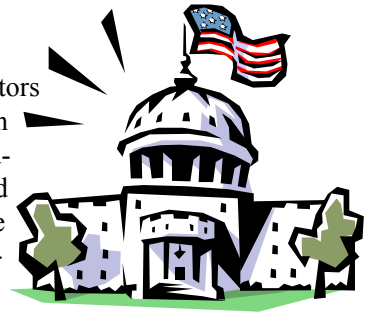
What you can do: Two easy things

There is another conclusion here. There are things that YOU can do. The situation is not hopeless.

If you care about your pension benefits—stop right now and do just two things. Two easy things.

1. Contact WSSRA headquarters with an EMAIL address or phone number we can use to contact you with urgent legislative updates. We really, really need email addresses. If you don't have one, perhaps there is a child or friend who will let us contact you through theirs.

2. Contact your legislators and tell them “Pension Funding is a fundamental, contractual and moral obligation of the state upon which people's lives depend.”



It is a simple and direct message that goes to the core of all of our issues. If you know your legislators—call (or better yet email) them directly. If you don't, use the Legislative Hotline at 800-562-6000.

Strength in numbers

WSSRA has nearly 18,000 members. When we ask you to contact your legislators, it is critical that they hear from all of you in your strength of numbers.

Deep, deep apologies to Santa or whomever represents your spirit of the season. This is not a happy message, and if it weren't for the fact that our sources are the State Forecast Council, the US Council of Economic Advisors, and, the *Financial Times of London*, we'd just make something up, go home and drink (a lot) of eggnog. The problem is there are rough seas ahead, and we think you deserve a fair warning. It's up to **all of us** not to take the news sitting down.

WSSRA is pleased to welcome new staff



Peter Diedrick has been hired as WSSRA legislative coordinator. Peter began work in November. Below is some biographical information:

Education

Master of Public Administration, Seattle University 2009

Bachelor of Arts in Political Science, Western Washington University 2007

Public Service and Legislative Experience:

- Data Compiler, Washington State Employment Security Department
- Legislative Aide, Washington State Senate (2008 and 2010 Legislative Sessions)
- Graduate Intern, United States Department of State – Washington D.C.

Tara Teitzel has been hired as WSSRA office assistant. Tara began work in November. Tara was born and raised in Olympia. In 2005 she graduated from New Market Vocational Skills Center in Tumwater, Washington. Her work experience has been in the technology field and customer service working with company logos and website designs. Tara is our youngest employee at age 24; she is married and a mother of two children.

Michele Hunter transferred from the office assistant position to membership coordinator in November. Michele began employment with WSSRA in 2005. She worked closely with Karen Keller for many years and learned/mastered the complex data-base accounting, DRS reports, membership compilation, WEB accessed “Accessing Unit Membership” (AUM) program, cash record accounting and the many other duties of the position.



We need all members' email addresses.

Please send yours to ed@wssra.org

WSSRA COLA explanation

The legislative Uniform COLA disaster of June 2011: Born in 1945 or later? You get zip!



by Don Bunger, Pat Cygan and Joan Penewell, WSSR-PAC Board

Birth Year	Turn 66 in:	Monthly Rate	Gain Sharing	Monthly COLA	Yearly COLA	2011 COLA
>1929	1995	\$0.59		\$17.70	\$212.40	\$6,653.10
1930	1996	\$0.61		\$18.30	\$219.60	\$6,440.70
1931	1997	\$0.63		\$18.90	\$226.80	\$6,621.10
1932	1998	\$0.74	G/S	\$22.20	\$266.40	\$5,994.30
1933	1999	\$0.77		\$23.10	\$277.20	\$5,727.90
1934	2000	\$1.08	G/S	\$32.40	\$388.80	\$5,450.70
1935	2001	\$1.11		\$33.30	\$399.60	\$5,061.90
1936	2002	\$1.14		\$34.20	\$410.40	\$4,662.30
1937	2003	\$1.18		\$35.40	\$424.80	\$4,251.90
1938	2004	\$1.21		\$36.30	\$435.60	\$3,827.10
1939	2005	\$1.25		\$37.50	\$450.00	\$3,391.50
1940	2006	\$1.29		\$38.70	\$464.40	\$2,941.50
1941	2007	\$1.33		\$43.23	\$518.70	\$2,447.10
1942	2008	\$1.73	G/S	\$51.90	\$622.80	\$1,958.40
1943	2009	\$1.83	G/S	\$54.90	\$658.80	\$1,335.60
1944	2010	\$1.88		\$56.40	\$676.80	\$676.80
1945	2011					

COLA closes to all born 1945 and after.

In June 2011, the Legislature cancelled all further increases in the Uniform COLA. This affects about 66,000 PERS 1 and TRS 1 retirees and eventually over 90,000 will be old enough to qualify.

Over \$350 million of our COLA funds were taken away from retirees to balance the state budget.

Over the next 25 years we will give up an additional \$4 Billion.

The chart is for 30 years of service, use this formula:

Rate x Years of Service x 12 months = your current & permanent COLA

Notes:

- From 1995-2006, birthdays falling after June 30 delayed the start of the COLA until age 67.
- The 1994 group was the last one qualifying: $\$1.88 \times (30) \text{ years} \times (12) \text{ months} = \676.80 (for life).
- The 1929 group got \$212.40 in '95, but by 2010 their yearly COLA = \$6,653 (add "Yearly COLA" column).
- Retirees must be retired for one year to qualify for the COLA.
- "2011 COLA" is the total, never-changing amount all with 30 years of service will receive yearly, with no more 3% yearly increases.
- All in-state years count; all TRS 1/PERS 1 folks get same COLA regardless of former salary.
- Formula example: Born in '38? Retired in '98? 40 years of service? DOB before July 1? Formula: $0.74 \times 40 = \$29.60$ (per month) $\times 12 \text{ months} = \355.20 (for year 1998). So from 1998 to 2010, with 40 years as the multiplier (number of years of service), the permanent yearly COLA is \$7,622.40.



We need
all members'
email addresses.
Please send yours to
ed@wssra.org

Proposed constitutional amendment

Funding reform for Washington's public pensions

by James McIntire, Washington State Treasurer

Washington's public pension systems are among the strongest in the nation. According to the state actuary, Washington's public pensions are collectively funded at 99% of liabilities, which puts us in the top three best-funded state pension systems in the country.

Many other states are only now trying to make the kinds of pension benefit reforms that Washington implemented in 1977 when the Plan 2 systems were created. Not only are these plans still open to new members, they're funded at 118% of liabilities. And, just last year the Washington Legislature funded them at the statutorily required minimum 80% of the actuary's recommended level—the highest rate in over 10 years.

Background

Unfortunately, the news is not all good for all plans. PERS1 and TRS1—both closed to new members in 1977—were underfunded from the beginning and have remained so ever since. Today, TRS1 is funded at 84% while PERS1 is funded at just 74% of the benefits the state actuary expects will be paid out. With over 90,000 retirees and most of the 18,000 that still work near retirement, there is little time left for the Legislature to fix this problem.

PERS1 and TRS1 are not underfunded because benefits are “too rich”—the average beneficiary gets about \$21,000 per year—and 96% get less than \$50,000 per year. Low funding levels for PERS1 and TRS1 were also not due to bad investment policies. In fact, the Washington State Investment Board has the top performing public pension fund in the country with annual returns exceeding our assumed 8% annual rate of return since its inception.

Obligations and options

Make no mistake, the state must and will pay all contractual benefits owed to beneficiaries. The Legislature cannot avoid contractual obligations by changing a law. But, the legislature did change benefits that they deemed to be outside the pension contract.

When the cost of chronically underfunding the Plan 1 systems became crystal clear to the 2011 Legislature in the face of extreme budget pressures, they eliminated an annual cost-of-living adjustment that was started in 1995.

While Plan 1 beneficiaries receiving less than \$1,545 per month will continue to receive benefit adjustments,

other beneficiaries will not get a cost-of-living adjustment in the future—a benefit that was worth an average of \$56.40 per month last year. The Legislature also reduced the monthly supplement for Medicare retirees from \$183 to \$150—which, like the cost-of-living adjustment, was structured to let the Legislature change it. But the courts have yet to weigh in with their views on these matters.

Saving at our expense

These two changes to retiree benefits saved legislative appropriators over \$364 million for the 2011-13 biennium, which ultimately was the key factor that drove their choice. Today the Legislature faces yet another large budget hole, and all possible spending reductions will again need to be considered.

Because PERS 1 and TRS 1 still have a combined unfunded liability of roughly \$4.7 billion, higher state and local government contributions will still be needed in the coming years. Budgetary pressures on *non-contractual benefits*, such as remaining cost-of-living adjustments and health-premium subsidies will continue as long as pension-contribution requirements continue to rise and state revenues continue to underperform.

While the current budget environment exacerbates these pressures, they would not be nearly as extreme if the Plan 1 pension system had been more consistently funded over the past 30 years.

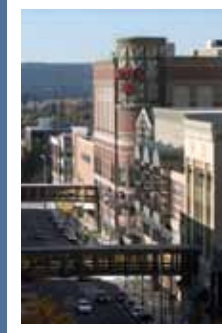
Reform proposal

Last spring, I sponsored an amendment to the state constitution to reform pension funding in Washington (HJR4219/SJR8214). This measure would require the Legislature to fund a fixed-payment plan to pay down the unfunded liabilities for PERS/TRS 1, and make a contribution to open pension plans equal to at least 80% of the actuary's recommended amount.

The proposed constitutional amendment has funding requirements similar to current law—but placing them in the State Constitution would make it hard for the Legislature to avoid making the needed contributions.

I plan to press the Legislature to fully fund the pension system, and hope you will join me to urge them to enact a constitutional amendment that will require them to do so in the future.

WSSRA Convention - June 4-6, 2012



2012

Tis the dawn of the New Year
 and all through E-7's house,
 the 2012 convention committee is busy
 with both pen and computer mouse.
 The plotting and planning of activities
 is being prepared with much care,
 in hopes that you and your spouse will be there.

So mark your calendar
 and plan to hop in your car,
 and drive to the Spokane Red Lion's
 hospitable front door,
 where we will brighten your horizons
 in person this year,
 as we welcome you to a "near nature, near perfect"
 venue, lots of old friends and good cheer.

Marilyn & Marilyn
 Co-chairs- 2012 Convention



Spokane



WSSRA connections



When it is time to hang up the keys?

by Julie E. Lee, Vice President, Driver Safety Program, AARP Education & Outreach



For many people, driving equals independence. It provides the freedom to visit family and friends, run to the store or the doctor's office, and travel freely. As we age, or as we observe an aging loved

one, such as a spouse or a parent, it's important to think about—and plan for—a life without driving. But how do you know when it's time to “hang up the keys”?

Giving up the keys is a very sensitive, personal decision. For some, the experience of relinquishing their driving rights can ignite feelings of anger, frustration, isolation and depression, according to AARP's *We Need to Talk* seminar, which is based on information created jointly by The Hartford and MIT AgeLab. It's therefore crucial that when you broach this subject with a loved one, you're educated and prepared.

Before initiating these conversations, you should observe your loved one's driving firsthand. Look for warning signs, such as these:

1. Almost crashing, with frequent “close calls.”
2. Finding dents and scrapes on the car, on fences, mailboxes, garage doors or curbs.
3. Getting lost, especially in familiar locations.
4. Having trouble seeing or following traffic signals, road

- signs and pavement markings.
5. Responding more slowly to unexpected situations; having trouble moving from the gas to the brake pedal, or confusing the two pedals.
6. Misjudging gaps in traffic at intersections and on highway entrance and exit ramps.
7. Experiencing road rage or frequently being honked at by other drivers.
8. Easily becoming distracted or having difficulty concentrating while driving.
9. Having a hard time turning to check over the shoulder while backing up or changing lanes.
10. Receiving traffic tickets or “warnings” from traffic or law enforcement officers.

When observing and assessing your own or your loved one's driving, try to differentiate between everyday mistakes and more serious safety risks. If you do notice one or more of these cautionary signs, consider exploring the free *We Need to Talk* online seminar, available at www.aarp.org/weneedtotalk.

If you're not at the point where a conversation is needed, you and your loved one may benefit from taking a driving refresher course, such as the classroom and online courses offered by AARP. For more information, visit www.aarp.org/driving45 or call 1-888-AARP-NOW, (1-888-227-7669).



At Okanogan County's October meeting, Sheriff Frank Rogers shared safety tips to avoid becoming a victim of scams and fraud:

- Use only one credit card.
- Think carefully before posting personal information on Facebook accounts.
- Don't leave paperwork containing personal information in your car.
- Safeguard your social security and smart cards.
- Do not give out personal information over the phone.

Need help? Have questions?

SPONSORED HEALTH INSURANCE PLANS AFTER RETIREMENT (PEBB AND HEALTH CARE AUTHORITY)

* enrollment is limited to 60 days after the first day of retirement.
1-800-200-1004 www.pebb.hca.wa.gov

QUALITY OF LIFE ISSUES WSSRA

1-800-544-5219 www.wssra.org

OPTIONS, TAKE HOME PAY, ETC. Dept. of Retirement Systems

1-800-547-6657 www.drs.wa.gov
recep@drs.wa.gov

SOCIAL SECURITY BENEFITS
1-800-325-0778
www.ssa.gov

STATE INSURANCE COMMISSIONER'S OFFICE/
STATEWIDE HEALTH INSURANCE
BENEFIT ADVISORS (SHIBA) 1-800-562-6900

In the spotlights



The Foundation for the Vancouver Public Schools—helping to meet the basic needs of children

by Jim Sork, director of the Vancouver Public Schools Foundation, 2001-2010, now retired.



Young Women in Action at Roosevelt create "Getting to Know You" posters. Getting to know you was the theme of the first module in the nine-week program. This activity was an ice-breaker for girls who do not typically socialize with one another.



Young Women in Action from Roosevelt Elementary outside Beaches, a favorite Vancouver restaurant. The trip to Beaches included instructions on manners and setting a table as well as a delicious meal.

More than 22,000 students walk through the doors of Vancouver Public Schools each day. From tiny tots with special needs to elementary, middle and high school students, they attend 35 different schools. Unfortunately, in the Vancouver community not all students come to school healthy, appropriately dressed and equipped, and ready to learn. More than half of our students qualify for subsidized meals, a federal indicator of poverty.

For the past 23 years the Foundation for Vancouver Public Schools, has helped to ensure that the basic needs of these children are met so that all students who attend our schools benefit from the outstanding educational opportunities provided by our district. As a private, non-profit 501c3 corporation, the foundation is able to offer assistance that cannot be funded by the school district. The foundation is funded by donations from school employees, students, parents, community members and businesses.

The mission of the foundation is to create opportunities to cultivate and inspire student success. About 23% of the foundation's annual budget (\$120K in 2010) was used for basic needs. The remainder went to support mentoring programs, school grants and special enrichment programs that benefit all students who attend Vancouver Public Schools.

As director for the foundation from 2001 through 2010, it was my privilege to provide direction to our paid staff of three and our 20 member volunteer board of directors. In addition to providing funding support, the

foundation plans and directs a number of ongoing programs that directly benefit students.

The Basic Needs Checkbook program provides principals at each of our 35 schools the ability to act quickly and discreetly to meet the urgent needs of students. Items most often purchased using these checkbooks are shoes and clothing; personal hygiene items; class, activity and field-trip fees; backpacks and school supplies; emergency medication and senior year expenses.

Funding for medical, dental, vision, audiology and other catastrophic needs that impact a child's life including support for Family Community Resource Centers (FCRCs) established in our highest need elementary schools. FCRC centers offer a safe haven for families and provide a link between families and the resources of the community. Family resource centers turn the noun "building" into a verb. These facilities are building hope, renewal and energy within neighborhoods by offering access to social services, activities, technology, educational resources and more.

In the spotlights



Mental Health Counseling is made possible through a donor-directed mental health counseling fund. This Tom Dudley Mental Health Counseling fund, named in honor of a high school principal, extends professional mental health counseling services to students identified by school counselors.

The Lunch Buddy mentoring program established in 1993, pairs adult community members with elementary students who would benefit from an encouraging adult in their lives. Children who are experiencing difficulty in school, or those who simply need a positive role model in their lives, are referred by teachers, counselors or school administrators. Students are matched with an adult volunteer from the community. “Buddies” meet with their assigned student once a week, for about 45 minutes at lunch followed by board games, reading, crafts or just talking.

Currently, more than 400 adult buddies assist more than 450 students in 19 of 21 Vancouver elementary schools. Teachers’ reports indicate that this simple program produces measurable benefits such as better attendance and improved student attitudes and behavior in class (i.e. more positive and less disruptive). More than 100 children are on the wait list. Two thirds are boys, making the need for adult male mentors especially acute.

The foundation’s newest program is **Young Women In Action**. Last spring, 110 girls joined 25 women mentors participating across three schools. Begun in 2010, the curriculum for the nine-week program, which runs from mid April through early June, focuses on development of life skills such as friendship, health

and hygiene, career, manners and etiquette, “envision your life” exercises and lots of fun. According to Tish Lilly, assistant principal at Roosevelt Elementary, “Young Women In Action provides girls an opportunity to interact with girls who are not in their circle of friends. It’s great preparation for middle school when they may find themselves in a class and not know anyone.” There is no charge to any girl who takes part in the program.

Since 1998, the foundation has funded 731 individual classroom **Enrichment Grants** totaling over \$725,000. Enrichment grants support creative, inspiring projects that are beyond the financial capacity of the school district. For aspiring student

musicians, the foundation has a special fund to help with musical instrument rental. In 2010, the foundation supported budding musicians to the tune of \$15,000.

As a long-time Vancouver educator (42 years), I have seen the increased needs of student and families served by our schools. I know the work of the Foundation for Vancouver Public Schools makes a profound difference for these students and the Vancouver community. There is no better investment in a community than helping children.

For additional information about the foundation visit www.vsdfoundation.org.

Writer Howard Buck and his buddy, Jalen, are all smiles. The foundation coordinates the Lunch Buddy program at 19 elementary schools. The one-on-one attention provided by adult buddies has been shown to help bolster children’s confidence.



Tara Taylor, executive director for the foundation, and her buddy after lunch. Tara and Liberty have been buddies for two years.

Steve Runyon enjoys reading with his young buddies. Steve has mentored more young men through Lunch Buddies than any other volunteer.

On the road in retirement

Cruising: the best way to travel

by Bill Marvin



As we arrived in our cab, I looked up and all I could say was, “Wow!” Royal Caribbean’s Oasis of the Seas towered over everything. It was huge! The second largest cruise ship in the world, its sister ship, the Allure of the Seas, is a couple of inches longer. The Oasis of the Seas is 1,187 ft. long and 208 ft. wide; it weighs 225,000 gross tons. The ship carries 5,400 guests and a crew of 2,165.

A great benefit of retirement is having time to travel. As we age and are looking for combining travel, relaxation and learning into single trips, many of us are discovering or rediscovering cruising. Packing and unpacking just once, being pampered, having time stand still, discovering exotic hideaways not normally on the beaten path, taking time to smell the flowers; these are all benefits of cruising.

Past WSSRA President Bill Marvin and his wife, Donna, have taken many cruises in the past. They found the pace of normal land travel becoming more difficult yet still wanted to see and visit places around the world. Their most recent trip is chronicled by Bill when they took a Caribbean cruise on the new Oasis of the Seas, the second largest cruise ship in the world. Sit back and imagine you’re along with them as you read about the luxurious life available to everyone who partakes of this special mode of travel.

The staff was so efficient as we checked in that even with so many people, we were on the ship headed for our cabin within 10 minutes. We had a handicapped junior suite; it was huge! It was the largest room we have ever had. The suite included a walk-in closet and enough hangers for all our clothes—the first time that has happened in all the cruises we have taken. We had a balcony which I would recommend to all who cruise; it just makes whatever space you have seem so much bigger. We had breakfast every morning on the balcony and used it throughout the day, even after enjoying the evening’s entertainment. I found the balcony was an ideal place to unwind by reading at any time.

Food choices to satisfy every taste

Like most of us who go on a cruise, food was one of the main delights. You can find a wide variety of delicious meals and snacks available 24 hours a day. Besides the formal dining room, which served great gourmet food, there were several specialty restaurants. These specialty restaurants all had cover charges, which included gratuities. Our favorite was 150 Central Park, which cost an extra \$25 per person. We felt it was well worth the price: a six-course dinner that

included fennel-dusted scallops, lobster ravioli, slow-roasted beef tenderloin and a Gianduja chocolate temptation. After finishing the meal, we were stuffed!

Other specialty restaurants onboard were the Chops Grille, the Seafood Shack, Giovanni’s Table, Vintages/ Tapas Bar and Izumas. Of course, you can always go to the Marketplace Buffet which was open from morning to night, included in the price of your cruise.

A couple of places we thought were fun were the Park Café, where we could make our own salads, choosing from such items as shrimp, tuna, raisins, tomatoes, carrots and olives. You choose from a tremendous array, then the attendants mix the salad up for you with your favorite topping and serve it to you in a salad bowl. Also available are chips, pita or roast beef sandwiches, soup and several choices of dessert.

Another eating establishment we enjoyed was Sorrentos, a pizza place, where you can help yourself to slices of pizza that are already made or make your own. There are many choices to pick from—mushrooms, pepperoni, sausage, ham, pineapple, tomatoes, zucchini, etc., plus several types of cheese.

Other favorites of foodies were a donut shop, cupcake cupboard, ice cream

On the road in retirement

parlor and a coffee bar with free cookies and small sandwiches served throughout the day. My favorite of all was Johnny Rockets, a hamburger, fries and shakes joint with a juke box playing tunes from the '50s.

Outstanding entertainment

The entertainment onboard was outstanding. The musical "Hair Spray" was presented on stage in the Opal Theater the first part of the week, and then a male quartet singing '60s music was the feature later in the week. A show of diving, synchronized swimming, and acrobatics was presented in the Aqua Theater's 17.9 ft. deep pool. The show was similar to the Cirque du Soleil's "O" in Las Vegas. The Ice Arena had outstanding skaters in its ice show. There were also a comedy club for adults, a jazz club, several night clubs throughout the ship featuring different types of music and a piano bar—enough to entertain all. The casino was always ready to take your money, as was BINGO.

Activity options

For those who were athletically inclined or those who wanted to stay in shape after eating all the meals and snacks, there was a huge gym area with all the exercise machines and lectures on conditioning, etc. I walked through one day and was so worn out that I never went back! Two flowriders (surfing), a miniature golf course, a zip line, basketball courts, shuffle boards, table tennis and a running track were available. And, of course, there were several small pools and hot tubs for soaking. Even while at sea, there was always room to sun bathe on the chair-lined deck.

What made this a unique cruise was the inclusion of three promenades. The Royal Promenade had a variety of shopping opportunities in addition to the pizza parlor, cup cakes

and two night clubs. Central Park had live gardens with benches to enjoy a more quiet time and some nice restaurants. The Boardwalk had a merry-go-round plus a place to get donuts and ice cream. Johnny Rockets and the Aqua Theater were close-by.

The ship rotates with its sister ship, the Allure of the Seas, between the Western and Eastern Caribbean. We were on the Eastern, which included stops at St. Martin, St. Thomas and the Bahamas. The Western cruise includes Haiti, Jamaica and Cozumel. This is a great cruise for families since the youth program is exceptional, with facilities for each age group.

Recommendations

I highly recommend a cruise vacation. It is very economical compared to a week's stay at a resort since it includes all meals, lodging and entertainment. You can do as much or as little as you want. For those of you who have sea sickness problems, these ships are so huge you do not notice the motion. The cabins on higher decks near the center of the ship are preferable for the smoothest sailing



Bill and Donna Marvin get ready to enjoy dinner in one of the ship's specialty restaurants. They have been on over 15 cruises.

of all.

The best rates are the times between Thanksgiving and Christmas. Don't book the Caribbean during the fall months as it is hurricane season. I would not recommend getting an inside cabin unless that's all you can afford; it's like sleeping in your closet with 24 hours darkness.

One other recommendation—use a reputable, well-established travel agent. They can advise you on the best cruise value and can get you just as good a deal as you can get on the internet, and they don't cost you any more. Also, if you need to make any changes, they can help you.




Passengers stroll by Johnny Rockets restaurant along the Boardwalk, which boasts a variety of shops and eating establishments. The Boardwalk is one of three promenades on the Oasis of the Sea.

The view from above shows one of the ship's promenades. This one, lined with trees, provides seating areas great for a beverage or something to eat and people watching.



Taking care of ourselves

The role of vitamin C and good health: you would be amazed

 by Bill Bergsma, health services committee

Are you a faithful user of Vitamin C? Do you take it only when you feel a cold coming on? Are you taking 500mg, 1,000mg or more? Would you be surprised to learn that after thousands of studies and reports on the subject over the last 75 years, Vitamin C appears to be the best, lowest-cost step to health and healing?

In his books, Thomas E. Levy, MD, JD, has traced back through decades of data to find many miraculous treatments, preventions and cures made with mega and optimal doses of Vitamin C. The recommended daily allowance for Vitamin C is said to be 75-95mg per day. Mega doses may range from 2,000 to 10,000 mg per day depending on the patient's condition. Optimal doses may be from 2,000 to 100,000 mg per day per patient. The dose is determined by the disease or infection and the threat to life.

Vitamin C can be taken by IV or intramuscular injection in the optimal dosages; no toxic levels have been found. Frederick Klenner, M.D., pioneered the use of mega and optimal dosages in 1948 when he cured 60 out of 60 polio patients with optimal doses of Vitamin C by IV or intramuscular injections. Some of the patients got doses every 12 hours. All were polio free within three days. Klenner also cured several people of snake-bite poison, mushroom poisoning, shingles, mumps, black widow spider bites and other serious infections or diseases. In 1949 he presented his case histories at the American Medical Association convention and was met with silence. In 1950 he cured 342 cases of shingles with optimal doses of vitamin C, each within 36 hours. He published several articles in medical journals, but few ever followed his lead.

Thomas E. Levy has followed up on Klenner's approach and has seen similar results. He has written several books and co-written others to pass on his findings. Levy learned from dentist Hal Huggins that many disease problems begin in the mouth. He watched Dr. Huggins remove root canals, mercury fillings and infected teeth, and clean up gum disease while at the same time infusing his patients with Vitamin C. He was amazed at the results. Some of the patients were fighting MS, ALS (Lou Gehrig's disease) and Parkinson's disease or Alzheimer's during this time. All became dramatically better. It changed Dr. Levy's approach to medicine. Studies on root canals showed a continuing leaching of a toxin that the body must constantly battle.

J. Issels, a cancer doctor, found that 98% of his patients had between two and 10 root canals. When the root canals were removed, patients responded better.

No hospital in America uses IV Vitamin C yet, but they do in New Zealand and Australia if requested strongly. A New Zealand TV version of "60 Minutes" documented the story of Allan Smith who was so ill doctors recommended removal of all life support. His family fought so strongly that the doctors relented and gave him IV doses of Vitamin C. Smith responded so well that they continued the treatment for several weeks. He is fine now, enjoying life and his grandkids. His case was called "Living Proof" and is available on a disc.



Dr. Levy found 51,000 references to Vitamin C via "pubmed," a government-run website that catalogs all studies from over 1,000 peer-reviewed medical journals from around the world. The National Institute of Health runs pubmed. Another source is MEDLINE from the National Library of Medicine which cites 11 million bio-medical articles from 1966 to 2002. There is so much evidence that heart disease begins with a scurvy-like lack of Vitamin C. This leads to the arteries getting slushy and cell walls separating so particles can get caught and begin forming clots in the arteries that service the heart muscle. Adequate levels of Vitamin C help you prevent many illnesses and heal quicker with and without other medical means. Dr. Levy's books use over 1,200 referenced articles. Nearly every disease you know has been treated with Vitamin C at some time and place. They have been written up and reported to various journals. There is so much we can learn and take advantage of for our benefit. With health costs going up so rapidly, it means we must be more responsible and seek every edge we can to be and stay well.

Humans, monkeys and Guinea pigs are about the only animals that can't make their own vitamin C. The gene that should stimulate Vitamin C doesn't seem to work in most cases. It should boost the enzyme L-gulonolactone oxidase (GLO) which makes Vitamin C from sugar in the blood. Maybe those who live over 100 years do produce some vitamin C. It is a topic for research.

References: *Curing the Incurable* by Thomas E. Levy; *Stop America's #1 Killer* by Thomas E. Levy; and *Primal Panacea* by Thomas E. Levy

History: Past WSSRA presidents

Eloise Stendal—WSSRA president 1988-89



by Rita Requa, historian

The 3% COLA that Plan 1 members just lost was enacted in 1989, when Eloise Stendal was president of WSSRA. Eloise used her inclusive skills to “Lead the Way,” which was her presidential theme. In an effort to present a united front for a 3% COLA, Eloise met with then-WEA president Terry Bergeson, the WEA-R president and AARP numerous times. The campaign for a COLA included not only Eloise’s leadership, but the efforts of the WSSRA Legislative committee, past president Stayner Brighton and WEA lobbyist Ralph Stevens.

Eloise was born in Mt. Vernon, Washington. Some of her first memories are of growing up in a teacher’s cottage adjacent to Meadow School on the banks of the Skagit River where her mother taught. Eloise spent her first four years of school there and finished her education in Mt. Vernon. She married her high school sweetheart, Bill, after he returned from the Army in Korea in 1949. Her first teaching job was second grade in Bellingham with a salary of \$2,400. By taking summer classes at Western while teaching in Burlington, she received her BA in Education in 1952. Eloise took off five years to have two children “and that was an education in itself that I really treasured,” she said. The family moved to Germany where she taught kindergarten in a US Army dependents’ school for two years. Upon returning to the states, Eloise taught a variety of elementary grades in Sedro Woolley. After receiving a NDEA Fellowship at Western and an MA in Education, she supervised student teachers and taught in-service classes while teaching in Sedro Woolley. She retired from that district after 23 years and recently was selected for the Sedro-Woolley School District Hall of Fame.

Retirement did not slow Eloise down. She became busy with Skagit/Island/San Juan Unit 21, serving on the local legislative committee and subsequently the state Legislative committee. NW-1 asked her to become a candidate for state president in one of the few contested WSRTA-WSSRA elections. Eloise won!

Eloise has been involved in a variety of community activities: Skagit Valley Literacy

Council as tutor, board member and student-pupil coordinator; commissioner for Hospital District #304; elder and clerk for the Presbyterian church; moderator of the North Puget Sound Presbytery; ARP Breast Health coordinator; Cascades Job Corps Community Relations committee; community Thanksgiving dinners and Fourth of July chicken barbecues for 25 years (where her husband, Bill, was chef and she his “flunky”). Anyone who was invited to the Skagit/Island/San Juan picnics was sure to enjoy the salmon barbecues especially prepared by Bill and assisted by Eloise.

Eloise still attends Unit 21 meetings, NW-1 Coordinating Council meetings and the state convention each June.

If you are in Spokane at next year’s convention, you will be sure to recognize her smiling friendly face. Be sure to say “Hello and Thank You, Eloise.” when you see her. She is one remarkable and dedicated woman!

WSSRA

Member Benefits



- Long Term Care / Home Health Care Insurance
- Medical Air Transportation Services
- Final Expense Whole Life
- Dental & Vision Plan
- Travel Discounts
- Computer Discounts
- Hearing Solutions
- Hotel Discounts
- Rental Car Discounts



For information on
benefits, call AMBA at
800.258.7041
or visit www.WSSRAbenefits.com



Supporting future educators



It takes a village



by David Myers, president, WSSR-Foundation

Four main groups are responsible for the success of foundation efforts to provide eight district scholarships of \$1,500.

1. The WSSR-Foundation Board consists of five members serving five-year terms on a revolving basis. This group is responsible for helping to raise and to manage the funds. One new member is elected annually at the WSSRA convention.

2. The scholarship committee, which is a WSSRA revolving committee consisting of three members serving three-year terms who are appointed by the president. This committee is responsible for the guidelines, publicizing and awarding of

scholarships through the association.

3. Each of the eight district representatives selects a committee that should make sure that each school is contacted to be sure they receive applications. This committee meets to score the applications, select recipients and plan award ceremonies.

4. The membership is key. Last year there were 190 individuals or couples who donated, along with nine county organizations or coordinating councils. Students wanting to become teachers need our help.

Please consider a tax-deductible donation to the foundation. Now is a great time to make a gift, to honor someone or to give a memorial to a friend or relative.

Foundation contributors

- Barbara Chamberlain in memory of Carol Anderson
Chelan/Douglas SRA in memory of John Ahnemiller and Richard D Petersen
East King SRA in memory of Chris Rohr, Unit 16 deceased members
George Eisentrout in memory of Olive Hull
Ken and Shirley Elfbrandt in memory of Olive Hull
Jim and Shirlee Hall in memory of Chris Rohr
Beverlymae Isaacson donation
Karen Keller in memory of Olive Hull and Nada Jarvis
Kittitas Co SRA in memory of Astrid Kaaring
Barbara Landrock donation
Lewis County SRA in memory of Linda Richards
Carol Nightingale in memory of Robert Eldridge
Renton/South King RSEA in memory of Rolf Dragseth
Marjorie Rhodes in memory of Chris Rohr
Southwest King SRA in memory of Roger Barr, Frances Clogston, Christine Rohr, Joyce Siverts, Florence Smallwood
The Tuesday Trotters in memory of Olive Hull
Despo Varkados donation
WSSRA donation
Yakima CO SRA donation

clip out, place in an envelope and mail to the WSSR-Foundation



Please check this line if you would like to receive information about setting up an irrevocable endowment scholarship fund.

I am making a donation

I am making a gift in HONOR of

I am making a gift in MEMORY of



Name and address of donor:


Name and address of person to be notified: (If you would like the person notified of this gift, you must include full name and address)

Contributions may be sent to: WSSR-Foundation 4726 Pacific Ave SE Lacey, WA 98503

FOR OFFICE USE ONLY
check
amount
reference

Strength in numbers

Help share the message of WSSRA

 by Karen Keller, WSSRA membership coordinator, retired

For the past 13 years I had the best job a school retiree could ever hope to have, working at the WSSRA office. In 1998 the then-executive director Pat Hoban hired this former kindergarten teacher to be the part-time office assistant. I certainly did have a lot to learn about office procedures and writing decent business letters! When Brenda Johnson retired as the membership coordinator in 2004, I took on that full-time position.

I am filled with gratitude for these 13 years I've had at WSSRA. I've met amazing school employees and retirees state-wide, and I'd like to thank you all by name. Since I don't have the space here to do that, let me say I have enjoyed meeting you and assisting you with your membership campaigns, and I look forward to

more good times ahead.

So, I ask you, who wouldn't want to be a part of this organization? School employees and school retirees are remarkable, lively, caring people. I am asking you to offer to do what you can to assist your unit membership chair. You might call "fade away" members to remind them that they are missed or stuff envelopes or assist with school presentations or staff a table at a school district benefits' fair. Carry a membership application with you to hand off to those non-members you meet at your bridge club, exercise group, church/synagogue or civic organizations. Give a gift membership to a friend or family member. After you've finished reading this *Journal*, give it to a non-member friend to enjoy. Those are just a few of the ways





you might help to share the message of WSSRA.


I want a strong, vital retiree organization working for my benefit, and I bet you do as well. WSSRA achieved a wonderful growth spurt last year and with our combined efforts we can again achieve another all-time high.


Michele Hunter is the new membership coordinator at the WSSRA office and is ready to assist you reach your membership goals. Michele_H@wssra.org.

As Bob Hope said, "Thanks for the memories."


1. Cut out this form


2. Give it to a retiree


3. Have her/him complete the form


4. Mail it to WSSRA

Mail completed form to: Washington State School Retirees' Association
4726 Pacific Avenue SE, Lacey, Washington 98503-1216

Name _____ Retirement plan (circle one below):
TRS 1/ TRS 2/ TRS 3/ PERS 1/ SERS 2/ SERS 3

Address _____ City/State/Zip+4 _____

Social Security number _____ Local unit name/number _____

Telephone (_____) _____ Date of retirement _____ Leg. Dist. _____ Cong. Dist. _____

I authorize the Washington State Department of Retirement Systems to deduct dues in the amount of \$5 per month and any future increases as voted by the membership from my monthly retirement allowance and pay such deductions to the Washington State School Retirees' Association.

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

Signature _____ Date _____

01-Asotin-Pomeroy	09-Kittitas County	18-Pend Oreille	28-Thurston County
02-Chelan/Douglas	10-Klickitat County	19-Renton-South King	29-Benton-Franklin
03-Clallam County	11-Lewis County	20-Seattle	30-Southwest Washington
04-Columbia Basin	12-Lower Columbia	21-Skagit/Island/San Juan	31-Walla Walla-Columbia
05-Grays Harbor Pacific	13-Lower Yakima Valley	22-Sno-Isle	32-Whatcom County
06-Southwest King	14-Mason County	23-Sno-King	33-Whitman County
07-Jefferson County	15-Okanogan County	25-Spokane	34-Yakima County
08-Kitsap County	16-East King	27-Pierce County	

Newsworthy

Remembering



Olive (Dickson) Hull died September 18, 2011, in Lacey. She was born January 12, 1926, in Bercail, Montana, and married Garry W. Hull of Pe Ell in 1951. Olive graduated from the University of Washington in 1949 (B.A.) and again in 1973 (M.L.S.). She taught elementary school and was a librarian in the

North Thurston school district.

Olive was a member of the WSSR-Foundation Board from 1999-2004, serving as president 2003-2004, and on the WSSRA Executive Board from 2004-2007 as the SW-4 District Representative. She was a member of the Thurston

County SRA and worked on membership at the local level.

Olive was an avid outdoorswoman, devoted to hiking, backpacking and climbing. She was a member of the Olympians, the Wanderers, the Tuesday Trotters and the Olympia Branch of the Mountaineers. In honor of her continued support for the branch, she received the Mountaineers' Career Service award. She was a fastidious birder, with over 660 species on her North American life list. She loved to travel, from Australia to Botswana. When she was not chasing penguins in Antarctica, Olive practiced her fiber arts, especially quilting and knitting.

Olive is survived by a son and daughter; she was blessed with six grandchildren.

A memorial service was held on October 8, 2011. Donations may be made to the Timberland Regional Library Foundation.

SW 3 holds forum regarding health-insurance concerns



by Gary Gleason, SW 3 representative, and Ron Nelson, forum co-chair

On November 20, 2011, a standing-room-only crowd of 80+ people filled the social hall of the Grace Lutheran Church in Port Townsend to hear PEBB/HCA representatives respond to concerns about the lack of service by the only Uniform Medical provider in Clallam and Jefferson Counties. While non-rural areas have several providers, this area has only Regence Blue Shield under contract to provide the reimbursement to local health care providers. Attending besides WSSRA members were medical providers, WEA active and retired members, members of the local unit of Retired Public Employees Council of Washington and Linda Barnfather, legislative aide for state representatives Van De Wege and Tharinger.

Concern centered around three major areas: 1) very late payments to local medical providers, 2) a cut-back of about 50% for selected preferred local providers and 3) an inability to get timely answers as to why doctors and others had not been paid in a timely manner and questions about the lack of clarity of bill explanations for services. In some cases WSSRA members and others had bills even

Attendees enjoy the snacks provided by the Jefferson County unit provided prior to the forum. Working together in the future can be another benefit of the forum.



sent to collection agencies. By having some longtime local health providers no longer on the preferred list, members have to go to Bremerton or Silverdale for treatment as the few remaining local providers were so booked up that appointments were very hard to get.

The PEBB and HCA representatives provided the history of why the State Uniform Medical organization had to contract out the payment, and they provided the welcome news that HCA had Regence Blue Shield under a must-improve order with a due date of the end of December to have cleared up the backlog of unpaid providers, which at one time exceeded some 300,000 cases according to the Seattle Times, or face fines!

One of the benefits of the forum was the cooperation exhibited among various organizations whose members share common problems and interests. Working together in the future could prove to be an advantage for all. Jefferson County's WSSRA unit has opened the door to working with the local RPEC and WEA, and it is hoped we will jointly share our efforts in meeting our goals which may result in increasing membership and member participation in these organizations.

Cochairing the forum committee were Ron Nelson, Floyd Thompson and Neil Potthoff. Dave Woodruff managed news releases and advertisements. The costs for finger food and all other expenses were covered by our local unit. The event was publicized with the aid of the WSSRA office, newspaper articles and ads in Jefferson and Clallam Counties, and bulletins through the WEA's Olympic Uniserv Office and their local affiliates. WSSRA SW3 provided some copy and mailing costs.

The Outreach Corner

Mini-grant programs help fund special activities and projects



by Nancy Rudy, outreach committee

WOW! Members of WSSRA are generous! Last year, they gave \$35,000 in mini-grants—from the largest and the tiniest units in the state to the biggest and smallest schools in the state.

Mini-grants are generally defined as limited money donated to active teachers and other school personnel to enhance learning activities and special projects not otherwise covered by school budgets.

A total of 21 units responded to the Outreach Committee's request for information. The process is fairly uniform: circulating the information, reviewing the applications, selecting the winners and publicizing their use of the grant.

Spreading the word

Getting the news out to teachers and others within the schools appears to be the most difficult aspect. Applications are usually included in newsletters which go to the members. But what about the other school employees, which most units include in their mini-grant process? Information is sent to school principals and/or head secretaries; however, the applications rarely are distributed to the many possible applicants. Oddly, several members noted, "Principals are not always positive or responsive." Circulating information to schools in larger districts is especially difficult.

Of the units offering detailed information to the survey, nine offer grants to their members only, while eight offer to anyone in the school. Two units give preference to members, either in amount of the grant or number of grants given. One respondent noted that they received more and better applications if the process were open to all. One county offers grants only to elementary schools.

Most units have a committee that handles all the details of mini-grants, including selecting the winners and often the amounts on the basis of merit. Two units give grants to those who respond first, and three use a lottery.

Establishing value

There is a wide range of monetary amounts and number of grants given. Some units offer a set number of grants, such as 10, and establish a set amount, such as

\$100. Others offer variable amounts such as up to \$250, up to \$200, or up to \$150, depending upon the money needed for the project. Two units gave 30-31 mini-grants, another 20, another 17 and several 10. While those in metropolitan areas may offer more grants for more funds, one member noted that it is impressive that even some of the state's smallest units are able to raise the money to give \$500 or \$1,000 in mini-grants benefiting local teachers each year.

Many units have been giving the same amount for several years, while costs have been rising. One grant committee chair noted that her unit offers far more than a minimum amount because so little can be done to make a class project work with only \$100 in today's economy.

Distributing the funds

All units are concerned with notifying the winners and publicizing the winners' accomplishments. The public relations advantage to the organization is not to be forgotten either. Those units which give fewer grants have the advantage of being able to gather the winners together and let them tell of their grant use at a unit meeting or banquet. This is most common in more rural areas. In metropolitan areas, the letter to the winner with notification to the principal is more common. Most units give extensive coverage with pictures (often in the classrooms) in

their newsletters, and local newspapers often cover the advantages of the grants.

It should be noted that 11 units make a point of visiting the school and often the classroom to award the recipient his/her grant—another PR opportunity.

Since most mini-grants are awarded in January or February, now is the time for units to review their procedures or consider offering grants next year.



We need all members' email addresses.

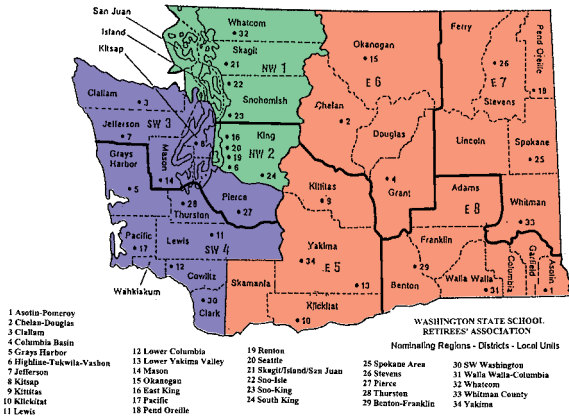
Please send yours to ed@wssra.org

WSSRA around the state



From the districts

What's happening in...



NORTHWEST-1

Members of *Skagit/Island/San Juan, Unit 21*, have been busy visiting schools and presenting grants to active teachers. "I have several handicapped children who would really benefit from having the Dragon Speak program for our computers. This would enable them to speak to the computer and have their words put into print," said a teacher in Allen Elementary School. The wish is typical of the 48 requests for grant money from the unit's annual giving. Although the requests are the most ever received, the unit felt the need to honor them all and had the wonderful opportunity of presenting the \$100 checks last week to the individual teachers in Concrete, Sedro Woolley, Burlington, Mount Vernon and Anacortes school districts. Starting in December, at their Annual Holiday Brunch, they began to replenish their

savings account by raffling off eight baskets to members and guests in attendance. The baskets ranged from a Hawaiian basket to jams and jellies to baked goods and other great items. They also collected non-perishable food items and cash donations for one of the local food banks at that time...The October meeting of *Sno-Isle, Unit 22*, was followed by a program about minerals, with a unique display featuring specimens from around the world. Parker Wells of the Marysville Rock and Gem Club shared information and kept engaged members in a lively discussion. The November meeting included an impressive memorial service for departed members, led by vice president **Nancy Strain**. A presentation followed by Bennie J. Walthall, author of "Imaginary Lines," a book of poetry. After the audience chose a poem from the

table of contents, Bennie explained the inspiration behind the poem, then read it. **David Karber** organized a legislative coffee hour in November. State legislators Mike Sells and Nick Harper met with Sno-Isle members at a coffee-house in Everett. The two encouraged all members to continue writing letters that included personal examples of negative impacts experienced as a result of loss of COLA and changes in insurance rate and coverage...*Sno-King, Unit 23*, held its November Scholarship Luncheon with 46 members attending. Tom Peloquin, a Civil War reenactor, portrayed a Union Artillery officer. He spoke of his daily experiences in the war. He brought some hardtack to sample. Members were glad that their luncheon had come first, as they didn't find the hardtack very satisfying. Edmonds and Shoreline SD superintendents presented updates on both districts. The second week of December, the unit had its Cookie Fest and Sing-A-Long. **Bruce Caldwell** played the keyboard while attendees sang holiday songs. Members brought holiday cookies, which were sampled and then purchased, with the benefits going to the scholarship fund...This was a par-

ticularly active quarter for *Whatcom, Unit 32*. With all the elections that were coming up, in October, unit 32 sponsored a meet-and-greet political forum. The majority of candidates running for office attended. They had a chance to meet and talk to members during lunch. After lunch they sat at the front and told a bit about themselves and their campaign ambitions and then answered questions generated by members. In November, a presentation was given by local author Carolyn Koehnline. She talked about her book "Confronting Your Clutter." The December program was presented by the Squalicum High School Music Department. They played some holiday tunes and other classic music.

NORTHWEST-2

Northwest 2 members have been donating to various causes this fall, and with the holidays approaching, the need was as strong as the giving. *Southwest King, Unit 6*, has been collecting monies for local food banks each month, donating to PAC, helping the Lions Club with eyesight causes and raising scholarship funds with the book exchange. With no meeting in December, board members donated to the local food bank rather than

WSSRA around the state

each other at their annual luncheon. November saw a USO presentation, and October featured a local choir group. January will welcome Highline interim superintendent Alan Spiciati...*East King, Unit 16*, members were given opportunities at both November and December meetings to purchase gifts for the holidays and help worthy causes. In November, Rebecca Willow from Park Place Books shared a variety of books for an audience of buyers. December's lunch and silent auction of new items benefited lucky winners with good buys; two worthy recipients that shared proceeds equally, the WSSR-Foundation and the unit's mini-grant fund... For *Seattle, Unit 20*, November's speaker was Seattle interim superintendent **Susan Enfield**. December had the unit's own members, **Phil Konkel** at the piano and singer **Jody Lemke**, playing and singing show tunes and seasonal music. Drawings for various prizes supported the mini-grant fund. The SSRA board renewed the medical-needs grants for members, providing cash for members who need assistance with medical bills. At the December meeting of the book club, leader **Jan O'Connor** discussed David Guttererson's "East of

the Mountains."

SOUTHWEST-3

Clallam County, Unit 3, started the year with a luncheon on September 20 at its usual meeting place, The Crabhouse Restaurant in Port Angeles. Guest presenter Ray Hanson shared pictures from a trip he and his wife took to Israel. The October 18th meeting was a busy one with Kevin Slatery talking about AMBA benefits and **Ed Gonion** speaking about WSSRA issues. Brenda Francis and two colleagues from the Elwha S'Klallam tribe presented a Power Point program and told about tribal news including the new Elwha Heritage Center in Port Angeles (extending an invitation to members to visit), the ceremony for the Elwha dam removal project and the annual canoe paddle which involves many northwest and Canadian tribes. The unit's November 15th meeting was the same day as the Health Fair, so the start of the meeting was delayed so as many as possible could attend the fair and get new information about changes in health insurance. The guest speaker Karen Gustin, superintendent of Olympic National Park, told about volunteer opportunities, youth programs, keeping Hurricane Ridge

open during weekdays all winter and progress with the Elwha dam removal and restoration. The December 20th luncheon featured entertainment by the Grand Olympics Chorus of Sweet Adelines International, which included our membership chair, **Marcia Homer**.

SOUTHWEST-4

The Grays Harbor Pacific, Unit 5, meeting held at the Hoquiam Senior Center was a hobby share event. Attendees mingled with the other seniors at the center and had a delicious lunch. Members were charged the unit's regular lunch price so that after paying the senior center, they had some money left for their treasury. A representative of the Port of Grays Harbor came to the unit's second meeting to inform the group what is being planned for the Grays Harbor waterways. Both meetings proved to

be very interesting...A large group of *Lewis County, Unit 11*, members attended the November meeting in anticipation of the annual silent auction. Most left with goodies and treasures in hand, and the mini-grant fund received an abundant boost. Julie Johnson, director of Donor and Alumni Relations at Centralia College, spoke about the unit's endowment fund with the college, how it is used and the processes involved. Applications for mini-grants were sent to all active members...*Thurston County, Unit 28*, continues to be a strong, active group. This year TCSRA was able to fund 20 mini-grants! The deserving recipients were from six school districts in the Olympia area. Members will hear about how the funds were used when the recipients attend the April 2012 meeting. Everyone owes a big "thank-you" to **Joanne Borden, Jo**



Salina Grieg and Anne Cossairt who proudly hold their mini-grant checks from Skagit/Island/San Juan.

Co-president Diane Visten with Little Mountain Elementary School teachers Sara Dahl, Susan Husband, Karen Wend, Stacie Kelsey, Eva Greenwald,

WSSRA around the state

Whitman County honored Bob McBride, Harold Hartman and Ray Olson for their years of service to the unit. Each man was presented with a bag of wheat flour and a pin.



Edwards and Liz Eaton for their hard work on the mini-grant committee. At the December luncheon, members were entertained by the North Thurston High School choir, directed by Rachel Landowski. Jane Laclergue from the Fireside Bookstore also joined the group with her recommendation for good reads.

EAST-5

Lower Yakima Valley, Unit 13, meets on the second Tuesday of each month in Grandview. A total of \$1,000 mini-grants were awarded to eight teachers representing five different school districts; 34 applications were received. Donations of \$100 to food banks in Prosser, Sunnyside and Grandview were given for the holidays. The unit's September meeting featured cast members Sue Ellen Davis and Brad Smith, from Over the Hill Theatricals presenting musical selections from "Bells Are Ringing." **Lois Olsen** accompanied them. Over the Hill Theatricals is a

theater group for the over-45 set. Trent Ball and Brad Smith, from the Grandview campus of the Yakima Valley Community College, presented the viticulture program in October. Health and insurance benefits were presented by **Bill Bourn** in November. The December meeting was a Christmas social which included a brown-bag gift exchange....Entertaining and informative programs have started the 2011-2012 for *Yakima, Unit 34*. The owner of Inklings bookstore shared a wide selection of "must-read" books in October. The November speaker was women's shoe collector, David Childs. He displayed many pairs of shoes and explained the changes in shoe styles through the decades. In December, the group fed lobbyist Fred Yancey at an abundant potluck, and then he "fed" us information pertaining to Washington state legislative decisions. "Wow! What we learned!" said all the members. The unit's drawing provided

some attendees a way to do their Christmas shopping; the record-setting \$145 in proceeds go to the WSSR-Foundation. Unit 34 gave \$5,836 in mini grants to innovative teacher recipients who serve many students.

EAST-6

The fall meeting of *Chelan-Douglas, Unit 2*, was special with members and guests enjoying a delicious lunch at The Red Lion Inn, Wenatchee where the program, "David Thompson," introduced by Chris Rader of the Wenatchee Valley Museum and Cultural Center was enthusiastically received. The unit volunteered to assist with Cashmere's Apple Days and decided on a fundraising trip in November to Mill Bay Casino in Manson. **Charlotte Kohnhorst, Sharon Salley and JoAnn Lewis** signed up over 50 new members this fall. The membership committee has developed a tri-fold for new members that contains important information regarding their membership and also about the local unit and activities. The Rock Island School project is on a roll! A group of 20 has put together booklets for the reading program. **Mary Perkins** is coordinator for this program as *Chelan-Douglas* assists her daughter, who is the school's principal. In November the unit deliv-

ered \$150 each to Suzanne Stanton (Wenatchee School District) and Debbie Walker (Eastmont School District) to purchase supplies for their Homeless Students programs. The unit received an LCD projector for computer presentations as a gift. Member **Ralph Peterson's** granddaughter expressed the need to her fiancé, who connected with an electronic firm and he was able to send the unit one. Members are thrilled; President **Denise Perkins** sent a heartfelt "Thank-you." For December festivities members sang Christmas carols and enjoyed each other's company, celebrating their friendships and connections as educators, and giving thanks for their blessings... There was a great turnout at the Wenatchee Golf and Country Club for the E-5/E-6 Coordinating Council meeting in October. This is always a fine opportunity to share ideas with other units... At their fall meeting, members of *Columbia Basin, Unit 4*, addressed several issues. President **Eloise Huston** called upon members to assist in getting the word out about the unit and everyone to encourage membership and attendance at meetings, which are generally fall and spring. The unit would like to encourage others to serve on the board, presently there are only two:

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president and treasurer. Their treasury is healthy, which allows them to give numerous grants. It was suggested they give grants only to WSSRA members, thus an incentive for new members to join their unit. Member **Terry Rice** spoke concerning Boys' State and Girls' State. Book bags were made and sent to countries where supplies are needed; this project is partnered with the Lutheran Church. **Wanda Harrison** continues with her Youth to Senior Connection (YSC) after-school program and reported it has expanded tremendously. She asked for additional volunteers. There is a serious need for volunteers and additional supplies for projects for the students in this very important and successful program... Generous members of *Okanogan County, Unit 15*, completed another successful drive to replenish items for the unit's soldier care package project. In early December, **Sibyl Wehmeyer's** Community Services committee stuffed donations into boxes and mailed them as Christmas gifts to Okanogan County soldiers serving in Afghanistan and Iraq. In October five lucky members won \$100 grants for school projects. Another five grants will be gifted in February. OCSRA began the new year with updated governing documents

thanks to the hard work of **Keith Davis**, chair, and members, **Marjorie McGaha** and **Rita Figlenski**. OCSRA will host the E-6 winter meeting on Tuesday, February 7 at Koala Street Grill in Omak. In January, speaker Tami Jackson, Bridgeport High School Principal, will discuss the tenacious efforts of last year's senior class to win the national "2011 Race to the Top, High School Commencement Challenge" and the amazing results including the wisdom and generosity of graduation speaker, U. S. Secretary of Labor, Hilda Solis. Okanogan's Virginia Grainger Fifth-Grade Honor Choir directed by music teacher Gail Ridenour will present special music at the regular February meeting.

EAST-7

The E-7 district is thriving and looking forward to hosting this year's annual WSSRA convention in June. They hope all will plan to attend, as it is going to be great. Members of the *Spokane Area, Unit 25*, have enjoyed two gatherings. At the September luncheon they were entertained by an Elvis impersonator who flustered several ladies with his special attention. At the October general meeting Forest B. Rogers, director of the Northwest Museum of Arts and Culture, brought

attendees up-to-date on events at the museum.

Judy Nelson and **Velma Churchill**, both SHEBA volunteers, scheduled an insurance workshop for November for retirees who were concerned with their medical insurance needs for the coming year. SAREA president **Bill Marvin** was guest speaker for *Pend O'Reille, Unit 18*. He explained the many areas of WSSRA-legislative, membership and outreach. He was assisted by **Velma Churchill** on health coverage...When *Whitman County, Unit 33*, held its Harvest luncheon on October 17 at a member's home, they honored **Harold Hartman**, retired teacher and principal of Garfield Elementary; **Ray Olson**, retired Colfax High School guidance counselor; **Bob McBride** retired teacher from St. John; **Annette Pettenger**, retired reading specialist from Pullman High School; and **Larry Warner**, retired superintendent from the Garfield-Palouse School District.

EAST-8

Walla Walla-Columbia Unit 31, has been busy this fall with the preparation of "goodie bags," a breakfast with legislators, and selecting five mini-grant winners. WWCSRA hosted a breakfast with the 16th District legislators in September. The looming deficit and

the need to make cuts in the budget overshadowed the discussion. The meeting allowed legislators to outline some of their preferred approaches to the budget issues, and permitted local members to express and personalize their concerns. Also, early in September members prepared and delivered nearly 200 "goodie" bags as a welcome to active members. Two local school superintendents spoke at the November WWCSRA luncheon. Mick Miller, superintendent of the Walla Walla Public Schools, and Tim Payne, Superintendent of the College Place Schools, both described the effects of the cuts in school funding. "Despite the budget problems," Tim Payne said, "we are doing more, better, and faster than in the past. Schools, especially in this valley, are doing a phenomenal job."



We need all members' email addresses. Please send yours to ed@wssra.org



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- 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.

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