

WASHINGTON STATE SCHOOL RETIREES' ASSOCIATION

# The Journal

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



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## WSSRA at work for you



A message from the president



### Protecting what we have

by Louie Osmonovich, president

As I'm writing this article, I am fuming over Governor Gregoire's proposals to eliminate our COLA, lowering our purchasing power even more as prices for life's necessities keep rising, and to decrease our Medicare-eligible medical subsidy from \$182 to \$150 while our medical insurance premiums increase. Other items in her budget proposal will no doubt negatively affect us and future retirees.

Even though the legislative skies are full of stormy, black clouds, we need to ride hard and fast to protect what we have and keep working toward our goals of responsible pension funding, reasonable COLAS, improved health benefits, retaining the Select Committee on Pension Policy

(SCPP) and establishing Plan 2 as the default plan for future retirees. With the state budget in such sad shape, our goals are getting tougher to reach, but I am convinced we have the fortitude to hold our position.

I have great confidence in our Legislative Committee under the leadership of Ester Wilfong and Gordon Irle to tackle the difficult task of protecting our issues. I want to thank members who wrote letters and made phone calls in support of the WSSRA goals.

By the time you read this article, the legislative session should be almost over and, hopefully, we will come out of it with no or minimal setbacks.

On the brighter side—our WSSRA financial sheet looks

*(continued on page 3)*



## The Journal

Washington State School Retirees' Association

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VISIT OUR WEBSITE AT [WWW.WSSRA.ORG](http://WWW.WSSRA.ORG)

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## WSSRA at work for you



A message from the executive director



### Governor blames pensioners

by Ed Gonion, executive director

The governor uses the word “reform” to describe what she is doing to retiree pensions. “Reform” sounds good, but it is used to hide the real proposal, which is to break the promise made to school retirees—and cut pensions in order to cover holes in the state’s general fund. There is no reform. *It’s a cut*, a betrayal made on the backs of those pensioners who have worked hard and paid into a system that made promises—which the governor is failing to keep.

#### Governor to cut Plans 2/3

Again, the governor uses the word “reform” to describe jacking up the retirement age for Plans 2/3 members from age 62 to 65. *It’s a cut*. Active school employees are working every day in Washington’s public schools, dedicating their professional lives to serving children. They are the teachers, administrators, secretaries, cooks, custodians, bus drivers, instructional aides, counselors, maintenance staff and more. They are paying into a retirement system, but now, the governor intends to cut their retirement, and again, call it “reform.”

In the last decade, starting in 2000, when many of today’s legislators were in the state legislature, the state diverted hundreds of millions of dollars of the EMPLOYER scheduled payments from being placed in the pension fund. Instead, those employer payments went into the state general fund. Those pension funds were used to pay for

non-pension spending. Meanwhile, employees continued to pay their full share into the pension fund. The result of that action has created a large hole in pension funds. So the governor now blames the retirees and employees. As one of our members said recently, “It seems in today’s world we can trust no politician to simply do the right thing.”

#### What can you do?

Your state legislators must hear directly from you, their constituent. Otherwise, your silence is your consent to eliminate your Plan 1 COLA. If the legislature does this—YOUR monthly pension check will NEVER increase for inflation—for the rest of your life! If you are in Plans 2/3, your silence is your consent to jack up YOUR full retirement age from 62 to 65.

Those of us representing you in Olympia are only as strong as the individual actions of our 17,200 members. If your legislators are hearing from you, then they will know when we meet face to face that all of you are standing behind us and will hold them accountable.

Contact your legislator NOW—a phone call, a letter, an e-mail message. Let them know that you strongly oppose the governor’s cuts to your pension. Tell your legislators that you worked hard and paid your share into the pension system; ask them to protect you. Tell them that the promises made must be promises kept. Give them your personal contact information and ask them to respond to your message.

*(President continued from page 2)*

as if we are in the black, and our budget is in good shape. Also encouraging are the increasing numbers of our WSSRA membership, which is currently over 17,000 members. We appreciate all who are making this happen.

Congratulations to Thurston County SRA member Cheri Ingersoll for being selected to be on the Department of Retirement Systems Retirement Advisory Committee. I would like to welcome aboard Fred Yancey, our new lobbyist from Scott D. Nelson’s The Nexus Group.

In conclusion partners, let’s rope in our legislators and let them know we are not going to settle for the governor’s proposals to balance the state budget to the detriment of our dedicated retirees.

I hope all of our WSSRA members survived the winter and are ready to gallop ahead with your unit as well as your state goals. Happy trails to you.



#### ON THE COVER:

Pictured is our state capitol where the fate of our pensions will be decided. Be sure you educate your legislators on the issue, and let them know you expect them to oppose cuts to your pension.

## WSSRA legislative news

## WSSRA's TOP PRIORITY: Governor Gregoire's Proposal "Reforming Pensions to Hold Down Costs" TRS / PERS Plan 1 Benefit Elimination Provisions

### WSSRA POSITION: **OPPOSE**



by Leslie Main, legislative coordinator

Following is an excerpt from Governor Gregoire's 12-13-2010 briefing paper, "Reforming Pensions to Hold Down Costs":

"The governor proposes to end future automatic benefit increases from the 1995 legislation, which would eliminate more than one-half of the unfunded liability in the closed plans. The legislature, as was the case prior to 1995, could award cost-of-living increases at its discretion. **The repeal will also reduce public employer payments by an estimated \$9 billion over the next 25 years**, with \$2 billion of that reduction expected to be realized by local governments over the next two biennia. The

Office of the State Actuary estimates that \$4 billion of the \$9 billion savings will be realized over this period. **For the next two years, local governments will save \$353 million and the state will save \$368 million.**

The governor's proposal removes the annual increase amount only for members and beneficiaries whose monthly pensions exceed the [\$1,000] minimum benefits provided in the plan. Retirees receiving the minimum benefit amounts won't be affected—their benefits will continue to be adjusted annually."

#### **If the governor's pension reform proposal for Plan 1 is enacted:**

- Retirees will have their benefit limited to its current amount. Any retiree who has already begun receiving the Uniform COLA will continue to receive the amount already added to their benefit. However, no further automatic increases would be provided.
- Currently, the proposal would not provide any benefit to members of TRS and PERS Plan 1 who have yet to achieve eligibility for the Uniform Plan 1 COLA. Apparently, the governor is considering the issue, and awaiting counsel from the attorney general's office.
- In an attempt to protect those Plan 1 retirees most vulnerable, retirees on the \$1,000 Minimum Benefit would continue to receive the Uniform Plan 1 COLA.

#### **NOTE:**

As of this writing, there are no bill numbers for the governor's proposal "Reforming Pensions to Hold Down Costs." However, it is expected there will be three bills (six if you count companion bills):

- Plan 1 reforms
- Plans 2/3 reforms
- Higher Ed Contribution Rate/Rehire-Retire.



View the "Governor Gregoire's 12/13/10 Press Conference" via the following link:

<http://www.tvw.org/media/mediaplayer.cfm?evid=2010120077&TYPE=V&CFID=6686807&CFTOKEN=84552080&bhcp=1>

#### **WSSRA POSITION: OPPOSE**

**Uniform Plan 1 COLA Benefits Must be Protected for All TRS/PERS 1 Retirees.**

**OPPOSE TRS/PERS 1 UNIFORM PLAN COLA provisions in Governor Gregoire's proposal, Reforming Pensions to Hold Down Costs!**

- ✓ It's up to you, my legislator, to ensure that school retiree pension benefits are protected.
- ✓ Pension promises made should be promises kept.
- ✓ Ruining TRS/PERS Plan 1 pensions to hold down costs is not the answer.
- ✓ Look to cut elsewhere in the budget first, before repealing retiree pensions to cut costs.
- ✓ The retirement security of current and future Plan 1 school retirees must be ensured.

**WSSRA legislative news**

**Two Decades of Changes to Plan 1 Benefits**

1. Under pension reform in 1989, the “’89 COLA” provided Plan 1 retirees with a 3% CPI based COLA, BUT the retiree first was required to lose 40% of their age 65 purchasing power. The result of was that Plan 1 retirees did not even qualify to begin receiving their ’89 COLA until their reached their late 70s or early 80s.
2. Between 1989 and 1995, a variety incremental ad hoc benefit improvements were enacted.
3. In 1995, in order to get inflation protection into more retirees’ pockets sooner, the Uniform Plan 1 COLA was established. **The Uniform COLA is not based on the CPI, or the base pension benefit.** Instead, the Uniform COLA uses an “annual increase” amount which increases by 3% each year, which when calculated with the retiree’s number of years of service, results in a monthly benefit increase.

**Average Monthly Benefits,  
All Plan 1 Retirees:**

**TRS 1 = \$1,861  
PERS 1 = \$1,654**

Source: **2009 Washington State Actuarial Report,**  
Office of the State Actuary, October 2010

- ✓ ***The measure of the worth of a pension benefit is how it retains its value over time.*** This requires provisions which protect the value of benefit from the eroding impacts of economic inflation.
- ✓ Retirees consider pension as deferred compensation. ***The legislature, as the sponsor of the state’s pension plans, has a fiduciary responsibility to manage the pension funds for the benefit of the beneficiaries.*** Retiree pensions should not now be ruined to hold down State General Fund costs.
- ✓ *Bakenhaus v. City of Seattle*, 48 Wn.2d 695 (1956). The court held that within defined benefit pension plans, ***the Legislature has created vested contractual rights that constitutionally cannot be impaired.***
- ✓ Even with the Gain Sharing improved Uniform Plan 1 COLA, a non-CPI based post-retirement adjustment, erosions in the purchasing power of Plan 1 pension

benefits continue. ***TRS/PERS Plan 1 members who retired during the 1970s have lost approximately 50% of their purchasing power.***

- ✓ Litigation is currently in process challenging the legislature’s 2007 repeal of Gain Sharing for Plans 1 and 3. ***So far, the initial summary of judgment handed down by the Court has indicated that any repeal of benefit must provide “trade-off” benefits of equal value.***
- ✓ ***The court has yet to rule in the litigation challenging the legislature’s 2007 repeal of Gain Sharing underlying issue:*** The constitutionality of provisions in both the 1988 Gain Sharing and 1995 Uniform Plan 1 COLA that the legislature retains the right to repeal or amend benefits deemed by the legislature in statute as not constitutionally protected.
- ✓ ***It’s not the pension benefits that are the problem; it’s the legislature’s failure to pay for those benefits, that’s the problem.***
- ✓ ***Oppose*** the governor’s proposal of, “Reforming Pensions to Hold Down Cost.” Support protecting school retiree benefits while stepping up to responsibly address neglected pension funding obligations.
- ✓ Legislators were warned by the Office of the State Actuary, “Pay now or pay more later,” as legislation was passed over the last decade to reduce pension contributions. ***It’s up to you, the legislature, the stewards of school retiree pensions, to ensure that, NOW, pension benefits are protected.***
- ✓ ***The legislature has reduced contributions to the pension funds, especially employer obligations to Plan, for years in order to realize short-term budget savings.*** This was done despite the future resulting increases in long-term costs.

**Select a few talking points from those provided to include with your communications with legislators.**

**When communicating with legislators:**

1. Indicate your name and your legislative district.
2. Begin your communications with ***Please.***
3. **IMPORTANT:** Include some comment of your own personal feelings and experiences.
4. Ask for a response.
5. Inform the legislators that you, and other representatives of WSSRA, will be following up with the legislator as the session progresses.
6. Conclude your comments with ***Thank You.***

## WSSRA legislative news

- ✓ ***Review programs established over the last decade, in which you or your district may have been involved.***  
Ask yourself: Which of these projects may not have otherwise been undertaken, had “savings” from pension contributions rate reductions not have used? ***Please, look to cut these programs first, before ruining retiree***

- pensions to cut costs.***
- ✓ ***The legislature’s “credit card bill” for avoiding pension contribution requirements is Past-Due.*** Please pay immediately, without harming the retirement security of school retirees.

### ***Facts about Plan 1 Benefits***

#### **The Design of Plan 1 - Benefit Method:**

- The Plan 1 benefit was not created with provisions for protection from inflation. Created in the late 1940’s, inflation was not of concern.
- + Over the years, incremental ad hoc benefit improvements were made.
- + Under pension reform in 1989, the “’89 COLA” provided Plan 1 retirees with a 3% CPI based COLA, BUT the retiree first was required to lose 40% of their age 65 purchasing power. The result of was that Plan 1 retirees did not even qualify to begin receiving their ’89 COLA until their reached their late 70s or early 80s.
- + In 1995, in order to get inflation protection into more retirees’ pockets sooner, the Uniform Plan 1 COLA was established. The Uniform COLA is not based on the CPI,

- or the base pension benefit. Instead, the Uniform COLA uses an “annual increase” amount which increases by 3% each year, which when calculated with the retiree’s number of years of service, results in a monthly benefit increase.
- + Plan 1 retirees begin receiving the Uniform Plan 1 COLA in July of the year the Plan 1 retiree turns age 66. The annual increase about began in 1995 at \$.59 per month per year of service, that’s \$17.70 per month per year of service. Since then, automatic increases and Gain Sharing benefits have brought the annual increase to \$1.88 per month per year of service, that’s \$56.40 per month for a retiree that had 30 years of service.
- = Plan 1 retirees are now facing a loss of the modest benefits that they have worked for decades to attain.



- ✓ ***WSSRA encourages legislators’ consideration of the responsibility the state has to provide for the compensation package of its former school employees. According to the 2009 Washington State Actuarial Report, produced by the Office of the State Actuary (10/2010), the “Average Monthly Benefits, All Plan 1 Retiree” amounts to: TRS 1 = \$1,861, PERS 1 = \$1,654.***
- ✓ The February 2009 study National Institute for Retirement Security (NIRS), ***Pensionomics: Measuring the Economic Impact of State and Local Pension Plans,*** measured the cost/benefit multiplier of pension benefits and pension contributions. According to the NIRS study:
  - o ***Every \$1 contributed by taxpayers in the form of employer and employee pension contributions to Washington pension plans over the last 30 years amounts to \$9.69 in increased economic activity.*** This reflects the multiplier effect of taxpayer contributions to pension funds that are invested and the impact of those investments as they ripple through the economy.
  - o ***Every \$1 in state and local pension benefits paid to retirees in Washington state supported \$1.37***

***in total output.*** This “multiplier” incorporates the impacts of retiree spending (\$2.35 billion), and induced impacts of retiree spending (\$1.5 billion), to arrive at a **total state economic impact of \$3.2 billion in 2006.**

- ✓ ***WSSRA members continue their dedication to Washington state K-12 education via non-profit, private sector, activities.*** For example:
  - o School retirees in ***WSSRA local units across the state provide “Mini-grants” to area K-12 public schools*** to assist with their various projects and needs.
  - o Contributors to the ***Washington State School Retirees’-Foundation provide college scholarships*** to high school graduates that plan a career in K-12 education.

It is this kind of non-profit, private sector, activity that will be needed more than ever in the months and years ahead. In order to participate in such programs, which support K-12 education NOW and into the future, those who have already dedicated their career to education must have their pension benefits protected.

**WSSRA legislative news**

✓ *The legislature’s votes enacting key Plan 1 benefits were almost unanimous.* Conversely, bills enacted by the legislature over recent years to manipulate pension contributions, passed primarily along party line votes, regardless which party was in the majority at the time.

This is not surprisingly as many legislators knew this was the wrong direction, during both the “good times” and the “bad times.” Confirm this for yourself at the legislature’s web site: <http://dlr.leg.wa.gov/rollcall/>.

***Trust in Government***

- ✓ Credit “MURPHY’S LAW” that the legislature’s self-imposed pension underfunding “train-wreck” coincidentally occurred during the nation’s biggest economic downfall since the Great Recession. ***Legislators must protect retiree benefits as they address this unfortunate combination of events.***
- ✓ ***The legislature has used short-term budget savings, realized via pension contribution rate reductions,*** to subsidize funding for basic government services and other political priorities of state and local and government over the last decade. ***All the while, legislators assured retirees that their pension benefits would not be impacted by this underfunding.***
- ✓ School retirees support K-12 education, we dedicated our career to it; we also support a strong social service system to assist provide health and long-term care assistance, and a strong public safety program. However, we oppose funding such programs with funds which should have gone toward pension benefits for the

employees that provide these services. ***Retiree pensions must not be ruined to fund long-term costs of non-pension programs.***

- ✓ On the one hand, Governor Gregoire has indicated a dedication to the children of Washington state. On the other, the governor has proposed diminishment of the retirement security of the retired educators who dedicated their lives to the children of Washington state. ***Such pitting of generations against each other is counter-productive and should be opposed.***
- ✓ Retirees consider pension as deferred compensation, part of their total compensation package of salary, health benefits, and pension benefits. ***The legislature, as the sponsor of the state’s pension plans, has a fiduciary responsibility to manage the pension funds for the benefit of the beneficiaries.*** Retiree pensions should not now be ruined to hold down State General Fund costs. Promises made should be promises kept.

***Facts about Legislative Underfunding of Plan 1 Benefits***

**The Design of Plan 1 - Funding Method:**

- The Plan 1 funding method, in and of its self, pushed the costs of the plan to the end of the life of the plan.
- + Legislative manipulation of pension contributions pushing payment of employer costs for Plan 1 further into the future.
- + The manipulation of contribution rates resulted in loss of potential investment return, and the liquidation of assets which would otherwise have been retained, but for the

need for increased cash flow to pay benefits.  
 = Legislators are **NOW** panicking as they facing a largely self-inflicted pension funding crisis. The State Actuary’s warnings of, **“Pay Now, or Pay More Later,”** have come to fruition.

Statutorily required contribution rate for TRS / PERS Plan 1 **members** = 6% of pay.

TRS 1 = RCW 41.32.350  
 PERS 1 = RCW 41.40.330

***WSSRA encourages legislators’ reasoned consideration of the State Actuary’s 2010 Risk Assessment report ([http://osa.leg.wa.gov/Actuarial\\_Services/RiskAssessment/RA.htm](http://osa.leg.wa.gov/Actuarial_Services/RiskAssessment/RA.htm)), as they address the State’s pension funding problems.***

✓ The legislature has used short-term budget savings, realized via pension contribution rate reductions, to subsidize funding for basic government services and other political priorities of state and local and government over the last decade.

- ✓ Legislators can no longer balance their operating budgets by depending on funds from:
  - “Savings” realized via pension contribution rate reductions
  - Subsidies from federal tax payers, or
  - Shifts in funds from taxpayer intended purposes, to other general government political priorities.
- ✓ Since these sources of fiscal subsistence are increasingly unavailable to state budget writers, a review of basic government obligations and how the state intends

## WSSRA legislative news

on meeting these obligations has been forced on policy makers. WSSRA asks that these considerations be made with the focus on, adhering to and actually accomplish-

ing obligations undertaken.

*The modest Plan 1 pension benefit improvements enacted to date must be protected!*

### Legislative Contact Information

#### Contact legislators & the governor via the telephone

Washington State Legislative Hotline  
1-800-562-6000 (TOLL-FREE)

#### SESSION HOURS:

Monday – Friday 8:00 a.m.-8:00 p.m.  
Saturday 9:00 a.m.-1:00 p.m.

When using the Legislature's Hotline to leave messages for legislators, you must be a constituent of the legislator being contacted. Any Washington state resident may use the Hotline to leave messages for the governor.

#### Contact legislators & the governor via the postal service

The Honorable \_\_\_\_ Wa. State Senate  
P.O. Box 40482, Olympia, WA 98504

The Honorable \_\_ Wa. State Representative  
P.O. Box 40600, Olympia, WA 98504

The Honorable \_\_\_\_  
Governor, State of Washington  
PO Box 40002, Olympia, WA 98504

#### Contact legislators via the internet

State Legislature's Web Site:  
[www.leg.wa.gov](http://www.leg.wa.gov)

Note: Follow the "Contact ..." prompts to arrive at the e-mail forms.

Governor's Web Site - [www.governor.wa.gov](http://www.governor.wa.gov)

Note: Click on "Contact the Governor to complete your message."

### FYI: Governor Gregoire's Proposal "Reforming Pensions to Hold Down Costs" Provisions re: Plans 2/3

Following is an excerpt from Governor Gregoire's January 13th briefing paper regarding changes to Teachers Retirement System (TRS) and Public Employees Retirement System (PERS), and SERS Plans 2/3:

"The governor proposes to discontinue incentives to retire earlier than age 65 for new hires in Plans 2 and 3 for PERS, TRS, and SERS. This modernization of the state's primary pension systems will **slash the long-term costs of public pensions by an estimated \$2.2 billion over 25-years for state and local governments**, freeing scarce resources for other essential functions."

✓ *Legislators may realize that the Alternate ERRF is currently the subject of ongoing litigation. This litigation*

*has been used by legislators and other policy makers as a reason for not addressing a variety of proposals, from relatively minor issues to major issues regarding the originating legislation.* What's good for advocates should be good for legislators; and vice versa.

✓ No real savings would be realized by the state by the governor's proposal as it only applies to new hires that won't even be eligible for any retirement for 20+ years.

*Pension benefits of current and future school retirees must be protected, when enacting pension employer contribution rates for the 2011-13 biennium.*

### Need help? Have questions?

#### SOCIAL SECURITY BENEFITS

1-800-325-0778  
[www.ssa.gov](http://www.ssa.gov)

#### QUALITY OF LIFE ISSUES WSSRA

1-800-544-5219  
[www.wssra.org](http://www.wssra.org)

#### OPTIONS, TAKE HOME PAY, ETC. Department of Retirement Systems

1-800-547-6657  
[www.drs.wa.gov](http://www.drs.wa.gov)    [recep@drs.wa.gov](mailto:recep@drs.wa.gov)

#### STATE INSURANCE COMMISSIONER STATEWIDE HEALTH INSURANCE BENEFIT ADVISORS (SHIBA)

1-800-562-6900

#### 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](http://www.pebb.hca.wa.gov)

## WSSRA connections

# Still haven't filed? AARP Tax Aide can help

by Larry Maxcy, AARP Tax Aide



April 15 will be here before you know it. But are your eyes still glazed over at the prospect of dealing with those confusing forms? Not sure if new provisions of the tax code apply to you?

Help is available.

Free tax assistance and preparation for taxpayers with low and middle incomes, with special attention to those age 60 and older, is available from AARP Tax-Aide from February 1 through April 15. You do NOT need to be an AARP member or a retiree to use this service.

Tax law can often be confusing. AARP Tax-Aide volunteers can make the process of filling out tax returns a whole lot easier. Congress was working on tax laws until mid-December, and the AARP Tax-Aide volunteers have become familiar with the most current tax provisions. The volunteers have completed a rigorous training program offered in conjunction with the Internal Revenue Service,

and they have the knowledge to prepare your return taking advantage of all the many provisions of the tax code.

Last year, more than 1,000 AARP Tax-Aide volunteers helped more than 56,000 Washington residents file their income tax returns. AARP Tax-Aide volunteers will offer help with personal income tax returns at nearly 200 sites in Washington state this year. The program is offered at senior centers, libraries and other convenient locations.

Call our toll-free number, 1-888-227-7669, or visit our web site at [www.aarp.org/taxaide](http://www.aarp.org/taxaide) to locate an AARP Tax-Aide site near you.

When you visit an AARP Tax-Aide site, please bring a copy of last year's return, all W-2 and 1099 forms including SSA-1099 for Social Security benefits paid, property tax records if applicable, all receipts and canceled checks if itemizing, Social Security cards for yourself and dependents, and if applicable, dependent care provider information including name, employer and social security number.

AARP Tax-Aide is a program of the AARP Foundation, offered in conjunction with the IRS.



## Did you know...

Your membership with WSSRA gives you access to many valuable benefits!

### **WSSRA endorses the following member benefits:**

- Long Term Care/Home Health Care Policy
- Cancer Treatment Policy
- Medicare Supplement Insurance Plans
- Final Expenses Whole Life Policy
- Tax-Deferred Annuity
- Medical Air Services Association (MASA)
- Astrum Hearing Solutions
- Government Employee Travel Opportunities (GETO)
- Vacations-to-Go Cruises
- LaQuinta Inn & Suites Discounts
- Hertz, Avis and Budget Car Rental Discounts
- AMBA TravelPERX
- Identity Theft Protection
- Dell Computer Discount
- Apple Electronic Products Discount
- 1-800-Flowers Discount

**To learn more about any of these endorsed benefits, please call AMBA at 1-800-258-7041.**

**To request a speaker for your local meetings, call Susan Lowry, AMBA Regional Director of Association Relations, at 800-258-7041 ext. 110.**

## In the spotlights



## Retiring...to another career

**D**id you agonize over your decision to retire from your career in education? I did! I postponed retirement several times... and then finally went through with my decision to retire from teaching in Cashmere in 2009. What caused all the stalling? I knew I would miss being in the thick of the hard work I loved. I knew I would miss the people—both the children and the adults—who shared my world every day. And I knew I would especially miss having a driving sense of purpose for every day.

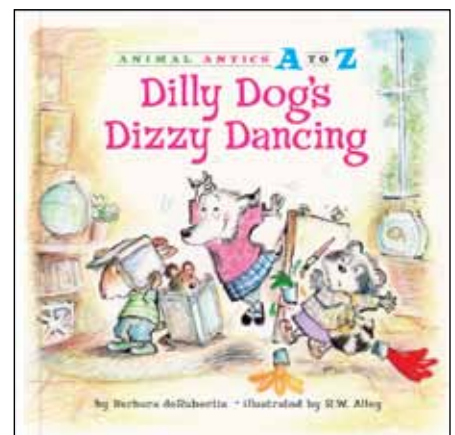
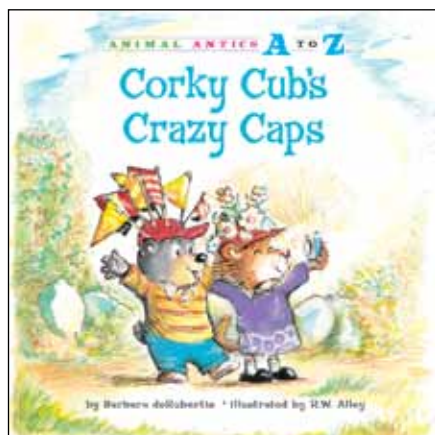
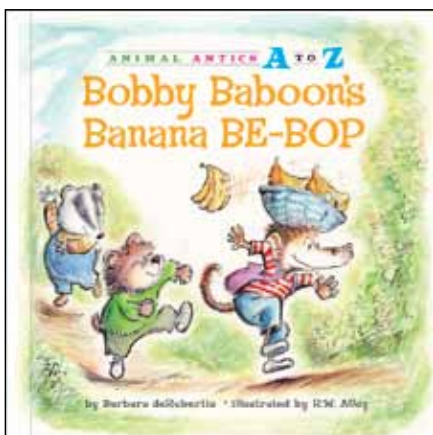
*I have found myself immersed in this grand project, working long hours, but happy as a clam because I am able to continue doing purposeful work.*

by Barbara deRubertis

Fortunately, for the past 18 years I have had a secondary career that has provided me with additional opportunities for challenging, meaningful work. I have been writing books for children—books that I hoped would be entertaining but also would serve serious, underlying educational purposes. And as luck would have it, when I took the retirement plunge, I was in the initial stages of writing a BIG new series: *Animal Antics A to Z*, with a separate 32-page book for every letter of the alphabet to teach children the important pre-reading skills associated with phonemic awareness. They are also designed to be used by students to read themselves, once they have reached the second grade reading level. So for the past year and

a half, I have found myself immersed in this grand project, working long hours but happy as a clam because I am able to continue doing purposeful work...work that satisfies my lifelong goal of making learning more effective, more satisfying, and more FUN for children! I have also been blessed to have several expert teacher-friends willing to act as consultants, sounding boards, and moral support when I need help beyond Google!

People often ask me, “What is it like to work on a big series like *Animal Antics A to Z*”? It’s a bit like teaching in a classroom: it’s a juggling act! In addition to the balls in each hand, there are always five balls in the air, and—one hopes—not too many that have dropped to the floor. While writing a rough



## In the spotlights



draft of one story, I might be in various stages of editing several others, writing comments on sketches that have come in from the illustrator for another, making changes in the final layouts for another, and researching and writing information and activities for the back page of yet another book. I also thought it would be great fun to have a separate website for each book with MORE activities, games and even a recipe that could be downloaded FREE. You get the picture, I'm sure! We do this all the time in education: We make a big job even bigger! It's part of the reason why I'm writing this article at 12: 45 AM...even though I've volunteered to help out with some testing at school first thing tomorrow morning!

A big thrill came my way about a month ago when I learned that *Animal Antics A to Z* has been selected as one of the recipients of *Learning Magazine's* "Teachers' Choice Award for 2011." Because I have worked so hard to make these books both useful and enjoyable for children, parents, and teachers, this award was welcome confirmation that teachers across the country recognized the value in what I've tried to accomplish. That feels very good, indeed.

The *Animal Antics A to Z* books include titles like *Alexander Anteater's Amazing Act*, *Bobby Baboon's Banana Boogie*, *Corky Cub's Crazy Caps*...all the way to *Zachary Zebra's Zippity Zooming*. The first 10 titles in the series are now in print, eight more titles will be released this month, and the final eight will be released in time for school this fall. With the completion of this series (which will have been five years in the making!), I will have published a total of 50 books. Whew!

If you're curious about the books, you can go to: <http://www.kanepress.com/> You'll find information about the *Animal Antics A to Z* series, plus other books I've written in the *Let's Read Together* series and the *Math Matters* series. Also, be sure to check out the activity pages for *Alexander Anteater*, *Bobby Baboon*, and the rest of the gang in Alpha Betty's class. I think you'll enjoy meeting them! (My editor and I talk about these "kids" as if they were real!) And I think you'll especially enjoy meeting the teacher, Alpha Betty, as well; she reflects many of the wonderful qualities of teachers I have come to love and admire during my 35 years of teaching. You'll see she is just as enterprising, competent, understanding, compassionate and creative as all of you are!

Another question I'm often asked is, "Who came up with the idea for the *Animal Antics* series?" In this particu-

*Pictured in her publisher's office in New York are Joanne Kane, president of Kane Press; author Barbara deRubertis; and Juliana Hanford, editor of the Animal Antics Series. Barbara is holding the "Teachers' Choice" Award her series recently received.*



lar case, a national retailer of learning materials contacted my publisher. The retailer reported that they perceived a real need for a high-quality series of books addressing phonemic awareness, preferably with one book for every letter of the alphabet. "We are impressed with the high quality of the *Let's Read Together* books you published," the retailer said. (This is a series of 15 phonics-based books for beginning readers that I wrote over a five-year period beginning 15 years ago.) Then the retailer continued: "We have been wondering if that author would be interested in writing such a series." My publisher contacted me, I agreed to take on the project, and I immediately began my research to find 26 endearing A to Z animals to enroll in Alpha Betty's class. I must tell you that the competition for placement in this class was keen: there were many contenders for every desk! And a mere five years later, here we all are!

Now I must get back to work, finish editing a tricky page in *Yoko Yak's Yakety Yakking*, and email it to New York!

*editor's note: When asked about how to get a book published, Barbara said, "It's a tedious process—often discouraging—and maddeningly illogical! Every author has a different experience, but most will tell you some of the same things: getting that first book published is the hardest part... and you will not make much money writing books for children."*

## On the road in retirement

## A trip of a lifetime!

by Pat Lanning



*Jerry and Sharon Peterson and Gordon and Pat Lanning in Moscow's Red Square. The varied beauty of the architecture and the magical atmosphere belie the square's often brutal and bloody history, but the combination makes Red Square a truly fascinating place.*

*"After touring four countries and seeing their amazing sights, it was time to return home. This was, indeed, a trip of a lifetime!"*

We flew from Seattle to Kiev via Washington, DC, and Frankfurt. We were met by our program director, Guzel, at the airport. In Kiev, we saw the first of many beautiful churches, the St. Sophia Cathedral, which is a UNESCO World Heritage Site. We also chose to take part in the very emotional Chernobyl Museum tour, which depicted the catastrophe that occurred at the Chernobyl atomic station in 1986, including a firsthand account from some of the survivors. We also visited the Babiy Yar Memorial, which honors the victims of World War II. With lots of time on our own, we had the opportunity to interact with the local people at a public market and at the restaurants—where we enjoyed the Chicken Kiev! Kiev is a beautiful city; it has been described as a system of parks with a big city inside.

We flew from Kiev to Moscow and transferred to our ship, the M/S *Rossia*, which was our home for the next 16 days. What a thrill it was for those of us who grew up during the Cold War to actually stand in Red Square! We toured the Kremlin, which

**Z**drastvooyte! (Hello!) from Russia. My husband Gordon and I, along with our friends, Sharon and Jerry Peterson, began our 23-day adventure in August of 2009 traveling with Grand Circle Travel, which included a three-night optional pre-trip to Kiev, Ukraine, then a 16-day river cruise from Moscow to St. Petersburg, and a five-night optional post-trip to the Baltic capitals of Tallinn, Estonia, and Helsinki, Finland.

is actually a walled city built as a fortification and ringed all around by 15th-century towers. The Kremlin is the very heart of Moscow, with the city's streets radiating outward in circles, and the Kremlin standing as the focal point of the inner ring. The State Armory, the oldest museum in Russia, was very interesting. We saw the historic armor, the royal thrones decorated with gold and diamonds, the royal carriages, the wedding dress of Catherine the Great and some of the world-famous Faberge eggs to name just a few of the artifacts.

We experienced the true flavor of life in Moscow during our four-day stay there. I was surprised at the number of cars and all of the various makes. We saw wonderful high-end shops and the shops that the locals went to. Because the tour directors were very well educated and open in their conversations with us, we were able to learn a lot about life in Russia. Education is very important to the people. Our guides had multiple degrees and could speak English quite well. During WWII, 27 million people were killed, result-

**On the road in retirement**

ing in the loss of a whole generation, a catastrophe from which they are still recovering. While in Moscow, we rode the Metro system and were treated to sculptures, marble floors and beautiful lighting—all taken from the churches during the Stalin era.

We cruised rivers, canals and lakes as we sailed to St. Petersburg. There were stops at various islands, and we were entertained on board the ship. One of the highlights for me was the stop at Kizhi Island in the middle of Lake Onega, one of the most ancient inhabited sites in Russia. It was an early pagan center, which now hosts an open-air architectural museum and reserve. The Church of Transfiguration, with its 22 timbered onion domes, was very impressive. Sometime this year, they will raise this magnificent building and replace the foundation. What an undertaking this is!

We were fortunate to visit a home of a local family where we enjoyed authentic Russian tea and sampled piroshky, which are pastries with such fillings as cabbage, chicken, fish, fruit, beef or mashed potatoes.

In St. Petersburg we visited a school and discovered that third graders are the same the world over. This was a state music school, with students chosen to attend and live here. On just the second day of school a concert showcasing individuals and the school band was presented. Very impressive!

We arrived in St. Petersburg on Day 11. While there, we toured the Peter and Paul Fortress; within the fortress is the St. Peter and Paul Cathedral. Peter the Great and all the Russian emperors and empresses are buried here. We admired Peterhof, Catherine’s Palace, the Hermitage Museum, the Yusupov Palace and, my personal favorite, St. Isaac’s Cathedral. We also enjoyed a night at the Russian Ballet.

After a last meal on the ship, we took a bus to Estonia. We really enjoyed Tallin’s Old Town, which is still encircled by city walls, punctuated with many stone towers rising above red-tiled roofs. Within these walls the cobblestoned streets remain much as they were when built in the 13th century—very narrow with buildings up next to the sidewalks.

After three days in Estonia, we took the ferry to Helsinki. During our free time here we visited the Market Square, the Senate Square which is ringed by a treasury of Empire neoclassic buildings including the 19th century Lutheran Cathedral and the Temppeliaukio Kirkko, a church beautifully hewn out of solid granite. Finland was the last stop on our remarkable journey. We flew home from Helsinki to Frankfurt, then back to Seattle.



*Gordon and Pat in Kiev, above the Dnieper River, the third longest river in Europe. The largest city of Ukraine, Kiev is a leading industrial and commercial center.*



*Gordon and Pat in Kiev with the statue of a cat. Legend says the cat saved a family from a burning house fire.*



*Pat and Gordon at the walled city of Tallin, Estonia. The most amazing part of Tallin for many is its Medieval city center with its picturesque Town Hall Square.*

*The travelers: Pat Lanning taught for 27 years at the elementary level in Hoquiam; her husband Gordon retired from the city of Hoquiam. Pat and Sharon Peterson have been friends since their freshman year at Hoquiam High School. Sharon and her husband Jerry are both retired from Weyerhaeuser; they live in Aberdeen.*



**MOVING?**  
 Change of address?  
 Please notify Karen  
 at the WSSRA office 800-544-5219  
 karen@wssra.org

Supporting future educators



Foundation challenge



by Bob Ehrenheim, president, WSSR-Foundation

Our convention in Wenatchee is not far off so it's time to do some planning about not only our participation but the future of our beloved

profession. We again solicit your donations for our Scholarship Fund helping future teachers prepare to follow our legacy.

Bring baskets, gift cards, event tickets, handicrafts, etc. to be used in either the silent auction or our drawings throughout the convention.

WHOSE CHILD IS THIS? This may be the one to receive one of our scholarships

"Whose child is this?" I asked one day Seeing a little one out at play. "Mine," said the parent with a tender smile. "Mine to keep a little while. To bathe his hands and comb his hair. To tell him what he is to wear. To prepare him that he may always be good. And each day do the things he should."

"Whose child is this?" I asked again As the door opened and someone came in. "Mine," said the teacher with the same tender smile. "Mine, to keep just for a little while. To teach him how to be gentle and kind. To train and direct his dear little mind. To help him live by every rule. And get the best he can from school."

"Whose child is this?" I ask once more Just as the little one entered the door. "Ours," said the parent and the teacher as they smiled. And each took the hand of the little child, "Ours to love and train together. Ours this blessed task forever."

Notice how mine changed to ours because true education is a partnership between both parents and teachers!



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

- Scholarship Endowment 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

Foundation contributors

- Brenda Johnson in memory of Carol Sue Franzen
Glenda and Tim Kimsey in memory of Margaret Buffington Fast
Kittitas County SRA in memory of Alfred Moss
Nancy Kleinschmidt - donation
Lewis County SRA in memory of Luella Baker and Edith Schoonover
Despena Varkados - donation
Robert and Bonnie Warnecke in memory of Norm Dahl and Eugene Maxim
WSSRA - donation
Yakima County SRA - donation

Your donation to the WSSR-Foundation can bring ever-increasing results. Every gift helps a future educator.

Strength in numbers

WSSRA offers something for everyone

by Joan Helm, chair, membership committee



2010-2011

State Membership Committee

- NW-1 David Thurman 360-734-3116
NW-2 Nell Hepburn 206-878-3183
SW-3 Marcia Booth 360-426-5525
SW-4 Waneta Filbin 360-256-0486
E-5 Kathy Fletcher 509-697-3561
E-6 Charlotte Kohnhorst 509-548-0150
E-7 Julie Simshauser 509-467-8706
E-8 Colleen Kinloch 509-751-9039
Board Liaison Susan Webber 509-786-3990
Resource Bill Marvin 509-926-8621
Chairman Joan Helm 509-337-6318

Thanks to each of you who has enrolled a new member during the 2010-2011 year. Please continue to reach out to your friends and former co-workers and invite them to join the Washington State School Retirees' Association.

WSSRA offers something for everyone as members can choose their level of involvement. Some belong in order to have up-to-date information on legislative issues which affect retirement benefits. Others belong because they enjoy the social interaction at local gatherings. Members enjoy the opportunity of leadership, whether it be as a member of a local committee or serving as a state officer. Many members enjoy volunteering opportunities.

Our organization awards scholarships to students interested in a career within the educational system. Many units support local school employees by awarding mini-grants.

The WSSRA state board is offering units \$10 for each member they enroll. They are also offering a further incentive of \$100 for units enrolling a minimum of 25 new members. I urge you to take advantage of this opportunity. This incentive is being offered until June 30, 2011.

Remember WSSRA is your organization. Be proud of it and share the opportunity of membership with a friend. If you need assistance, remember to contact Karen Keller at the state office or a member of the state membership committee.



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 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

## The Outreach Corner

## Questions for units from the Outreach Corner



by Rita Figlenski, board liaison to the outreach committee

### Question: What could your unit do to make your community a more livable community?

If you are short of ideas, an entire Community Service Kit is available from Rebecca Villarreal, NRTA Senior Program Analyst, at [rvillarreal@aarp.org](mailto:rvillarreal@aarp.org) or 312-458-3620. Former school employees often can be found involved in Health—e.g. nursing home visits; Livable Communities—e.g., driving people to doctor's appointments; and Economic Security—e.g., assisting with tax preparation.

### Question: What could your unit do to attract, support and retain quality teachers?

As reported by the National Retired Teachers Association (NRTA) on its website, "33% of new teachers leave the profession within the first three years of employment."

As we read those staggering, daunting numbers, the answer could be volunteerism. For example, donate an hour a week to one of those new to the profession as several retirees are doing around the state.

See the October, November, December issue of *The Journal* and the "Outreach Corner" by Mary Perkins for tips on getting involved in your local school.



### Question: Did you know that according to AARP, the value of volunteer service hours is \$20.85 an hour?

Why mention this? There are opportunities for recognizing volunteers in your unit.

The AARP Andrus Award for Community Service is awarded annually and recognizes outstanding community volunteers. This year's entry deadline is June 1.

In addition, there is the national With Our Youth Award, which volunteers from Sno-Isle, Chelan-Douglas, Columbia Basin and Okanogan County units have won in the past two years. What better way to garner recognition for your units? June 8 is the deadline for submission for that award. E-mail or phone Rebecca Villarreal ([rvillarreal@aarp.org](mailto:rvillarreal@aarp.org) or 312-458-3620) for information regarding both awards. Mary Perkins and Rita Figlenski of the Outreach Committee are available to help you as you fill in the application.

### Question: Is your unit's website up and running?

### Question: If it is up and running, is it being kept up to date?

Active members who are a growing, important and essential part of our membership read and glean information online rather than from hard copy—as do many retirees. It behooves us to make sure the content is timely. You will find that your website is a great place to showcase your unit's newsletter. A caveat or two: Take care when "borrowing"—e.g., cartoons and artwork for websites and newsletters. Those things could very well be the intellectual property of someone else and may not be "plunked" into publications without in some cases payment, always permission and acknowledgement. Finally, have another person proofread for content, spelling and grammar.

You will remember that the State Outreach Committee came about when four former committees—Communication, Education, Member Services, and Community Service were rolled into one. The committee invites your input/suggestions. E-mail committee chair Marie Buckner, at [gmbuck@comcast.net](mailto:gmbuck@comcast.net), or board liaison Rita Figlenski, at [ritafig@communitynet.org](mailto:ritafig@communitynet.org).



If you are a **Unit Newsletter Editor**, and if you missed last year's Outreach Breakout Session at State Convention, you are in luck! Jo and Bruce Caldwell have agreed to do a repeat of their segment on *producing a dynamic, readable newsletter* for your unit.

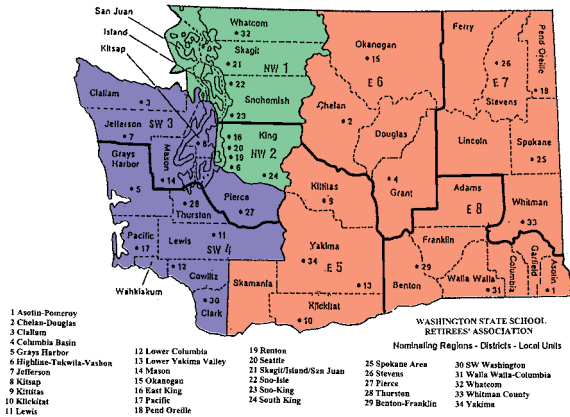
The presentation had rave reviews from last year's attendees.

WSSRA around the state



From the districts

What's happening in...



**NORTHWEST-1**  
*Skagit/Island/San Juan, Unit 21*, members enjoyed their annual festive Holiday Brunch at the Skagit Golf and Country Club in December. After a wonderful meal of crab melt/frittata, attendees were entertained by Synergy, an outstanding singing group from Mount Vernon HS. The unit awarded 17 \$100 grants to active teachers, which will be handed out in individual school visits. Members are busy contacting legislators regarding concerns pertinent to this legislative session. The March luncheon will be held at the Mount Vernon Royal Fork with speaker **Jerry Jenkins**, superintendent of Northwest ESD 189...Sno-Isle, Unit 22, members had an eventful and informative January meeting. **Pearl Miller** explained the history of the 35 year association with the Salvation Army then showed the bowl and red blanket that the organiza-

tion gave the membership as a thank you for its years of dedicated service to their organization. A representative from SHIBA spoke to retirees regarding Medicare rights and changes; she encouraged members to check medical statements for accuracy. She explained how to contact the local SHIBA office if there are problems that the insurance company isn't addressing. Afterward, a written report is taken and forwarded to the state insurance office where the complaint is investigated. She also gave tips for avoiding Medicare fraud and information about programs and services that connect seniors to community resources. Following this the members played a lively game of Bunco; **Mary Ann Karber** was declared Sno-Isle Bunco champion. The Everett School District invited Sno-Isle to attend and provide information about WSSRA and Sno-Isle

membership at its February retirement seminar. The February Sno-Isle program featured John McAlpine from Retired Senior Volunteer Program (RSVP). The March meeting will be an open-to-the-public luncheon and fashion show. The cost is \$20 and funds will go to scholarships. The theme of the show is Women in History with the fashions from Goodwill... After a detailed process, *Sno King Unit 23*, took the recommended by-law changes to members in February and April. One large change involves moving standing committee description to a by-law appendix where they can make it a policy document which will be more readily amendable to keep stated policies in line with practices. **Roberta Hawkins** is to be commended for this very laborious accomplishment! There is a March deadline for the unit's four \$1,200 scholarships to high school seniors going into the field of education. The scholarships are renewable for three more years. The unit has organized its legislative telephone tree and proofed calling lists. Members are avidly keeping abreast of developments in Olympia. **Rachel Lake** has again prepared a legislative resource card, mailed to all members to

keep with unit's directories. The card lists the representatives' and senators' (from our three school districts) contact information so it is at the ready when we need it. This has been very helpful in the past! For their February meeting, members toured the Brightwater Waste Treatment Center that will serve King and Snohomish counties. SKSR member, **Aaron Feik**, was instrumental in making sure an educational component was part of the site's development...*Whatcom, Unit 32*, awarded \$3,775 in mini-grants to Whatcom teachers for projects ranging from art experiences to books for reading classes. Greg Baker, new Bellingham superintendent, spoke at Whatcom's November luncheon. He was very receptive to hearing about WSSRA's work on pension issues in Olympia. The December meeting was held in Blaine. Members were entertained by some Christmas carols in Norwegian sung by the Sons of Norway Male Chorus. **Ed Gonion** attended Whatcom unit's January meeting at the Bellingham Senior Activity Center. Ed urged members to write their legislators protesting Governor Greigore's plan to eliminate Plan 1 COLAs. Members attending our February meeting in Bell-

## WSSRA around the state

*Dawn Darling, second-grade teacher at Peshastin-Dryden Elementary, with her principal, Tim Lawless, and a certificate from Chelan-Douglas SRA to purchase*



*a heavy-duty pencil sharpener, which she loves and says it sure has "made her life easier."*

ingham were entertained by the Showstoppers, a chorus of Bellingham HS students under the direction of Linda Short. Whatcom member **Richard Anderson** was nominated for WSSRA President-elect at the January NW-1 Coordinating Council meeting.

## NORTHWEST-2

*South King, Unit 6,* member **Sherrill Miller**, owner of E.B. Foote Winery in Burien, presented Winemaking 101 to the January meeting. Unfortunately, there was no tasting involved. The February meeting featured Executive Director **Ed Gonion**. **Don Bunger** presents regularly at meetings on technology issues and keeping cell phones, drains, tires, computers and water systems working properly. He recently took everyone through programming cell phones with ICE information (In Case of Emergency). Former unit president **Marianne Woodward**'s 100th birthday was celebrated by many members in January. Member **Sammie**

**Monroe** is in training for a second year as a teacher in Kenya...December ended for *East King, Unit 16,* with a successful silent auction which raised more than \$500 for Hopelink. January's meeting had Patrick Early, a private trainer, who emphasized the importance of staying hydrated, getting quality sleep, eating well-balanced meals and, of course, exercising regularly. Members **Jim and Shirlee Hall**, **Bob and Pat Sandbo**, **Beverly Simpson**, **Helen Forney**, **Nan O'Hiser**, **Carole George** and **Russ Goetschius** are all members of Marilyn Johnson's exercise class at Peter Kirk Community Center in Kirkland...*Renton-South King, Unit 19,* enjoyed Inquiring Minds speaker Wayne Horvitz, professor of composition at Cornish College of the Arts. His program, "Fine Tuning History: Music, Myths and Stories of the American West" discussed the role of music in the social movement and the history of the West. This spring, retired

librarian **Lorraine Swisher** and her husband, Jack, will present a photo show of the Rhine and Mosel River valleys from a river cruise taken last August...Because of a generous bequest from estates of previous members, *Seattle, Unit 20,* is offering medical needs grants for up to \$200 to members who have out-of-pocket medical expenses. Grants are limited and only for this year. February speaker was Cordell Carter, new executive director of athletics for Seattle Public Schools.

## SOUTHWEST-3

*Clallam County, Unit 3,* was entertained by the Sequim HS Select Choir, directed by Stephanie Clark, at its luncheon on December 21 at the Port Angeles Crabhouse Restaurant. Members contributed to a fund for the choir's trip to perform at Carnegie Hall in the spring. The unit's Warm Up Clallam County project brought in nearly 100 items which were donated to a St. Vincent De Paul agency for dispersal. Co-president **Marcia Homer** gave away several small door prizes. On January 18, **Jane Pryne**, superintendent of Port Angeles SD, and Betsy Wharton, who leads a citizens' group, spoke about the district's four-year levy. Pat McCollum of Olympic Medical Center presented a program called Stress in Heart and Lung Disease, which included tips for reducing stress. The unit's

book group has met three times. The membership drive has resulted in some new members; but work continues to enlist more.

## SOUTHWEST-4

*Lower Columbia, Unit 12,* has had a number of programs from service and volunteer agencies. **Lucy Calhoun** used the monthly small-change offering and money in the budget to buy over 400 pairs of socks for needy school children. Instead of exchanging gifts, members gave money to United Way. This year the unit has given out more than twice as many classroom grants as ever before, thanks to the contribution of a local business... Outreach with *Grays Harbor Pacific, Unit 5,* comes in a variety of packages. The unit is bringing in a speaker that will take them through the process, orally and written, of Staying Active and Alive after 65! All attendees will receive a sheet entitled Check for Safety to "seniorize" their home. This information is well received by seniors and caregivers of seniors. At the February meeting, diabetic Medicare members will be measured for FREE inserts and shoes in keeping with the new federal benefits available... Lewis County Sheriff Steve Mansfield spoke at *Lewis County, Unit 11's* January meeting. He gave an overview of programs and classes regarding personal

## WSSRA around the state

safety that are available to seniors. He noted that the most common crime against older citizens is fraud. Ten teachers were selected to receive \$100 grants; each will receive the award in person in front of students if possible... *Thurston County, Unit 28*, donated over \$1,000 dollars each to charities for Thanksgiving and Christmas. Eighty people attended the Christmas luncheon. Eleven mini-grants have been awarded. For some time the unit has had a committee working on updating and rewriting the by-laws; that work is finally completed... *Southwest Washington, Unit 30*, held a retirement seminar in November. Seventy people attended. There are plans to hold another seminar in March or April.

### EAST-5

**Judy Markham** assists editor **Kathy Schultz** in compiling an article for the *Yakima County, Unit 34*, newsletter called "Question of the Month." One of the most recent questions was "Who was your favorite teacher in school, and why was that person so special?" The answers were diverse and enlightening, showing the impact teachers have on a student. Many stated they went into teaching because of certain teachers and how they shared their love for their subject and their students. The unit holds a raffle

at each meeting with all proceeds going to WSSR-Foundation; in December they raised \$128, their highest income ever.

### EAST-6

With the mantra, "phone, write and e-mail often," *Okanogan County, Unit 15*, members are engaged in contacting local legislators to protect retiree pensions and health benefits. **Rita Figlenski**, E-6 Board Representative, and **Pat Davis**, Legislative Chair, are leading the efforts. In January, local school superintendents and OCSRA members **Richard Johnson**, Okanogan, and **Art Himmler**, Omak, presented a bleak synopsis of the economic woes facing area school districts. The situation was likened to getting a finger cut off and being told to carry on as usual. Emphasizing that legislators are good people dealing with an overwhelming crisis, the superintendents stated it is critical to give legislators our input to direct their decisions. In addition, a plea was made for communities to back their schools now and in the future. At OCSRA's February meeting, Larry Clark, a member of the 1161st Transportation Company of the National Guard, discussed his two deployments to Iraq. His visit culminates OCSRA's service project to send care packages to local military personnel serving in Iraq

and Afghanistan. According to Larry, care packages boost morale, provide a lifeline to home and replenish items when supply lines are shut down.

### EAST-7

*Spokane, Unit 25*, will meet March 1. E-7 Coordinating Council meeting will be March 7 at the Old Country Buffet in Spokane... *Whitman County, Unit 33*, sent out a flyer to members reminding them that their children and grandchildren can apply for the unit's \$1,000 college scholarship. At the unit's held March 22, **John Jaeger** will take attendees on an historical tour of Tekoa. The May 24 meeting will be in Pullman with a program on Lewis and Clark presented by Doug and **Marion Eier**.

### EAST-8

As is their tradition, members of *Benton Franklin, Unit 29*, enjoyed collecting unwrapped toys/books for the Salvation Army and singing Christmas carols in preparation for the holiday season. The unit had a

party to celebrate reaching 500 members; balloons and party favors decorated the tables at the January luncheon. **Marilyn Darke** of Richland was honored as "The 500th Member." Also honored was **Arden Vie**, a retired Pasco school principal, who was celebrating his 99th birthday. After the party, the balloons were taken to a local retirement center for their enjoyment. Program chair, **Peter Bixby** introduced a presentation by the Regional Service Corps—AmeriCorps at the January meeting. Members were encouraged to volunteer in the program. Scholarship applications are being accepted; three \$1,000 scholarships will be awarded in the spring. **Elaine Banks**, spoke for the legislative committee, stressing the importance for everyone to contact their legislators. Members look forward to spring activities, continuing their membership drive and perhaps thanking the "active" members for their continued service of educating our youth.



(standing) Kathy Reim, Harriet Smith and Eloise Stendal.

Greeting guests at the check-in table at Unit 21's Holiday Brunch are (seated) Barbara Landrock and Bonnie Green and



# Ask a friend to join us



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

The mission of WSSRA is to...

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

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

## Don't delay—ask today

*You'll find inside...*

AARP.....	9	Legislative report .....	4	President's message .....	2
AMBA.....	9	Membership .....	15	Retiree contact information.....	8
Executive director's message.....	3	Membership application.....	15	Travel .....	12
Foundation .....	14	Outreach Corner.....	16	WSSRA information .....	2
In the spotlights.....	10			WSSRA around the state.....	17