

The Journal

WASHINGTON STATE SCHOOL RETIREES' ASSOCIATION

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



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Chelan-Douglas School Retirees' Volunteer Program is "Filling the Gap"

WSSRA at work for you



A message from the president



Be ready for action

by Louie Osmonovich, president

Okay, partners, saddle up! We've got pension robberies to prevent.

Happy New Year to you all!

I'm enjoying my ride as your president—so far. I'm very pleased by

the receptions I've received from the units I've visited. These visits, allowing me to meet WSSRA members, are the highlight of my job. The programs and speakers at those meetings were exceptional. You're not only doing things to benefit your members, but you're reaching out to help others. This bodes well for WSSRA's image. I'm looking forward to meeting more of you in the new year.

Another highlight for me was attending the AARP@50+ Convention in September. I sat in on numerous

sessions and listened to some insightful speeches and thought-provoking discussions, among them were Kathleen Sebelius, U.S. Secretary of Health and Human Services; Newt Gingrich, former Speaker of the House; Dave Berry, columnist for 500 newspapers in the U.S. and abroad; James Carville, a political contributor for CNN who helped elect President Clinton; Mary Matalin (James' wife), a political strategist and commentator who helped in the Reagan and Bush campaigns; Carrie (Schwab) Pomerantz, president and CEO of Charles Schwab Foundation; Scott Serota, president and CEO of Blue Cross and Blue Shield Association; Robin Roberts from *Good Morning America*, Whoopi Goldberg and Larry King. This was a fun and

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Washington State School Retirees' Association

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WSSRA at work for you



A message from the executive director



2011 Legislative Session – Perilous days ahead

by Ed Gonion, executive director

Economists have termed this economic downturn as the “Great Recession” because of its impact and duration.

Since World War II there have been 10 national economic recessions; the average DECLINE in real GDP was 1.8%, DECLINE in employment of 2.6% and duration of 10 months.

However, the average for 2007-2009: DECLINE in real GDP of 4.1%, DECLINE in employment of 6.1%, duration of 18 months. In this Great Recession, the state of Washington lost 192,000 jobs, and revenue to the state treasury has crashed.

The financial situation continues to get WORSE. Just since the end of the 2010 legislative session last March, there has been a \$1.6 billion negative change in the finances for the current fiscal biennium. The projected fund balance of \$457 million has turned into a \$1.3 billion deficit. In January, the Legislature must act quickly to cut spending and balance the budget. That is just the beginning of the bad news for the citizens of Washington.

The governor and legislature must cut billions of dollars from the next 2011-13 biennium budget—which begins July 1. In order to maintain current state services, projected maintenance level increases could total \$5.3 billion—money that state government does not have. This means that painful, draconian cuts in the state budget will be made. Budget writers must use an ax, rather than a scalpel.

There is no place to find cover, hide, stay out of sight and wait out the financial crises. Everything funded by government will be examined/debated for inclusion on the chopping block. Budget priorities will be reset; many stakeholders and organizations will be harmed.

Protecting and maintaining retiree pensions and benefits is always a challenge in Olympia, even during the best of times. These are not the best of times. The risk and peril for all of us is extreme in 2011. Every WSSRA member must stay informed. In addition to the *Journal*, the *Legislative Insight* is available on our website www.wssra.org. If each of you is ready and willing to act when called upon, we will have chance to protect pension and benefits for current and future school retirees.

(President continued from page 2)

informative convention.

Now... back in the saddle and back to earth, my attention is on our goals—(1) Responsible pension funding, (2) reasonable COLAS, and (3) health benefits.

A headline which appeared in the *Seattle Times* early in December said, “State seeks \$4 billion fix for its pension fund.” Our state treasurer, Jim McIntire, proposes a constitutional amendment that would force the Legislature to begin fixing the problem in 2015, before it becomes much worse. He also recommended that the Legislature put \$1.4 billion into the pension system during the next two-year budget to keep funding on pace. The article also noted that Senator Ed Murray, who may become the next Senate Ways and Means chair, is open to a constitutional amendment dealing with pensions. He said, “Long-term reform of the pension system is something we (the Legislature) should address.”

Treasurer McIntire was the featured speaker at our 2010 convention. The newspaper article goes into greater detail about the state/condition of our pension system and is worth the read. It is available online at www.seattletimes.com. This legislative session will be challenging,

so keep your pistols (phones) ready for action when our Legislative committee asks for your help.

Be sure to read Leslie Main’s *WSSRA Legislative Insight*. It is loaded with excellent information on what we need to know in the upcoming session. We are grateful to Leslie for her exemplary work keeping us informed.

Thanks again to all members who attend unit meetings, hold offices and/or are on local committees. This is where things need to operate smoothly for us to maintain our success as a progressive state association.

My wish/desire for 2011 is for more members to attend unit meetings, help on committees and inform us of your concerns through your elected board representatives. Foremost, I wish you good health and a safe, prosperous year.

We are facing trying times—so I would like to quote an apropos one liner: “Trying times are no time to quit trying.” Keep up the good work and keep “galloping” toward our WSSRA goals. Adios!

ON THE COVER: Members of the Chelan-Douglas Unit are pictured at Rock Island School, where their tutoring program has won them an NRTA award. Read more about the program on pages 10-11.

What will the 2011 Session mean for current and future school retirees?



by WSSRA staff on behalf of WSSRA's legislative committee

WSSRA legislative objectives for 2011 include responsible pension funding and protection of school retiree pension and health benefits.

The Legislature, and all policy makers, have a very hard road ahead in addressing budget issues considering...

1. the new margin of Democrats and Republicans in both chambers,
2. the negative revenue and caseload forecasts, and
3. the election results of the major fiscal related initiatives.

WSSRA is especially concerned how the Legislature will address the extreme budget pressures regarding pension funding. The “balloon payment” of employer pension contributions has come due.

- We know of the Legislature’s tradition of cutting contribution rates. We also know General Fund-State employer pension costs will increase 104.5% from \$770 million in the 2009-11 biennium, to \$1.48 BILLION over the 2011-13 biennium.
- There is no doubt that school retirees will be impacted as the Legislature struggles to pay its bills! The question is, HOW and by HOW MUCH?
- We know that the governor has requested a “Redesign” of the Public Employee Benefits Board (PEBB) insurance benefit design with the goal of realizing savings for the PEBB program over the next one-to-five years.
- We also know there is increasing talk among policy makers that the Plan 1 COLA, along with basically every other State program, is on the table for possible cuts. WSSRA members are reminded that Uniform Plan 1 COLA statute contains “right to repeal” provisions similar to that which the now-repealed Gain Sharing benefits contained. As many of you know, the repeal of Gain Sharing is the subject of ongoing litigation.

Responsible pension funding—options

Many legislators are gaining an understanding and increasing enthusiasm for getting the State’s pension funding on the right-track. This pension funding bandwagon has potentially good ramifications. We need to exercise caution and concern: How will the Legislature accomplish “responsible pension funding?

Options to attain responsible pension funding identified for policy makers by the Office of the State Actuary (OSA) in its *2010 Risk Assessment Report*, included: avoid underfunding, benefit improvements, and address Plan 1 legacy costs when deciding how they should proceed.

1. Underfunding

Over the past 20 years, the largest pension plans have only been funded at 80% of recommended levels. Short-term funding policies capturing investment gains early, and losses deferred, has contributed to underfunding of the pension funds.

Options:

- A. Mandate annual funding at 100% of actuarially recommended contributions (ARC)—this sets a high standard which would be hard to meet.
- B. Mandate annual funding at 80% of ARC—this lessens the fiscal pressures for budget writers, but does not attain full funding, only steadies the funding progress (similar to Rep. Bailey’s 2010–HB 2871).
- C. Delay changes to methods and assumptions—this achieves the goal of avoiding short-term changes that lower cost by reducing contribution rates, but can lead to underfunding.
- D. Require a two-thirds vote of the Legislature to adopt contribution rates lower than the ARC (similar to Sen. Schoesler’s 2010–SJR 8223).

2. Benefit Improvements

Over the past 20 years, a 0.45% increase in liabilities have been added via pension benefit increases, many of which were retroactive.

Options:

- A. Give the Legislature the clear authority to designate new benefit improvements as discretionary—provides funding flexibility, can be contained to protect amount already paid, or to protect benefit already earned (similar to Sen. Schoesler’s 2010–SJR 8223)
- B. Avoid unfunded prior service costs by establishing a strict funding policy for retroactive benefits by requiring that new benefit improvements be funded over a specific time
- C. Limit or prohibit new benefits until a specific process has been conducted,

WSSRA at work for you

D. Limit or prohibit new benefits until a specific funding ratio, such as 80%, has been achieved (similar to Rep. Bailey's 2010–HB 2679 and HB 2871)

3. Risks from Plan 1 Legacy Costs

The historical funding method used for Plan 1 has served to push costs out into the future before they are fully paid. The resulting Plan 1 legacy costs have been exacerbated by underfunding of the pensions and enactment of new benefits by the Legislature. According to OSA staff, as of the 6/30/09 *Actuarial Valuation Report*, the combined unfunded liability for PERS 1 and TRS 1 was \$7 billion.

Options:

- A. Mandate minimum funding rates starting in 2015 and/or pay extra lump-sums toward the Plan 1 unfunded liability each year until the liability is gone
- B. Protect closed plans by directing the Legislature to adopt policies preventing re-emergence of the PER/TRS 1 unfunded liability once it is paid off or developing an unfunded liability in any other system.

After determining what issues are to be addressed, policy makers must decide how to best address the issues.

Constitutional Amendment

During the November 16 meeting of the Select Committee on Pension Policy (SCPP) public testimony was taken on the issue of option for managing pension funding risk. Treasurer James McIntire produced the report *Pension Funding Reform for Washington State* last fall in response to issues raised in the state actuary's 2010 *Risk Assessment Report*. He indicated that he feels a fiduciary responsibility to address these issues, and thus has also drafted a constitutional amendment to address the policy volatility of pension funding.

Under Treasurer McIntire's proposed Constitutional Amendment:

- The intent is to provide fiscal discipline and consistency in the budgeting of the funding of the retirement and improve generational equity.
- Plan 2/3—require 80% funding of costs under entry age normal actuarial cost method (i.e. actuarially recommended contributions (ARC) using the actuarial method in current statute for Plans 2/3.)
- Plan 1—adherence to fixed minimum contribution rates to address the Plan 1 unfunded liability, as provided in SSB 6161 (2009), which suspended recognition of minimum contribution rates in 2015.
- Future Plan 1 benefit improvements enacted by the

Legislature would have to be funded with contributions separate from those required under the minimum contribution rates floors.

- Improvements to other plans must be fully funded.
- Curbing prospects for future mid-biennium changes to actuarial assumptions and methods by extending when they would be implemented (i.e. no more short-term budget solutions).

WSSRA supports Treasurer McIntire's proposal in principle as it focuses almost wholly on the problem, which is pension funding. However, we do have concerns about provisions wherein, Plan 1 benefit improvements would be required to be funded separate from the Unfunded Liability amount covered by the contribution-rate floor.

Issues raised by WSSRA

WSSRA raised the following issues during testimony before the Select Committee on Pension Policy on December 16 regarding options for managing pension risks:

- With the current budget crisis there are two things that could be done immediately:
 1. Immediate adherence to previously established contribution rate floors for basic and unfunded liabilities, currently not recognized under SSB 6161 (2009), and
 2. Enactment of the actuarially recommended contribution rates adopted by the Pension Funding Council for the 2011-13 biennium.
- Plan members have always made their statutorily required contribution rates (Plan 1 = 6% of pay) their entire career, while the State used money it should have put toward its pension contributions on other non-pension political priorities. Members of the retirement system should not have to take responsibility for the State's underfunding of its pension systems obligations.

The 2011 Session—Here it comes, ready or not!

Please refer to *WSSRA's Legislative Insight* for further details regarding expectations for, and developments of, the 2011 Session: <http://www.wssra.org/legislativeinsight.htm>.



Pension protection: a reason for membership

Will defined-contribution pensions be the trend of the future?



by Richard M. Anderson, WSSRA Board Representative, NW 1, for the membership committee

As the Washington State Legislature struggles with billion-dollar deficits year after year, legislators search for ways to save money. One costly item that has been a focus in the past is the Washington State Retirement System. Over the years, the Legislature has closed pension plans and substituted new ones, each designed to save the state money. Plan 1 pensions were closed to newly hired employees in 1977, when money-saving Plan 2 pensions were created for TRS/PERS.

Plan 1 pensions were defined-benefit pensions

This meant that retirees' monthly benefits were based upon a formula: 2% X years of service X highest two years compensation. With 30 years of service, a teacher could retire with full benefits at any age. Other factors that could influence the monthly benefit were: withdrawing personal contributions at retirement or designating survivor benefits to a spouse or receiving a sporadic COLA. Whatever the defined amount, a retiree would receive that benefit **for life**.

When **Plan 2 pensions** were introduced in 1977, the state saved money by requiring a beneficiary to **wait until age 65** before receiving a full-retirement benefit without penalty. This saved money by increasing the number of years employees are required to make pension contributions and by shortening the number of years retirees could receive benefits. Plan 2 plans were still **defined-benefit pensions**.

A hybrid plan: part defined-benefit and part defined-contribution

In 1995, the Washington State Legislature created a **Plan 3 pension system** and invited Plan 2 members to transfer to it. Plan 3 reduced the formula from 2% to 1% X years of service and required each member to invest his or her contributions in IRA-type accounts featuring a variety of investment options. Interest rates had been quite high in prior years so Plan 2 members who transferred to Plan 3 gambled their **defined-contribution** account investments would fare better than what the Plan 2 fully defined benefit would provide. This was a hybrid plan that was part defined-benefit and part defined-contribution. Plus, the Legislature added the inducement of gain-sharing to persuade Plan 2 beneficiaries to switch. If a new hire did not choose between joining Plan 2 or Plan 3 within 90 days of being hired, the new hire was put into Plan 3 by default. Plan 3 was intended to reduce the state's future liability to retirees.

A defined-contribution plan

A defined-contribution plan is a retirement-savings plan in which the employer and member contribute to an employee's retirement account with no guaranteed retirement benefit. Benefits are limited to contributions to an account and investment savings in the account. The state saves money because **benefits are limited to the balance in the account**. Once the employee retires, **the state has no further obligation. When the funds in the account are spent, payments end**. For the remainder of his or her life, the retiree must rely on other resources that he or she had the foresight to acquire. (Note from Leslie Main: One could purchase a lifetime annuity benefit with the proceed of the defined-contribution account, but that just illustrates the need for a fully defined-benefit plan.)

As a trade-off to gain sharing, the Legislature permitted Plan 2/3 members to retire at age 62 instead of age 65 with 30 years of service.

During the recent legislative session in 2010, a bill (SB 6045) was introduced in the Senate Ways and Means Committee to **design a defined-contribution pension system for new public employees, teachers and other school employees**. The bill did not make it out of committee. The bill probably would have had support, but legislators were already too burdened with other, more pressing matters to deal with the political and financial consequences it would bring. I would expect the idea of a defined-contribution pension system will arise in future legislative sessions. State Senator Joe Zarelli (R-18), sponsor of SB 6045, continues to push for the state to end defined-benefit pensions and place new hires on a 401 K plan.

Leslie Main, in her *Legislative Insight*, said, "The fact that Democrats even brought this bill up for a public hearing appears to be a very bad precursor of what's in store for the future with respect to future pension-benefit policy. It indicates a lack of concern over the retirement security of those who do dedicate their careers as educators and public servants."

Is this the trend of the future?

During the next legislative session, if new defined-contribution plans are proposed, contact your legislators immediately and tell them that such plans discourage young people from entering the teaching profession that is already beset with heightened accountability issues and school budget cuts. It has been shown that defined-benefit contribution plans do not save money in the long run.

Remembering

Remembering two former state presidents—Betty Johnson and LaVerne Gierke



Betty Johnson, WSSRA state president 1993-94, and Pierce County Unit 27's leadership guide and boundless energy volunteer, passed away in Tacoma on October 26. She was 95 years young.

Betty Warden Johnson was born in Chatfield, Minnesota, population 1,500. She was the youngest of seven children living on the family farm. At age 17 she "went out west" to live in Tacoma with an aunt and an uncle. After graduating from Stadium High School, she enrolled in the teacher education program at the College of Puget Sound.

She started teaching in 1939. When she was married two years later, she had to resign—no married female teachers were offered contracts. However, World War II brought a change in that rule. Back to teaching she went until her retirement in 1977.

During her more than three very active decades of retirement, she remained very active with senior issues at the state and local levels: Pierce County School Retirees Association president, WSSRA state membership chair for several years, SW/3 membership chair and secretary to the Coordinating Council for several years, WSSRA representative to the Washington Senior Lobby, Outstanding Volunteer of Pierce County 2003, NRTA 50th Anniversary National Retired Educator Award 1997...and there's more, much more. Always busy, always smiling, always helping—Betty Johnson.

A memorial service was held on October 30 at Mountain View Funeral Home in Lakewood, Washington.



LaVerne Gierke, WSSRA state president 1979-80, and member of Seattle Retired Teachers, passed away November 22 in Shoreline at the age of 94.

Born in Virginia, Minnesota, her mother died when LaVerne was only seven. Her father later remarried, and LaVerne gave credit to her step-mother for much of her upbringing. She said her step-mother taught her how to work, while her father taught her to love work.

During the Depression, LaVerne did housework for her room and board and a dollar a week. With her savings from this work, she managed to make her college tuition payments. She earned her elementary teaching certificate from Duluth State Teachers' College and later went on to earn her B.A. from the University of Washington.

Her first class required creativity in teaching skills: 13 of the children spoke English, 13 spoke Finnish and one student spoke both and acted as interpreter.

For 25 years LaVerne taught school, 23 of them in Seattle, grades 1-4. She also volunteered in local, state and national teacher organizations. Since retirement in 1972, she has focused on teacher-retirement issues in the Seattle RTA and WSTRA. She has served as president of Omicron Chapter of Delta Kappa Gamma and active in the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints.

She is survived by a son, daughter and step-daughter and several grandchildren and great-grandchildren. A funeral was held on December 4 in Seattle.

Need help? Have questions?

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Learning about the past

Governor Evans vs pension legislation, 1971 Session

 by Dan Peterson, historian

In November 2010, the *Seattle Times* carried the following headline: “State seeks a \$4 billion fix for its pension fund.” James McIntire, former state representative and now Washington state treasurer, warned of a shortfall looming and proposed a constitutional amendment that would force the state to close this looming gap in pension assets for teachers and state workers. He is supported by state actuary Matt Smith, who is quoted in the same *Times* article saying, “The past 20 years, in terms of benefit improvements and funding practices, really can’t continue. The costs will become unsustainable.”

This 2010 concern regarding pension funding has been the subject of several *Journal* articles, e.g. Vol. XXIV no. 2 dealt with crisis during the 1971 legislative session. In our WSSRA Journal April of 1971, Gov. Daniel Evans, who had proved his legislative skill passing ground-breaking environmental legislation with joint Democratic and Republican cooperation was recorded as “...recommending no appropriation from the states General Fund to the Teachers’ Retirement system for any purpose whatsoever...” including payment of pensions, payment to the Pension Reserve Fund and payment of the state’s share (50%) of the Retirement Systems operating cost for 1971-73.

As was reported in previous articles, Gov. Evans offered HB591 which, if passed, would create a super agency with a director appointed by the governor and responsible to the governor.

When Gov. Evans’ recommendations reached the Board of Trustees of the Teachers Retirement Systems, they called a special meeting on January 18, 1971. The following resolution was released:

“The Board of Trustees of the Teachers Retirement System is unalterably and unanimously opposed to the Governor’s proposal to violate a long-standing principle of public trust to the teachers, the retired teachers and other public employees, including policemen and firemen, in the destruction of a sound public pension system.”

Despite opposition to Gov. Evans’ proposals, the Board of Trustees, “under protest” authorized the transfer of funds from the Pension Reserve Fund to the Pension Fund in order to pay pensions as they came due for the months of January, February and March. To meet February pension payments, approximately \$1M worth of common stocks was sold. It was further announced the Board of Trustees would meet on April 12,

1971, to take actions to ensure payment of pensions for April, May and June.

Further complicating implementation of the governor’s plans was a Supreme Court ruling that pensions must be paid. “A pension payment, once authorized in accordance with state law, becomes a lifetime contract.”

Another reaction to Gov. Evans’ withholding of \$18,082,193 for the remainder of the 1971 fiscal year was a court action. Edgar H. Osborn of the Washington Education Association and Mae Weaver President of the WSRTA sought a Writ of Mandate, which if granted could order the governor, the state budget director and the state treasurer to transfer to the Teachers’ Retirement System the balance of money (\$18,082,193) appropriated by the 1969 legislature. Additionally, it would be required that no further transfers be made from the Pension Reserve Fund for the payment of current pensions. In addition, any funds already transferred for this purpose must be restored to the Pension Reserve Fund.

Gov. Evans submitted an executive request to the legislature, which became labeled HB591 and was designed to create one super-pension agency, merging teachers, public employees, law enforcement officers, fire fighters and eight other agencies of state government. The head of this super agency would be appointed by the governor and was to have full authority over the funds of the Teachers Retirement System. While the Board of Trustees would continue to exist, it would be divested of its authority, except for certain rule adoptions and its ability to screen applicants for temporary and/or permanent disability benefits. The head of the proposed super-pension agency would be responsible only to the governor. The titles of Director of the Teachers Retirement Systems would be abolished and an assistant director would be placed in charge of the three largest retirement systems to administer administrative functions.

Director Rogel continued his analysis of the HB591 by reminding the public that the changes proposed by the governor were numerous and revolutionary. “They have been submitted to the legislature without any previous knowledge on the part of the administration or the Board of Trustees of the Teachers Retirement System, nor did those who made the recommendations to the governor at any time confer or consult with the personnel of the retirement systems concerning its present operation or the possible effect of the changes being recommended.”

(continued on page 14)





“All-cuts” budget not the only option

by Ingrid McDonald, AARP advocacy director



Once again, lawmakers in Olympia are grappling with a huge state budget deficit. The recession is still hurting people in our

state—people are earning less, spending less and thus paying fewer taxes. As a result, the state is up to \$5 billion short of what it needs to fund core services for the next two years.

This is a problem for everyone in our state, whether you are rich or poor, young or old. We will all be touched by inevitable cuts in state services and weakening infrastructure—and the most vulnerable among us will be hardest hit.

But wait, there are choices here. An “all cuts” budget that slashes health and long-term care, de-funds our schools and universities, weakens our criminal justice system and puts our natural resources at risk is unacceptable.

Lawmakers have a false perception that voters in the mid-term election sent a clear message that gives them no choice other than an “all-cuts” approach. But it is a lot more complicated than that.

Yes, voters rejected Initiative 1098 which would have established a high-income tax to fund health care and education. They approved Initiative 1107 to repeal a 2-cent increase on a can of soda, and they approved Tim Eyman’s Initiative 1053 to require a supermajority vote for any changes in the tax code.

But they didn’t vote for an “all-cuts” budget that will eat away at the quality of life in Washington state. A December Elway Poll of Washington voters found that the majority of voters do not expect the legislature to solve the budget deficit through cuts alone. Forty-percent expect some taxes will have to be raised, and 18% believe that the Legislature will “find money from somewhere to fund programs without a general tax increase.”

Legislators do have choices

Reducing a \$33 billion dollar budget by \$5 billion or so won’t happen without some pain. Lawmakers have tough choices to make, but they do have choices.

First and foremost, AARP is urging lawmakers to prioritize and protect services that keep people in their own homes and communities as they age. Cutting home care, adult day health programs, Meals On Wheels and other supports is penny-wise and pound-foolish. It will not only hurt people—it will also cost more in the long run as seniors give up hope of staying home and resort to more expensive

nursing-home care. The same goes for proposed cuts to prescription drugs and other core Medicaid benefits. Without stabilizing medications and proper care, emergency room use and hospitalizations will rise, all at more cost to the state.

So what are the options for raising taxes, and how can that be done without hurting people who are already hurting from the recession and with the supermajority vote requirement in place? First, require tax exemptions to receive the same legislative scrutiny as other forms of spending, and require all exemptions to have sunset dates. Second, crack down on tax evaders to recoup hundreds of millions of dollars in revenue lost by businesses that illegally or unethically fail to pay their fair share. And if you can’t get a supermajority vote for these or more fundamental tax changes, let the people decide. There is nothing stopping this legislature from using a majority vote to send a referendum to the voters to preserve services they care about by supporting a specific revenue raiser.

You can make a difference

Reach out to your state lawmakers and remind them that they have options; tell them what you care about and what you don’t want to see cut back—whether that is the quality of education for your grandchildren, the public safety infrastructure that keep criminals out of your neighborhood or the home-care worker who helps you get out of bed. You can contact your lawmaker through the Legislative Hotline at 1-800-562-6000 or for more information visit www.aarp.org/wa.

The WSSRA Executive Board met November 3-4 at the WSSRA Office in Lacey; the following actions were taken:

- Extended the WSSRA Salary Schedule to 2016-17
- Voted that the School Retirees’ Appreciation Week Proclamation be changed to reflect appreciation for all school retirees
- Adopted the Code of Conduct, Whistle Blower Provision to be placed in the bylaws
- Approved Marcia Booth as District 3 representative on the Membership Committee
- Awarded honorary membership to Bruce Reeves, Thurston County
- Approved car rental policy for the first reading

In the spotlights



Chelan-Douglas School Retirees' Volunteer Program is "Filling the Gap"

by Mary Perkins



Principal Sue Kane said, "We are so fortunate to have such caring people in our community."

NRTA recognized the Chelan-Douglas SRA volunteer program, "Filling the Gap," with a *With Our Youth!* award for its work at Rock Island Elementary School. Rock Island is an K-4 school located in a small community, approximately 10 miles from a larger city. The 2009-2010 poverty level was 87.6%. Many jobs are agriculturally related and are seasonal. These occupations often include shift-work and times of unemployment. In 2009-2010, 27% of the families were transitory in nature, with 39% considered migrant, 73% minority and 50% of the students came from Spanish-speaking homes. Despite these challenges, the staff continues to close the opportunity gap, as evidenced by Washington state assessment scores. The school received state honors again this year and has also been nominated for a national Blue Ribbon Award.

On the front cover, center top—Marie Buckner and Aldo; center bottom—Rose Mullan and Erik; left side, top to bottom—Joan Lewis and Brandon; Nancy Valeson and Liz; Ed Sands and Jonathan; Peggy Love and Issac; right side, top to bottom—Betty Duvaughelle and Bryan; Mickie Crowe and Ezra; Denise Perkins and Alondra; Mary Perkins and Canyon.

The community

In Rock Island, WA, population 865, the elementary school has become the focal point for the community. The building was remodeled 16 years ago with extensive input from the citizens. Their vision "to keep the building as a small rural school at the center of the community" was realized. Residents are proud of the school, and it remains "The Jewel of the Eastmont School District."

Many well-attended events are held at the school: musical performances, fall barbeque, arts festivals, Culture Day, Veterans' Day and Grandparents' Day celebrations. Our volunteers were invited to "Music Around the World." We enjoyed seeing our students perform and mingling with parents and other community members.

Reaching out to members

The project began with a notice in the unit's November 2009 newsletter that advertised WANTED: INSTANT HEROES!

It asked prospective respondents if they "would like to volunteer to...(1) work in a quiet setting? (2) work with one child at a time? (3) not make lesson plans? (4) not correct papers? (5) have flexible hours? (6) have everyone think you are wonderful?"

The announcement went on to explain the following:

Members of the Chelan-Douglas SRA are embarking on a new project to assist students at Rock Island Elementary School. It is a small school (200+) with a diverse school population. They have 80% free and reduced lunches, many non-English speaking parents and many households in which both parents are working. Their WASL scores have been high due to teacher effort and expertise, and the ability to use para-professionals to reinforce reading and math concepts. Due to budget cutbacks, the number of para-professionals has been greatly decreased. This is the gap that we would like to help fill with

In the spotlights



volunteers.

We are looking at providing teams of volunteers for reading reinforcement in the A.M. and math in the P.M. We need your help whenever you are available and plan to develop teams which can work around vacations, illness, snow birds, etc., etc! Call if you would like more information.

Volunteers enter the classrooms

Twelve volunteers reported for a very brief training session, and the program began that month.

Volunteers worked daily with first- and second-grade students from 9:00 until 11:30 AM, reinforcing reading skills. Third-grade classes received reinforcement in math skills one afternoon per week.

Staff

We see the staff as dedicated teachers who are always striving for excellence, while putting the needs of their students first. They provide all the materials, consult with the volunteers on a regular basis and are never too busy to give us needed information or assistance. We see the mission of the school...to create and maintain a collaborative learning environment so all students develop and demonstrate academic excellence...happening in the classrooms every day.

Children

Our students look forward to working with us. At the beginning of the program, they often asked, "Are the grandmas and grandpas coming today?" Now, they expect us to be there and want to know, "Can I be next?" as we call them from the classrooms.

We have also seen special relationships develop, confidences and concerns shared, and students who have made excellent progress. "How many books do I get to read today?" has become the question for several of our former reluctant readers.

Goals

The goals of the program as as follows:

1. Put trained volunteers in the school to work one-on-one with students needing help.
2. Develop a "special" relationship between the volunteer and the child.
3. Keep Rock Island Elementary progressing toward local, state and national goals.
4. Develop a team model which encourages our members to volunteer and still be able to travel or pursue other retirement goals at the same time.
5. Provide trained substitutes when needed.
6. Provide a positive and fun experience for all involved.

Commitment

Most of our volunteers drive a 20-mile round trip (one drives 50) to work at the school. This gives the community the message that making sure each student has an opportunity to achieve academic excellence is of great importance. We were proud to have two additional community members join our group.

As educators, we know that no matter how successful the project is, it can always be improved. As a result, we have set the following as our goals for 2010-2011:

1. Implement the 2009-10 goals at a higher level.
2. Recruit more volunteers—especially men, as many of our students are boys, and they need more role models.
3. Expand the afternoon mathematics program.
4. Expand the morning reading program with the goal to work with each child three times each week.
5. Add a culminating event sponsored by the Chelan-Douglas SRA—perhaps a trip to a local book store to enable each student to choose a book for his/her home library.
6. Reinforce the school motto: "Every child succeeds at Rock Island."



"My students loved reading with them so much because the volunteers always made them feel

special," said Harriett Fox, first-grade teacher.



"They fill a gap that we just can't fill," said Steph Collett, second-grade teacher.



"The kids enjoyed their time and got to have some one-on-one time that they wouldn't have gotten otherwise," said Jamea Connor, second-grade teacher.



"The volunteers are a bright spot in each of my students' day," said Leah

Hammond, third-grade teacher.

On the road in retirement

Bike riding for exercise and enjoyment

by Gary Gleason



Gary Gleason and his bike at the end of the ride on the Mickelson Trail in Edgemont, North Dakota, population 9.

Joy! Oh, joy! Riding a smooth trail in the sunshine, feeling the fresh air drift by and the soft sounds of nature, bike tires on pavement and hellos from fellow riders I meet. The Pacific Northwest is blessed with a good number of trails and shares this common of bounty trails for walkers and bike riders with the rest of the U.S.A. According to the Rails to Trails website, there are now some 1,683 built trails, with 19,872 miles in the U.S. and Canada. It doesn't matter if you go with a professional guide or on a self-supported ride, you will have an educational experience.

Riding as a single person

One method of riding as a single person is to pick a town along the way, stay a day or two, and ride out and back in both directions along the trail from that base; then move on to the next base town and once more ride out and back. I find that even though you are seeing the same country, your viewpoint is different enough and, because you have some idea of what is along the trail, you can stop, take photographs and read any historical signs that you missed the first time.

I began my Katy Trail ride alone in the small town of Windsor, Missouri. As planned, I arrived three days early, giving me a chance to ride a part of the trail that the organized ride did not cover.

There were history lessons in the towns of Clinton, Calhoun and Windsor, with major manufacturing locations for clay bottles and jugs nearby. Several small ponds near the trail were old surface mines for both the coal and clay need to make the containers which were shipped east by train.

Windsor had three things new to me: an Amish community complete with horse-drawn vehicles; a restored caboos that had been part of the U.S. Bicentennial celebration; and a thunder storm and tornado alert. I was sure glad my motel looked solid and had a basement.

My next stop was a drive to Boonville and more out-and-back riding along the trail and along the river. As it turned out, I was only a few miles from the starting location for the organized trip. I was there on a nice warm weekend, sharing the trail with many local riders. That day, I found the stores and shops open in small town of Rocheport, shops which were closed when we came back with the group on Monday.

A group ride on the (same) Katy Trail

The 200+ mile-long Katy Trail group ride in Missouri was sponsored by Elderhostel. It was a six-day ride along the Missouri River from Boonville to St. Charles. Each day's ride was from 20 to 40 miles long with all details taken care of—motels, meals, guides, sag van, bike mechanic, guest speakers and entry fees to exhibits and museums—all in a single package.

The official start of the trip was at a motel in Columbia on Sunday afternoon followed by a van trip up to Boonville. The group consisted of some two dozen riders, several couples, a number of singles like myself and others riding with friends. The main task was picking up our bikes, as we were not allowed to use our own bikes even if we had them. Much to my surprise all the bikes were brand-new; most still had the tags on them. I had been told that bike touring companies

On the road in retirement

like to break in new bikes with adult riders because we are more careful, and we also ride shorter distances each day, thus giving the bike mechanics time to check each bike for loose parts, stretching cables and chains.

The Katy Trail going down the river to St. Charles was a little downhill, making for easy riding. Except for our group, the trail was empty of other riders. That meant that lunch was often in a small café, which was normally closed at this time of the year but opened just for us.

One afternoon a heavy rainstorm was predicted, so we packed up—our bikes in a closed trailer and us in a couple of vans. Off we went to the Daniel Boone House and Park, the same Daniel Boone of the coonskin hat fame. I knew he had moved out to West when it got too settled for him, but it turns out he was the Spanish government's agent and served as a judge before Spain gave the land to the French in payment for war damages. This land later became part of the Louisiana Purchase. His home was a stone fort, shaped like a two-story colonial home, except for the heavy doors and gun slits in the walls for defense. Just off the trail, near the spur trail leading to Columbus, is a very large oak tree that local legend says is where Daniel Boone held court for the Spanish government.

Each night we returned to a new base motel in the next town, where our baggage had been moved for us. Then we had dinner out, often in nice restaurants. Many of the restaurants were more “formal” than I expected for sure. I was very glad I had put in long pants and a semi-dress shirt. Two of the dinners were in local wineries following a tour and visit to the tasting rooms. I did not know that until prohibition, Missouri was major wine producer. That ended big time with prohibition—authorities pulled up the grape vines and closed the wineries. Today the production of wine is once more a growing industry.

My ride on the Mickelson Trail

In contrast, the 100-mile long Mickelson Trail ride in the Black Hills of South Dakota, was a self-supported group of seven riders from Port Angeles in late September. We provided our own transport, camping, meals, bike repair and history lessons.

Much of our planning dealt with our cars and vans, finding safe places to leave them and shuttling back or forward to them or to our campsites. Guide books, trail maps and local contacts all helped in the on-the-spot planning. The guide books gave us information on where to set up camp and the distance to ride to the next camp. There were impromptu side trips to caves and hikes, and swimming in hot springs as we wished—often driven by the weather. A heavy rain sent us to explore the Wind Cave National Park and

Hot Springs, an older, smaller-in-space, less developed as a trail system—a much more “closed-in” experience, and Jewel Cave, much larger and much newer in its development, with an extensive trail system with good stairs, lighting and cement-paved trail—all needed for the vast spaces inside.

We knew that a very large ride was scheduled at the same time as our trip—more than a hundred riders would be coming toward us—so we visited Mt. Rushmore to allow them to pass by.

The railroad in the area was built to ship gold and take supplies from the main rail line 108 miles to the south. The trail is on the west side of the Black Hills, running from Deadwood to Edgemont, with no side branches: a single-purpose rail line.

Several high points stand out: the Mt. Rushmore night-time program; the hike along the base of the cliff face just under the carvings; the ride among the buffalo (really big animals!); and the trips into the two cave systems. We had a 360-degree view of the Black Hills from the top of Mt. Harney, some 7,242 feet high.

Give riding a try

With WSSRA's emphasis on good health and physical fitness, I encourage everyone to consider bike riding as one form of exercise and enjoyment. My great joy in having a WSSRA state convention in Yakima or Wenatchee is the trails nearby. The Yakima Greenway trail system and the Wenatchee Loop trail both are under 20 miles in length, a nice ride early in the morning or late afternoon.



Two fellow riders on a double-bike ride ahead of Gary Gleason through a herd of bison in Black Hills National Park. The ride was a side trip to the Mickelson Trail in South Dakota.



The Katy Trail group stops to rest at the only rail tunnel in Missouri. There were a couple of these stops each day on the tour to make sure riders were not too spread out and to check that no one needed help, water or food.

Health care update

PEBB Redesign



by WSSRA staff, on behalf of the health services committee

As previously reported, the Public Employee Benefit Board (PEBB) and Health Care Authority (HCA) staff is currently working on a request by Governor Gregoire to develop a value-based “PEBB Portfolio Redesign.” It is the governor’s desire that such a portfolio redesign will realize cost savings for the state’s PEBB program within one to five years.

WSSRA is concerned that, over the long-term, implementation of the PEBB Portfolio Redesign, will negatively impact out-of-pocket expenses for all PEBB enrollees.

Health Care Authority (HCA) staff has invited WSSRA representatives to work on two PEBB Redesign resource groups: the Retiree Redesign Group, and the Redesign Communications Group.

State budget decisions regarding current funding for the PEBB, the proposed PEBB-funding rate, the Medicare-eligible “explicit subsidy” level for calendar years 2012-13, and the remittance rates paid by non-PEBB participating school districts will all impact considerations regarding the PEBB Portfolio Redesign and the Retiree Redesign.

WSSRA voiced the following issues to the PEBB Retiree Redesign Group

- Adverse selection is when sick people tend to enroll in the most comprehensive plans, because they realize they need the provided benefits, and healthy people tend to enroll in minimum cost/benefit plans because they are, and expect to remain healthy. This adverse selection negatively impacts the health insurance company’s profit/loss plan as the cost per member in the comprehensive plans increase.
- There is already a degree of adverse selection in the PEBB retiree offerings. Some PEBB Medicare-eligible retirees choose less comprehensive/less costly plans

(history continued from page 8)

Rogel concluded his article by pointing to the lack of courtesy and common sense in not consulting those retirees who were to be most impacted by the changes and who had contributed millions of dollars to the program. Those retirees had paid over half of the operating costs of the retirement system and yet were allowed no input to legislation that was unprecedented and revolutionary.

The next installment will continue to follow actions of Gov. Evans and the reactions by pensioners and the legislature.

such as the Medicare Supplement Plan F, until these less comprehensive/less costly plans prove inadequate. Such retirees have the opportunity to switch to the more comprehensive plans, such as the Uniform Medical Plan, during each annual enrollment period. Thus, compounding costs for the more comprehensive wrap-around plans.

- Just because a retiree is healthy today, doesn’t guarantee that he or she will be healthy tomorrow. WSSRA is concerned that under a PEBB Portfolio Redesign, retirees enrolled in even lower benefit/lower cost plans who experience major health crises in the middle of an enrollment year could suffer devastating financial burdens. The long-term costs due to adverse selection will make the more comprehensive/more costly benefits even more expensive, now and into the future as their health and the health of their fellow-PEBB enrollees decline over time.
- If the “1993 Substantially Equivalent” provisions are repealed under a PEBB Portfolio Redesign, eventually even the more comprehensive plans remaining in the choice of PEBB plans offered (such as those offered today) could be eroded as future budget crises dictate.

WSSRA voiced the following issues to the PEBB Redesign Communications Group

- The List-Serv updates that have been started by the PEBB are helpful for advocates, but appear to be too technical for most retirees. Also, these updates could include an automatically generated follow-up letter to subscribing members that their subscription will be dropped if the PEBB is not contacted with any changes to the subscribers e-mail address.
- Having TV-W record all PEBB meetings, as is done with other boards, would promote PEBB enrollee understanding of PEBB decision making processes.


Other PEBB Redesign communication members include representatives from the following:

- Insurance plans (i.e., Uniform Medical Plan, Regence, Group Health, Keiser, etc.)
- Active and retiree organizations (i.e., Washington Federation of State Employees, Retired Public Employees Council, Service Employees International Union, Teamsters)
- Health Care Authority

Stay tuned for updates on the PEBB Redesign.

The Outreach Corner

Reaching out with Outreach

 by Gordon Taylor, outreach committee member

We're good! We're good at explaining the importance of belonging and getting new members. The state membership approaching 17,000 is evidence of that. We're good at signing up members, but what then? What do we do to welcome newcomers to the organization? How do we explain our ongoing efforts to benefit current and future retirees? What do we do to encourage involvement of members?

These were the questions presented to the participants at the Outreach breakout session during the convention last June. The participants were asked to describe what their unit does for Outreach activities. The 23 written descriptions were then posted on the wall for each person to review and select three of his or her favorites. With a few duplications the responses fell into two categories: activities that increase the visibility of the organization and the services provided, and activities that support and encourage potential and current members.

Activities to increase the visibility of the organization and the services provided

- Maintain a "school house" at a fairgrounds or museum site—a one-room original schoolhouse, complete with memorabilia and staffed by active and retired school employees.
- Utilize opportunities to publicize unit activities, especially donations such as mini grants, scholarships and volunteer activities.
- Volunteer in schools, such as in a tutorial program for underserved elementary students. The October-December issue of the *Journal* included an article about how to develop and implement a successful tutorial program.
- When volunteering, wear name tags identifying yourself as WSSRA.
- Distribute newsletters to clubs, schools and offices; utilize email when possible. Explore an agreement with a local school district or districts to send the unit newsletter to all staff through the district internet service.
- Participate in a local parade with a float carrying both active and retired members of WSSRA.



- Collaborate with other agencies, such as the Retired Senior Volunteer Program, senior centers and city council to sponsor community events.

Activities that support and encourage potential and current members

- Send a letter of encouragement/support to active members. You might post a letter in each school identifying WSSRA, the organization's activities and inviting new membership.
- Send a packet of information and welcome to each new member. Include your current unit newsletter, directory, description of local unit activities, AMBA benefits and an invitation to become involved.
- Send a letter to selected retirees with a "thank you" for the years of involvement, and welcome them to attend luncheons and become involved in unit activities.
- At luncheons focus on an individual committee with a brief explanation of the activities involved because often the general membership does not understand the work of the executive board and committees.
- Send a letter near the end of the school year to individuals or for a building bulletin board posting such as the following example:

The (local unit name) sends a big PAT ON THE BACK to you! Teaching the children of (school district name) is an important job, and you are doing a super job of being a positive role model for these young people.

*You are appreciated more than you will ever know!
We hope that this has been a successful and happy year for you and your classroom.*

Your local unit may find some of these suggested activities helpful in outreach activities as we attempt to be as good at supporting and involving members as we are at getting new ones.

WSSRA – 800-544-5219

www.wssra.org

Supporting future educators



Our legacy—return the favor



by Bob Ehrenheim, president, WSSR-Foundation

Surely, all of you took time out to count your many blessings during this past holiday season. It's unbelievable that we are now officially entering the second decade of the 21st century. Remember back almost 50 years ago when the Seattle World's Fair took place in 1962 with the theme "Century 21"? Did we think that it would ever happen? Yes, it did and now we are already in 2011!

This brings to mind that most of us were either young teachers or planning to enter one of the most revered professions on this earth. How do we return the favor? Our legacy.

The WSSR-Foundation is one of the answers to that question. As our convention in June approaches, we hope you will continue your great support by bringing baskets, gift certificates, silent action items or any other such gift to help support the nine scholarships given each year to deserving future teachers.

Your past support has been greatly appreciated, and we look forward to this coming June when our goal will be to raise over \$6,000. Can we do it? As a team, anything is possible.

Remember the WSSR-Foundation with your financial gifts.

Foundation contributors

- Helen Bell in memory of Priscilla Pryor
Chelan/Douglas SRA in memory of Charlotte Griffiths, Robert Hughes, Dick Johnson, Margaret Minard and a donation
Sharon Dennis - donation
Olive Hull in memory of Beth Kennedy, Priscilla Pryor, John Twelves
Kittitas County SRA in memory of Virginia Erickson, June Hartman
Lewis County SRA in memory of Gilbert Breiter, Mamie Smith, Shirle Verley, Arthur Williams
Pend Oreille SRA in memory of Delores Schultz
Renton/South King RSEA in memory of Caroline Anderson, Shirley Haubrick, May Shaft and a donation
Rita Requa in memory of Edith Bowers, Don Fitzgerald
Don and Rosalie Rifenbery in memory of Raymond and Agnes Paetznick
Southwest King SRA in memory of Russel Carlson, Bill Fowler, Larry McCarthy, Antoinette Nutley
Southwest Washington SRA in memory of Bill Fromhold
Susan Stannard in memory of Cathy Stohs
Yakima County SRA - donation



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


Form with fields for Scholarship Endowment Fund, donor name, address, and amount. Includes WSSR-Foundation logo and office use only section.

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

FOR OFFICE USE ONLY check amount reference

Strength in numbers

Large groups are influential: do your part

 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

Over the fall months many units and members had an opportunity to meet with their locally-elected representatives and senators. Now those elected officials are meeting with the task of balancing the state budget. At the state, local and individual levels our organization will need to be proactive to protect our retirement benefits. The WSSRA legislative committee does an excellent job of notifying members when we need to make contacts. However, we know there is strength in numbers.


It is important that every WSSRA member reach out and encourage his or her friends, spouses,


neighbors and colleagues to become members. The elected officials need to be reminded that WSSRA represents not only today's school retirees but also future retirees, and that we have many pension concerns.

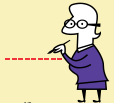
There has never been a better time than the present to enroll a new member. Remember our organization grows one member at a time.


Do your part to help WSSRA membership increase. Keep in mind that large groups are influential.




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 _____

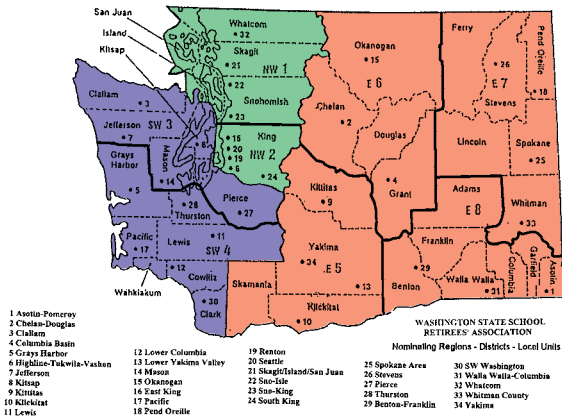
01-Asotin-Pomeroy	09-Kittitas County	18-Pend Oreille	28-Thurston County
02-Chelan/Douglas	10-Klickitat County	19-Renton-South King	29-Benton-Franklin
03-Clallam County	11-Lewis County	20-Seattle	30-Southwest Washington
04-Columbia Basin	12-Lower Columbia	21-Skagit/Island/San Juan	31-Walla Walla-Columbia
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	

WSSRA around the state



From the districts

What's happening in...



NORTHWEST-1

Skagit/Island/San Juan, Unit 21, members held their Holiday Brunch at the Skagit Golf and Country Club on December 1. It was a festive event—well attended and enjoyed by all, time to enjoy a wonderful lunch and entertainment, to visit with valued friends and to meet new ones. There were performers throughout the morning and a performance by Synergy, a Mt. Vernon HS singing group, at 12:15. Members also collected non-perishable food items, travel-size toiletries and/or monetary donations for the Hamilton Food Bank. Unit 21 will also award at least 17 \$100 grants this year, visiting the lucky schools to deliver these in the near future. The unit welcomed 17 new members this fall... At their September meeting, *Sno-Isle, Unit 22*, members learned about Medical Relief International, an organization that

provides doctors and dentists who donate their time and expertise. Dr. Loree Jolin gave an enlightening program about the Third World countries where she provides dental work for people in remote areas. The October program consisted of information provided by a League of Women Voters' speaker who gave helpful step-by-step guidance through the various issues that faced voters. She was followed by several candidates for office who presented their platforms. A speaker from the Stilliguanish Visitors Center entertained Sno-Isle members at the November meeting. The December meeting was a brunch where members were entertained by the Four Far Shores barber-shop quartet. Toys, funds and food were collected for the Salvation Army. Sno-Isle members continue their community service, again working with the Everett Imagine Children's Muse-

um, collecting items for the art room and participating in programs. Many members are continuing to write letters to children in the Marysville E.L.L. Pen Pal Program. The membership committee has been busy visiting schools, providing membership applications and information about the organization, and encouraging active teachers to apply for mini-grants. And the scholarship committee has distributed applications and information to colleges and news media about scholarships for potential teachers... Early fall found *Sno-King, Unit 23*, in full membership-enrolling mode as members attended Benefit Fairs in Shoreline and Edmonds. Shifts were organized by membership chair, **Rita Requa**. In late fall and winter, Rita organized visitations to Edmonds School District schools, the unit's district of focus for the 2010-2011 year. Active members were invited to, and several did, apply and receive Educator Grants for up to \$200. Under **Virg Rayton's** leadership, the education committee awarded 24 grants. The 3-Rs (Review, Reconsider and Reset) ad hoc committee, a hard-working, diligent group led by **Roberta Hawkins**, is re-assessing language in the bylaws and measuring

it against common practice. The Fall Scholarship Potluck, organized by **Rachel Lake** and **Betty Odle**, included entertainment by Lori Hansen from the Pickled Herring Band as she played wonderful Scandinavian songs and popular songs on her accordion. She concluded by marking Veterans' Day with an all-military-branch medley of anthems. **Jim Sissel** gave a moving reading of "What is a Veteran?" A new event for Sno-King was a December Holiday Sing-A-Long and Cookie Fest... *Whatcom, Unit 32*, awarded \$3,700 in mini-grants to 30 applicants in November. Applications increase as school districts cut budgets and the word about mini-grants spreads. Whatcom hosted a candidate forum in October. In November **Greg Baker**, Bellingham School District's new superintendent, was the guest speaker. It provided a great opportunity to introduce the unit and explain who they are. The December meeting was in Blaine at the Senior Center, where the Norwegian Male Chorus entertained. **Ed Gonion** will be the guest at the unit's meeting in Bellingham in January.

NORTHWEST-2

"Giving" was the theme for *East-King, Unit 16's*

WSSRA around the state

end-of-year meetings and feature newsletter article. Christmas giving was in the minds of members in November when Mary Harris of Park Place Books presented a variety of wonderful tomes for consideration. The December lunch was all about donating to Hopelink families via a big silent auction. **Sandra and Bob Lyon** were recognized for their giving ways in a feature newsletter article. Bob throws big BBQ parties at various times for those who live at his Timber Ridge retirement complex, and he has supplied tasty ribs for several East-King summer picnics. Sandra tutors Hopelink adults, works with fourth and fifth graders as they participate in reading competitions, and tutors other students preparing for exams. She serves on East-King's hospitality and mini-grant committees as well...In November, *Renton-South King, Unit 19*, enjoyed Gene Snavely's presentation on Paranormal Investigations. Gene is a member of the King County Paranormal Investigators Association and has traveled throughout the U.S. and parts of the world investigating phenomenon. NW-2 membership chair **Nell Hepburn** also attended. The holiday spirit reigned at the Decem-

ber luncheon as the unit made a \$200 donation to Western State Hospital for residents who don't otherwise receive holiday gifts. Generously sharing with others, donations were also given to local food banks... The November luncheon of *Seattle, Unit 20*, featured Phil Smart, Sr., who talked about growing up in Seattle, being an officer under Gen. Patton in North Africa during World War II, starting Phil Smart Motors in Seattle and being an important volunteer at Children's Hospital. The SSRA Book Club is reading Comac McCarthy's "The Road" for its December meeting and welcomed noted mystery writer J.A. Jance at the December luncheon. She spoke on her experiences in becoming a mystery writer and signed books for guests. In conjunction with other Northwest 2 units, Seattle sponsored a retirement seminar on Oct. 2 at PEMCO Financial Center with about 70 in attendance.

SOUTHWEST-3 Clallam County, Unit 3, held executive and general meetings on September 21, October 19 and November 16 at the Crabhouse Restaurant in Port Angeles. In September, Jim McEntire, a candidate for state representative came early

to speak with members and answer questions in an informal setting. Guest speaker Joe Cammack, a local pharmacist, presented "Diseases and Drugs." October's meeting featured three more candidates for state representative who came early to speak briefly and answer questions: Kevin Van De Wege, Steve Tharinger and Dan Gase. Two guest speakers from the Clallam County Sheriff's Department, Randy Pieper and Al Camin, spoke on "Safety for Seniors." The unit's November luncheon had a Thanksgiving menu. **Reba Cornett** presented a brief program to honor veterans, and Kathryn Galbraith presented information about reverse mortgages. **Beverly Brown** hosted a book group on November 2, which was well attended; another was held December 6. Membership chair **Curt**

Horne reminded attendees of the drive to get new members and the chance to win a trip. Members were encouraged to bring donations of hats, scarves and gloves to the meeting on December 21 for the annual Warm Up Clallam County project... *Jefferson, Unit 7*, is now holding its meetings at the Port Townsend Golf Club and has named **Bob Allgire** its temporary president. SW-3 Legislative representative **Gary Gleason** presented an informative, stimulating program at the unit's September meeting. He stressed how important it is for everyone to be concerned and informed. Legislative issues and health concerns and costs were topics for the October meeting. Susanne Seusch, a pharmacist from Jefferson Healthcare provided information and answered questions. Mini-grant applications will be processed



W S S R A president Louie Osmonovich stands next to a caricature of a sheriff at the November meeting of Okanogan Country SRA. Carrying out

west theme, the members of OCSRA presented him with a badge deputizing him as their leader.

WSSRA around the state

and awarded in January.

SOUTHWEST-4

“Quality of Life” is the by-word for *Grays Harbor Pacific, Unit 5*. A speaker was invited from Information & Assistance to come and discuss services available to keep seniors on their feet and in their homes as long as possible. She explained Medicare changes and insurance information that is available through SHIBA and stayed after the meeting to answer questions, make appointments for consultations and provide literature. To find out what services are available to seniors contact the Senior Information and Assistance in your area by telephone or internet...Good attendance marked the start of the 2010-11 year for *Lewis County, Unit 11*. Bridget Higgins presented an overview of the Lewis County Big Brothers, Big Sisters program. Emphasis is both on helping students in the school and also making participation in community activities possible. The annual silent auction was the main feature of the Novem-

ber meeting with a brief time of Christmas music and caroling. The auction drew the largest meeting attendance and netted the most dollars ever. Earnings were allocated to the Salvation Army and Toys for Tots. Applications for \$100 mini-grants were distributed with grants to be awarded in January... *Thurston County, Unit 28*, continues to be strong and active. In October Sheila McCartan, Visitor Member Services Manager of the Nisqually Nation Wildlife Refuge Complex, explained what happened to the 760-acre Nisqually River estuary years ago and how it has been restored. November’s speaker was **Heather Rader**, 2010 Regional Teacher of the Year. Following a wide variety of teaching experiences, she has developed the philosophy that “Every child is whole and, when provided with the right opportunities and challenges, can succeed.” The North Thurston High School Choir performed holiday music, and local artist and author, Nikki McClure, shared her

paper-cut art and children’s books in December...

Lower Columbia, Unit 12, has had several meetings on safety and area volunteer programs. A speaker from the fire department spoke on fire safety and the licensing department spoke on driving safety for seniors and how to prepare for driving tests. The unit has teamed up with a local credit union, Longview Fibre, to more than double the number of classroom grants. President **Noel McRae** has been speaking to local superintendents in preparation for actual school visits later...This is the fourth year that *Southwest Washington, Unit 30*, has donated \$500 to the iQ credit union for their Read With Me program, where the money buys books for children to take home. **Donna Quesnell** gave a presentation to celebrate the 100th anniversary of Women’s Right to Vote. The Clark County Clean Water Commission met with the group to give an overview of their program, which is funded by a yearly fee of about \$33 paid by property owners in unincorporated Clark County.

EAST-5

Yakima, Unit 34, knows how to have fun. They played BUNCO under the direction of **Nick and**

Kathy Schultz and won all sorts of neat prizes. Their last meeting was a holiday potluck with Representative Bruce Chandler coming to share the happenings in Olympia; he is very optimistic that challenges can be met and overcome. While he sees better times ahead, some members aren’t quite so convinced and will watch closely as representatives work and will keep them informed about retirees’ wishes.

EAST-6

The October meeting of *Chelan-Douglas, Unit 2*, featured visiting members discussing legislative matters. Among these guest speakers were Cliff Courtney, Cary Condatto and Shiloh Schauer (representing Linda Evans Parlette). The November meeting was exceptionally well attended to hear award-winning author Susan Butruille present portions of her theatre dramatization “Recipe For Justice” which depicts the struggle for women’s voting rights in Washington and nationally. The drama premiered at Sleeping Lady’s Chapel Theatre in 2009. December’s meeting included a “White elephant/bake sale” as a fundraiser. Unit committees remain active: The Scholarships and Grant Funds committee



Sharon Ford proudly displays the cover with her picture on it from the October-December Journal. Her Walla Walla Unit had the cover matted and framed and presented it to her at its November meeting.

WSSRA around the state

continues to collect monies from sale of paperback and hardback books donated at each meeting; they donated two boxes of books to the Wenatchee Senior Center and school supplies to Suzanne Stanton, case manager for Homeless Education. The Community Service committee busily collects items for the Women's Resource Center and area food banks. The Health committee held a Benefit Fair on November 10; news from the committee focused on updates about state health insurance; and the social committee hosted a "Celebration Party" at Canyon Creek Clubhouse on October 22 to celebrate the unit's National Retired Teacher Award (NRTA), one of the three awards given nationally. And the 2011 Convention Steering committee met to plan for the WSSRA June convention. Attending were **Mary Perkins, Marie Buckner, Nancy Valeson, Rose Mullen, Sharon Salley, JoAnn Lewis and Denise Perkins**. Preliminary plans were discussed and ideas were exchanged over a luncheon provided by **Mary Perkins** at her home... *Columbia Basin, Unit 4*, held its fall meeting in late October. It was a pleasure to have **Irene Hlousek and Norma Haney** from Yakima County, **Charlotte Kohnhorst**

Members of Sno-King gather around Bruce Caldwell at the piano at their holiday sing-along. Jim Siscel, seated on the right, joined in the accompaniment on "Jingle Bells" using sleigh bells that were his grandfather's.



and **Nancy Valeson** from Chelan-Douglas, and District 6 representative **Rita Figlenski** at the meeting and to hear their input. The unit awarded grants to Smokiam Alternative School in Soap Lake, to Othello teachers for books and supplies, and to **Wanda Harrison** for the "Youth to Senior Connection" after-school project in Moses Lake. Rita presented Wanda with the NRTA award for her outstanding work on this project, which Wanda organized and directs... Hats off to members of *Okanogan County, Unit 15*, for a successful Care Package Drive for Military Men and Women serving in Afghanistan and Iraq! Donations from generous members covered two tables at the October meeting with more items dropped off at Committee members' homes. Community Service

chairman **Sibyl Wehmeyer** and committee members **Rita Figlenski** and **Colleen Pock** sorted and boxed the items and added letters of thanks from the members of OCSRA before mailing the packages to local servicemen and women. In September, antiques' expert Linda Lewis from Omak awed members with her knowledge of antiques as she examined members' treasures ala "Antiques Roadshow." Dishes, jewelry, a toy train from Cracker Jax boxes, a 1912 bathing suit, a blade sharpener from a 1920's shaving kit: nothing stumped Linda. She explained that her adventure into antiques was not driven by a passionate interest, but a purposeful choice to save her family-owned dime store when Wal-Mart arrived. With hard work, faith and grit, she turned the dime store

into a successful antiques shop. In October, OCSRA members pinned on deputy sheriff badges to welcome the sheriff and his lady, alias WSSRA President **Louie Osmonovich** and Sherry. Members were grateful to met Louie and Sherry and hear Louie present the latest WSSRA news with a bit of added humor, Louie-style.

EAST-7

Pend Oreille, Unit 18, has given a \$50 grant to the elementary school and a \$100 grant to the high school... The October meeting of *Spokane Area, Unit 25*, featured a presentation by Harriett Jacobsen, head of Soles for Souls. This group collects and purchases new shoes and gives them to needy preschoolers in the Spokane area. Each preschooler's foot is measured, and they are allowed

WSSRA around the state

to pick out the shoes they like. For many, it is the first time they have had a new pair of shoes. Soles for Souls also donates meals and shoes to Crosswalk, a haven for troubled and/or homeless teenagers. In November, the unit held a Health Benefits workshop for members, attended by over 50. **Velma Churchill** and **Judy Nelson**, health committee chairs, explained the new guidelines and answered members' questions. On November 7, members manned a booth at School District 81's Benefits Fair for all active

employees. It presented a chance to be visible to actives and to explain our association programs and goals. Many were interested in the retirement seminars which are held each March. The December meeting was a luncheon held at the Spokane Country Club. Entertainment was presented by five talented local teenagers, all brothers and sisters in the Black family. They participate in the Spokane Junior Symphony and play piano, guitar and violin. They played classical, country and Christmas selections to

the delight and amazement of all in attendance....*Whitman County, Unit 33*, held its November 16 meeting at **Don Kackman's** home in Colfax. **John Young**, E-7 district representative, and former E-7 coordinator, **Carol McGurk**, were guests. The group is looking into possible help with the vintage school building that has been relocated to the Whitman County Fairgrounds.

EAST-8

The September meeting of *Asotin County-Pomeroy, Unit 1*, featured new

Clarkston superintendent **Darcy Weisner**, who shared his background and what he hopes to accomplish in Clarkston during his term, saying educators should become "dream-makers, not dream-breakers," and stressed how important it is to reach children early "because we must make a difference before fourth grade, or we may lose some children." To show support for the homeless, one unit member slept in a cardboard box during the time of the Cardboard City. In October, E-8 representative **Don Parks** gave a short talk about membership, and said that we need to keep focused on our lives to stay healthy and continue to educate ourselves on the legislative issues. State Representative Susan Fagan also talked about issues facing the state legislature, stating that education must be funded as a first proposal, and advised members to let the legislature know they are continuing pressure on them. On November 10, Asotin superintendent **Greg Godwin** shared information about the building of a new elementary school and an addition to the high school and a report on the background of the school and its bonds. **Colleen Kinloch** was proud to report that now ALL area



Did you know...

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WSSRA endorses the following member benefits:

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You can also request a speaker for your local meetings by calling Susan Lowry, AMBA Regional Director of Association Relations, at 800-258-7041 ext. 110.

WSSRA around the state

superintendents are members of Unit 1. Helen Castle reported about 1,000 lbs of food have been donated to the food bank, and 2,000 sheets and pillowcases have been given to families in need. The group will be collecting and donating clothing to the schools for the winter. The December gathering included singing and an auction with proceeds going to grants to be given to teachers... *Walla Walla, Unit 31*, has been very busy. At the first of every school year they put together 200 goody bags for members who are still working; the retirees also give the actives goody bags at the end of the school year as a little perk. At the unit's October meeting some mini-grant award winners were announced. **Joan Helm**, was recognized as the unit's nominee for the Patrick Hoban award for outstanding work within the organization, and **Ellen Wolf**, for receiving the Stan Mc Naughton award for outstanding work in the community. When Walla Walla gives its student-teaching scholarships in the spring, they choose to give them in honor of members who have done an outstanding job for the organization during the year. This past year, they were given in honor of **Deanna Aichele** and **Patti Grant**.


At the November meeting, the unit was pleased to present **Sharon Ford** a framed and matted copy of the *Journal* with her picture on the front cover. Prior to the November meeting, some members took a school bus to tour Clay in Motion, a local pottery-making facility whose owners are former students from the district. Members **Bob Fox, Shirley Rodenburg, Rick Nebeker, Jerry Cummins** and **Joan Helm** attended a breakfast with local legislators—Senator Mike Hewitt and representatives Maureen Walsh and Terry Neeley... *Benton Franklin, Unit 29*, began its year in August with an “indoor picnic” at the Country Gentleman restaurant in Kennewick. President **Elmer Bailey** welcomed all members and shared his vision for 2010-2011 for Unit 29. Lori Aronson spoke about Team Read. Ken Muhlbrier, professional guitarist and past student of several teachers in the audience, entertained. In September, candidates and incumbent legislators from the 8th and 16th Legislative districts participated in a forum discussing WSSRA state issues. Legislative committee members **Elaine Banks** and **Jim and A. J. Foster** posed relevant questions. The legislative program drew an above

Sno-Isle honored by NRTA...again



For the second time in two years, NRTA presented Sno-Isle with one of its Little Red Wagon awards in recognition of the group's work with the Marysville School District's Pen Pal program. Pictured in upper left are Mary Ann Karber with her pen pal. Upper right pictures Sno-Isle vice president Sheila Larsen with the red wagon. Above is Linda Averill, her pen pal William and ELL teacher Rosa Barringer. After Linda and William read How I Became a Pirate, Linda gave William a quilt her mother had made.

average attendance and the meeting time was extended. Members were honored to have WSSRA President **Louie Osmonovich** attend the October meeting. Christine Lindgren, president of Responding to Autism Services, presented an overview of the service her company provides for neurotypical people. Autism is a subject dear to most teachers. In November, Unit 29 traditionally collects unwrapped toys for the local Salvation Army and sings Christmas carols. Due to weather conditions, however, the meeting had to be postponed until two weeks later.



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*Dedicated to preserving, protecting and improving
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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.

Vision

**WSSRA will provide leadership
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