



OKANOGAN COUNTY SCHOOL RETIREES' ASSOCIATION

NEWSLETTER, August, 2024

Website: <http://wssra-units.org/okanogancounty>

GREETINGS!!

Welcome to the beginning of a new OCSRA year. We are fortunate to have many opportunities to help people in need. Thank you for donating your time, energy, and financial support to families in our communities. Our experience has shown us that together we can support the young and elderly and make our communities better for all. We appreciate your membership and value your participation as we work toward a brighter future!!! 😊

Yours in Service,
John LaGrou and **Richard Johnson**,
Co-OCSRA Presidents

MEMBERSHIP NEWS

August 2024 Compilation: On 08/01/2024, OCSRA had 338 members: 22 Cash Payers, 211 Retirees on pension payment, 3 Honorary Status, and 102 Actives working in school systems. Total WSSRA membership: 17,013.

Honorary Status: **Patricia Lester-Davis** was recently awarded Honorary Status by the WSSRA Board for reaching the age of 90 with over 20 years of service to OCSRA/WSSRA. OCSRA's other Honorary Status members are **Colleen Pock** and **Chuck Pecha**.

OCSRA Welcomes New and Returning Members: **Tiarha Agee**, Omak; **Debbie Asia**, Twisp; **Margell Caillier**, Winthrop; **Eugenie Farrow**, Omak; **Susan Gregerson**, Carlton; **Diana Litehiser**, Omak; **Paul Schwab**, Thorp; **Cindy Staeber**, Malott; **Burton Turner**, Grand Coulee; and from Omak School District: **Yesica Andrist**, **Amie Meese**, **May Riggan**, **Nicholas Sackman**, and **Ellie Swartsel**.

In Memorial:

Jerald Brightbill, Tonasket, died at age 97 on February 5, 2024. His 33-year teaching career includes teaching many years at Tonasket Elementary School.

Lois Chavey, Twisp, died February 14, 2024, at age 90. She was known as the "Lunch Lady" at Methow Valley Schools from 1975-1998. She also volunteered for Methow Valley Elementary's Life Skills Program.

Don DeVon, Omak, was 84 when he died on May 1, 2024. As a high school counselor and frequent speaker throughout the Pacific Northwest, Don received the National Indian Education Counselor of the Year award in 2001.

Betty Holmes, Tonasket, died at age 97 on February 5, 2024. Betty taught 34 years including 29 years teaching "K", 1st, and 2nd at Tonasket Elementary School.

Marcia Liebl, Winthrop, died on February 27, 2024 at age 74. Marcia taught lower elementary grades at Winthrop and the Methow School District.

Gerald “Jerry” Mills, Tonasket, died at age 84 on June 4, 2024. Gerald began his 30-year career teaching math and science along with coaching at Tonasket. After several years away, he returned to Tonasket as a Principal and finally, Superintendent of the Tonasket School District.

SCHOLARSHIP TRUSTEE BOARD INFORMATION

The Scholarship Trustee Board is responsible for the scholarship funds composed of three members with one member elected each year to a three-year term rotating by tenure to chair the Board. A new member is elected to serve as chairman during the March general meeting.

The Scholarship Trustee Board is responsible for the invested funds of the OCSRA scholarship account, scholarship fundraising, and determination of the scholarship award amount annually and operates independently of the Unit Treasurer. The Unit Treasurer is an advisor to the Board as a non-voting member and is responsible for the Board’s receipts and expenditures. The Scholarship Trustee Board usually meets with our Edward Jones Advisor once or twice a year to help determine the amount of the scholarship(s) to be awarded in May. We have one Board member leaving our Board this coming year; if you would like to be part of this group, we would love to have you join us. If interested, please see **Dee Blank, Donna Sanford, or Richard Johnson.**

NOTE: The Scholarship Trustee Board is separate and independent of the OCSRA Scholarship Committee.



OSCRA’s 2024 Scholarship Recipient, Lyndsi Streeter, Okanogan, was awarded \$2,000. She is a WSU Junior majoring in K-8 Education, Middle Level Math. Pictured from left: **Penny Garrison**, OCSRA Treasurer; **Sibyl Wehmeyer**, Scholarship Committee Chair; **Lyndsi**; and **Barbara Christensen**,

GIVING HISTORY

A History of Giving Helen Keller stated, “Alone we can do so little; together we can do so much.” Look at what OCSRA has achieved by working together and pooling our dues: Since the fall of 2006, OCSRA has awarded 135 school grants totaling \$22,200 and issued 15 college scholarships totaling \$15,000. In 2011, OCSRA added Community Service work such as donating Items to Okanogan County military personnel serving overseas, area food banks, and the Support Center, and providing \$10,300 to help community projects. Working together, OCSRA has made an amazing history of giving to our schools and communities.

Membership Matters: You may ask, “What do I get for \$7 per month?” Actually WSSRA receives \$5 and OCSRA receives \$2. Washington State School Retirees Association works year-round to protect and enhance pensions for all current and retired school employees. The Olympia office employs an executive director, legislative director, two contract lobbyists, and support staff

to aid in this effort. Dues from both organizations support scholarships for future educators. Insurance and travel opportunities are available to both active and retiree members through AMBA (Association Member Benefits Advisors). Active OCSRA members may apply for grants to purchase classroom materials. Refer to the application included in this newsletter. All districts in Okanogan County have received grants with Okanogan School District leading the way with 64 grants totaling \$9,700.

COMMUNITY SERVICE REMINDER

OCSRA members voted to donate \$500 to the Omak Elks Lodge's Baby Shower project. Pictured: Loren Combs, Exalted Ruler of Omak Elks Lodge, and **Mary Johnson**, Community Service Chair.



Mary Johnson, Carol Payne and Sherry Pitts, who make up our Community Service Committee, are looking for ideas to help our communities in Okanogan County. If you have ideas that will help meet needs in our area, please contact one of us. In past years, we have supported Okanogan County Community Action Food Bank, Okanogan Outreach School, Okanogan/Omak Meals on Wheels, etc. We are all aware of many needs in our county. Therefore, put on your thinkers and share your ideas with our committee members!



PRE-RETIREMENT WEBINARS SLATED FOR MID-OCTOBER

WSSRA'S 2-part Pre-Retirement Webinars are being scheduled for mid-October. Information will be sent to area schools by early October or contact Tara at WSSRA: 360-413-5496.

OCSRA MEETINGS AND PROGRAMS 2024-25

2024-2025 OCSRA meetings will take place on the last Tuesday of each month at the Presbyterian Church. Bob and Janet will prepare lunches for the meeting. The cost of lunches is \$5.

Tuesday, September 24, 2024, 11 a.m.: \$5 Soup & Sandwich Lunch and General Meeting, Community Presbyterian Church of Omak, 9 Birch St. S. Program: Okanogan HS Sign Language Teacher, Jason Brown, and 2nd-year students.

Tuesday, October 29, 2024, 11 a.m.: \$5 Soup & Sandwich Lunch and General Meeting, Community Presbyterian Church of Omak. Voting on Grant Winners.

Tuesday, February 25, 2025, 11 a.m.: \$5 Soup & Sandwich Lunch and General Meeting, Community Presbyterian Church of Omak. Voting on Grant Winners.

Tuesday, March 25, 2025, 11 a.m.: \$5 Soup & Sandwich Lunch and General Meeting. Election of officers.

Tuesday, May 27, 2025, 11 a.m.: \$5 Soup & Sandwich Lunch and General Meeting. Budget Proposal for 2025-2026.

June 2-June 4: WSSRA Convention: Yakima Convention Center.



Janet and Bob Shacklett, Okanogan, will be cooking up \$5 lunches for this year's meetings. **Yum!**

OCSRA OFFICERS AND COMMITTEES 2024-2025

Co-Presidents: Richard Johnson & John LaGrou

Co-Vice Presidents: Carol Payne & Maralee Bowling

Secretary: Marcelle LaGrou

Treasurer: Penny Garrison

Past President: Rita Figlenski

Scholarship Trustee Board: Dee Blank, Donna Sanford

Communications:

Newsletter: Maralee Bowling

Media & Website: Penny Garrison

Journal: Richard Johnson & John LaGrou

Community Service: Mary Johnson, Carol Payne, Sherry Pitts

Grants: Carol Payne, Marcelle LaGrou, Sibyl Wehmeyer, Sherry Pitts

Health: “Open Position”

History: Ida Laurie

Legislative: Gordon Pitts

Membership: Marcelle LaGrou

Program: Carol Payne; Maralee Bowling

Retirement Planning: Penny Garrison, Donna Sanford

Scholarship: Sibyl Wehmeyer, Barbara Christensen

WSSRA President 2024-2025: Rita Figlenski



Rita Figlenski, Okanogan, was installed as WSSRA’s President for 2024-2025 at the June Convention in Wenatchee.



OCSRA celebrated School Retirees’ Week and President-Elect **Rita Figlenski** at **Marcelle LaGrou**’s home, Omak. Pictured front, left: **Mary Johnson, Rita Figlenski, Donna Sanford, Carol Payne, Penny Garrison;** back, left: **Gordon Pitts, Richard Johnson, John LaGrou, Helen Lees, Sherry Pitts, and Marcelle LaGrou**

GRANTS AVAILABLE FOR OCSRA MEMBERS

ATTENTION: Members of Okanogan County School Retirees' Association (OCSRA) currently employed or volunteering in one of the Association's school districts—

- OCSRA offers ***members*** eight \$300 grants this school year. The grant must be used in a single school year to fund projects and materials (excluding field trips) not covered by other financial means. The grants must be used in an OCSRA School District and the application must have the signature of the *building principal*. This year four grants will be awarded in the fall with an October 15 deadline and four grants will be awarded in the spring with a February 15 deadline.

To apply, complete the form below and return it to OCSRA Grants Chair, Carol Payne, 13 Kernel Road, Omak, WA 98841 by October 15, 2024 to apply for the fall grant or by February 15, 2025 to apply for the spring grant.

Applicant's Name: _____

School District's Mailing Address: _____

Applicant's Email Address: _____

Applicant's Home Address: _____

Grade Level/Area of Instruction: _____

Number of Students to Benefit: _____

Estimated Cost: _____

Will the Grant Provide Resources for More Than One School Year? ____ If Yes, How? _____

How Will the Grant Be Used? Attach Any Helpful Pictures/Supporting Documentation for the Grants Committee. Please Use the Back Side for Further Explanation for the need.

Signature of Applicant: _____ Dated: _____

Signature of Building Principal: _____ Dated: _____

Office Telephone Number of Building Principal: _____