

Bits & Pieces

www.wssra-units.org/thurstoncounty/

October 2024

Unit 28 of the Washington State School Retirees' Association
Serving retired and active school employees and our community.

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Books. Books. Books. **Sue Shannon**, TCSRA's 2023-2024 president, who passed away in May, left behind a basement full of her books. In memory of Sue, a selection of her books will be available at our monthly luncheons [See page 4 for details]. The money raised will be donated to our spendable foundation fund in Sue's name, which is used to provide mini-grants to Thurston County public school employees.

Please note that the 2024-2025 school year mini-grant applications are now available online at TCSRA's website, www.wssra-units.org/thurstoncounty/.

We have a committed slate of officers in place for the 2024-2025 year. They are: **Patty Gee**, president; **Karen Keller**, vice president; **Paula Hughart**, secretary; **Will Gentz**, fiscal treasurer; **ZiNita Carrell**, membership treasurer; and **Pat Slosson**, immediate past president. In addition, our committee chairs are: **Will Gentz**, **Pat Slosson**, **Ann Chenhall**, **Dorn Barr**, **Jim Slosson**, **Gail Feagins**, **Pat McLachlan**, **Sally Jones**, **Ron Crawford**, **Sharon Dennis**, **Nancy Zabel**, **Karen Keller**, **Jean Holman**, and **Nancy Peebles**. You'll find lists of all committee members in your new directory, pages 5 through 7. Take a look! If you'd like to help with one of the committees, contact the chair, whose name is in bold print.

This year's election cycle has several initiatives that affect school employees either directly or indirectly. WSSRA Legislative Coordinator, Emmett Mills, has recommended voting **NO** on **each** of the following initiatives:

Initiative 2117 repeals the Climate Commitment Act which is raising funds to fight climate damage.

Initiative 2109 repeals billions in education funding by eliminating capital gains tax on the wealthy.

Initiative 2066 locks our communities into dirty energy while raising families' costs.

Initiative 2124 sabotages the WA Care Plan to help Washingtonians afford long-term care.

AARP tip of the month: **BEWARE**. People receive an average of nearly 12 fake messages or scams daily via email, text, or social media.

Patty Gee, TCSRA President

WELCOME MARY GENTRY & MIMI WILLIAMS, THE BEST IS YET TO BE

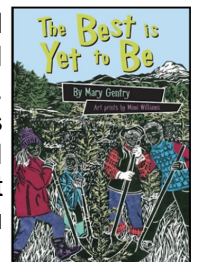


We are so pleased to welcome **Mary Gentry** and **Mimi Williams** as our luncheon guests and speakers this month.

Mary Gentry has been an English and drama teacher, attorney, and author. She has served various local civic organizations and on boards

advocating for our community. Mary has written three books, the most recent one titled *The Best is Yet to Be*, a series of essays dealing with all of life from aging, change, family, and more. Mary's previous books are *Too Far from the Tree* and *Quite Contrary*.

Mimi Williams is a well-known local educator and print maker. She created the covers for all three of Mary's books. Mimi will demonstrate how she works magic with Linoleum Block Prints, and Mary Gentry will read from her latest book and talk about writing. You won't want to miss it!



Bring a friend and be sure to make reservations for your entire party. [See page 2 for reservation information.]

Pat Slosson, Hospitality Committee

Friday, October 18, 2024—12 noon
The Ember's Restaurant
Indian Summer Golf and Country Club
5900 Troon Lane SE, Olympia
Broccoli Beef with Rice

OR

Tofu Vegetable Stir Fry (V, GF, DF)
Soy and ginger marinated tofu, stir fried with white rice and veggies
(\$20 includes tax and gratuity)



LUNCHEON RESERVATIONS

I will be sending out emails to remind you of our upcoming luncheon. Please respond to that email if you plan to attend. We need our reservation count

by **noon on Friday, October 11.**

If you **do not receive an email**, or if you **need to cancel or add to** your reservation, email me at dazicar88@gmail.com, or call me **no later than noon on Friday, May 10, at 253-381-2592.** Please do not call the restaurant with reservation changes.

To be added to the email list for notification, please send me your email address.

ZiNita Carrell, Email Committee Chair

LEGISLATIVE REPORT

On September 17, the Select Committee on Pension Policy (SCPP) took a major step toward restoring an ongoing cost-of-living adjustment (COLA) for TRS 1 and PERS 1 retirees. The SCPP directed committee staff to prepare draft legislation to give Plan 1 retirees the same annual COLA that Plans 2 and 3 retirees receive.

The Plans 2/3 style benefit selected by the committee will provide a COLA based on inflation not to exceed 3% each July. In years when inflation exceeds 3%, excess benefits will be “banked” and saved for years with less than 3% inflation.

The draft legislation will also include financing provisions that should increase its likelihood of passing the Legislature in what might be a tight budget year. It will extend the current requirement of a 10-year financing period to a 15-year period. Additionally, it will re-amortize costs of previously granted one-time COLAs over the same 15-year period. These measures will substantially reduce short-term costs for while not impacting the COLA that retirees receive.

Both the Plans 2/3 benefit design and the financing approach selected by the committee were requested in a joint letter that WSSRA and other public sector retiree organizations sent to the SCPP. WSSRA Legislative Committee Co-Chair Carolyn Stella (Unit 11) and Pat McLachlan (Unit 28) testified before the committee, urging for the restoration of a COLA for Plans 1 members. The committee listened, with all but one member voting to move ahead with WSSRA’s preferred plan.

On October 15, the SCPP will review the draft legislation and have an opportunity to officially recommend it to the Legislature, which convenes in January 2025. While there is still a long road ahead, the SCPP has never before seriously considered restoring an ongoing COLA for Plan 1 retirees. This progress is the result of years of WSSRA members meeting with their legislators to build support for our cause.

Emmett Mills, WSSRA Legislative Coordinator

CULTURE SHOCK!

After 50+ years in public schools, I went to work in a private, religious-based school. In the first few days I made up my usual list of “Mr. Slosson’s Standards for Successful Middle School Students” (read “rules”) that included such things as “Do not throw, toss, lob, or pitch things (zero trajectory).” I am pretty proud of this list. It has been carefully honed over five decades to deal with difficult students who think they are lawyers. My mentor/co teacher said, “I can see why you would have this list, but you won’t need it here.” I am so glad I didn’t hand out the rules. It would have been embarrassing.

What I saw during the first week:

Uniforms: the parents save money, and nobody feels left out. The biggest violation is untucked shirts.

Kids had their materials with them when they came to class. There is a regimented plan for leaving books and binders in homeroom. Kids return there twice a day to pick up and leave their stuff. The biggest problem is that some kids don’t have sharp pencils.

Spirituality is a big part of school. Prayer and attendance at worship is required. The school teaches virtue as an integral part of each class.

Compliance is expected. I have been there two weeks, and no student has said “no” or asked me “why”. I don’t have to explain or justify myself; they just do what they are asked.

What I did not see:

Phones: If a student has their phone out once, it goes to the office until the parent picks it up. If a smart watch is used for anything other than telling time, it goes to the office too. (And, since there are no phones, almost no one asks to go to the bathroom.)

Basketballs and footballs are not visible. Nobody carries them around, and thus they are not bounced, dribbled, passed, or thrown in the halls.

Granted, every student is there because the parents are involved, and they are paying for the experience. However, the tuition is surprisingly low — subsidized by the church.

First impressions: Public schools could learn a lot from this private school. There is no excuse for a chaotic middle school.

Next time: Culture is too important to leave to chance.

Jim Slosson, Education Chair



FOR A HEALTHIER DIET, CONSUME LESS SUGAR, SALT

In her July 3, 2023, *Consumer Reports'* article titled, "Painless Ways to Reduce Sugar and Salt in Your Diet," Janet Lee gives us some startling facts. She states, "Almost 75 percent of U.S. adults 60 and older have high blood pressure. About 29 percent 65 and older have type 2 diabetes; almost 50 percent have prediabetes." Ms. Lee says that "reducing your intake of sodium and added sugars can help improve your blood pressure and blood sugar levels, respectively. These dietary changes also benefit your weight and reduce your risk of other health problems, such as heart disease, dementia, stroke, kidney trouble, and erectile dysfunction."

The American Heart Association (AHA) recommends that a person consume no more than 6 teaspoons (25 grams or 100 calories) of added sugar per day for women, and no more than 9 teaspoons (36 grams or 144 calories) for men. Adults consume about 17 teaspoons a day, on average.

For sodium, the AHA recommends that a person consume no more than 1,500 mg a day. Adults consume about 3,400 mg a day, on average.

Ms. Lee suggests six easy ways for us to reduce our consumption of sugar and salt. They are:

1. Read the Nutrition Facts label on food packaging. A daily value of 20 percent or above for sodium or added sugars is high.
2. Cook more at home. Most of the sodium and sugar in our diet comes from processed foods and restaurant meals. Cooking with fresh meats, fruits, vegetables, dairy, and grains, we can easily lower the salt and sugar used.
3. Go slow. We can slowly cut down on salt and sugar to give ourselves time to adjust.
4. Find sweet alternatives. We can eat fresh fruit on plain yoghurt instead of cake and ice cream.
5. Explore your spice cabinet. Instead of using salt, we can use basil, mint, parsley, chili flakes, ginger, and garlic or cinnamon, nutmeg, and vanilla to flavor our food.
6. Don't aim for perfection. Every day and every meal OR a new opportunity to cut back. It's a lifelong process.

**Pat McLachlan, Member and Health Services
Committee Co-Chair**

In Memoriam

We note the passing of **Raymond Arnold**, and we offer sincere condolences to his family and friends.

COMMUNITY SERVICE NEWS

Happy New School Year! January first, with its kisses at midnight and hangovers in the morning, is not really the New Year that defines our world. Labor Day and the beginning of school is the new year that has made and continues to make our world go 'round as WSSRA members: teachers, parents, grandparents, students, from Pre-K through graduate school, as well as every-one else who works in a school.

However, even as the new school year brings change, the needs of the kids don't change. Some kids need food, clothing, a roof over their heads, and school supplies, and some need lots of extra help just navigating school and learning to READ. This is where we come in. There are numerous local organizations that work to fulfill these needs. For example, the Thurston County Food Bank's FORkids program which supplies weekend food for elementary students, All Kids Win which does the same for secondary students, the South Sound Reading Foundation, the Little Red Schoolhouse, the North Thurston Education Foundation and the Olympia School District's FESS program (Family Education and Support Services) which has a Basic Needs Pantry. These organizations depend on donations and volunteers. A quick Google search will provide you with contact information and insight as to what you can do to support them and the kids they serve. Or you might simply consider volunteering in a school near your home.

An article in the current AARP magazine states that physicians describe "Sitting Disease" as a real phenomenon. It goes on to say that "Sitting diminishes your brain. Sitting impacts your longevity (negatively) and Sitting damages your fitness and mobility." In conclusion, the article lists "Six Sneaky Ways to Move Your Butt." May I suggest that a seventh way would be to get out of the house and volunteer?

TCSRA has scheduled a volunteer activity with All Kids Win on **November 18** from 10 a.m. until noon. We will be filling backpacks with weekend food.

TCSRA will offer our traditional opportunities to donate cash for the Food Bank and the Salvation Army in November and December respectively and collect donations for The Other Bank at every luncheon.

Mom Gift Bags are on the agenda in December for the Salvation Army Adopt-a-Family moms.

Sally Jones, Community Service Chair

Each month we randomly draw the name of an "active" (not-yet-retired) member, who will receive a Starbucks gift card in the mail.

This month's winner is:

**Jane Oberhansly
Yelm Community Schools**

Check this box each month to see if YOU are the lucky member.

Thurston County School Retirees' Association
P. O. Box 3051
Lacey, WA 98509-3051

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ADDRESS SERVICE REQUESTED

 If you are leaving for your Snowbird location, please let the WSSRA office know to change your address or temporarily to stop your mailings:
Email michele@wssra.org, or call 360-413-5496.
Remember, the Post Office charges our unit for each forwarded or returned copy of *Bits & Pieces*.

MINI-GRANT APPLICATIONS

Do you know a school employee who could use a little help with a special project? A TCSRA mini-grant is just the thing. Applications for elementary and secondary mini-grants are available beginning **October 1**. The date for completed applications is **Thursday, October 31**. Applicants should go to the TCSRA website — www.wssra-units.org/thurstoncounty/—to fill out and submit your application online. TCSRA Members are eligible for up to \$400. Non-members may apply for up to \$200. Grants will be awarded at the beginning of November 2024.


*Nancy Zabel, Elementary Chair
Karen Keller, Secondary Chair*

BITS & PIECES, the newsletter of the Thurston County School Retirees' Association, is published nine times a year, September through May, as a membership service.

Information for the November 2024 issue is due by October 11. Please email copy to editortcsra@gmail.com

Editor: Pat Slosson, 360-561-3232.

The memorial service for G. Sue Shannon, former president of TCSRA and co-founder of North Thurston Education Foundation will be held on Saturday, October 5, 2024, at 2 pm. The service will be held at the Olympia First Baptist Church located at 904 Washington ST SE. In lieu of flowers a donation can be made to the North Thurston Education Foundation in her name.



BOOK SALE INFORMATION

Each month at our luncheons we will be having a book sale. Many of these books came from Sue Shannon's extensive library of over 2,000 books. The paperbacks will be \$1 each and hardbacks will be \$2 each. After reading them you can donate them back to allow someone else to buy that book they have been waiting to read! All monies received will go to our fund for mini-grants.

