



Bits & Pieces

www.wssra-units.org/thurstoncounty/ December 2024

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

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Here is an end of the year donation idea:

Thurston County School Retirees' Association, Unit 28 of WSSRA, has a long-standing and successful mini-grant program. School employees in the eight Thurston County public school districts are encouraged to apply for mini-grants to supplement and enhance the educational experience for their students. This year TCSRA was able to contribute \$13,185 toward the requests. Checks for this year's grants have been delivered.

Where does the money come from that we use for mini-grants? It comes from you, our members, who donate to our spendable fund with the Community Foundation of South Puget Sound. This 501(c)(3) foundation supports non-profits like TCSRA by accepting and managing donations so that the donations are eligible for tax deductions. Many of our members may not know that donations to TCSRA are used to fund the yearly mini-grant awards. The more tax-deductible donations to the fund, the more money will be available to sustain this program. Donations to the Community Foundation can be made through our website.

Join me in making a recurring small donation to the spendable fund where money for mini-grants is deducted. Go to: <https://www.wssra-units.org/thurstoncounty/donate/>, scroll down to and click on the highlighted "here", click on "Give Today" in the upper right-hand corner, scroll down to the Thurston County School Retirees' Association fund line and click on "Donate Now." In the additional notes box, type Spendable Fund. A donation to the Community Foundation of South Puget Sound is a donation to TCSRA's mini-grant fund.

Patty Gee, TCSRA President

JOIN US FOR HOLIDAY MUSIC



TCSRA is honored and excited to welcome the Olympia High School Chamber Choir, under the direction of Dan Schwartz, to entertain us at our December luncheon.

The Chamber Choir is a mixed group of 8 girls and 8 boys that provides music all around our community. All 16 singers are also members of the larger Symphonic Choir. They meet before school at 7:55 a.m. every morning. Over the last 25 years, the group has consistently taken 1st place at the regional contest and as high as 3rd place at the state contest.

Dan Schwartz is in his 31st year as choir director at Olympia High School. He has served as president of the Chinook Music Educators Association and his groups have performed at several state conferences and professional sporting events. He lives in Littlerock with his wife and two daughters.



Bobbie Andreas, Hospitality Committee

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

Friday, December 20, 2024—12 noon

The Ember's Restaurant
Indian Summer Golf and Country Club

Menu: Roasted Pork with a Mushroom Herb Au Jus,
served with oven-roasted potatoes and vegetables

OR

Pesto Tortellini (V)
Baked cheese tortellini with pesto cream sauce
served with fresh vegetables

Dessert: Chef's Choice
(\$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, December 13.**

If you **do not receive an email**, or if you **need to cancel** or if you **need to add** to your reservation, email me at dazicar88@gmail.com, or call me at **253-381-2592 no later than noon on Friday, December 13.** 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



A REFLECTION ON EDUCATORS



This history teacher studied Latin for six years, so I merge both in a reflection on the word “educators.” Our common career comes from the roots: “Educare,” “Educere,” and “Educatio.” Woven together they mean: leading out, helping up, guiding, nurturing, and nourishing.

In our lives, it’s leading others (not only youth) out of themselves and into their potential. It’s nurturing and guiding them into enhanced skills (cognitive and practical), knowledge, values, and character, to effect a sense of agency in their lives.

To Greeks, it was preparing youth for civics, oratory, and ethical lives, but also the arts and physical education. In Rome it was learning the law, how to govern, plus engineering. In the Middle Ages it was grammar, logic, math, music, astronomy and humanities. The Renaissance added literature, history, science, and languages. The Industrial Age added vocational-technical education.

We help/ed lead others up (educare) to their better selves in a myriad of ways and disciplines—at home, in classrooms, counseling offices, band rooms, student government, libraries, gyms, online, coaching, in daily life, etc. Collectively, we add to the tapestry called “civilization” that spans millennia, as others did for us. We’re ALL part of “Educare” (educators), helping to nurture and shape “human becomings.”

Gery Gerst, Education Committee

In Memoriam

We note the passing of **Louanne Hardcastle and Barbara Wisdom**, and we offer sincere condolences to their families and friends.

LEGISLATIVE REPORT

On November 12 the Select Committee on Pension Policy (SCPP) unanimously endorsed draft legislation to provide TRS 1 and PERS 1 retirees with an annual ongoing cost-of-living adjustment (COLA). The bill, which gives TRS 1 and PERS 1 retirees an annual COLA of up to 3%, will be introduced to the legislature in January 2025. There, it faces an uphill battle, as the legislature expects to be saddled with a large budget deficit.

While both voted for the proposal, Senator June Robinson (D Everett), chair of the Senate Ways & Means Committee, and Pat Sullivan, the Director of the Office of Financial Management, both expressed deep concerns about the proposal’s viability due to the current budget situation. Sullivan indicated that his office is projecting a shortfall of \$10 billion over the next four years, making it extremely difficult to implement new programs that require spending. Representative Joe Fitzgibbon (D West Seattle), the House Majority Leader, spoke supporting the bill, while acknowledging the budget challenges that lie ahead.

The projected budget shortfall is informed by ever-changing economic projections. It is possible that financial conditions could improve between now and February, when a forecast will be made to determine the legislature’s budget for the upcoming biennium.

The committee adopted four amendments to the original draft bill to clarify intent and address technical aspects. Only one was controversial. After extended discussion, the committee unanimously passed an amendment stating the legislature’s right to retroactively change or repeal the ongoing COLA. Even if this language is not included in the bill, legal precedent indicates that the legislature has the right to change or remove benefits that were not in effect at the beginning of employment. Retiree and employee representatives on the committee voted for the amendment, hoping that it would increase its chances of passing the legislature.

Since the legislature revoked the annual COLA received by Plan 1 retirees in 2011, retirees have worked tirelessly to convince leaders to restore their lost benefit. While the SCPP helped pass one-time COLAs, never before has the committee endorsed a bill to restore an ongoing COLA. We must work harder than ever to advance our proposal through what will likely be a challenging legislative session in 2025.

Emmett Mills, WSSRA Legislative Coordinator

Each month we 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:

**Robert Dearborn,
North Thurston Public Schools**

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

MINI-GRANT RECIPIENTS NAMED

In 1997 TCSRA began awarding mini-grants to school employees in order to supplement and enrich the educational environment. This year TCSRA received 58 elementary and 34 middle school/high school applications, including 35 from TCSRA members. The applications described a variety of worthwhile projects, covering a wide array of academic areas. We were able to contribute \$13,185 toward the requests. Congratulations to the recipients! Best wishes for a successful year ahead.

Tumwater School District:

*Erin Crabtree	Peter G. Schmidt Elementary
*Sarah Haseman	Black Lake Elementary
*Scott Rang	Tumwater Hill Elementary
Megan Moskwa	Black Lake Elementary
*Cindy Tobeck	Littlerock Elementary
*Angela Burke	Black Lake Elementary
Heidi Seldomridge	Peter G. Schmidt Elementary
*Brianna Selin	Michael T. Simmons Elem.
Lisa Atchinson	Michael T. Simmons Elem.
*Colleen Mott	Michael T. Simmons Elem.
*Renee Cruickshank	Tumwater Middle School
Laurie Harris	Tumwater Middle School
*Cassidy McQuiston	George Bush Middle School
*Aimee Opincarne	Black Hills High School
Yolanda Grave de Peralta	Tumwater High School
Emma-Kate Schaake	Tumwater High School

Griffin School District:

*James Alviar	Griffin Elementary
*Heidi Toepke	Griffin Elementary
*Frank Ehresmann	Griffin Elementary
*Wendy Potkonjak	Griffin Elementary
*Johanna Kay Dowler	Griffin Elementary

Yelm Community Schools:

*Linda Crawford	Fort Stevens Elementary
Jenny LeTempt	Fort Stevens Elementary
*Tammy Matthews	Fort Stevens Elementary
*Brittany Meyer	Fort Stevens Elementary
*Julie Ruger	McKenna Elementary
*Michelle Reinicke	McKenna Elementary
Hillary Hull	Yelm High School

Rochester School District:

Katy Gallagher	Rochester Primary School
Jessica Whitehead	Rochester Primary School
*Tammy Caskey	Rochester Primary School
*Carrie Black	Rochester Middle School
*Velynda Hubbard	Rochester Middle School

Rainier School District:

Shanna Martin	Rainier Elementary
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Tenino School District:

*Colleen Taylor	Parkside Elementary
Raelynn Goodwin	Parkside Elementary
Kristi Schow	Parkside Elementary
Samantha Lawton	Tenino Elementary
Karla Zehm	Parkside Elementary

North Thurston Public Schools:

Sandra Glasl	Lydia Hawk Elementary
Laura Bates	Lacey Elementary
Troy Staszak	Chambers Prairie Elementary
*Midge Livingston	Woodland Elementary
*Bayley Morgan	Meadows Elementary
*Jason Greer	Chinook Middle School
Amelia Hanna	North Thurston High School
Megan Pattin	River Ridge High School

Olympia School District:

*Katy Beattie	Pioneer Elementary
April Jones	McLane Elementary
Denita Blount	Hansen Elementary
Felicity Womer	Boston Harbor Elementary
Kasey Cannan	Lincoln Options
Susana Bailen Acevedo	Centennial Elementary
*Taryn Tessneer	LP Brown Elementary
*Rebecca Rutzick	Hansen Elementary
Kyrian MacMichael	ORLA Montessori
John Bingaman	ORLA
*Rachel McKaughan	ORLA
*Karina Champion	ORLA
Katie Jahner	ORLA
Sophia Gashel	Jefferson Middle School
Jewel Crow	Jefferson Middle School
Lindsey Welsh	Jefferson Middle School
*Cassie White	Thurgood Marshall Middle
Crystal Allenton	Thurgood Marshall Middle
Megan Rodriguez	Thurgood Marshall Middle
*Marianne Walters	Washington Middle School
Brandi Swortz	Capital High School
Jennifer Hunt	Capital High School
Molly French	Capital High School
Chris McNabb	Capital High School
*Marti Buck	Transitions Academy
*Joy Fulling	Olympia High School

*** TCSRA member**

Elementary Mini-Grant team: Nancy Zabel, Sue Koch, Laurie Jones, Laurie Gieblehaus
Secondary Mini-Grant team: Karen Keller, Will Gentz, Linda O'Shaughnessy, Diane Kildow, Dennis Crisp, Erin Mann

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ADDRESS SERVICE REQUESTED



COMMUNITY SERVICE

Thank you, TCSRA, for your generous support of the Thurston County Food Bank. We collected \$1,216.00 in donations at our November luncheon.



December brings many opportunities to volunteer for or donate to charitable organizations. If my mailbox is any indication, the possibilities are endless.

As individuals, I am sure that TCSRA members support generously a myriad of causes, according to their personal interests. As a group, TCSRA participates in the Salvation Army's Adopt-a-Family program by preparing small gift bags for the moms of these families.

Suggestions for items to donate include, but are not limited to, the following: special lotions, bath products, knit hats, gloves, socks, scarves, pretty note pads or cards, small journals, candles (tea lights aren't much fun without holders), special candy, tea, coffee, or cider mixes, mugs, holiday-themed (or not) tea towels, potholders, or trivets, and any small item you deem appropriate. Ask yourself if you would like it or give it to a friend.

We collected a substantial number of gifts at the November luncheon, but the bags must be assembled for delivery before the December luncheon, so if you wish

to donate, the deadline is December 9. There is a donation box at the WSSRA office on Pacific Avenue or I will pick things up if you contact me by December 9. The goal is fifty bags. We can do it!

In addition, TCSRA will continue our tradition of accepting monetary donations for the Salvation Army at the December luncheon. Checks should be made out to the Salvation Army directly.

If you have questions or need items picked up, please contact me at:

Cell: 360-480-0972; Home: 360-866-8039, but don't trust the answering machine.

Email: sljonz@gmail.com

Thanks in advance!

Sally Jones, Community Service 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.

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Information for the January 2025 issue is due by December 10.

Please email copy to pslosson1@comcast.net