



# Bits & Pieces

[www.wssra-units.org/thurstoncounty/](http://www.wssra-units.org/thurstoncounty/)

January 2025

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

## PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE



*Shin'nen'omedetō.* Happy New Year in Japanese Kanji.

My husband and I were assigned by our church to teach English in Japan. While there we experienced 17 public holidays. They were celebrated by everyone; it seemed that we were always celebrating something. When December arrived, there was nothing to celebrate. To fill in the month, throughout the entire country of Japan, Santa was recruited to become December's "Big Man" for the children. Being a Big Man, Jerome was recruited by the Hoikuens where I taught to be Santa and give out presents and candy canes. The children thought he was the REAL Santa Claus.

December was closely followed by New Year's Day, the public holiday most celebrated by everyone in Japan. Prior to the date of the Meiji period, the Japanese New Year had been based on the lunisolar calendar. However, in 1873, five years after the Meiji Restoration, Japan adopted the Gregorian Calendar and the first day of January became the official and cultural New Year's Day in Japan.

New Year in Japan is celebrated with the Bell Ringing. At midnight on December 31, Buddhist Temples ring their bells a total of 108 times to symbolize the 108 temptations in Buddhist belief, and to get rid of the 108 worldly desires believed to be in the heart of every Japanese citizen. A traditional Japanese belief is that ringing bells can rid the sins of the passing year. The bell is rung 107 times on the 31st and once past midnight.

Tradition, tradition, tradition! TCSRA has traditions, too. We should ring our bells to celebrate our 38 active volunteers and our over 1,000 members. We celebrate during the year when we gave scholarships to students and mini-grants to school employees. We celebrate our legislative work. Let's ring our bells!

AARP tip of the month: Water intake actually means the total water molecules you drink. So eating watermelon and drinking coffee, tea, and soup all count.

*Patty Gee, TCSRA President*

## SUPERINTENDENTS' FORUM

Last spring Sue Shannon envisioned having the superintendents of Thurston County's school district come together in a forum at one of TCSRA's luncheons. At the January luncheon we will welcome the superintendents from these districts.

There are eight school districts within Thurston County. Some are located in more rural areas and others are primarily urban. The superintendents will briefly share the highlights of their district, as well as successes and challenges that they may be facing.

The eight districts and their superintendents are: **Patrick Murphy**, Olympia; **Chris Woods**, Yelm; **Kevin Bogatin**, Tumwater; **Troy Oliver**, North Thurston; **Clint Endicott**, Tenino; **Bryon Bahr**, Rainier; **Dr. Jennifer Bethman**, Rochester; and **Kirsten Rue**, Griffin.

Offering support to each of these districts is the ESD113. The superintendent is **Dr. Lester "Flip" Herndon**.

Having superintendents give up their valuable time to attend our luncheon is very much appreciated. It is a wonderful opportunity for us to catch up on all of the current topics in education.

We look forward to this forum of superintendents.

*Vicki Carter, Hospitality/Luncheon Committee*

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

Friday, January 17, 2025 — 12 noon

*The Ember's Restaurant*  
Indian Summer Golf and Country Club

Menu: Chicken Parmigiana with pasta  
OR  
Eggplant Parmigiana (Vegetarian):

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, January 10.**

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](mailto:dazicar88@gmail.com), or call me at **253-381-2592 no later than noon on Friday, January 10.** 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



The 2025 Legislative Session is almost here and there is good news and bad news to share.

Here's the good news: In November, the Select Committee on Pension Policy unanimously approved a plan to restore an ongoing cost-of-living adjustment (COLA) to TRS 1 and PERS 1 retirees. If enacted by the legislature, TRS 1 and PERS 1 retirees will get the same annual COLA that members of most other state-managed pension plans receive. This is a huge win for retirees, who have waited 13 years for their benefits to be restored. The proposal will be introduced as a bill in January for the legislature's consideration.

Unfortunately, this victory couldn't have come at a worse time. According to projections from November, the state is expected to face a budget shortfall of 10 to 12 billion dollars over the next four years. This will likely force lawmakers to explore budget cuts and/or find new revenue sources. It will make it extremely difficult to pass bills that involve new spending.

Revenue projections are informed by ever-changing economic data. It is possible that financial conditions could improve between now and March, when a forecast will be made to determine the legislature's budget for the upcoming biennium. While it faces long odds, we must continue to ask our legislators to pass the TRS 1 & PERS 1 ongoing COLA bill in 2025.

While revenue projections have the potential to improve by March, they also have the potential to get worse. We've learned from experience that in a true budget crisis, pensions and health insurance benefits are far from secure. For this reason, we will be prepared to play defense. One of our least secure benefits is the health insurance subsidy that the state provides to Medicare plans offered through the Public Employees Benefits Board (PEBB). The state

*(Continued on page 4; see "Legislative Report")*

## It's Time to Get Started

All right! You've put it off long enough. It's time to sit down at your computer—or yellow pad—and finally write that book you've been thinking about since you retired. It doesn't matter what it's about: gardening, kids you knew in your teaching career, or maybe the best vacation you ever took. Let's do it!



There are at least one thousand books that will tell you how to write your book. I'm just going to share some things I have learned. I think I have written six books. I never expected a real publisher to take them on, but one did come close. Some things to know:

**Your book will probably not be published unless you do it yourself.** It's easy to self-publish, and you'll end up with a professional looking book that you can share with friends and family. For as little as \$2,000 you can have a copyright, a USBN, and a listing on Amazon.

**There is no such thing as writer's block—just writer's excuses.** You find a time of day that works for you and sit yourself down. Make yourself write every day. It's your job. Approach it with the same discipline you had as a teacher. Don't worry if the writing is crappy, you can fix it the next day. In my sixth book, *Cliches to Live By*, I say, "Lousy writing is much easier to fix than blank pages."

**Decide on your audience.** Somewhere in the first fifty pages you will get an idea of who might care about your book. I wrote the Vietnam book for my grandkids—it accidentally turned into a novel complete with a plot. The math books was/is for teachers of prealgebra—but it found a wider audience. The book about the alternative school is good, but can't be published—too easy to identify characters.

**Find a cheerleader.** I was lucky. Several people convinced me to write the math book and kept encouraging me. Better yet, form a little group of writers and cheer each other on when you meet once a week for beer and a progress report.

**Write the ending before you write the middle.** Once you have some momentum, and you've already revised the first chapter five or six times, go ahead and write the last chapter. It will give you direction and purpose. Because you already know the ending (which you will change several times), you will be more likely to complete the task.

**Get started today—not tomorrow.** If you wait until tomorrow, you'll decide that you need to head to Office Depot and get special pens, a friend will call and want to meet for lunch, the cat will need a shot....and so on and so on.

Who knows? This could be the start of something big—or at least fun!

*Jim Slosson, Education Committee Chair*

Each month we will randomly draw the name of one of our “active” (not-yet-retired) members, who will receive a Starbucks gift card in the mail.



This month's winner is:



**Leann Caranci**  
**Olympia School District**

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

## 7 Helpful Supplements to Consider

In her August 1, 2024, Consumer Reports' article, “7 Supplements That Might Actually Help You,” Ashley Abramson suggests that, as we age, we consider taking calcium, collagen, fish oil, magnesium, melatonin, vitamin B12, and Vitamin D as supplements. In addition to a healthy diet, and adequate exercise and sleep, these supplements will help us keep our bones strong, and our skin, joints, brain, heart, muscles, red blood cells, nervous system, immune system, and sleep patterns healthy. They will also decrease our risk of depression and type 2 diabetes.

Ms. Abramson explains some research showing who should take each supplement; how much of each supplement we would need given our age, gender, diet, medications, and current health; and the type of supplement most easily absorbed.

Ms. Abramson states that Consumer Reports prioritizes the U.S. Pharmacopeia (USP) seal on the products it recommends because this seal helps ensure that the product is a quality product that contains the ingredients and doses listed on the label and is free from harmful contaminants. “Seals are key because the Food and Drug Administration does not regulate supplements as it does drugs.” “Many (though not all) Nature Made and Kirkland (Costco) vitamins are USP Verified.” In addition, supplements from CVS are recommended because CVS says it “requires third-party testing for all the vitamins and supplements that it sells.” Consumer Reports gives a picture of each recommended product and lists the places one can purchase it

If you google this Consumer Report article title, the whole article will come up as a free article, and you can read the details you need to know in deciding which, if any, supplements to take.

Of course, we also need to talk with our doctors before taking a new supplement to ensure that there are no potential interactions with medications that we might be taking.

**Pat McLachlan, Member & Health Services Committee**

## *In Memoriam*

We note the passing of **Ken Anderson, Diane Hills, and Teresa Sweeney**, and we offer sincere condolences to their families and friends.



## COMMUNITY SERVICE



TCSRA delivered 108 “Mom Bags,” bags of small gifts specifically for moms, to the Salvation Army Adopt-a-Family program. The generosity of our members has been overwhelming and the bags are nicer than ever. Thank you to Kathleen Newcomer from Gull Harbor Lutheran Church who helped to sew the creative bags. Thank you to member **Terry Lowe** from the Olympia Christian Reformed Church who coordinated a contribution of 29 complete bags. Many thanks to everyone who contributed to the “Mom Bag” project.

TCSRA members also delivered a monetary donation to the Salvation Army.

Stay tuned for our next community service event.

**Sally Jones, Community Service Chair**



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### **LEGISLATIVE REPORT** (Continued from page 2.)

automatically pays 50% of the premium (up to \$183 per month) for Medicare eligible retirees who get health insurance through PEBB. We must keep funding for this program in the budget. We must also ensure that the legislature continues to fully fund all pension plans. TRS 1 and PERS 1 retirees know that pension underfunding can lead to loss of benefits.

There will be many opportunities to get involved during the legislative session. To make sure you're getting the latest news, please go to [www.wssra.org](http://www.wssra.org) and sign up for our email list.

*Emmett Mills, WSSRA Legislative Coordinator*

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

*Editor: Pat Slosson, 360-561-3232.*

***Information for the February 2025 issue is due by January 15.***

*Please email copy to [editortcsra@gmail.com](mailto:editortcsra@gmail.com)*

### **THANK YOU OHS CHAMBER CHOIR**

The OHS Chamber Choir entertained us at our December luncheon, performing an outstanding selection of holiday songs under the direction of **Dan Schwartz**. Treasurer **Will Gentz** presented a \$150 honorarium to the OHS Chamber Choir. What a wonderful event!



#### **Welcome, New Members:**

*Active, not-yet-retired, members are underlined.*

**Troy Oliver**  
**Aimee Opincarne**  
**Kathleen Utterback**  
**Tammy Caskey**  
**Sam Hunt**

**Sheryl O'Brien**  
**Brianna Selin**  
**Daniel Mason**  
**Timothy Hartzell**  
**Cassie White**

Please report any address or telephone changes to the **WSSRA Office** at: **360-413-5496** or **[michele@wssra.org](mailto:michele@wssra.org)**