



The Bulletin



Volume LIV No. 4

The Seattle School Retirees' Association

March-April, 2018

Upcoming Luncheons

Please e-mail or call ahead to reserve your space: ssra44@juno.com or 206 521-5170 (the SODO office number). Please let us know ahead of time!

SSRA's March 6th, 2018 Luncheon

Date: Tuesday, March 6th

Time/Place: Lunch at 12:00 at The Canal Restaurant in Ballard

Price: \$20.00 for a buffet lunch

RSVP Deadline: Monday, February 26th

Program: Nationally known author Jamie Ford, who wrote *Hotel on the Corner of Bitter and Sweet*, *Songs of Willow Frost* and the



most recently published *Love and Other Consolation Prizes*, will be our guest speaker.

Mr. Ford came to speak to us over a year ago and is coming back by popular demand. His novels always feature Seattle, particularly the International District, as an important part of the story. He has an uncanny grasp of time and place. Like last time, he is expected to sell and autograph copies of his books. (Again, we would like to thank Maxine Loo for helping to get Jamie Ford to come.)

Quotation for the Day:

“Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world. Indeed, it is the only thing that ever has.” Margaret Mead, anthropologist

SSRA's April 10th, 2018 Luncheon

Date: Tuesday, April 10th

Time/Place: Lunch at 12:00 at The Canal Restaurant in Ballard

Price: \$20.00 (except for current school employees who pre-register by March 26th and then pay a special price at the door).

RSVP Deadline: Monday, MARCH 26TH

(NOTE THE CHANGE IN DATE FOR THIS LUNCHEON TO APRIL'S SECOND TUESDAY SO SEATTLE PUBLIC SCHOOLS' CURRENT EMPLOYEES CAN ATTEND BECAUSE IT'S DURING THEIR SPRING BREAK.)

Program: The speaker will be one of AARP's experts on how to avoid identity theft and hold on to your possessions wisely--plus the latest information about fraud protections.

Remember to make all new guests at our luncheons feel SSRA's full welcome!

Don't forget that The Canal's caterers need a fairly firm count for lunch 8 days ahead of time—so please let us know by February 26th for the March luncheon and by March 26th for the April 10th luncheon to guarantee your seats for our excellent buffet lunches.

- If you do not wish to have lunch with us, arrive by 12:50 for the program. There will be extra seats available in the back for those who come only for the program.
- Bring non-perishable food items or checks and personal items donated to the West Seattle Food Bank and The Compass Center.

See Page 6 for a Legislative Update

Information was timely at the time of printing but the State Legislature was still in session with a COLA decision not resolved.

The Governor Lets Education Retirees Toot Our Own Horns in March

Hear Ye! Hear Ye, all members of SSRA and our parent group in Lacey, the Washington State School Retirees' Association! Washington's Governor Jay Inslee has declared the week of March 19th through 25th to be a special week honoring us all—so enjoy it! You might even want to visit your old school haunts to see how things are going in the District.

Below is a reproduction of the official proclamation signed by the governor.



SSRA Leadership for 2017-2018

Co-Presidents.....Pat Cygan and Sharon Green
President-elect.....Pat Cygan and Sharon Green
Immediate Past President.....Susan Battin

Recording Secretary.....Mary Wallon
Treasurer.....Sue Battin

Committee Chairs

Audit Review CommitteeRoxanne Trees
Budget/Finance.....Jim de Jarnatt
Communications/Outreach.....Ron Cygan
Community Services.....Marilynn Miller
Drawings and Baskets.....Marilynn Miller
Friendship.....OPEN
Historian.....Dan Peterson
Health Services.....OPEN
Legislative.....Edith Ruby and Mary Wallon
May Luncheon.....Margaret Nelson
Membership.....ALL SSRA MEMBERS
Parliamentarian.....Edith Ruby
Programs.....Pat Cygan
Resolutions/Bylaws.....SSRA's Board
Retirement Seminar Planning.....OPEN
Scholarships.....Patricia MacGowan
Burbank Rideout/SEED Grants.....Sharon Green
Nellie Sterrett.....Margaret Nelson
WSSRA-PAC.....Mary Wallon and Edith Ruby

NOTE: If you are willing to take on one of these OPEN positions or know an SSRA member who would likely be that special addition needed to be on SSRA's Board, please call Co-President Pat Cygan at 425-493-0352.

Thought for the Day

"Happiness is not having what you want, but wanting what you have."

*Rabbi Hyman Judah Schachtel,
American theologian, author and
educator (1907-1990)*

Words Worth Remembering

"Nothing is more dangerous in the whole world than sincere ignorance and enthusiastic stupidity."

Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.

The Bulletin is published five times per year by the Seattle School Retirees' Association. **Membership meetings** are held on the first Tuesday of each month from September through May (except January) with a buffet lunch served at twelve noon; then a meeting and guest speaker/program follow our buffet luncheon at **The Canal Restaurant** located at 5300 34th Ave. N.W. **Office hours** vary. You may now reach us by calling the SODO office at 206 521-5170. **Email:** ssra44@juno.com

Is There Any Value in Optimism as We Age?

by SSRA's Co-President Pat Cygan

Hmm . . . pessimism about aging may put us at risk for Dementia! I recently read a *Seattle Times* article about how both pessimism and optimism impact lives dramatically. That February 8th article analyzed how people's attitudes and mindsets can impact anyone's health, but we are capable of redesigning such beliefs and thereby lessening our chances for developing Dementia and Alzheimer's Disease. ***I learned:***

A study, led by Dr. Becca Levy of the Yale School of Public Health and funded by the National Institute on Aging, investigated Levy's theory that Americans with negative beliefs about getting older are significantly more likely to develop Dementia than their peers who embrace their senior years with optimism. Dr. Levy's team weighed how risk factors such as smoking, diabetes, cardiovascular disease, and stress levels put some senior citizens at greater risks for developing Dementia. Prior research had already shown that negativity about aging often led to more stress—and extra stress levels in *some seniors* revealed that their brains tended to develop the amyloid plaques and neurofibrillary tangles associated with Alzheimer's.

Dr. Levy's team focused their research on 4,765 older Americans whose average age was 72. They asked their research subjects to answer 5 kinds of questions about aging. For example, were they as happy now as they were when they were younger, did they feel that things got better or worse with age, and did they feel less useful as they aged. Participants' cognitive status was assessed by a standard test over the phone—e.g., asking them to count backward from 20, to name the U. S. President and Vice President, and to recall a list of 10 items. Participants retook that mental test every two years. Finally, all subjects tested provided saliva samples that were sent off to the National Institutes of Health to see if any had a version of the APOE gene that would have put them at a greater risk of getting Alzheimer's. *[Among those tested by Levy's team were 26% with such an e4 variant of APOE.]*

Dr. Becca Levy and her Yale team's findings were published in the journal, *PLOS ONE*, on February 7, 2018. **Their studies show that those who embraced their senior years with zeal and optimism were 44% less likely to develop Dementia over their next four years than their counterparts who held negative beliefs about aging.** 44 percent is not a trivial difference!

Surprisingly, a striking finding also emerged from their studies—namely that the apparent benefits of being positive and living optimistically were especially beneficial to the sub-groups in their study whose genes put them at greater risk for Dementia because they carried risky variants of the APOE gene. Some subjects with that gene chose to live their lives with hope and zest; their positive attitudes about aging allowed them to ease (and even lessen) handicaps embedded in their genes.

In the four years after joining Dr. Levy's study, 4.6 percent of the adults with negative beliefs about aging developed some degree of Dementia. So did 2.6 percent of the participants with positive attitudes about aging. Among those with a version of the APOE gene that predisposed them to Alzheimer's Disease, 6.14% of adults with negative beliefs about aging developed Dementia BUT only 2.7 percent of those with positive beliefs about growing older did.

Dr. Levy's research team intentionally set up control groups for factors such as age, sex, educational history, initial cognitive performance, health conditions and other factors. The results were significant. **Living life large with optimism and positivity toward aging was associated with a 19% reduced risk of developing Dementia for the entire group tested by Dr. Levy's team. Among participants with positive attitudes toward aging who had evidence of carrying a risky APOE gene that predisposed them to Dementia, they were 31% less likely to develop Dementia than their counterparts with negative attitudes.**

*Does this remind you of how we tend to react to any glass that's only half-filled with a desirable liquid? Some are pleased because it seems mostly full, but others gross out precisely because it is half empty so they feel cheated. Since birth, we have been aging every day of our lives, but **the onus of "being old"** is usually attributed to us once we reach our 50th or 60th or 70th birthday. How we react to all of life's major changes—positively or negatively—will affect and maybe determine our future Mental Health and Physical Well-Being!*

In Memoriam

It saddens us to learn that the following members have passed away:
Bronson Berg, Annabelle Corey, Sally Shavey and Marcy Wynhoff.

Mona Humphries Bailey

1932-2018



Dr. Mona Bailey passed away on January 12th. As many of you know, she was an important administrator for Seattle Public Schools who rose to the level of Deputy Superintendent. She also held many state positions and eventually became Assistant State Superintendent. Mona Bailey always advocated for equity and for strong academic standards for all students. She co-chaired a state advisory committee in 2008 to close the achievement gap between African-American students and their classmates. She also held leadership positions at The Pacific Science Center and with Delta Sigma Theta Sorority. A large number of retired Seattle School educators attended her two memorial services held on January 18th and 19th on Mercer Island.

SSRA's Committee Reports

- **S.E.E.D. Grant Committee**

Sharon Green, Chair

SSRA has money to give to educators to help with special learning projects that are not funded by the schools.

If you are an Active (a current education employee in Seattle who is a paid member of SSRA) you may apply for up to \$300 for each school year. If you are NOT a member you may apply for up to \$100 one time only. Both Actives and non-members may also pool with other teachers on the same project. This may include a summer school project.

A simple one page application is required and the number of grants are not limited at this time. The deadline has also been extended from March 31st to April 16th of 2018.

We would love to give away more money. Please take a few minutes to visit our website at www.seattlesra.org and look under the Scholarship and Grant tab to find the S.E.E.D. application form.

We look forward to hearing from you.

- **Health Services Committee** (which needs a volunteer to chair it) Pat Cygan, Acting Chair

Are any of you readers secretly searching for ways to add to your longevity? A recent article in the *Seattle Times* touted a variety of ways to help us live into our 90s. *Consuming alcohol may trump exercise to help us live longer, for example!* Beginning in 2003, researchers led by the **University of California neurologist Claudia Kawas** tracked 1700 nonagenarians enrolled in a 90+ study to explore how/which daily habits impact longevity. Researchers discovered that subjects who drank about 2 glasses of beer or wine a day were 18% less likely to die early, but participants who exercised 15 to 45 minutes daily cut the same risk by only 11%. Another factor that boosted longevity was being slightly overweight (but not obese), which cut the risk of an early death by 3%--or as Claudia Kawas noted, "It's not bad to be skinny when young but it's very bad when you're old." Subjects who kept busy with a daily hobby two hours a day [like chairing this committee for SSRA?] were 21% less likely to die early. Those who drank two cups of coffee a day cut their risk of dying early by 10%. Claudia Kawas' research team will continue to study how habits impact longevity beyond people's genetic makeups.

- **Program Committee** Pat Cygan, Chair
 As the 2017-2018 school year winds down, so too do our final 3 members' luncheons at The Canal Restaurant near the Ballard Locks—where we continue to savor delicious meals from our buffet arrays. Our *March 6th luncheon* will feature one of our favorite previous guest speakers—**Jaime Ford**, author of *Hotel on The Corner of Bitter and Sweet* plus two newer novels “historically set in downtown Seattle areas” (*Songs of Willow Frost* and *Love and Other Consolation Prizes*).
On the 2nd Tuesday of April (i.e., April 10th) our speaker will be **an AARP Fraud Buster, Leeta J. Scott**, who will give us updated tips on how to keep other people from stealing our belongings and identities. We hope several Seattle Public Schools' employees (members and potential members) will join us for this special luncheon during the District's Spring Break. We will be sending out flyers in March to notify them that they can join us that day for a special lunch price if they pre-book a reservation with us.
 Finally, our **May 1st luncheon at The Canal will honor all SSRA members who are 85 years old and older with a free lunch and some gifts selected by May Luncheon Chair Margaret Nelson**. Our special program for this luncheon will feature the actress-historian, **Debbi Dimitre**, who will perform her newest piece about the artist, “**Grandma Moses.**” Please join us for all 3 luncheons and programs. Just pre-reserve your seat at our tables!
- **Nellie Sterrett Committee** Margaret Nelson, Chair
 Remember: Those of you who are SSRA members and have a birthday during a month when SSRA has a luncheon are entitled to a **free lunch**. Just give your birthday information at the sign-in desk at the restaurant when you sign in. Also don't forget to call 206 521-5170 or e-mail us at ssra44@juno.com to reserve your seat for the luncheon!
- **Drawings and Baskets** Marilynn Miller, Chair
 At the March luncheon we will have door prizes. If you can, please bring items suitable for door prizes (valued \$5 to \$10) to the Canal Restaurant before the March luncheon. We took in about \$100 for S.E.E.D. Grants at the last luncheon. Thanks to all of you who purchased tickets.
- **Community Services Committee** Marilynn Miller, Chair
 We are still collecting non-perishable food and personal items like new white socks and winter apparel as donations to the West Seattle Food Bank and The Compass Center. Your generosity is greatly appreciated, particularly at this time of year. We didn't receive many donations at the February luncheon so please do what you can for the March gathering.
- **Scholarship Committee** Patricia MacGowan, Chair
 [The committee chair is out of town at this time. Readers can still go to the SSRA website at www.seattlesra.org to find information on and applications for scholarships.]

I Never Thought of That!

“The third-rate mind is only happy when it is thinking with the majority. The second-rate mind is only happy when it is thinking with the minority. The first-rate mind is only happy when it is thinking.”

A.A. Milne, British author (1882-1956)

What Now?

By Edith Ruby and Mary Wallon, Co-Chairs, SSRA Legislative Committee

WSSRA's Legislative Committee has had two visits scheduled to Olympia this session to lobby for our goals with legislators. Goals this session are a Cost of Living increase for TRS 1 and PERS 1 members and a restoration of the PEBB healthcare subsidy to at least \$183/month from the present \$150/month. An alternate suggestion from some legislators, which WSSRA would also support, is to set the subsidy at half of whatever members' PEBB premiums are for that year. The structure of our visits has been changed this year to give us more time for meetings with legislators. This has allowed us to coordinate visits so several of us can meet with each legislator, giving us a stronger voice.

Before the session the Select Committee on Pension Policy(SCPP), which consists of both legislators and other public officials, recommended that a onetime COLA of 3% on the first \$25,000 of pension income, up to a maximum of \$62.50/month, be approved for TRS 1 and PERS 1 retirees. Several bills containing this recommendation were introduced in both House and Senate. Unfortunately, the one bill with some likelihood of being passed at this time, SSB 6340, decreased the 3% to 2%. While eliminating the \$25,000 yearly cap it keeps the \$62.50/month maximum increase. Yearly pension would have to be \$37,500 to receive the full \$62.50. This bill was passed unanimously by the Senate on Feb. 14. As we write this(Feb. 15) the bill has been sent to the House Appropriations Committee where members can (1) vote it on to House Rules Committee as is, (2) amend it and send it to House Rules, (3) let it die in Appropriations. To become law it must make it through House Rules, be approved by the full House, and sent to the governor before end of session March 8.

As the deadline for our article approaches, your humble writers are unwilling to predict the fate of Plan 1 COLA legislation. Perhaps by the time your *Bulletin* reaches you it will have been decided. We are unsure of degree of support in the House. However, the SCPP recommendation for a COLA and the unanimous favorable vote by the Senate show that there is gathering momentum for some cost of living increase. We would be happy to receive a small one time pension boost this session but will continue to push hard in future sessions for an ongoing yearly COLA. We are disappointed that there seems little likelihood that there will be any increase this session in our Medicare Eligible Healthcare subsidy, which would benefit Medicare eligible retirees in all TRS and PERS plans. This will continue to be a top WSSRA priority.

Whatever the fate of current COLA legislation, there are a number of Seattle area legislators who deserve thanks and praise for their efforts to make it happen. Whoever your senator is, thank him or her for their Senate vote in favor of the legislation. In the House these representatives sponsored one or more bills giving us a onetime Plan 1 COLA: Joe Fitzgibbon(LD 34), Noel Frame(LD 36), Nicole Macri(LD 43), Vandanna Slatter(LD 48), Ruth Kagi(LD 32), Gerry Pollet(LD 46), Javier Valdez(LD 46). Please let them know how much you appreciate their support for a COLA and how much you need the help it would provide.

(We are focusing on a COLA for Plan 1 retirees because all other state retirement plans, including PERS and TRS 2 and 3, have guaranteed yearly COLAs written into legislation setting up the plans. WSSRA is keeping a careful watch for any threats to these plans.)

[**Editor's Note**-- Just before I send this issue to the printer, our legislative team sent this update: The House budget only recommends a COLA for those with the very lowest pension amounts. WSSRA continues to push for what the Select Committee on Pension Policy COLA originally recommended since it would benefit many more retirees on Plan 1. Final results are not in yet.]

The Dancing Brain

from the University of California, Berkeley's "Wellness Letter"

If you like to tango, cha-cha, salsa, swing, or foxtrot, put on your dancing shoes: Dancing may be good for the brain, according to a study from Germany in *Frontiers in Human Neuroscience*.

Researchers divided healthy seniors, ages 63 and older, into two training groups for 18 months. Half engaged in a special dance program that required continually learning challenging new routines. The other half did aerobic fitness workouts, along with strength and flexibility training.... Classes were held twice a week for six months, then once a week for the next 12 months.

As seen on MRIs, both groups had increases in gray matter in the hippocampus (which is involved in learning, long-term memory, and spatial navigation), but the dancers had increases in more parts of this brain structure and also had significant improvements in overall balance. Atrophy in the hippocampus occurs not just in Alzheimer's disease but also, to a lesser degree, in normal aging, especially after age 70. But interestingly, this is one of the brain areas known to generate new neurons throughout life in response to physical and mental challenges, a process known as neuroplasticity.

The authors concluded that "the additional challenges involved in our dance program, namely cognitive and sensorimotor stimulation, induced extra hippocampus volume changes in addition to those attributable to physical fitness alone."

Lines from Literature—How Many Do You Know?

In which novel are following lines found?

1. "Second star to the right and straight on 'til morning."
2. "Along the Paris streets, the deathcarts rumble, hollow and harsh."
3. "Really, Scarlett, I can't go all of my life waiting to catch you between husbands."
4. "You are my creator, but I am your master. Obey!"
5. "Let's face it: our lives are miserable, laborious, and short."
6. "O, my Eva, whose little hour on earth did so much of good."
7. "My love for Linton is like the foliage in the woods: time will change it."
8. "Trust me, Wilbur. People are very gullible."
9. "Mr. Rochester continued blind the first two years of our union."

Answers below—upside down

Score: 0-3 Go to the back of the class. 4-6 Give yourself a pat on the back.

7-8 Move to the front of the class. 9 Take over the teacher's chair.

Future Retirement Planning Seminars from the Washington Department of Retirement Systems

The following are upcoming seminars for state public employees in our region:

Seattle on Saturday, June 16th; Tacoma on Saturday, April 14th; and Edmonds on Saturday, July 14th.

All of these seminars are put on by the Washington State Department of Retirement Systems and are scheduled from 9:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m. Check out the DRS website to find out more details and to register.

living color.

1. Peter Pan 2. A Tale of Two Cities 3. Gone With the Wind 4. Frankenstein 5. Animal Farm
6. Uncle Tom's Cabin 7. Wuthering Heights 8. Charlotte's Web 9. Jane Eyre



Seattle School Retirees' Association
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SSRA Scholarship and/or S.E.E.D. Grant Fund Donation Form

Date _____

Enclosed is my gift for:

SCHOLARSHIP FUND



Helps provide scholarships for post-secondary education and training for graduates of Seattle Public Schools.

BURBANK RIDEOUT SEED FUND



Seattle Education Enhancement Dividend provides mini-grants to school employees for special classroom projects.

If a box is not checked above, your donation will be placed where the need is greatest.

Amount enclosed: \$ _____

Person or family (and address) to be notified of my gift:

In honor of _____

or

In memory of _____

My name _____

Please make checks payable to SSRA Scholarship and Grant Fund

Mail to: SSRA, 151 S. Lander St. (Suite C) Seattle, WA 98134

Donations are tax deductible as a charitable contribution to the extent allowed by law. You may double your gift by enclosing a matching donor form from your (or your spouse's) employer. Please check here if you would like information about including the Scholarship and/or Burbank Rideout SEED Fund in your estate planning.