



# The Bulletin



Volume LXXX No. 1

The Seattle School Retirees' Association

September-October, 2024

## News from SSRA Acting President Julee Neuhart

We hope that all 822 of our retired members have enjoyed a “NO-LABOR DAY” early September weekend. We have 37 members who returned to work after Labor Day. To those teachers and staff, we hope you are enjoying another opening of school with eager students and a pleasant reunion with your school colleagues. While all of our SSRA members were relaxing on summer vacation, the SSRA leadership team has worked to make plans for our 2024-25 year.

### FALL MEETING OCTOBER 17, 2024

Our first meeting of the new school year will be held in the Cascade Room in the Mountaineers' facility in Magnuson Park located at 7700 Sand Point Way N.E. (in the old Sand Point Naval Base). This building is in the northwest corner of the park.

Our luncheon speaker will be Ms. Page Olson who is a fourth generation Seattleite and a Seattle historian. She will speak about the “Great Seattle Fire”. The story of the Seattle fire is misunderstood. This is partly due to the initial reporting in the local paper on the day of the fire. Also, people interpreted the fire based on the topography of today, which is very different from the time of the fire. We will travel back in time to June 6, 1898 and hear how the fire really started. We will hear about the type of people who lived in Seattle one hundred years ago and discover a well-kept secret.

### AGENDA

- 10:30 a.m. Please join us for a “social hour” – a chance to visit with old and new friends
- 11:00 a.m. Lunch
- 11:45 a.m. Speaker
- 12:45 a.m. Raffle (This is a fund raiser for Mary's Place)
- Association business
- 1:00 p.m. Adjournment

All 50 of our prospective luncheon guests will need to **pre-register by calling Patricia MacGowan (206-851-0232) or by email at [cmacgowan@comcast.net](mailto:cmacgowan@comcast.net) BY MONDAY, OCTOBER 7<sup>TH</sup> WITH YOUR RED BOX LUNCH CHOICES. WE'LL AGAIN ORDER FROM **LE FOURNIL'S FRENCH BAKERY**. Each attendee will pay \$18 at our luncheon for a *LeFournil Red Box Lunch* + some eating essentials. *Patricia MacGowan needs to know each diner's Lunch Choices NO LATER THAN Friday, October 11th so we can pre-order and pay for those meals for a 10/17 delivery.***

**Le Fournil's Main Entrée Choices include a Cold Quiche Lorraine OR a Cold Quiche Poireau (=Vegetarian) Or a Chicken Caesar Salad Or ONE of these 11 BAGUETTE SANDWICHES = ROAST BEEF; CHICKEN SALAD; HAM + SWISS; TURKEY + SWISS; SALMON SALAD; CEMBERT CHEESE; SLICED HARD-BOILED EGG; TUNA SALAD; HAM, SWISS AND BUTTER; ROASTED VEGETABLES + SWISS CHEESE; PORK AND MUSHROOM PATE WITH CORNICHON (= PATE FORESTER)** [Most sandwiches will include lettuce, tomato, mayonnaise and Dijon mustard.] **Cold Drink Choices** include one bottle of apple juice, orange juice, Coke, Diet Coke, Sprite, Perrier OR Water. **Dessert Choice Options = a TART with mixed fruit OR lemon OR cheese OR chocolate OR apple OR blueberry OR strawberry fillings; a gluten-free chocolate mousse; a chocolate OR coffee éclair; Madeleine OR shortbread raisin OR assorted COOKIES; a Mille Feuilles OR a Chou a la Crème.**



*In Memoriam*

It saddens us to learn that the following SSRA members have recently passed away:

- Richard Burnham of Seattle**
- Fumio Ishida of Aliso Viejo, CA**
- Patricia Reese of Seattle**
- Paul Volkman of Kenmore**

Members who worked with those we have lost are welcome to submit short notes for the Bulletin about our lost members and their work in Seattle Schools. Send information by email to the Bulletin Editor, Joani Harr, at [joaniharr@aol.com](mailto:joaniharr@aol.com).

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***SSRA Leadership for 2024-2025***

Acting President.....Julee Neuhart  
 Past President.....Pat Cygan  
 Chairman of the Board.....Edith Ruby

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

***Committee Chairs***

By laws.....Roxanne Trees  
 Budget.....Jim DeJarnatt  
 Community Services.....Karen Lam  
 Drawings and Baskets.....Karen Lam  
 Health Services.....Myrna Muto  
 Interim Historian.....Eleanor Toews  
 Legislative/PAC... ..Edith Ruby and Mary Wallon  
 May Luncheon.....Margaret Nelson  
 Membership.....Julee Neuhart  
 Newsletter.....Joani Harr  
 Parliamentarian.....Edith Ruby  
 Programs.....Pat Cygan  
 Scholarships.....Patricia MacGowan  
 SEED Grants.....John Thorp  
 Website.....--Ron Cygan  
 WSSRA’s NW-2 Representative. .Patricia MacGowan

***NEED MONEY FOR YOUR CLASSROOM?***

*For those of you currently working for Seattle Public Schools, you can recoup unreimbursed costs by applying for an SSRA S.E.E.D. GRANT.*

***SEE OUR NEXT PAGE FOR AN APPLICATION.***

***SSRA’s Bulletin*** is published five times per year by the Seattle School Retirees’ Association. We plan to hold 4 members’ meetings for the 2024-2025 school year. Even though our SODO office is rarely staffed, you can leave messages for us at the office number (206 521-5170) or by email at [ssra44@juno.com](mailto:ssra44@juno.com).



Seattle Education Enhancement Dividend (or S.E.E.D. Grant) Classroom Grant Application September 1, 2024 to May 1, 2025

NAME \_\_\_\_\_ DATE \_\_\_\_\_

SSRA MEMBER? \_\_\_ YES \_\_\_ NO Best Phone Number/Times To Reach You? \_\_\_\_\_

Amount of Request? SSRA MEMBERS MAY REQUEST UP TO \$550 IN A SCHOOL YEAR. \_\_\_\_\_

A NON-MEMBER MAY REQUEST UP TO \$300 ONE TIME ONLY. \_\_\_\_\_

Your School and Its Address? \_\_\_\_\_

Your Position/Role? \_\_\_\_\_ Your e-mail? \_\_\_\_\_

Grant Amount Requested? \_\_\_\_\_ Number of Benefitting Students? \_\_\_\_\_

Mail check to whom and where? \_\_\_\_\_

Important Alert Notice: Usually each school year falls into 2 calendar years [e.g., Sept. 2024 to June 2025]. If SSRA were to send you SEED Grants of \$600 or more in the same calendar year [=Jan. to Dec.], both SSRA and you would be required by the Internal Revenue Service to fill out a 1099 form—thereby reporting that sum to be a potential addition to your income for that tax year. Thus, SSRA Members, if you apply for a SEED grant in 2 different but adjacent school years, please space your requests for S.E.E.D. grants so that the total for both grant requests will not equal \$600 or more dollars between January and December of the same calendar year.

Is This A Combined Project? \_\_\_ Yes \_\_\_ No If combined, with whom? \_\_\_\_\_

Is This A Summer School Project? \_\_\_ Yes \_\_\_ No Is This An After-School Project? \_\_\_ Yes \_\_\_ No

Briefly describe how this grant will be used to enhance students' learning? (Use back if necessary.)

What specifically do you plan to purchase with this S.E.E.D. grant? (Use back of this sheet if necessary.)

Project's Start Date = \_\_\_\_\_ Project's Finish Date = \_\_\_\_\_

Next, you will need to show this request to your school's PRINCIPAL OR PROGRAM MANAGER FOR HIS/HER SIGNATURE. YOUR PRINCIPAL/PROGRAM MANAGER'S SIGNATURE IS REQUIRED.

PRINCIPAL or PROGRAM MANAGER'S SIGNATURE \_\_\_\_\_ Please PRINT Principal/Program Manager's Name.

MAIL A PAPER APPLICATION TO John Thorp at 11033 39th Ave. N.E., Seattle, WA 98125 OR send application by email to jhthorp3@outlook.com (We must receive the application by May 1, 2025)



### **What will the 2025 Legislature Do for Retirees**

by Edith Ruby, and Mary Wallon, SSRA Legislative Committee Co-chairs

This will be an important year for WSSRA Legislative Committee with a number of issues impacting current and future state retirees on the agenda for the 2025 Legislature. Safeguarding our members' pensions is always high on WSSRA's agenda. A major focus this year is restoration of a Plan 1 COLA. In 2023 the Legislature directed the Select Committee on Pension Policy (SCPP) to do a study of how a guaranteed, automatic Plan 1 COLA might be restored. Since the Uniform COLA for Plan 1 retirees was ended by legislative action in 2010, there have been Plan 1 COLA in only five of the past fourteen years.

Information from the COLA study was presented and discussed at the SCPP's September 17<sup>th</sup> meeting. Committee members passed a motion instructing committee staff to prepare a bill for the 2025 Legislature giving Plan 1 retirees a yearly COLA of up to 3%, depending on the Seattle area CPI. In years in which the CPI is less than 3%, funds saved would be banked for future COLAs. This is the same formula as the Plan 2 COLA. The draft bill will be on the agenda for discussion at the October 15<sup>th</sup> SCPP meeting. SCPP's support for a continuing COLA is vital if legislators are to pass COLA legislation although it does not guarantee legislative approval. Also, legislators always have the power to amend a bill. Your WSSRA legislative team members will be carefully following the progress of the bill through the legislative session! Concern about the cost of the COLA was expressed by representatives of the Association of Washington Cities. If the legislature passes the COLA bill, they will also need to find a way to fund it.

One possible roadblock to success is three initiatives on the November ballot. These initiatives, if passed, will slash billions from future state budgets. Initiatives are I-2109, the 'wealth tax' on capital gains of more than \$250,000 from sale of stocks and bonds; I-2109, which ends the carbon auction, and I-2124, which makes the state's new Long Term Care program optional. Passing these initiatives will eliminate state revenue that currently goes to fund public education, childcare and early learning, as well as work to improve the state's transportation system, and clean up air and water. Looking for places to make budget cuts, retiree benefits will likely be high on legislators' lists. **WSSRA's Board urges members to vote NO on these initiatives.**

A successful lobbying season for WSSRA and other education organizations depends on electing legislators who value education and are willing to prioritize the needs of educators when making decisions on how best to allocate funds in the state budget. All members of our state House of Representatives and half of our senators are up for election in November. This fall many of them are out and about asking for the support of votes in their districts. Now is the time for all of us to attend their events and speak to them about our needs as state retirees in this time of continuing high inflation.

## SSRA's Committee Report

- Health Committee

Myrna Muto, Chair

### *Loneliness and Social Isolation*

For older adults, loneliness and social isolation are serious public health risks, which affect a significant number of people in the U.S. They are at risk for dementia and other serious health conditions. A report from the National Academies of Sciences, Engineering and Medicine (NAEM) shows that more than one-third of adults forty-five and older feel lonely and nearly one-fourth of adults sixty-five and older are considered socially isolated. Factors that place older adults at risk for loneliness and social isolation include living alone, the loss of family or friends, chronic illness, and hearing loss.

Loneliness is the feeling of being alone regardless of the amount of social contact. Social isolation is a lack of social connections. Social isolation can lead to loneliness in some people, while others can feel lonely without being socially isolated.

Recent studies found that:

- Social isolation significantly increased a person's risk of premature death from all causes, a risk that may rival those of smoking, obesity, and physical inactivity.
- Social isolation was associated with about a 50% increased risk of dementia
- Poor social relationships (social isolation or loneliness) were associated with a 29% increased risk of heart disease and a 32% increased risk of stroke.
- Loneliness among heart failure patients was associated with a four times increased risk of death, 68% increased risk of hospitalization, and 57% increased risk of emergency department visits.

Ideas for making social connections from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) include:

- Make time in your routine to contact others who care about you.
- Reach out to different people to create a broad network of support.
- Join a group with shared interests to create a sense of belonging.
- Find ways to be responsive and grateful to others, express gratitude.
- Take care of your health so you can readily connect socially and have fun.
- Volunteer with a group or organization.
- Spend more quality time with family and friends.
- Find ways to share the things you are already doing – exercise or cook with others.

If you are feeling disconnected, lonely, or stressed consider talking with a professional who can identify ways to help you.

## **2024-2025 SSRA By-Laws Review**

by Roxanne Trees – Audit Review Chair

Some would say ‘By-Laws are Boring!’. Yet, as one of WA state’s largest group of retired, active, or current educators (and as a non-profit organization) we cannot take lightly our affiliation, region, structure, responsibilities, and purpose.

As an SSRA Board member and Audit Review Chair, an ex-officio member of the SSRA Finance Committee, and a two-year attendee at the WSSRA State conferences in Pasco and Wenatchee, I have become more familiar with the WSSRA State organization and our Seattle SSRA – Unit 20 affiliate. As a relative newcomer to our non-profit organization, I think we have both great potential and unlimited opportunity!

This year, with SSRA leadership changes, it seems an ideal time to have a 2024-2025 By-Laws review. Using existing By-Laws examples and non-profit checklists, we can update systems, goals, and purposes of our organization simultaneously. I volunteered to research existing documents and create a 2024-2025 By-Laws draft document. In the process, I turned to the 2024 WSSRA State By-Laws, then located our recent 2018 SSRA version, and considered side-by-side language changes and current gaps. A proposed 2024-2025 draft SSRA By-Laws document emerged.

The Board recently received copies of the previous 2018 document, the newer 2024-2025 draft version, with links to locate the 2024 WSSRA State By-Laws. After a short introduction, the Board decided to use the entire September 17<sup>th</sup> SSRA Board meeting to review, compare, and cross-check old and new drafts. They will also gather any other organizational documents and upgrade SSRA according to any corresponding non-profit standards. The timeline for a new SSRA By-Laws document will include.

- Board reviews and pre-approval
- Board introduction of an approved document to the membership
- Board recommendation of a vote of acceptance at a 2025 Spring meeting.

Follow along this year with some interesting (not Boring) changes!

## Thank You Representative Fitzgibbon

Thank you Representative Joe Fitzgibbon for your meeting with Executive Director Peter Diedrick , Legislative Coordinator Emmett Mills, and Patricia MacGowan (pictured below) regarding WSSRA legislative priorities. Thank you for your support.

WSSRA legislative priorities include:

- Support the Select Committee on Pension Policy (SCPP)-endorsed Plan 1 for 2024 (3% up to \$125 per month).
- Support SCPP Plan 1 COLA study efforts and lobby to endorse a permanent Plan 1 COLA in 2025.
- Maintain a \$183 Medicare Eligible Healthcare Subsidy Increase if possible
- Enhance the pension formula for TRS and SERS Plans for 2 and 3 members who have worked for over 30 years.
- Support DRS legislation to pay pension for the entire month of death.
- Sponsor legislation to address inequalities in HCA dental coverage for those residing in healthcare facilities.



**History Notes: School Closures**  
*By Eleanor Toews, Seattle Schools former Archivist*

All around the country, schools are closing because of declining enrollments. Things changed during the pandemic and we are told more and more parents chose to either home-school or to send their kids to private schools. So, what's happening here in Seattle isn't all that unusual.

Not only is there a huge deficit, combined with lowered enrollments, it is a fact that under-enrolled schools simply cannot offer the diversity and richness of services to students. Finding follows enrollment; it's that simple. Maybe this should have been the headline "**Under-enrolled Schools Unable to Provide Services**", not that the debt is driving us to close 20 elementary schools.

In 1979, I was fresh out of Columbia University's Library Masters program. As the brand new archivist of Seattle Public Schools, I was, within a scant year, faced with the ramifications of school closures. Whatever the reasons were then – declining birth rates, the lure of the suburbs, bussing – shock waves roiled the city. By June 1981, twenty-nine schools, including two major high schools, seven middle or junior high schools, and twenty elementary schools would be closed.

The Seattle Schools Archives was at that time housed in two small classrooms at Whitman Jr. High in Seattle's Crown Hill neighborhood. There was one archivist and one student records clerk. With the exception of a small portion of microfilmed student transcripts housed there, all District records, including school and student records, were on paper. You can imagine what the impact of school closures in the summer of 1981 was on the archives.

As soon as the decision was made, I had to visit every school, with pen and paper in hand, to document not only what records existed (and in which closets/file cabinets/boxes/boiler rooms/attics), but also they needed to be transferred to the archives for the duration of state-approved retention periods. This constituted vast amounts of paper including everything from attendance sheets to school transcripts. Not only records on paper, but all kinds of ephemera which was deemed to have historical value. Everything from paper commencement programs to trophies and mascots had to be identified and designated for transfer to the archives.

To put all this in perspective, I, a recent transplant from New York City, had to navigate the city with a paper map on the seat beside me to find these schools in a city I barely knew and in a car that I hadn't driven before (we didn't have a car in NY). I would meet with the custodians (usually) and make the rounds of the building from attic to boiler room and sometimes portables as well. Add to this scenario the wall of hostility that was palpable from everyone in school because I represent "downtown" (the A&S Admin building). I should've had a t-shirt saying I DIDN'T VOTE TO CLOSE YOUR SCHOOL, or DON'T SHOOT THE MESSENGER. This was particularly true in the two high schools – Queen Anne (since 1909) and Lincoln (since 1907). Someone described my task akin to a "vulture circling over the dying bodies (of the schools)."

In fact, there's a story to the Queen Anne closure; actually two stories. One, at Queen Anne it was reported that one of the teachers had obtained a master key and snuck in at night to remove Queen Anne Grizzly annuals to give to a private historical society. That was remedied by changing the locks; no small feat in such a large school in those days before coded access cards.



(School closures continued)

That was then, 44 years ago. This time will be very different. Almost 100% of school administrative and student records are electronic and elementary schools, which will be justifiably be fiercely defended, simply do not have the history and historical stuff to deal with as secondary schools do. However, there will be at least two professionals who will make personal inspections for any records and historical material to be transferred to the archives.

In a few cases, those in closing schools may also be resigned to the fact that the students will be better served (e.g. full-time librarians, nurse, art, PE, field trips, etc.) in the larger schools they will merge into. This means the hostility of closing schools will not be as great.



## Thinking About Retirement??

### Pre-Retirement Zoom Webinars

Thursday, October 17, 2024 @ 5:00 PM

Department of Retirement Systems and Health Care Authority/PEBB

Friday, November 01, 2024 @ 5:00 PM

Social Security/Medicare and VEBA

Sponsored by Washington State School Retirees' Association

**Certificated and Classified Employees:** If you are within 1-5 years of retirement, you will want to attend these (no fee) virtual webinars to learn about your retirement plans (Plan 2 or Plan 3), medical/dental options, sick leave buyout (VEBA), Social Security options, and Medicare.

These webinars will feature presentations from the following agencies:

WA State Department of Retirement Systems (Plan 2 and Plan 3, October 17)

WA State Health Care Authority/PEBB (Medical/Dental/Vision options, October 17)

Social Security and Medicare (November 01)

VEBA (Your sick leave buyout options – November 01)

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Please visit [www.wssra.org](http://www.wssra.org) and register under the webinars tab.



Phone: 360-413-5496 ext 5

Website: [www.wssra.org](http://www.wssra.org)

Email: [Tara@wssra.org](mailto:Tara@wssra.org)



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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.