



Summer 2019

Connections

NEWS TO KEEP YOU ENGAGED IN THE PROFESSION YOU LOVE

2019 Annual Meeting



The WEA-Retired Annual Meeting was held June 5-6 at the WEA-HQ Office in Federal Way. Over 80 delegates, board directors, and leadership guided the next year's work, celebrated the current year's accomplishments, and enjoyed camaraderie of retired colleagues. Some highlights of this year's Annual Meeting are below.

- All committee chairs gave their yearly reports.
- Sharon White was awarded the Member of the Year (see page 4).
- Derek Stanford received Advocate of the Year (see page 4).
- WEA Lobbyist Julie Salvi shared the legislative bills affecting retirees and work still to be done next year
- Special guest Rep. Laurie Dolan, a stalwart supporter of retirees, shared her work and goals for WEA-Retired.
- A donation of \$250 to the WEA Children's Fund in memory of all our retired colleagues who passed away since the last Annual Meeting.
- A scrumptious dinner and lovely auction was held to raise money for the scholarship fund.
- Ten \$1,000 scholarships were awarded to active WEA and SWEA

members to further their education.



- Outgoing board directors were recognized for their service.
- Outgoing WEA President Kim Mead, WEA-Retired President Neva Luke and Financial Director Stacia Bilsland were recognized for their years of service.



If you would like to be a delegate next year, watch for the nominations for delegates in the Winter *Connections*.

The President's Corner

By Neva Luke, 2018-19 WEA-Retired President



It has been an honor and a pleasure to be your President over the last two years. I am so grateful for the support of the Executive Committee members and the Board Directors, each of whom have done an amazing job in their respective roles. I want to especially thank Mary Lindsey, who was my Vice President and is now your President.

Mary and I worked side by side in every aspect over the last two years. I am especially proud of our work in membership — both in growing the activities in councils and also in recruiting more members into WEA-Retired.

Another highlight for me has been the friendships with members, retired and active, across our beautiful state. No matter where I went, members were warm, inviting and engaged. I would be remiss if I didn't give a shout out to the WEA staff who quietly and consistently support WEA-Retired in everything we asked for. Amazing professionals.

I look forward to supporting Mary and the new leadership and I know she will do amazing things as she already has done these past two years as VP. I also look forward to seeing you at future WEA-Retired events.

By Mary Lindsey, 2019-20 WEA-Retired President

I am very excited to begin the adventure of being your WEA-Retired president as Neva and I have just completed our two-year term as your WEA-Retired president and vice president. We had a great time continuing to move WEA-Retired forward and were thankful to all that Kit Raney did before us, especially in the area of organizing the chapters throughout the state. Neva and I continued this work emphasizing membership recruitment. We were rewarded with a grant from NEA to finance our efforts and were able to offer local chapter organizing/membership recruitment grants for the first time in the history of WEA-Retired.

Did you know that NEA/WEA-Retired is the membership category with the most gains in membership? With an increase of over 13 percent nationally this past year, we now have more members to serve, and more members to become involved in activities to improve both public education and the quality of life for retirees. Besides increasing our membership, retirees are the most involved in union activities, and we also have higher rates of voting! There is never a shortage of things to do as a retiree and do know that when you contribute your time and skills to WEA-Retired, it is noticed, appreciated and helps us all. I am so looking forward to working with you during the two years ahead. Thank you for being a WEA-Retired member!



Welcome our new WEA-Retired President and Vice President

This year at the WEA-Retired Annual Meeting in June, delegates elected a new President and Vice-President. Neva Luke, our past President, did not seek re-election. Mary Lindsey, formerly our Vice President, was elected to a two-year term as the WEA-Retired President and Shirley Hickey as Vice-President. It is tradition that new terms begin "when the gavel drops at the NEA-RA," which occurred on July 7 in Houston.

Mary is from WEA-Retired Fourth Corner, having taught in the Bellingham School District for 32 years. She retired in 2007 as a special education life skills teacher at the middle school level. She has been active in union activities for decades that have included; bargaining, lobbying and initiative and political campaigns. She has been a pre-retirement seminar facilitator and the WEA-Retired liaison with the Washington State Alliance for Retired Americans.



Shirley Hickey lives in Kent and has held several WEA-Retired positions including Kent board director, executive committee, organizing team, and legislative work team. She continues to support the work of the Kent Education Association leadership and active members. Highlights of her union work include having served as KEA president, WEA-PAC Management Board, WEA and NEA Representative Assemblies delegate, local coordinator for passing the Simple Majority for Our Schools Initiative 4204, and volunteering with parent and community groups to pass the Class Size Initiative 1351. Shirley taught elementary school for 28 years at Cedar Valley Elementary in the Kent School District.

Shirley is Secretary of WSARA, Washington State Alliance for the Retired Americans, 47th Legislative District PCO, and volunteers with the Emergency Food Bank ministry at the St. Columba Episcopal Church site. Her retirement goals include spending some time with her fiancé Rod Blalock, her daughter Alisa and family, playing cello, traveling and enjoying "flex time."



Shirley states, "WEA Retired is strong and gaining momentum. This is an ideal time for us all to join with members and leadership to strengthen public education and work on senior issues, such as pensions, health care, and a COLA for Plan I retirees."

2019 WEA-Retired Member of the Year: Sharon White

By Kit Raney



At the end of the 2018 WEA-Retired Annual Meeting, Sharon White completed her last minutes of her seven-year stint as Secretary of WEA-Retired. Sharon is a stalwart in the retired association and, if you have ever been to a board meeting, annual meeting, lobby day, etc., you've seen Sharon.

Sam Hayes says of his longtime Chehalis colleague, "I know of few who have done so much for their local, council, state and national associations and still found time to be politically active as Sharon White. She has been a true leader in good times and not-so-good times. Few have her stamina and continued dedications."

Besides serving as WEA-Retired Secretary, Sharon has also been president of WEA-Retired Scholarships, a member of the Legislative Work Team, and is a presenter for the WEA-Retired pre-retirement Seminars. She has worked tirelessly for retirement security, speaking up and attending Lobby Days in Olympia, participating in the Senior Lobby and the Washington State Alliance for Retired Americans. Sharon has attended countless WEA-RAs and NEA RAs through the years. Thank you, Sharon, for your years of service to our association!

2019 WEA-Retired Advocate of the Year: Rep. Derek Stanford

By Kit Raney

Rep. Derek Stanford has served in the State House of Representatives since 2011 representing the 1st district, which includes Bothell and surrounding areas. He is responsive to his constituents and truly cares about improving our state. To understand what he cares about, one only needs to look at the list of bills for which he has been either the primary sponsor or secondary sponsor. As members of WEA-Retired we are thankful for his tireless efforts on our legislative issues. He has consistently worked to make Plan 2 the default and was the primary sponsor of PERS1/TRS1 added benefit (HB2323) and TRS1/PERS1 COLAs (HB2323) in 2018.

This past legislative session we were finally able to succeed in getting a bill passed making Plan 2 the default retirement plan for new hires who didn't make the choice between Plans 2 and 3. Rep. Stanford had worked on this for several years, yet it wasn't his bill that passed. The Senate version passed thanks to Stanford stepping back to let that version pass. According to Julie Salvi, our WEA lobbyist, he worked it to the end and put policy above getting credit for bill sponsorship.

Rep. Stanford is certainly deserving of our Advocate of the Year award and we thank him for being a champion for our issues.

Stacia Bilsland Stepping Down

By Sandy Kokko



In its thirty-two year history WEA-Retired has had nine presidents, 14 vice presidents and 12 secretaries. There have been, however, only three people who have overseen WEA-Retired's finances. On Aug. 31 Stacia Bilsland will step down as financial director after 21 years of service.

Since 1998, her duties have included:

- Processing vouchers
- Making arrangements for meetings, including housing and meals
- Processing new memberships in conjunction with WEA staff
- Monitoring the investment account
- Overseeing the scholarship account

In 2002 Stacia was no longer needed to monitor the WEA-Retired scholarship account because it officially joined Scholarship America thus removing this duty from her responsibility. Stacia immediately became a member of the newly elected scholarship board and served as treasurer for seven years.

When Stacia assumed the position of financial director, the WEA-Retired board of directors managed the WEA-Retired investment account. In 2004 she helped create an investment policy so the account could be transferred to a professional adviser. In 2017 she once again advised the board to transfer the account to a different adviser to provide a more stable and larger growth income. The change was completed in 2018.

In 2006 Stacia started teaching me what was involved as being the event planner. She handed this task off in 2007. In 2017 Karla Kragelund took over from Stacia the task of processing new memberships.

Stacia was foreshadowing her intent to step down. She knew that the only way anyone would be willing to step into her shoes was by paring down the responsibilities. Over the years I have lost count of the number of times board members have acknowledged her excellent work and have exclaimed, "I would not want your job!"

What many people do not know is that Stacia has served on many other boards and committees in addition to WEA-Retired. She served for years on the alumni board for Central Washington University. I have lost count of the number of organizations in which she has been involved in Grays Harbor County. Her habit has been to leave a position and find another place to serve.

There are no words that adequately show the gratitude of WEA-Retired to Stacia for her two-plus decades of service to this organization!

My fantastic adventure to Antarctica

By Karle Warren



One of my bucket list goals — to visit all seven continents of the world – finally materialized late last year. On Dec. 7, 2018 I flew to Ushuaia, Argentina. Located on the Beagle



Channel between the Martial Range and the end of the world, it is the most southern city in Argentina and in the world. It is a key access point to skiing at Cerro Castor and Glacier Martial, wildlife adventures with penguins and orcas in the Beagle Channel and Tierra del Fuego National Park. Of course, it's also the port of call nearest Antarctica.

I boarded the 200-passenger Norwegian Hurtigruten ship, Ms. Fram. On this particular cruise, 27 countries were represented when the ship's 79 crew members were added to the passenger list. So began my 23-day journey in the southern hemisphere's early summer: from Argentina to the Falkland Islands, South Georgia, and our final destination: the Antarctic Peninsula!



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During the first few stops to the British Territorial islands, I eagerly learned about their native and diverse sea birds and penguins. I soaked up a bit of history too. For 140 years, until the introduction of the Fishery Conservation Zone in 1987, sheep farming and the export of wool provided the main base of the Islands' economies. While the sale of fishing licenses (since 1987) has become a welcome added income source for the Islands, sheep farming remains the major form of land use. Farms in the Falkland Islands are known for their natural pastures and are managed with very little use of synthetic chemicals or treatments. In fact, a number of the farms are designated as organic suppliers for their produce, beef, mutton, and wool. As a British overseas territory, the Falklands have internal self-governance, and the United Kingdom takes responsibility for their defense and foreign affairs. The Falkland Islands' capital is the bustling city of Stanley on East Falkland.

We continued on to South Georgia where I saw the whaling history by observing the materials left behind, including posted signs to not enter some old sites due to asbestos. The former whaling village of Grytviken is where the explorer, Sir Ernest Shackleton, is buried in a small whalers' church cemetery. It was a unique adventure taking a group hike on this island's uneven terrain amid, yes, SEALS!

Deception Island was another stop on our way to the Antarctic Peninsula. One morning, I joined a zodiac craft tour around Deception Island which is a sea-filled caldera with a narrow entry way call "Neptune's Bellows" on the southeast side. It is part of the South Shetland Islands and is one of two active volcanoes in Antarctica. It was used in the 19th century as a whaling base. There were huts, shelters and later a scientific observatory station shared by the United Kingdom, Chile, Argentina and Spain. Horrific eruptions in 1967, 1969 and 1970 damaged most and left only Argentina and Spain's research stations.



Have a great trip to share? WEA-Retired wants to hear from you. Send an email to WEARetired@washingtonia.org or mail your hard copy story to: WEA-Retired, P.O. Box 9100, Federal Way, WA 98063.



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Important dates

Aug. 14, 10 a.m. - 3 p.m. Washington State Alliance for Retired Americans (WSARA) Educational Forum on Medicare & Social Security, Liuna Local 242, 22323 Pacific Highway S., Des Moines. Free tickets are available at www.washington.retiredamericans.org or call 206-890-1009. Lunch provided.

Sept. 13, WEA-Retired Executive Committee meeting, 10 a.m. – 2 p.m.

Oct. 22, WEA-Retired Executive Committee meeting, 10 a.m. – 2 p.m.

Oct. 23, WEA-Retired Board meeting, 9:30 a.m. – 3 p.m.

Oct. 24, Senior Lobby Fall Conference, Hotel Murano, 1320 Broadway, Tacoma. Email info@waseniorlobby.org for details.



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Connections is published by Washington Education Association-Retired four times a year. We invite your comments and contributions.

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