



Spring 2020



Connections

NEWS TO KEEP YOU ENGAGED IN THE PROFESSION YOU LOVE

A message to you

Whether you have been retired for one year or several decades, we all remember how it was on the last day of school. It was always exciting as students said their goodbyes to their classmates and the staff wished the students a great summer. This year, the last day was totally different for our pre-retired members. They did not know that they would not see their students again in person when they said goodbye to them in March. It was thought by many that school would be out for a couple of weeks and the coronavirus would then be under control. Since none of us has ever dealt with a global pandemic, we underestimated the impact.

This spring, our working educators stepped up in a big way. Seeing students every day changed into remote learning almost overnight. All hands on deck became a motto. Some school bus drivers started delivering meals and learning packets to students on their route. Some paraeducators supported students by providing childcare for those whose parents were essential workers. Teachers and support staff learned new technology and techniques to support student learning remotely. It has been really remarkable how school was able to continue during this crisis. With the uncertainty of how education will be provided next fall, the need for social distancing, and consideration for health needs of students and staff alike, retirees will continue to be in awe of what can be accomplished under such extraordinary circumstances.

As retired members, we have not heard our members saying, "Oh, how I wish I was still working in the schools so that I could work during a pandemic." However, we have had our challenges during the shelter-in-place and with some being in the high-risk category because of our age and/or underlying medical conditions. Our new normal has been to learn new ways to shop for groceries by ordering online, shopping very early during the designated senior hours, or relying on others. Seeing others outside of our household takes planning. Many of us have learned how to Facetime, Skype, or Zoom to visit with family and friends as well as to participate in meetings, classes, doctor appointments and religious gatherings. Maybe we have used the phone to not only text but to call people more. Maybe we have done more home and garden projects, or not. Maybe we have read a lot more or watched movies that we have enjoyed or wanted to see for the first time. In years to come, we will certainly remember these times of quarantine.

Thank you for being a WEA-Retired or Pre-Retired member! Your membership and involvement in WEA-Retired is important and appreciated. The more voices we have, the louder the message. WEA-Retired will continue to support public education and the enhancement of the quality of life for WEA active and retired members. Please be safe, everyone!

The President's Corner

By Mary Lindsey, 2019-20 WEA-Retired President



If you would like to see something hopeful, Google Kaitlyn Saunders in Washington, D.C., or go to our WEA-Retired Facebook page to see the post about her. Kaitlyn is a 9-year-old from our nation's capital who hopes to be in the Olympics someday. She has been skating for 2 ½ years, usually on the ice, but due to COVID-19 she has switched to roller blades. A few weeks ago, she took her skates, her mother, and her skating coach to the Black Lives Matter mural painted on the street. The huge letters take up two blocks on a section of 16th Street, now renamed Black Lives Matter Plaza. (The mural and plaza were commissioned by Washington, D.C., Mayor Muriel Bowser.) At 5:30 a.m. to avoid crowds, Kaitlyn, dressed in a bright yellow skating outfit to match the mural letters, skates an amazing routine to her favorite song, "Rise Up," sung by Andra Day. Her skating coach says that she is very capable of making it to the Olympics someday. He

founded the Diversity Ice Foundation with the goal of bringing diversity to figure skating.

Kaitlyn is a confident skater who will be entering fourth grade this fall. She says that she feels free and powerful when she's skating and that she feels like she can fly and no one can stop her. She wishes that everyone could feel like that. Isn't that what we also wish for her and all other little Black girls as they grow up to be a teenager, an adult, and an old woman? That they feel free and powerful as they go through life without having to deal with racist attitudes, be followed while simply shopping, be stopped for "traffic" violations, and be denied access to quality healthcare, housing, employment, and education because of the color of their skin?

BLACK LIVES MATTER

WEA-Retired is starting a book group. Our first book is by Seattle author Ijeoma Oluo, who wrote *So You Want to Talk About Race*. After hearing Oluo speak a while back, I purchased her book. She inscribed, "Keep listening, keep talking." That is extremely important, but she also emphasizes in the book that it is easier to talk than do, and listening and talking need to lead to action. This book study group is open to any WEA-Retired member statewide. The first step is to read the book. We will be meeting on Zoom, starting in July or August. Please email me if you want to join the conversation at wearetired@washingtonea.org.

Shortly after I spoke with the WEA-Retired Executive Committee about starting a book club, I ran across an article in the Washington Post entitled, "When Black People are in Pain, White People just join Book Clubs" by Tre Johnson. After thinking, "Oh, no, I am being predictable and have messed up already," I changed my thinking. We are educators, and reading as well as listening and talking must be in the equation. What needs to happen is that we act differently as a result of all of this listening, talking and reading. So, if you want to talk about race, WEA-Retired members, please sign up, show up on Zoom, read, listen and talk as we focus on how together we can do better.

My trip to Africa

By Marian Griffin, WEA-Retired Tacoma



In February 2020, I had the tremendous opportunity to visit South Africa with a 22-member delegation from the greater Puget Sound area. The group represented higher education, business and economic development, healthcare, women and girls empowerment, global ministry, and of course, tourism. My 12-day adventure took me to Johannesburg, George and Cape Town. Each city had its own unique and fascinating qualities. The delegation met government officials, visited schools to form educational partner-

ships, and engaged in a special community service project in George. It was exciting to learn about and experience the diverse cultures of the three cities.

Johannesburg – Feb. 18. The first city we visited was Johannesburg, the largest city in South Africa, with a rich history of South Africa's struggle for freedom. When mining began in the 1880s, Johannesburg became widely known as the South African city built on gold. In Johannesburg, I visited the Apartheid Museum which graphically portrays the apartheid story. It was an emotional journey through South African history. Much of it correlated with the struggles of black Americans during segregation in the South.

Our next stop was Constitution Hill, the former prison known for its brutal treatment of political prisoners. This facility was a tragic reminder of the inhumane conditions they were subjected to. The beautiful courtyard and artifacts hide the atrocities that happened there. Part of it now serves as the Constitutional Court of South Africa.

In Soweto (a township of Johannesburg) lies the famous Vilakazi Street, the former home of two Nobel Peace Prize winners, Nelson Mandela and Archbishop Desmond Tutu. Soweto was created in the 1930s when the government started separating blacks from whites under the apartheid system. It was also created as temporary housing for black laborers who worked in the gold mines. Soweto includes the Mandela Family Museum. There I learned the history of Nelson Mandela's life before and after prison. Soweto includes a number of places significant in South African history. There were a lot of other interesting things to see and do, but we were on a time schedule.

Our last place of significance north of Johannesburg was Liliesleaf Farm Museum. It was used as a safe house for African National Congress activists in the 1960s and was also the headquarters for the underground South African Communist Party. Mandela lived there under an assumed name for a while. Because of some documents found there, Mandela and seven others were found guilty and sentenced to life imprisonment for political crimes (attempting to overthrow the South African government).

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Congratulations to our 2020 WEA-Retired Scholarship recipients

As the WEA-Retired Scholarship Chair, I am proud to announce that the committee was able to give \$1,000 scholarships to 10 active WEA members. We received 36 applications from every WEA membership category. It was a difficult task to choose who should receive a scholarship. However, those chosen had outstanding participation in their local union as well as involvement with young people outside of the classroom setting. All members of WEA, both active and retired, should be honored that we have this caliber of educators in our communities. - Bev Wentz, WEA-Retired

SWEA/Aspiring Educator Member

Ciara Harding

Ciara will transfer from Everett Community College to Eastern Washington University this fall to pursue a BA in Elementary Education.



Classified/ESP Members



April Hoeveler - 5 years in education

April works in the North Thurston School District as a paraeducator in a life skills program. She will use her scholarship to pursue a degree through Western Governors University. She will use her scholarship to pursue a Master of Arts in Teaching, Secondary English Education.

Heather Alnes - 8 years in education

Heather will use her scholarship to pursue a BA in Elementary Education through Western Governors University. She is currently an elementary school secretary in the Tumwater School District.



Certificated Members

Anita Johanson - 14 years in education

Anita will use her scholarship to obtain an MA in Curriculum and Instruction. She is currently a middle school science teacher in the Manson School District.

Christina McElroy - 14 years in education

Christina is a music teacher in the Pasco School District. She will use her scholarship to attend Orff education training with a music education emphasis in dance, music and creativity.



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Michelle Heeb - 29 years in education

Michelle is a Spanish teacher at Puyallup High School. She has a passion for school safety and will use her scholarship to pursue an Associate of Applied Science degree in Homeland Security Emergency Management. Her goal is to improve emergency planning and response at the school and district level.



Jamie Howell - 17 years in education

Jamie is a high school special education teacher in the Willapa Valley School District. She will use her scholarship to attend a Love & Logic training in Colorado called "Love and Logic for the Classroom and Home Creating Respectful, Responsible and Mentally Healthy Kids."

Hillary Britt - 17 years in education

Hillary is a Washington Virtual Academy (WAVA) teacher serving students throughout the state. She lives in Des Moines and is employed by the Omak School District. She will use her scholarship to pursue an endorsement in library media.



Brenda Dutton - 9 years in education

Brenda is an IEP coordinator, coach, and learning specialist at the Central Valley Early Learning Center in Spokane Valley. She will use her scholarship to attend a Love and Logic conference in Denver, Colorado to become a certified Love & Logic trainer.

Natalie Foster - 10 years in education

Natalie is an art teacher at two middle schools in the Spokane School District. She is using her scholarship to earn a Masters in Art Education degree.



Information about the WEA-Retired Scholarships for 2020-21 will be posted on www.washingtonea.org/retired by November 1.

My trip to Africa continued

My time in Johannesburg left me with a desire to learn more about the city, before and after apartheid. My lasting impression of Johannesburg was an ugly history because of apartheid, but it was utterly fascinating and highly educational.

George – Feb. 22. Our second city was much more cheerful. We were greeted at the airport in George with singing, dancing and the key to the city. George has been Tacoma's Sister City since 1997, so Tacoma Mayor Victoria Woodards and other city leaders were a part of our delegation. That evening we were treated with a fantastic and succulent dinner by the host mayor and city officials.

One morning, I had the opportunity to attend a worship service much like my Baptist church at home. The children's choir and the women's choir blessed us with songs of praise and inspiration both in English and Afrikaans. I found the people warm and friendly, with each person greeting us with a hug or handshake. That afternoon was one of the highlights of our visit to George. We participated in their "All City Worship Service" organized as a way to bring community together. We were blessed with singing, dancing, and the spoken word from local artists and people from our own delegation. Mayor Woodards, who has a passion for choir music, directed an "All City Children's Choir" in two popular gospel songs. Renowned gospel recording artist, Crystal Aikin, a Tacoma native, was part of our delegation. Her music ministry is enjoyed all around the world. There were thousands of people in attendance.

The next morning was the most heartwarming highlight of our time in George. Our main focus was to supply uniforms to 108 school children whose parents did not have the resources to provide them (\$80 each). The looks of gratitude on the children's faces were very touching. With the help of friends, I was able to supply five uniforms. That afternoon we journeyed to Oudtshoorn, about 45 miles from George, to explore the Cango Caves (Coordinating Assembly of Non-Governmental Organizations). It is said that they were rediscovered in 1780 by a farmer looking for lost sheep. Tourists can go about two and a half miles into the cave. Since this was my first visit inside a cave, I was amazed at this underground wonder with spectacular halls, narrow tunnels and towering limestone formations. Since the acoustics were so great, Crystal rendered a breathtaking rendition of Hallelujah, which gave everyone goosebumps. On the main route, we passed several ostrich farms. This area is known as the ostrich capital of the world. I was able to become close and personal with some ostriches!

To culminate our stay in George, the mayor of Tacoma and the delegation hosted a farewell dinner for our host. Our time in George was absolutely amazing, from the warm welcome at the airport to the amazing church celebration, the uniform donations, and the beautiful landscape.

Cape Town – Feb. 25. We departed George early one morning for a 250-mile ride to Cape Town. On the way, we stopped at the Garden Route Game Lodge for lunch and experienced a two-hour safari adventure in an open Land Rover. There were sightings of elephants, lions, zebras, antelope, buffalo, cheetahs, hippos and many species of birds. The drive along the coast was breathtaking. We arrived just on the outskirts of Cape Town at about sunset and took some amazing photographs. We arrived at our hotel tired, but very satisfied.

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Cape Town is said to be one of the most beautiful cities in the world because of its beautiful beaches, breathtaking mountains, wine estates, great food, penguins, and spectacular views. After my visit, I am in total agreement. Also, in Cape Town we had the opportunity to visit Parliament and learn about the government of South Africa. I also visited a township in one of the poorest areas of Cape Town to get another perspective of the city. We enjoyed delicious food and atmosphere, with live music and dancing at Mama Africa.

Another exciting day was spent at the Cape of Good Hope. On the drive, we saw lots of seals, ocean-going birds, and the occasional ostrich. A ride up the mountain in the Flying Dutchman Funicular took us to the Cape Point Lighthouse. Cape Point is at the southeast corner of the Cape Peninsula where the Atlantic and Indian Oceans meet. We had to watch out for baboons because if we had any visible food, they would grab it from us. The mayor had her muffin stolen.

This was a stunning place with a good atmosphere, spectacular views and a memorable experience.

We were scheduled to tour Robben Island, the former political prison where Mandela spent 18 of his 27 years in prison. But because of high winds, the trip to Table Mountain was canceled. Table Mountain can be viewed from surrounding areas, much like our Mt. Rainier. It is called Table Mountain because it is shaped like a table, and the white clouds over it resemble a tablecloth. Although disappointed, I got to go to the Groot Constantia winery, the oldest wine estate in South Africa. Although not being a wine drinker, I enjoyed the samplings, especially since they were paired with chocolate. Our closing dinner was at a popular restaurant called Marco's. I was brave enough to try crocodile and sample a few other African dishes. My last morning in Cape Town was spent shopping at the Waterfront Mall near our hotel.

I left South Africa much smarter than when I arrived. I am so thankful that I had the opportunity to visit and experience these three amazing cities. I left feeling proud of my heritage and inspired to learn more.





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Important dates

July 2-3: NEA-RA/NEA-Retired Annual Meeting
<https://ra.nea.org/>

September 23 & 24: Virtual WEA-Retired Membership
Conference. Event is for WEA-Retired members only.

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