



Spring 2021



Connections

NEWS TO KEEP YOU ENGAGED IN THE PROFESSION YOU LOVE

Caring for Kids awarded \$10,000

By Lois Perkins, WEA-Retired Soundview

The WEA Board of Directors COVID-19 Community Relief Fund Committee approved a donation of \$10,000 to Caring for Kids. WEA-Retired nominated this organization because of its outstanding reputation in the Soundview Council for responding to food insecurity and supporting families in need of bedding, clothing and school supplies. Caring for Kids sponsors a back-to-school fair in August and a holiday fair in December. In spite of the COVID-19 restrictions this past December, Caring for Kids provided holiday cheer to over 600 families. Because many fund-raising events had to be canceled due to COVID-19 restrictions in 2020, Caring for Kids was a natural choice, as the families in need increased.

Congratulations to Diane Formoso and her dedicated volunteers, many of them longtime WEA members and now, WEA-Retired members. Diane Formoso's response upon receiving the news of the WEA funding:

Thank you so much! We are gearing up for Read Across America. We have distributed 2,170 beautiful Disney books to our three school districts for kindergarten and early learning. We paid \$1 each, and a box of 10 weighs almost 25 pounds with a value of \$17.

Children of the Valley awarded \$10,000

By Janis Swanson, WEA-Retired Fourth Corner

WEA-Retired Fourth Corner members have been involved in a book club focused on social justice and have also had speakers on the same topic. As we learn, read, and discuss the problems of racism in our country, I am often left with the question of how to apply and act on what I am learning with the limitation of being a retired educator, especially during the pandemic.

Through WEA-Retired, I learned of an opportunity to take a simple action to apply for funds made available through the WEA Board of Directors COVID-19 Community Relief Fund Committee to address COVID-19 financial impacts on community programs, especially those serving children of color. This money was reallocated due to budget changes, monies not being spent on travel, etc. I could think of no other program that so clearly met the application specifics other than Children of the Valley (COV). A very generous donation of \$10,000 was awarded to this most worthy of programs in Skagit Valley.

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The President's Corner

By Mary Lindsey, 2019-20 WEA-Retired President



Happy March! Spring is now just around the corner. Hopefully the snow is behind us.

This month, 22 WEA-Retired members will attend the NEA Leadership Institute and/or the NEA-Retired Conference, thanks to Zoom. Usually we just send two members. It is always energizing to share ideas with others from throughout the United States. Next month, we will have 44 WEA-Retired delegates attend the virtual WEA Representative Assembly. This will be the second year for a virtual RA. Last year, it was quite abbreviated, but this year New Business Items (NBIs) and Resolutions (our belief statements) will return.

On page seven of this *Connections*, you will find the 2021 Virtual WEA-Retired Annual Meeting Nomination Form. (You also received this form electronically in the Feb. 27 *e-Connections*.) The annual meeting is our version of the WEA-RA. Each chapter is eligible to send up to 12 delegates based on its membership count. Please consider nominating yourself or asking someone else to do so for positions listed on the form. It would be wonderful to have a full delegation from each chapter! It is also a good idea to have an alternate or two. WEA-Retired members may also attend as a non-delegate. Our annual meeting will have a combination of business, guest speakers, and sharing of information. Join us!

Our NEA-RA and NEA-Retired Annual Meeting will take place virtually in early summer. Our delegates are serving their second year of a two-year term. Check out page eight for all of the important dates scheduled so far.

Thank you for belonging to WEA-Retired! You can always contact me at wearetired@washingtonea.org.

WEA-Retired Scholarships

By Sandy Kokko, WEA-Retired Vancouver

At its inception in 1987, WEA-Retired had a strong legislative focus. Six years later, the pre-retirement seminar program began. In 1996, WEA-Retired awarded its first two scholarships to WEA active members, \$300 each, to “provide vital support to those seeking to enhance their skills or earn new endorsements.” Over the next 24 years, the program underwent two structural changes, received an endowment from Laura McVicker, and has awarded \$102,150 to 121 WEA members. Today, WEA-Retired Scholarships is an independent organization affiliated with WEA-Retired and awards up to ten \$1,000 scholarships each year.

Fundraising. The organization conducts two major fundraisers each year.

- There is a cash prize drawing where participants can win \$100, \$200 or \$300. Tickets are \$1, and the drawing takes place on Saturday of the WEA Representative Assembly.

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- At a banquet held during the WEA-Retired Annual Meeting, there are a variety of auction events in which attendees may participate.

WEA-Retired chapters raise funds throughout the year. Individuals make donations in memory of friends and loved ones. This year, Pilchuck UniServ donated \$1,000 in honor of Johnnie Tucker.

With the COVID-19 pandemic, the 2020 fundraisers were canceled when the WEA Representative Assembly and the WEA-Retired Annual Meeting changed to a virtual format. The scholarship board made the decision to reduce the number of scholarships to no more than five for 2021. WEA-Retired made a \$5,000 donation so the number of scholarships could once again offer up to 10 scholarships.

With the pandemic continuing its stranglehold, the WEA Representative Assembly and WEA-Retired Annual Meeting will once again be virtual formats. That means fundraising in 2021 needs a new look. Two lap quilts have been donated to the organization. Every \$5 donated will purchase a ticket for the quilt of your choice. Checks should be made out to WEA-Retired Scholarships and sent to WEA-Retired Scholarships, P.O. Box 820708, Vancouver, WA 98682. The winners will be announced in the next newsletter.

Looking for help

The selection team leader is responsible for dispersing scholarship application information to WEA UniServ Councils and getting the information onto the WEA-Retired website. The selection team evaluates the applications and then meets to determine the winners.

- There are openings on the team so, if you are interested in joining, please contact Bev Wentz at barwentz@comcast.net. The team will meet via Zoom in April 2021 to determine the recipients.
- Bev has filled the role of team leader for years. She has expressed a desire to retire from her position in the next year or so. If you are interested in taking on the role of selection team leader, please contact her.

The auction fundraiser held during the WEA-Retired Annual Meeting has been overseen by Sandy Kokko with the help of a group of volunteers. Sandy, too, has expressed a desire to hand that task off to someone else. If you are interested, please contact her at skokko1946@gmail.com.



Lobbying virtually in 2021 ... join us next year!

By Neva Luke, WEA-Retired Sammamish, 5th Legislative District

This year's Lobby Day, Feb. 8, was the fifth time WEA-Retired has partnered with the Retired Public Employees Council (RPEC) to meet with legislators and share our issues. The public employees have basically the same retirement plans, insurance plans, and other retirement benefits as WEA-Retired members, so it is a natural partnership of likeminded retirees. The big difference this year is that it was all virtual.

The RPEC staff did an amazing job with the training the morning on Lobby Day. They presented guidelines and tips of how to conduct virtual meetings with legislators. Our three top priorities for this legislative session are to protect the Medicare benefit for retirees, address the regressive tax system of our state, and strengthen the pension system.

The RPEC staff was outstanding with the training, making all the appointments with legislators. They were informative, organized, and efficient. We lobbied by legislative district, which also gave us an opportunity to meet and, over the years, get to know the RPEC members in our LD. I have found them to be knowledgeable and easy to work with. Many of our members have worked with their RPEC counterparts in other LD meetings and have attended each other's retiree meetings.

Since Lobby Day was virtual and no driving was required, we had more of our members participate than ever. Regardless of how Lobby Day is structured in the future, I strongly encourage you to join in. The more voices there are, the stronger the message.

Lobby Day (week) 2021

By Lois Perkins, WEA-Retired Soundview, 28th Legislative District

Our team met with Sen. Nobles first. We congratulated her on her election as senator. Such a breath of fresh air! Even to have a meeting with the senator of the 28th Legislative District was a big change over many years of being ignored. She is a real go-getter and is willing to listen. She welcomes emails, testimonial at hearings, or just signing in pro or con. She supports keeping the PEBB \$183 Medicare benefit and is looking for ways to make our state taxes fair for everyone.

Our visit with Mari Leavitt was also good. We thanked her for her support in passing the one-year COLA for TRS 1 and PERS 1 last session and reminded her the job is not done until it is permanent. She also supports the PEBB \$183 Medicare benefit, and we told her in future years we would like to see that increased. Her position on progressive tax relief was unclear, as it's too early in the session to commit.

We also visited with newly elected Dan Bronoske. He has deep roots in union work and supports both the PEBB Medicare benefit and progressive tax revenue.

I was also able to join in and listen to their joint Town Hall on Feb. 20. They answered questions from the public. I look forward to working with these legislators.

Lobbying with legislators on Zoom

By Gloria Smith, WEA-Retired Riverside, 17th Legislative District

I enjoyed talking with my three 17th Legislative District legislators this year on Zoom! No drive to Olympia in February. Sometimes when I have gone up in the past for lobbying before and after retirement, there was snow or ice to deal with!

The training was also on Zoom. We were given specific issues to ask about and get a commitment of either yes or no from each legislator. The training included a role play of talking with your legislator, once for “pro” and a second example for an opposing or “con” discussion. I hope we will lobby on Zoom next year too, and I would recommend more of our retirees join us!

Building relationships while lobbying

By Brigitte Tennis, WEA-Retired Lake Washington, 10th Legislative District

As a WEA-Retired member, I was able to participate in Lobby Day. The process was easy! As members, we were able to participate in a Zoom training on how to lobby and what items needed our attention. The talking points that WEA sent were very helpful and made me less nervous.

Retired Public Employees Council of Washington (RPEC) scheduled our online appointments with a legislator, and I was happy to note that we were in groups of 5-6 members per legislator so I would not have to carry the conversation alone!

On the appointed lobby day, a small group of WEA-Retired members met with Rep. Greg Gilday (R), a newly elected legislator from the 10th Legislative District. He spent almost 20 minutes meeting with us, hearing and responding to our concerns.

For me, the most important component of this first meeting was to build a relationship with our legislator. Relationships are the foundation of all communication, and it's important to create that positive trust before tackling potentially hard issues. I think of conversation more like a sandwich — the positive bread, the meaty hard issue, and then the positive bread again before we close. Some of the more experienced WEA-Retired members dove right in, so I just observed and listened.

Rep. Gilday was not in favor of the first issue mentioned, which was “progressive revenue” because he said that he opposed raising taxes at this point in time. After things got a little tense, I jumped into the conversation and brought up our other issue which was PEBB Medicare Benefit funding, asking him if he was in favor of it. The tension eased when the representative said that his wife was a teacher and that he was in favor of prioritizing funding for both PEBB and Medicare. We chatted a little more about teaching, and then the representative said that he would like to further establish a relationship with us. We thanked him and signed off.

I thought this experience was wonderful! Having several members on the team allowed us to “tag team” with different styles of communication. Our points were made, and we started the foundation of a relationship. We did, in fact, end up using the sandwich approach, which ended with the positive comments from Rep. Gilday that he would like to continue meeting with us and would be happy to have us contact him for more time to chat. I would like to see us schedule more intermittent time to chat with our representatives so it is not just once a year for an “ask”. Maybe that could be organized? This was a super experience!

WEA-Retired Pilchuck creates a unique 'give-back' during COVID

By Jeanne Bartlett, WEA-Retired Pilchuck

Pilchuck WEA-Retired has always participated in a give-back event in December. This year we knew we wanted to focus on seniors who were isolated by COVID -19 and/or lack of family connections. We also wanted to keep our members safe while providing a way to work together on an activity that would help to alleviate loneliness and isolation for seniors in our community.

Silver Kite, the wonderful organization that provides online connections through classes in the arts, was discovered. These classes are provided free through Sno-Isle Libraries as well as many other library systems during COVID. We contracted with one of their presenters, Suzie Treinen, to teach a ZOOM class on making POP-UP Cards. WEA-Retired Pilchuck paid for this class. Suzie joined us in our give-back by providing the class at a reduced fee. Thank you, Suzie!

Retirees from other councils were invited to join us. What fun we all had as we learned some cardmaking techniques. With much laughter, collaboration, conviviality and a little frustration, we cut and folded paper to make these holiday-themed cards.

Homage (Senior Services of Snohomish County) was delighted at the prospect of having the extremely creative and labor-intensive cards for their seniors. Michelle Frye arranged for the cards to be included in the Meals on Wheels Holiday deliveries.

WEA-Retired members across the state donated time, materials, labor, outstanding creativity and perseverance so that dozens and dozens of POP-UP cards were delivered in these meals. Some of our members delivered their cards to their local Meals on Wheels program or donated their cards to other senior facilities. Creating these one-of-a-kind cards was a wonderful way to work together and provide seniors a cheerful connection during the holiday season.

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COV has served children in need in Mount Vernon since 2006. It was started as an after-school support program, but with the pandemic, their needs expanded. COV began offering full-day services and had to open a second location. This year, the program has grown from serving 60 children to serving nearly 100 per day. Plans are in place to bring this program to two other local school districts.

The support for academics includes building bridges between teachers and families. The vast majority of children served are Hispanic and many are children of migrants, so to honor their culture, a cornerstone of COV is cultural enrichment. Family support, transportation, meals and snacks are provided as well. COV works to provide equal opportunities for the children to learn, feel supported, and thrive in all aspects of their lives. Many of the tutors involved in the program are bilingual college students returning to serve their communities. District paraeducators are also involved in the program.

While an active member, we often started building meetings with the question, "What has the union done for you?" Reflecting with gratitude on this generous donation for the children of my community, I think it is time we also ask what our union has done for others. Thankfully, even as retired members, even during a pandemic, one answer we can proudly give is that we are working for social justice.

2021 virtual WEA-Retired annual meeting nomination form

WEA-Retired will convene its annual meeting virtually on June 9-10. On odd numbered calendar years, our annual meeting delegates elect our president, vice president, and half of our board directors.

Non-chapter units: Kent (3), **Lake Washington** (1), North Central (3), Puget Sound (8), Rainier (5), **Sammamish** (10), **Seattle** (7), **Soundview** (2), Spokane (4), **Summit** (4), Vancouver (5), WEA Cascade (7), **WEA Eastern Washington** (7), **WEA Lower Columbia** (4), WEA MidState (6), WEA Olympic (8), WEA Riverside (6), and **WEA Southeast** (7). Board directors will be elected for the units in bold print. The number in parenthesis is the number of delegates the chapter is allowed in addition to the board director. **Non-chapter units' delegates will be elected at the March 25 WEA-Retired Board Meeting.**

Chapter units: Pilchuck (10), **Tacoma** (5), **WEA Chinook** (12), and **WEA Fourth Corner** (10). The units in **bold print** will be electing a board director this year. The number in parenthesis is the number of delegates the chapter is allowed in addition to the board director. **Chapter units should elect their delegates by April 30.**

This form may be used for nominating delegates from ALL councils, board directors, president, and vice president. Nominees for chapter units will be forwarded to the chapter leader to be included when the chapter elects its delegates. Non-chapter delegates will be elected during a meeting of WEA-Retired Board of Directors on March 25.

All nominees must be WEA-Retired members. More than one name may be submitted for each position. You may nominate yourself and/or another retired member. If you nominate someone other than yourself, you must have the consent of the nominee.

Submit your nomination information to Elections and Nominations Chair Diane Kanda at mdkanda@yahoo.com. You may scan the nomination form or list the requested information on an email.

Nominations are due by March 24. Submissions by U.S. Mail must be received by March 24 to Diane Kanda, 4595 Wynn Road, Bellingham, WA 98226. (See form below.)

2021 WEA-Retired nomination form — multiple positions

Your name _____ Retirement/separation date _____

Your email _____ Phone number _____

I nominate the following WEA-Retired members for:

DELEGATE	CHAPTER	BOARD DIRECTOR	CHAPTER
1.			
2.			
3.			
4.			

PRESIDENT	CHAPTER	VICE PRESIDENT	CHAPTER
1.			
2.			



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Important dates

March 12-14: Virtual NEA Leadership Summit
March 14-16: Virtual NEA-Retired Conference
March 24: Virtual WEA-Retired Executive Committee
March 25: Virtual WEA-Retired Board Meeting

Virtual WEA-RA

April 1, 6 -8 p.m.: WEA-RA Delegates, Business Session 1
Standing Rules & Adopted Procedures of WEA-RA
April 15, 2:30-4:30 p.m.: Mock Assembly for WEA-Retired Delegates
April 15, 6 -9 p.m.: WEA-RA Delegates, Business Session 2
April 16, 9 to Noon: WEA-RA Delegates, Business Session 3
April 16, 2-5 p.m.: WEA-RA Delegates, Business Session 4
April 17, 9 to Noon: WEA-RA Delegates, Business Session 5
April 17, 2-5 p.m.: WEA-RA Delegates, Business Session 6

May 6: Virtual WEA-Retired Executive Committee
June 8: Virtual WEA-Retired Executive Committee
June 9, 10 to noon: Virtual WEA-Retired Board Meeting

Virtual WEA-Retired Annual Meeting

June 9, 1-4 p.m. / June 10, 9 a.m. to 3 p.m.

Virtual NEA-Retired Annual Meeting (new dates!)

June 22-23

Virtual NEA-RA

June 30-July 3

Connections

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Connections is published by Washington Education Association-Retired four times a year. We invite your comments and contributions. During other months, a newsletter is sent to your email address. If you're not receiving those, please send an email to WEARetired@WashingtonEA.org.

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