



An interesting way to take part

Guess what I did last week? I volunteered at the WEA Representative Assembly at the Meydenbauer Center in Bellevue. I have attended Rep Assemblies in the past as a delegate, but not for many, many years. So, when my friend Michele Miller, President of the Bellevue Education Association (the host unit of the Rep Assembly), asked me if I wanted to volunteer, I said, "Why not?" I can honestly say I'm not sorry. Here's some of the benefits of volunteering:

- 1) *You are provided meals, mileage and any other expenses such as parking;*
- 2) *There were opportunities to do different assignments from Information Booth, Sergeant at Arms (making sure only legal delegates are allowed on the floor), phone/floor monitor (helping speakers who want to make motions and speak from one of 6 phones) and Pages (running information from the phones to head table)*
- 3) *If you can multi-task, you can listen to the speakers and the debate while performing*

your job but you could also get away if you wanted.

On Wednesday night, April 24, we had the volunteers' dinner and training session in the



By Chris Gray, LWEA, WEA-Retired

huge meeting room set up with tables and chairs for the 1,200+ delegates who would arrive on Thursday. The delegates are elected by the members of their local education associations. The WEA Rep Assembly, when in session, is the largest democratic deliberative body in the state. Tom Carter, the WEA Parliamentarian, handled

our training session where we learned about the procedures that would be used and what to expect when performing the various jobs. Tom has been doing this job for 38 years so I think we can assume he knows what he is doing. It was emphasized that volunteers did not need experience and, in fact, did not even need to have ever attended Rep Assembly as a delegate. Many of my fellow volunteers had never attended the Assembly before.

On Thursday, the first business meeting was gavelled to order by the current President of WEA, Mary Lindquist of Mercer Island. Much of the time was spent recognizing dignitaries and reviewing the procedures. It was exciting to see the two huge video screens following the proceedings and allowing speakers to be seen by the entire Assembly. This was the only meeting that adjourned on time, at 10:00 p.m. On Friday, there were two business meetings. The issues focused on Resolutions (the

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President's Message

Attending RAs with passion, pride

I attended my first WEA Representative Assembly (RA) at the SeaTac Red Lion in 1980. I am sure that the attendance was not even close to the 1,100 that attended the 2013 WEA RA, but it seemed humongous! I was so proud to be a part of this group who cared so passionately about our profession. We debated issues, elected officers and set the direction of WEA for the next year. It was democracy in action.

On April 25–27, I joined 31 other WEA-Retired members as delegates to the 93rd WEA



Kit Raney, WEA-Retired president

Representative Assembly at the Meydenbauer Center in Bellevue and I was still so proud to be a part of the over 1,100 passionate educators who attended this RA. If you have attended a WEA RA, you know that the days get long,

especially the last day. I was proud of the members of our WEA-Retired delegation who stuck it out until the very end on Saturday night. It is such a pleasure to see how much our retired members still care about their profession and public education!

Not surprisingly, many New Business Items (NBIs) that came to the floor concerned funding — more accurately, lack of funding — from the State. On Saturday morning, red clad delegates were bussed to Olympia for a rally on the Capitol steps. This sea of red educators was joined by supportive Legislators and Governor Inslee. The message which resonated loudly and clearly over the Capitol was about the funding of smaller class sizes and restoring educator cost-of-living adjustments.

During the RA, the delegates heard from Tom Ahearne, the lead attorney who was instrumental in winning the McCleary decision to fully fund our schools, and Senator Patty Murray, former educator and School Board member and a true champion of public education.

There were other bright spots during the RA. There was recognition of the huge accomplishments of our SIG schools. These are schools deemed “low achieving” by test scores that, with the help of their Associations, received federal School Improvement Grants (SIG). Because of the extra resources provided by SIG and help from their Associations, the SIG schools in Washington out-performed all other states. The Washington SIG schools were a shining example of how extra resources plus District/Association partnerships can help student achievement.

Another bright spot was the speech of the National Teacher of the Year. Jeff Charbonneau, a high school science teacher at Zillah High School in Zillah, 20 miles southeast of Yakima, was named the 2013 National Teacher of the Year. Although you can't hear the speech he gave to the Assembly, you can get a feeling for why he was chosen by watching this video <http://www.washingtonea.org/content/video/12/toy2013/frame.html>. It will almost make you wish you were back in school!

The delegates said “goodbye” to President Mary Lindquist. Her six years in office will finish when the gavel goes down ending NEA RA in Atlanta this July. Mary presided over her last

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Proposed budgets & retirement

by Lee Ann Prielipp, Legislative
Chair, WEA-Retired

The proposed Senate and House budgets are extremely different in how retirees are treated, or mistreated. Beginning May 13 there will be a Special Legislative session to determine the final State budget.

As we go to press, it is apparent that the proposed Senate budget is detrimental to retirees as it reduces the current monthly \$150 PEBB Medicare-Eligible Healthcare Subsidy to \$100 for retirees who have fewer than 20 years of service. Retirees would be “means tested”; those who earn more than \$80 per year of service credit in their pensions would see a \$50 monthly reduction in their subsidy. For a retiree with 30 years of service, it would affect those who earn a pension of more than \$2,400 each month. These reductions would be most difficult for retirees living on a fixed income. We already had the health care subsidy reduced from \$183 just two years ago.

This Senate Majority Coalition (formed when two Democrats joined the Republican Caucus) is attempting to create an optional defined-contribution retirement system for new employees. This 401(k) style retirement plan would severely limit the retirement incomes of future teachers.

House Democrats proposed a budget that contains no reductions for school retirees. It also makes the full, actuarially recommended pension payment to the State’s pension funds. This budget retains the Medicare-Eligible Healthcare Subsidy at \$150 per month.

Contacting your Legislators to express your concerns regarding these issues is important. Legislators supporting no changes deserve our thanks and encouragement to continue supporting retirees.



*Lee Ann Prielipp, Chair of the
WEA-Retired Legislative Task Force*



*Posters are stacked on a table at
WEA Rep Asscmly, awaiting
transport to Olympia with WEA
delegate citizen lobbyists. Photo
by Chris Gray, whose article
appears on page one.*

Representative Assembly

Taking part (volunteering) at R.A. *(continued from page 1)*

philosophical positions of the organization) and the beginning of New Business Items (the action items).

On Saturday morning, 1,300 delegates and staff went to Olympia to meet with legislators and to hear from supportive legislators about what was happening with education and teacher issues. They were transported on 36 large buses. Most of the delegates wore red clothes, standing for "Wear Red for Public Ed." This was the first time WEA has taken the Rep Assembly to Olympia to lobby. Everyone thought it was well worth the time and, hopefully, they made an impact. Saturday evening was the last business session. Here are, briefly, some of the issues I heard discussed:

1) Teachers are having difficulty demonstrating concern about what's happening at the

state and federal levels because they are "buried" by classroom issues like too many students, unsupportive parents and administrators.

2) There is a definite lack of passion in joining and participating in Association activities.

3) There are feelings of hopelessness about the current state of public education.

4) Teachers are still very passionate about their students.

There was a tribute to Mary, thanking her for her tenure as WEA President. She cannot run again and the delegates elected a new WEA President and Vice President. The tribute was MCed by Meeghan Black of King-5 TV who was a former debate student of Mary's. Speakers included family, the President of the Mississippi Association, a video from NEA President, colleagues and finally, Christine Gregoire, for-

mer Governor. All had glowing things to say about Mary's work.

Elected as the new WEA President is Kim Mead, current President of the Everett Education Association. Here's her comment from the *Everett Herald*, "My specific goal is to make sure education remains number one in our legislators' minds. The work in front of us is great, but the rewards for our members and our students are worth the hard work." Stephen Miller, past President of the Bellevue Education Association was elected Vice President.

So, if anyone asks you if you want to volunteer at the WEA Rep Assembly, I urge you to also say, "Why not?" They really appreciate your time and it is fun to talk with teachers and other educational employees who are currently fighting the political battles at the local, state and national levels.

President's message *(continued from page 2)*

WEA RA and has been an outstanding leader and spokesperson for the 82,000 members of WEA. I feel privileged to have worked with Mary and hope she enjoys her well-earned retirement. The RA elected Kim Mead as the next WEA President. I am very confident that Kim will continue the tradition of strong and accomplished WEA presidents and look forward to working with her.

After 33 years of attending WEA Representative Assem-

blies, I feel great pride in our organization and appreciate WEA-Retired as part of this great union. There is much to do to improve public education. Our work will never be finished. You know the difference you made when you were working. Speak up about the importance of public education. Speak up about the importance of smaller class size. Speak up and support our educators. As a retired educator, your voice means a lot. Use it.



Incoming WEA President Kim Mead, from Everett EA.

Member Activities

Opportunity knocks in Clarkston

by Karle Warren, WEA-Retired SouthEast Board Director & Executive Board member

Clarkston may be rural, but there is always something exciting going on. I received an invitation from the Clarkston School District to be part of a new advisory group called “Key Communicators.” “Just what are ‘Key Communicators’ and what is their purpose?” I asked.

The Key Communicators are an advisory group comprised of respected community leaders who have a strong connection to Clarkston. The group’s purpose is to provide input on District facility and strategic planning while striving to strengthen support within our community.

Hmm. I was born and reared in Clarkston, my K-12 education was completed in Clarkston, 32 of my 35 years in education were accomplished here, and I was an association leader and bargainer for over 27 years. And, most of all, I have very strong opinions about the Clarkston School District and the students we are preparing to become extraordinary community/state leaders. I just might be qualified! I accepted the invitation!

At our first gathering for introductions to other participants, goal-setting and dinner, I was very pleased to see many selected parents, county commissioners, levy and bond coordinators, lawyers and business persons that make our community successful.

A few weeks later, six out of the 15 participated in the District’s Bus Tour. Oh, joy — a bus tour!!! For an individual who usually gets sick on buses, I made it without incident! (It must have been the fascination with the wi-fi on the bus.) The group toured Heights Elementary and Lincoln Middle school classrooms. At Heights Elementary (the school I retired from), the visitors saw kindergarteners comparing and contrasting and fifth-graders using scientific methods to report out on soil erosion experiments. At Lincoln Middle School, the visitors were informed about the progress of the cross-curriculum tiered program used with struggling readers.

More gatherings are planned with the Clarkston School District and I am very proud to say I am WEA-Retired and representing my retired colleagues.

I encourage all WEA Retirees to answer the door when opportunity knocks. You never know where it my lead ... but adventures are the key to exciting days ahead.



WEA-Retired member Karle Warren (center) is one of Clarkston’s Key Communicators who visited a 5th-grade classroom to watch a lesson reporting the results of soil erosion experiments. These community members will be influential messengers to their peers about school programs, and will help their district plan for its future. What a perfect volunteer opportunity for a retired teacher!

Social Security by the numbers

by Kit Raney, WEA- Retired President

Financial security during retirement depends on the stability of these three legs: your pension, your savings and Social Security. If any of these provide less money than anticipated, financial security can be in danger. The current attacks on Social Security are attacks on our financial security.

How important is Social Security? It is the foundation of retirement security for almost all Americans. While monthly benefits average a modest \$1,260, they are the main source of income for most seniors. Two-thirds of elderly beneficiaries count on Social Security for more than half of their income, including a third who rely on it for 90 percent or more. The program keeps more than 21 million Americans out of poverty. In the State of Washington, 6.7 percent of Social Security recipients age 65+ are living in poverty. Without Social Security, that percentage would jump to 40 percent. Protecting Social Security is important.

People like Social Security. To better understand Americans' perspectives on Social Security and their preferences regarding options to strengthen the program for the future, the National Academy of Social Insurance partnered with Mathew Greenwald & Associates to conduct a multigenerational study. Here is some of what the study found:

1) Americans don't mind paying for Social Security because they value it for themselves (80%), for their families (78%), and for the security and stability it provides to millions of retired Americans, disabled individuals, and children and widowed spouses of deceased workers (84%).

2) 89% of Americans agree that "Social Security benefits now are more important than ever to ensure that retirees have a dependable income."

3) 82% of Americans, including 74% of Republicans, 88% of Democrats and 83% of independents, agree it is critical to preserve Social Security for future generations even if it means increasing Social Security taxes paid by working Americans.

4) 87% of Americans — including 71% of Republicans, 97% of Democrats, and 86% of independents — want to preserve Social Security for future generations even if it means increasing taxes paid by wealthier Americans.

Politicians of both parties have, and are, using the deficit as an excuse to go after Social Security even though Social Security is funded separately and doesn't contribute to the deficit.

The "chained CPI" proposal in President Obama's budget is the latest attack on Social Security as it would reduce adjustments that are designed to keep pace with the cost of living. Social Security recipients would have less buying power because the benefits would not keep up with the cost of living. The chained CPI cuts cumulative benefits for an average worker retiring today at age 65 by \$28,015 if fortunate enough to live to age 95.

For additional information about protecting Social Security, visit *Strengthen Social Security* at www.strengthensocialsecurity.org and contact your members of Congress.

Member Activities

Blog? . . . what's a blog?

by Nancy M. Miller,
editor, WE...Too

Last newsletter, I asked WEA-Retired members who maintained blogs to let me know their address so I could write about it (or so *they* could write about it). My mail box, electronic or otherwise, remained undisturbed.

So I sat down at my computer.

To catch up the non-techies in our ranks, a 'blog' is the electronic equivalent of a newspaper column. The word comes from "web" (as in WWW, the World-Wide Web) and "log" (as in the daily record kept by

a ship's captain). "Weblog" quickly became abbreviated to "blog".

Blog subjects range from family-oriented records

which can be found at <http://campdreamlake.wordpress.com/>. If you want to read about poodles and Paris, grandchildren and yacht delivery, this might be for you.



Nancy Miller, WE...too editor, reads blogs on a variety of subjects, but does not blog herself.

If you want the latest info debunking aura-reading or the Bermuda triangle, or whatever is up in the world of things that go bump in the night, Gordon Bonnett's blog, Skeptophilia (which received its 250,000th hit last

month) can be found at <http://skeptophilia.blogspot.com/>. (Gordon teaches AP Biology and Physics, is a colleague from past years, and was a WEA member until he wandered off to upstate New York, where he has been a local president.)

Wikipedia has a list of blogs under the search term "list of blogs." If you use that search term in Google, it'll bring you more than you can imagine. Frankly (... pause ...), I advise use of Advanced Search.

If you have a blog, please let me know ... then we won't have to search for it.

of reunions and travel, to humor, to expressions of personal perspective, to craft circles, to political commentary, to guides, to religious reflection. In a way, Mary Lindquist's e-chalk (at www.washingtonea.org) is a blog. Any and all topics can, and do, find their way into blogs.

Jack McKenna, past president of Lake Washington EA, now ship's pilot and island resident, writes a blog called "Upper Left: Island Living Off the Coast of Washington State,"

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*Never doubt that
a small group of
thoughtful, committed
citizens can change the
world; indeed, it's the
only thing that ever has.
— Margaret Mead*

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