Sno-King
School Retirees

The SKSR Bulletin

January-February 2025

A message from your board

What's happening

by Jim Siscel, chair

We want to extend a huge THANK YOU to Debbie Hubbell and Robin Randles. Debbie has joined our board and will be taking care of the folding and mailing of our Bulletin. Robin has supervised the newsletter folding parties for several years.

Debbie retired in June after 30+ years of working at the elementary level. Her last assignment was teaching fifth grade at Syre Elementary in the Shoreline District. Debbie will be contacting those who have helped with folding the *Bulletin*.

Legislative efforts in 2025

Please read the article about our legislative efforts for this year. When you are asked to write your legislators, please do so. It does make a difference. Please, Plan 2&3 members, write to support the effort to get a permanent COLA for those Plan 1 members who do not have one.

The legislative priorities for this year are: 1. Restore a permanent Automatic Plan 1 COLA. 2. Protect the $183 Retiree Medical Benefits. 3. Maintain full actuarially funded pension payments. 4. Enhance benefits in Plans 2&3 by lowering retirement ages.

Grants to active teachers

It was exciting to the Board that we were able to use almost all $15,000 that we had budgeted for our Active Educator Grants. Karen McElliott, who does a fantastic job chairing this committee, has shared information and photos from grant presentations in this issue.

Can you volunteer to help send emails?

We still need a person to send out emails one to four times a month. We have purchased the Mail Chimp program, which makes

(chair's message continued on page 2)

OFFICERS

vacant, President
Cathy Webb, Vice President
Jan Phillips, Secretary
Jennifer Altena, Treasurer

COMMITTEE CHAIRS

Linda Fitzgerald/Keith Lindaas, Scholarships
Robin Randles, Health
Lynda Hughes, Community Service
Linda Lee, Humanities Washington
Barb Bumgardner, Sunshine
Karen McElliott, Active-Member Grants
vacant, Legislative
Jim Siscel, Membership/Retirement/Website
Deby Comfort, Membership Records
Debbie Hubbel, *Bulletin* Mailing
vacant, E-mail Distribution
Jo Caldwell, *Bulletin* Editor

Our next event
February 20
by Linda Lee

HUMANITIES WASHINGTON

UFOs in the Northwest featured at our February meeting

Join us at our General Membership meeting on February 20, 2025, to hear speaker Steve Edmiston, from Humanities Washington, present *UFO Northwest: How Washington State Spawned the Men in Black.*

Edmiston was the screenwriter and co-producer of "The Maury Island Incident," a film chronicling the story of the alleged sighting of a UFO over Puget Sound.

The event takes place in the Board Room of the Edmonds School District ESC, 20420 68th Ave. W., Lynnwood, WA 98036.

We will begin at 12 noon with meet and greet time; then a brief business meeting followed by Steve Edmiston's presentation at 1 pm.

Mark Your Calendar!

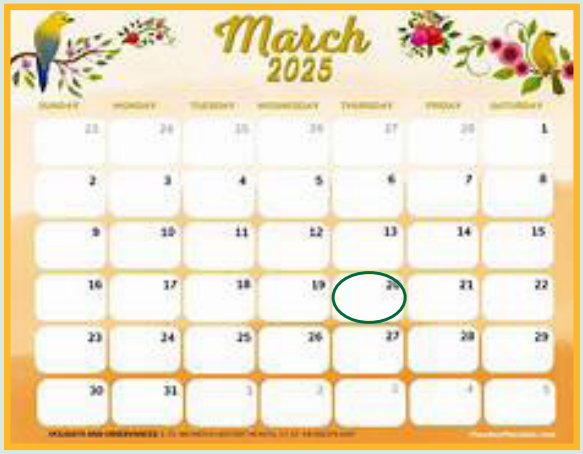
by Karen McElliott

This year's SKSR field trip will be a guided tour of Edmonds Cascadia Art Museum. The museum is located next to the Edmonds train station.

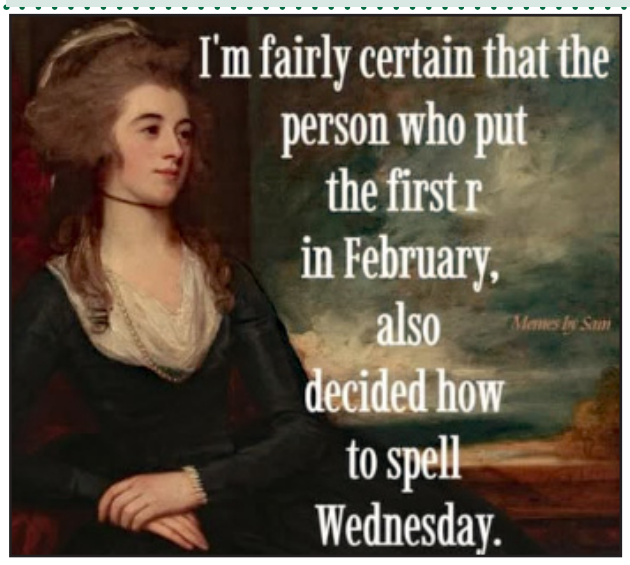
The tour is set for Thursday, March 20, at 11:00. Cost is $9 for seniors.

At that time, there will be several new exhibits on display.

One will be "Silent Songs: The Photography of Johsel Namkung." Namkung, was born in Korea and trained as a classical musician; he immigrated to Seattle after WWII where he attended the University of Washington and eventually transitioned to photography.



Look for an email with more information, including sign up and money collection, at the end of January/the beginning of February.



(chair's message continued from page 1)

this job easy. The program is set up with groups that you can assign each message to. Everyone, please put the following address in your Contacts list: information@sksr.org. This will ensure that our emails reach you.

The Edmonds School District will be providing its annual Retirement Seminars beginning on Thursday, February 27, and continuing for the following three weeks. When we get the final schedule, we will send out an email with that information. You must sign up to attend one of the seminars.

We have some great programs and a field trip planned for 2025, Please watch for their announcements in our *Bulletin*.

Legislatve update

2025 Legislative session begins

by Emmett Mills, WSSRA Legislative Coordinator

The 2025 Legislative Session is almost here and there is good news and bad news to share.

Here's the good news

In November, the Select Committee on Pension Policy unanimously approved a plan to restore an ongoing cost-of-living adjustment (COLA) to TRS 1 and PERS 1 retirees. If enacted by the legislature, TRS 1 and PERS 1 retirees will get the same annual COLA that members of most other state-managed pension plans receive. This is a huge win for retirees, who have waited 13 years for their benefits to be restored. The proposal will be introduced as a bill in January for the legislature's consideration.

Here's the bad news

Unfortunately, this victory couldn't have come at a worse time. According to projections from November, the state is expected to face a budget shortfall of between 10 and 12 billion dollars over the next four years. This will likely force lawmakers to explore budget cuts and/or find new revenue sources. It will make it extremely difficult to pass bills that involve new spending.

Revenue projections

Revenue projections are informed by ever-changing economic data. It is possible that financial conditions could improve between now and March, when a forecast will be made to determine the legislature's budget for the upcoming biennium. While it faces long odds, we must continue to ask our legislators to pass the TRS 1 and PERS 1 ongoing COLA bill in 2025.

While revenue projections have the potential to improve by March, they also have the potential to get worse. We've learned from experience that in a true budget crisis, pensions and health insurance benefits are far from secure. For this reason, we will be prepared to play defense. One of our least secure benefits is the health insurance subsidy that the state provides to Medicare plans offered through the Public Employees Benefits Board (PEBB). The state automatically pays 50% of the premium (up to $183 per month) for Medicare-eligible retirees who get health insurance through PEBB. We must keep funding for this program in the budget. We must also ensure that the legislature continues to fully fund all pension plans. TRS 1 and PERS 1 retirees know that pension underfunding can lead to loss of benefits.

Please sign up for our email list

There will be many opportunities to get involved during the legislative session. To make sure you're getting the latest news, please go to www.wssra.org and sign up for our email list.

Questions, comments, or concerns? Contact WSSRA Legislative Coordinator Emmett Mills at emmett@wssra.org or (360) 413-5496 ext. 2.

Scholarship news

Applications due March 17

by Linda Fitzgerald, scholarship co-chair

Scholarship application forms will be in the high schools and on our website for those students graduating in 2025 from one of the public high schools in Edmonds, Northshore, or Shoreline School Districts and who are planning a future as a teacher or other school-related employee. We will award four scholarships, each worth $2,500, to students planning to obtain a degree in one of these fields.

Applications may be obtained from the high-school career center or the SKSR website (www.SKSR.org). The deadline for submission is March 17, 2025. We will honor our recipients and meet their parents at our Scholarship Luncheon in April!

One of our former members, Winnie Smith, made a generous donation in her will for scholarships. We use this money to extend each of these scholarships $1,000 for three more years, providing students are progressing in their academic program with the goal of being in education.

Donations to the General Scholarship Fund or the Winnie Smith Scholarship Fund are always welcome.

Grants news

$14,421 awarded to active members this year

by Karen McElliott, grants chair

This fall, SKSR's active members were offered the opportunity to apply for mini-grants of up to $400 for work with their students. Typically, grants are awarded for speakers, field trips, tickets, and classroom materials (e.g., manipulatives, books, and class equipment). Forty-two grants were awarded a total of $14,421. To date, SKSR has distributed over $139,000 in grants to aid students in our three districts.

EDMONDS SCHOOL DISTRICT

Cedar Way Elementary

Leann Onishi: Materials to create two Sound Walls, one in the Title 1 classroom and another in a 1st grade classroom. (Title 1 Reading)

Lynndale Elementary

Stacey Sateren and **Jill Walzer**: Color printers to produce visuals to teach vocabulary and concepts to multilanguage learners. (1st/2nd and 2nd grades)

Lynnwood Elementary

Alicia Wilson: Signage to improve student independence in finding library materials, including Dewey dividers and genre dividers. (Librarian Information Specialist)

Seaview Elementary

Brian Kelly: Materials, such as headphones, cushions, and book tubs, to organize the classroom's literacy area. (1st grade)

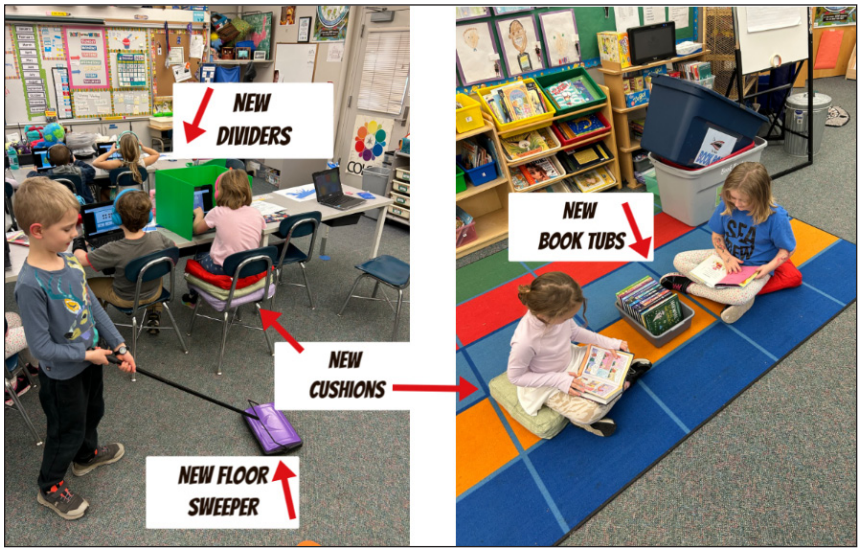
Catherine Mathias: A set of *The Lightning Thief* for a split class's novel study. (5th/6th grade)

Spruce Elementary

Melissa Hart: Bus transportation to the Hazel Miller Universally Accessible Playground. (Developmental Kindergarten)

Terrace Park Elementary

Lisa Klukas: Wobble stools for alternative seating. (Kindergarten)



First grade Seaview students show off some materials their teacher Brian Kelly received to help organize the classroom's literacy practice.

NORTHSHORE SCHOOL DISTRICT

Canyon Creek Elementary

Joanne Burkett: Materials to supplement the building's *Camp You Matter* curriculum. (2nd grade)

Dylan D'Entremont: Science books to support a science/research project. (5th grade)

Woodmoor Elementary

Valerie Heinzen and **Maddie McGinnis**: Materials to use to support speech and language development. (Speech Language Pathologist)

SHORELINE SCHOOL DISTRICT

Briarcrest Elementary

Jafeet Corral: Organizational materials to help develop biliteracy in a dual language classroom. (2nd grade)

Emma LeBlanc: Materials to enhance a social studies unit in which students teach Kindergarten. (1st grade)

Janet Shin: Items for the classroom's reset station and high-interest books. (ELL)

Anna Stuart: Chapter books for strong readers who need books with appropriate complexity. (1st grade)

Cascade K-8 Community School

Janet Markwardt: High-interest books for LAP students. (LAP Reading and MLL)

Laura Reed: Online math subscription for students with IEPs who need additional practice. (Resource Room K-8)
Sheryl Yost: Headphones and a wobble chair. (K/1st grade)

Echo Lake Elementary

Jean Bolivar: Non-fiction books about current athletes and sports history to update the school library. (Teacher Librarian)
Allison Hoover: Soccer balls to replace and expand the P.E. department's existing equipment. (PE Specialist)
Karen Nicholson: Transportation and tickets for a Seattle Symphony performance. (5th grade)

Einstein MS

Peter Reni: Class-designed T-shirts for the school's AVID elective. (8th grade Math and AVID)

Lake Forest Park Elementary

Natalie Campbell (1st), **Jessica Hendrick** (1st), **Grace Kim** (4th), **Rhonda Okazaki** (2nd), **Pauline Olson** (1st):, and **Lori Scobie** (4th) Class subscriptions to the IXL math program.
Britt Harris: Soprano ukuleles and an automatic tuner for the music department. (Office Manager)
Frank Kleyn: Non-fiction dog breed books for third-grade research unit. (Teacher Librarian)
Aimee Miner: Transportation and tickets to Shorecrest HS's production of *Peter and the Starcatche*r. (Principal)
Ingrid Rigsby: Classroom books written in a variety of languages. (MLL)

Lake Forest Park students pass the Shoreline High School cast as they exit the theater after watching a performance of Peter and the Starcatcher. *Principal Aimee Miner used her grant to help pay for transportation.*

Paige Robson: Updated Zones of Regulation materials to support the school's social/emotional objectives. (School Counselor)
Kathy Ross: Tickets for the Everett Imagine Children's Museum. (Kindergarten)
Maggie Smith: A tenor marimba and a soprano marimba for music classes. (Music)

Meridian Park Elementary

Lisa Sezate: Copies of *Where the Mountains Meet the Moon* for a class novel study. (5th grade)

Ridgecrest Elementary

Susan Clyde: An all-school assembly with Alan Zerbe. (1st grade)

Presenter Mary Lynn Potter (center) is flanked by Syre grant recipients Chrisy Francescutti (left) and Michelle Carroll.

Monica Holdridge: UFLI-aligned readers, chapter books, and decodable readers. (Reading Specialist K-5)
Stephanie Laviola: Art supplies to use in the study of the seven elements of art. (4th grade)

Syre Elementary

Michelle Carroll: Sets of social studies-themed books. (Principal)
Chrisy Francescutti: Spanish and Korean editions of popular titles for MLL students. (Librarian)

Karen McElliott (left) recognizes Lake Forest Park grant recipients Joanne Burkett and Dylan D'Entremont.

Health news

Adapting to low vision

compiled by Robin Randles, health chair

As we age, our eyesight continues to change. Vision changes can also be caused by age-related macular degeneration, glaucoma, or diabetic retinopathy. Low vision is reduced vision that can't be fixed with glasses. Low vision makes daily tasks and walking harder.

Many accommodations are available

Once glasses are no longer sufficient, other tools can help. Handheld magnifiers with a light and magnifying domes that can be placed on top of a page are simple fixes. Stand magnifiers help when you want your hands free or if your hands are a bit shaky. "Around the neck" magnifiers help when you want your hands free, as well.

Make sure your workspace is well lighted. Use higher-rated lumen bulbs. Use a gooseneck lamp so it will bend to the area you need lighted. Add more lamps to your home. Carry a higher-rated lumen pocket flashlight. Reduce glare by adjusting inside lights. Wear a wide-brimmed hat, visor, or ball cap outside. To increase contrast, use a colored tablecloth with white dishes. Put black contact paper on a desk where you use white papers. Use heavy, bold markers when you make lists. Put bright tape on the edge of stairs, and declutter your home so there are no trip hazards.

Find a source for help

Work with an optometrist or ophthalmologist who specializes in low vision. These doctors have tools and tips that can help. Your regular eye doctor can recommend a low-vision specialist. Occupational therapists can also provide strategies and training to help with mobility. There are also websites that can help you understand low vision and can help you search for doctors in your area like the American Optometric Association, the Foundation for Fighting Blindness and Helen Keller Services.

Optometrists can help with glasses-mounted telescopes to help see farther away. Prisms can help move an image to an area when you can see it. There are even telescopes that can help people with certain types of low vision, drive safely.

Technology can make a difference

Advances in technologies have revolutionized what people with vision impairment can do. Most smart phones, tablets, lap tops, and desktop computers have built-in tools that can help people with vision impairment. These accessibility features can enlarge the text or cursor size, adjust a screen's contrast, zoom in for a close-up of anything on screen, turn speech into text, and read information out loud.

Most devices, including smart speakers, also have built-in digital assistants like Apple's Siri or Amazon's Alexa that understand voice commands and can complete tasks for you. For example, you can tell a digital assistant to make a phone call, look up information online, read the news or the weather aloud, place a grocery order, give you directions, send an email or text message, type out information in a document, play music, read you a book, or operate other smart home devices (such as lights, thermostats, appliances, or home security systems). These digital devices and apps can be portable, lower-cost option vision aids. Not all technology is free, so check out the information about each app or item.

There are also handheld and wearable devices like OrCam and IrisVision that can describe a scene you are looking at or read documents.

Technology is not a cure-all for those with low vision. People with low vision will need other devices and aids as well. They will need to work with specialists to rehabilitate their vision. Many options are available to help those with low vision from low-tech to high-tech devices, and there are specialists who work with those who have low vision. With AI, who knows what new applications will be available in the future?

Our last event

Living Voices makes presentation at first meeting of year

by Lynda Hughes, program chair

Living Voices member Rachel Rene presents information about the World War II-era Japanese Internment. As part of the presentation, she played the role of a family member who was taken to a camp.

November 14 was the first SKSR meeting of this school year. More than 30 of us met at the Shoreline Center. After visiting, we enjoyed a delicious teriyaki lunch.

First on the program was Susana Reyes, superintendent of Shoreline, who showed us a Power Point of many student activities and explained the district's budget.

Next, the group called Living Voices presented a multimedia program about the Japanese Internment. One of the members of the group, Rachel Rene, portrayed a child whose family was taken to a camp.

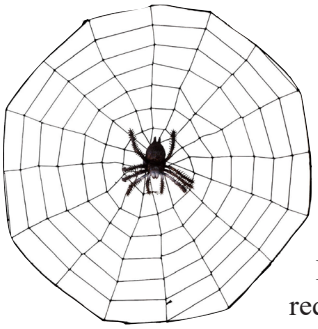
We saw pictures of actual events. We also learned about life in the camp and what happened to the family when it returned home.

Although the child and family were not real, the pictures and events were. The performance was very moving, and the pictures on the screen enhanced the topic.

Rachel had a question-and-answer session after the program. She was extremely knowledgeable about her topic.

Living Voices has many different programs; it might be fun to choose another in the future.

Rachel Rene shows the certificate of appreciation presented to her by SKSR member Lynda Hughes, who chaired the November event.



Check out our website

Information for your use

by Jim Siscel, SKSR webmaster

- If you are a Plan 1 retiree and are interested in the Plan 1 Cola Study requested by the Legislature, you can find it on our website, www.sksr.org. There is a link on the Home Page at the top of the page under "Special News."
- Go to www.drs.gov to find a myriad of information concerning retirement. Near the top of the Homepage are various major headings that you can click on for further information. Scroll down the page to find areas that may be of interest to you. If you subscribe at the top of the page, you will receive email updates on new information. Some may or may not interest you, but most probably will.
- Look at our website. There is lots of information on it. On the Home Page, you can see when new information is added. As webmaster, I work hard to keep it up-to-date.

"I have a dream"

January 20

Help us with the *Bulletin*

The deadline for the next *Bulletin* is **February 13**.

Please send changes in your mailing address, telephone number, or e-mail address to Deby Comfort, dailicom@hotmail.com, or call 425-652-0952.

If you would like to help fold and prepare the *Bulletin* for mailing *on* **Monday, March 3**, contact Debbie Hubbell: debbiehubbell5@gmail.com, or call 206-947-0889.

If you know of illness, please call Sunshine Chair Barb Bumgardner, 206-364-8413.