The Voice

A Newsletter for Yakima County School Retirees November 2026

Meet Your Legislators from the 14th & 15th Districts



Sen. Curtis King 14th



Rep. Deb Manjarrez 14th



Rep. Gloria Mendoza 14th



Former Rep. Jeremie Dufault 15th



Rep. Chris Corry 15th

Our November program is being arranged by Larry Scholl, our YCSRA Legislative Coordinator. All of the representatives pictured have been invited to attend our next General Meeting. They will have a time to address the group and then answer our questions.

The 2027 session begins in January. One legislative position for the 15th district is currently vacant pending election. Vote early and use the drop boxes around the county. If you have to mail, leave plenty of time-the post office doesn't pickup everyday. Postmarks will be important this election!

Legislative Hot-line: 1-800-562-6000
Operational only during the legislative session

FALL 2026 Webinars

WSSRA will be hosting two webinars this fall.

The first webinar will be geared towards retirees and the second webinar towards active educators interested in early retirement options.

REGISTER BY VISITING: WWW.WSSRA.ORG

You will receive a confirmation email with the link to join the webinar.



HEALTH CARE AUTHORITY (PEBB) WEBINAR
OCTOBER 14, 2026 | 1PM

Join us on October 14 as we welcome special guests from the Washington State Health Care Authority to talk about PEBB insurance and rate changes for 2027.

PRE-RETIREMENT WEBINAR
HEALTH INSURANCE & EARLY RETIREMENT
OCTOBER 27, 2026 | 5PM

Please join us for this free, WSSRA hosted event. Choosing a health plan when switching from work to retirement is complicated. Doing it before Medicare eligibility at age 65 is complicated AND expensive. It shouldn't be that way! If you're wondering what it takes to find medical insurance for an early retirement, please join us on October 27. Representatives from the State Health Care Authority and the Washington Health Care Exchange will give presentations and be available to answer participant questions.

THE VOICE

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Mini-grants
Linda Sumner
509 248 1875

General Meeting

When: **Monday, November 2, 2026**

Where: **Englewood Christian Church, 511 N 44th Avenue, Yakima**

Fellowship: **12:30pm–1:00pm**
Coffee, Tea and Refreshments

Program: **14th and 15th Legislative Representatives**

The following people have signed up to bring the following:

FOOD		**DRAWING PRIZES**	
1. Joanne Burns	509 930 7725	1. Jane Watson	509 823 4289
2. Rosemary Saul	509 424 0701	2. Nora Ranta	509 952 8161
3. Nancy Lindgren	509 307 8048	3. Jim Churchley	509 965 2636
4. Connie Carpenter	509 388 6252	4. Connie Carpenter	509 388 6252
5. Sandy St. Mary	509 573 5071	5. Kathy Schultz	509 966 9341

If you want your issue of 'The Voice' delivered by e-mail, YOU must be certain that Sandy Gavin has your current email address: sandyg1948@gmail.com

The newsletter will come from newsletter@yakima-county-sra.org



Make sure we have your proper email

If you have changed your email address in the last year or you are not receiving your newsletter by your preferred method, please let Sandy Gavin know ASAP. Thanks!
Sandy Gavin, sandyg1948@gmail.com

Opinions expressed in **The Voice** are those of the authors and do not necessarily represent the view of the YCSRA Board or the editor.

Editorial contributions and articles as well as ideas for articles are welcome. The deadline is the 12th of each month.

Send information to:
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heather@payne-design.com

WE SEND OUT WSSRA GREETINGS!

Let's support our members with get well wishes, condolences, thank yous, congratulations, thinking of you and more. Email or call me with names and I'll get the card(s) sent out for you. Email: cmstenehjem@msn.com or 509-966-3409. Leave a message if no one answers.

~ Millie Stenehjem

Mini-grant Application

As a member of Yakima County School Retirees you are eligible to apply for a mini-grant to use with the children of your school. These grants are intended for special projects or classroom materials. **Grants up to $500 are available.** It is a token of our appreciation for all that you do to help students achieve their potential. This year we have **$12,000** to award. So let us help you with that great idea you have for your class or school.

Grant Applications must be received by **Thursday, Nov. 12, 2026.** Applicants receiving grants will be notified by Dec.14, 2026. If you receive a mini-grant, we ask that you plan to share with us a written description along with pictures of how this mini-grant benefited your students. This will become part of our May 3, 2027 general meeting.

Please send to Linda Sumner, 2607 Clinton Way, Yakima, WA 98902 by April 16, 2027.

Please complete the application below and attach your type-written grant details. Please make it brief and specific.

KEEP FOR YOUR RECORDS
RETURN TO LINDA SUMNER

MINI-GRANT APPLICATION

Applicant Name _____

Grant Title _____

Amount Requested $_____ **Number of Students Served** _____

Program Description – Please attach a separate type-written letter outlining Grant details.

Applicant Home Phone _____

Applicant Email _____

School Name _____

School Address _____

School Phone _____

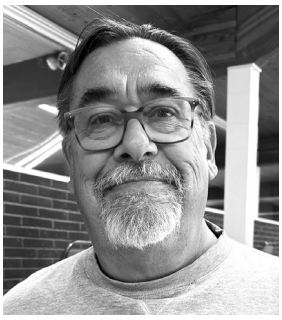
Supervisor/Principal Name _____

Supervisor/Principal Signature _____

Your Signature _____

Please return this completed application with your grant description to: Linda Sumner, YCSRA Mini-Grants, 2607 Clinton Way, Yakima, WA 98902. The completed application must be received by November 12, 2026.

Health Matters



John Osegueda

By John Osegueda

A couple of years back I wrote my initial article discussing health and what your doctor seemed to want you to know about your healthy life regarding maintaining an open dialogue between the two of you. Well, it is time to explore what your oral health professionals (thank you dental hygienists) feel it is important for you to know about your oral health. So. I present to you:

12 Things Your Dentist Wishes You Knew

The connection between mouth and body health is stronger than you may realize.

1. The Amount of Time You Spend Brushing Your Teeth Matters – When you ask for oral health tips for proper dental care, you'll often hear someone say that you should brush your teeth for two minutes, twice a day. Two minutes isn't an arbitrary number. If you're brushing your teeth when you wake up and when you go to bed, the plaque has had at least twelve hours to build up in your mouth. One minute isn't going to get all of that off. You'll remove more plaque by spending the extra minute in the bathroom, and this way you're less likely to have to spend an extra 30 minutes getting your teeth scraped at the dentist.

2. Seriously, Brush Your Teeth Twice a Day – It can take less than a day for plaque to become tartar, so if you're only brushing once per day, you're giving plaque extra opportunity. You think to yourself, "I brushed my teeth before bed, and I haven't eaten anything since or I've only eaten breakfast, why should I brush my teeth?" The truth is that bacteria still can be active in your mouth while you sleep, so they're still building up plaque on your teeth. Brushing twice a day is one of those tips for good oral health that is absolutely crucial. By brushing once after breakfast and once before bed (for two minutes each time), you give plaque a much lower chance of becoming tartar.

3. Flossing Isn't a Joke – This is one of those major oral health tips that many people tend to ignore. Oftentimes, people think that if they brush their teeth, their teeth are clean and they don't have to floss. Wrong! You miss more than a third of the tooth's surface by ignoring the space between teeth.

4. Fluoride Is a Big Deal – Another dentist's tip for oral health is to use fluoride toothpaste. Tooth enamel is made up of tightly packed mineral crystals that help the enamel harden. Bacteria feed on sugars in your mouth and produce acid, which can dissolve these crystals. Fluoride helps tooth enamel remineralize and build up more of these mineral crystals. It is also important to make sure children get small doses of fluoride, preferably from tap water, as this helps their permanent teeth develop before they erupt.

5. Candy Isn't the Sole Cause of Cavities – Don't eat too much candy and don't drink too many sugary drinks. That's probably a common oral health tip that you've heard. While it is true that sugars feed bacteria and that candy and soda have sugar in droves, they aren't the only source of bacteria-feeding sugar. Starch, a carbohydrate found in corn, potatoes, rice, bread, and other foods, contains sugars that can also feed bacteria. So don't think that you can avoid brushing your teeth just because you didn't have any sweets or soda.

6. Your Tongue Says More than You Think – A tongue discoloration or change in appearance can say more about your oral and overall health than you might think. If your tongue looks like it has white patches, you could have a build-up of bacteria. Taste buds and other crevices in your tongue are excellent places for bacteria to hide, especially if you don't clean or brush your tongue. This is why brushing your tongue is among those tips for good oral health you should remember. White patches could also mean you have thrush, a yeast infection of the mouth, which tends to occur if you are on antibiotics. If you have a webbed or striped look on your tongue, this may indicate a higher risk for oral cancer.

7. Unhealthy Mouth Means Unhealthy Overall – Speaking of oral health "secrets," most people don't realize that what happens in your mouth doesn't stay in your mouth. If you have gingivitis or even full-blown gum disease (also called periodontitis), you're at risk for other serious conditions such as cardiovascular disease and endocarditis. The bacterial infections that cause these oral health conditions can spread to the heart and other parts of the body, causing multiple issues. They can even affect fetal health in pregnant women, as periodontal disease has been linked to premature birth and low birth weight.

8. Don't Skip the Dentist When You're Pregnant – (OK, Probably not an issue for most of us in this organization, but you may have someone you care about that it may apply to.) Here's an important oral health tip: if you have gum disease and you are pregnant, the bacterial infection

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November Legislative Update



Emmett Mills

By Emmett Mills, WSSRA Legislative Liaison

Can you feel it in the air? It's getting dark earlier. The leaves are changing color. The mornings are chilly. These are all signs of the inevitable – the state legislative session is only a few months away. Unfortunately, it looks to be a long and harsh one with scarce resources. As we prepare for a legislative session that will likely involve significant budget cuts, we have two primary areas of focus.

PROTECTING PEBB MEDICARE BENEFITS

The first is protecting the PEBB Medicare Benefit, which is received by every public sector retiree who purchases Medicare insurance through the Public Employees Benefits Board (PEBB). The state provides an automatic premium subsidy of up to $183 per month for all PEBB Medicare retirees. Without this benefit, monthly premiums would increase by up to $183. Unfortunately, this benefit is low hanging fruit – it isn't contractually guaranteed and could be easily taken away. We defeated a proposal to reduce it earlier this year and are working to educate legislators about its importance.

SECURE A COLA IN 2027

Our second area of focus is to secure another COLA for TRS 1 and PERS 1 retirees. Unlike members of other pension plans, most TRS 1 and PERS 1 retirees don't receive automatic annual increases. We are working with the Select Committee on Pension Policy to draft a bill that would provide these retirees with a COLA in 2027. While money is very scarce, there are ways that the legislature could provide a benefit increase at no immediate cost to the state.

During the fast-paced legislative session, we rely on email communications to let you know when we urgently need your help. Please make sure we have your email address by going to **www.wssra.org**, scrolling down to the bottom of the page, and filling out the box that says "**WSSRA Members - Join our email list!**"

Health Matters Continued from Page 4

may have negative health impacts on your developing baby. What's more, the hormonal changes you go through during pregnancy can make you more susceptible to gum disease. It is vital that you go to the dentist while you are pregnant to minimize any risks to yourself and your child.

9. When Telling Your Dentist About Your Medications, Don't Forget Aspirin! – Dentists ask about your medications when you visit: it's standard procedure. They really need you to tell them about all of your medications, including aspirin. Even if you take a low dose aspirin daily, it could increase your bleeding risk during dental procedures, and dentist needs to know.

10. You Shouldn't ignore Mouth Pain – A major oral health tip for proper dental care: don't ignore the symptoms of a problem. Most people believe that if they experience irregular mouth pain, it will go away. Even if it does go away the problem is likely still there. Some people experience intermittent pain when their teeth are impacted or when dealing with gum disease. But just because the pain stops doesn't mean the problem has been solved. What's more, experiencing mouth pain cold be a symptom or sign of a heart condition or even an oncoming heart attack.

11. Oral Cancer Can Affect Anyone – Don't skip that oral cancer screening just because you don't smoke or use tobacco products. The risk factors for oral cancer can be found in anyone. Alcohol use, sun exposure, genetics, and the human papillomavirus (HPV) can cause oral cancer, which means that it can affect far more people than you might think. Furthermore, oral cancer is not particularly hard to detect, diagnose, or treat in its early stages. If treated early, the survival rate increases significantly. The problem is that most people do not get screened unless there is a noticeable problem, and, therefore, oral cancer is not often diagnosed before it reaches the later, harder-to-treat stages.

12. Your Dentist Isn't Judging You – So many people avoid going to the dentist because they are embarrassed about the current state of their oral health. The best way to find out about a dentist's tips for oral health is to make an appointment and talk to one. Dentists are skilled and friendly professionals who aren't going to judge you. Rather, they want to help you improve your oral health and treat any dental issues or concerns you might have.

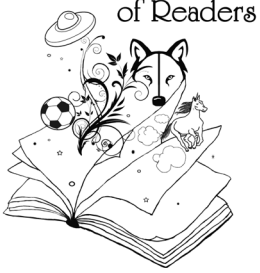
Well, there you have it. I just have two questions for the dentists out there. First, do you really understand our responses to your questions when you hands are half-way down our throats, AND, why do you always seem to have Fridays off ?

Lupine Society of Readers

Almost a year ago, two representatives of the Lupine Society came to our monthly meeting and shared their mission; Encourage the love of reading by planting the seeds of reading with books. The Society provides books for schools, working with teachers and administrators, to get books into the hands of children.

Though we are no longer in the classroom, our group can continue to share our love of reading with the next generation. At each meeting until May, a box will be at the church for donations of gently used books, for children of all ages. Similar to the children's book, Miss Rumphuis, who sought to make the world beautiful by planting flowers, we will be planting the seeds of reading.

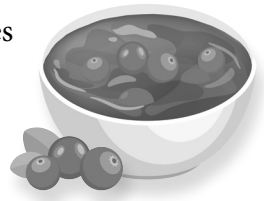
Any questions, please contact Sue Ryan Osegueda, her email is yakavegas@gmail.com.



Cranberry Sauce

Made with frozen cranberries

Ingredients



1 (12 oz) Bag Frozen Cranberries
1/2 Cup Orange Juice
1/3 Maple Syrup
Zest of 1 Orange
1 teaspoon Ground Cinnamon
2 Diced Jalapeños *(optional)*

Directions

1. Add all of the ingredients to a medium saucepan over medium heat and bring to a gentle simmer. Simmer until thickened to your liking, and yes, some of the cranberries will pop and break down.
2. Allow cranberry sauce to cool at least 15 minutes before serving. You can make ahead 3-4 days and store in your fridge. Or freeze after it has cooled to room temperature for up to 3 months.

Yakima County
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