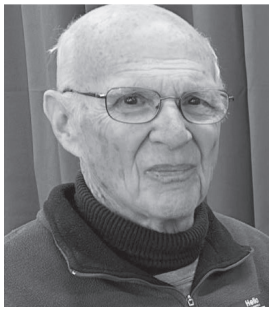
The Voice

A Newsletter for Yakima County School Retirees — December 2026

YCSRA Christmas Program





Paul Schaffer

Program arranged by December President, Paul Schaffer

Christmas is coming, that glorious time of year, when all PEOPLE seem to STEP A LITTLE LIGHTER, A LITTLE BIT HIGHER AND THE AIR RINGS WITH Merry Christmas, Happy Hanukkah, Happy Holidays, or whatever expression of Good Will you may choose to use. Classrooms are filled with happy excited kids thinking presents and winter break along with teachers, who will be hoping for a few days of rest. Of course, it is also the time when many merchants are going to find out if they have made a profit for the year or not. For our family, at least, it is a joyous time of year, time to remember Pop & Mom, Grandpa & Grandma and see the little kids open presents and eat, or as Charles Dickens put it in the Christmas Carol, remembering Christmas's Past. Not everyone is so fortunate, but the best news is everyone hopes better times are coming.

Last Christmas, the program was on the painting of "*Washington Crossing the Delaware*" by Emanuel Lautze, commemorating the famous Christmas battle of heroism and sacrifice in our nation's history. The program was enriched by our own Sheila Wilson playing the piano while our group sang a few Christmas Carols. So, what will the program be this year? Since our meeting date is December 7th, maybe it could be a memorial to the famous USS Oklahoma, or perhaps O'Henry's lovely but sad tale *"The Gift of the Magi"* or possibly the story of the rescue of Mary Ellen Connolly? The song *"Stairway to Heaven"* or could it be the song *"Darling I am growing old?"* But you can be rest assured the program will NOT be about *"The Only Survivor of the Battle of the Little Bighorn"* sometimes known as *"Custer's Last Stand."*

One certainty is that Sheila, thank you in advance, will play and we will sing a few Christmas songs so that when we leave, we may step a little bit lighter and higher.

WSSRA Retirement

By Paul Schaffer

The WSSRA has made a change in how it will be disseminating retirement information out to concerned parties. Traditionally a booklet was available for those needing information regarding their upcoming retirement. In keeping with the current technology, an interested individual can scan a QR code and receive the information digitally. The needed information then can be printed as needed or stored by the recipient. The cost of printing and postage can be drastically reduced and it appears that this is the trend in information gathering many people prefer. The QR code is available on the WSSRA website.

Regardless of the method of gaining the information, future retirees are recommended to start looking at the pertinent information three years before they retire. Feel free to contact Paul Schaffer, if you have further questions.

THE VOICE
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Mini-grants
Linda Sumner
509 248 1875

General Meeting

When: **Monday, December 7, 2026**

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

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

Program: **Paul Schafer will present a program of Christmas Music and a Surprise. Join us for some Holiday cheer**

The following people have signed up to bring:

FOOD

1. Paul Schafer 509 453 2606
2. Nora Ann Ranta 509 925 8161
3. Carol Mills 509 307 2060
4. Chuck Weedin 509 697 8040
5. Millie Stenehjem 509 966 3409

DRAWING PRIZES

1. Linda Sumner 509 952 2368
2. Larry Scholl 509 674 9352
3. Carol Mills 509 457 4015
4. Linda Bauer 509 307 2060
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:
Sue Ryan-Osegueda | 509 952 3295
Email: yakavegas@gmail.com

Design Heather Payne | 509 901 8733
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, December 10, 2026. Please contact Linda Sumner at 509 952-2368 with any questions. Applicants receiving grants will be notified by January 20, 2027.

If you receive a mini-grant, please share with us a written description along with pictures of how this mini-grant benefited your students. This will become part of our May 2027 general meeting and newsletter. You will be contacted by a Mini-Grant committee member in early April 2027.

NOTE: *Due to small number of applications submitted, the deadline was extended by one month. There is no need to re-apply, please be aware of updated timeline dates.*

Please send your application and grant description to:
Linda Sumner, YCSRA Mini-Grants,
2607 Clinton Way, Yakima, WA 98902.

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

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 _____

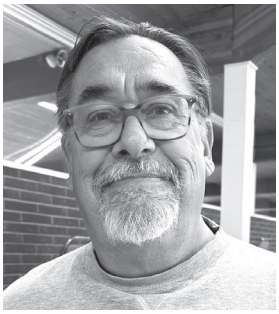
Supervisor/Principal Name _____

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 December 10, 2026.

Health Matters



John Osegueda

By John Osegueda

My brother, David, despite being a Raiders fan, is a pretty astute individual. He always has perfect retort to any question, and my favorite one of his saying is when someone asks him how he doing, his response is "better seen than viewed". Boy, that makes a lot of sense. As a species, it seems we humans spend a majority of our existence trying to extend the time we have on this earth. We try to eat well and drink less to try to maintain a healthy life. Some people, like my wife, get up before the sun rises to walk the pool at the Y to get their steps in. Smoking seems to have gone the way of the dodo bird and we wouldn't drive without fastening our seatbelts.

The average age at death was 47 years in 1900. By 1950 that number was 67 years and currently the average age of death of an American male is 74. There are certainly many factors for this doubling of that number from 1900. We have safer occupations, better health care and an understanding that investing in one's self is a worthwhile investment indeed. Just as a good retirement plan will hopefully insure economic security in our golden years, having some solid adherences to daily patterns can add more healthy years to our lives.

It is not just a longer life we should strive for, but also a life of feeling well, moving freely, thinking clearly and staying engaged with our loves ones. It is certainly true that genetic markers play an important role in aging well, but in a study by Dr. David Barzilai, a longevity physician at Harvard, suggests that by adopting "5 Pillars of Longevity", we all can add more healthy years to our lives. Dr. Barzilai suggests that good health is "surprisingly unglamorous".

5 Five lifestyle patterns consistently show up in research: Movement, Nutrition, Sleep, Stress Management and Social Connections are the "Pillars" that give the foundation for longevity.



Pillar 1: Movement. Barzilai says that movement is the key that helps improve every body system at once from brain health, bone density. Cardiorespiratory fitness is the strongest predictor of mortality. Seniors should try various types of movement including two days of resistance training and 150 minutes of moderate aerobic training or 75 minutes of vigorous activities with proper rest between intervals. Even if you are not a gym rat just get up and move.



Pillar 2: Nutrition. Healthy eating habits make our cells govern our day-to-day life possible. Eating well leads to basically keeping all systems working properly. Barzilai says that one should build meals around whole foods that avoids glucose spikes and don't scrimp on your protein, healthy fats and fiber.



Pillar 3: Sleep. Sleep is important to longevity because it allows the body to take of itself. Sleep clears metabolic waste from the brain which consolidates memory and resets hormones that regulate stress and appetite. It is recommended that adults get seven to eight hours of sleep every day. Keeping a regular pattern of sleep time is vital. While it may difficult for some, managing time is something that is mostly in our hands and we can normally dictate when we sleep.



Pillar 4: Stress Reduction. Stress in itself is not the culprit we make it out to be. Stress sharpens focus, fuels energy levels and can protect us from harm. Barzilai states that the trouble with stress is that it can't be switched off. Chronic stress wears down your body that over the years stress might damage your immune and cardiovascular systems. Stress disrupts sleep and metabolism and might advance your aging prematurely. It is suggested that the best way to manage stress are not physical or social, rather it is mental. People look for a gimmick or aid that they believe will lesson stress in their lives. By paying attention to these five pillars and adding them to your daily life just might be the thing that brings relief.



Pillar 5: Social Connection. People tend to neglect this pillar the most. They are caught up in the minutia of everyday living that they fail to protect their relationships with that same doggedness that they protect their investments with. They may even measure friendships in materialistic terms, questioning whether they are worth the time or investment. But meaningful social connections are invaluable. When you find a person or community that brings genuine connection into your life, nurture it and take it as seriously as you would your health or business.

When asked which pillar has the most impact of longevity, Barzilai feels that when they are braided together, social connection stands out a bit more than the others. Watching a beautiful sunset is only outdone by one thing: sharing that time with someone special which makes all of the five pillars the foundation for a longer, more rewarding life.

December Legislative Update



Larry Scholl

By Larry Scholl

Central Washington has been a stronghold of Republican Party conservatism for many years. The last time a Democrat was elected to a state legislative position from Central Washington was decades ago. That all changed on November 3rd. On Wednesday morning, headlines declared that numerous incumbent Republicans had been swept out of office, reflecting a surprising trend nationwide.

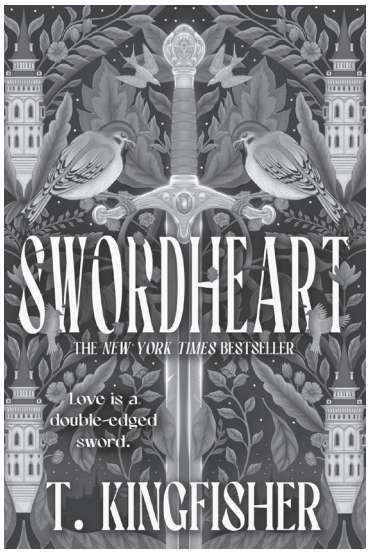
Locally, one term incumbent Representatives, Deb Manjarrez and Gloria Mendoza both lost their seats to Democrat challengers. In District 14, Democrat Ezequiel Morfin defeated incumbent Republican Deb Manjarrez for Position 2 and Democrat Chelsea Dimas defeated incumbent Republican Gloria Mendoza for Position 1. Representative Dimas is from the Sunnyside area and Representative Morfin is from the Toppenish area. For District 15, Position 1, Republican Representative Chris Corry won his seat. In District 15, Position 2, Republican Reedy Berg ran unopposed. The vacant Senate seat in District 15 was won by the former 15th District Representative Jeremie Dufault, who ran unopposed for that Senate seat. And finally, the Senate seat in District 14, held by Senator Curtis King, was not up for election during this cycle.

State wide, Republicans lost several seats to Democrats, giving Democrats a "super majority" in the state legislature. This is the first time in many decades that a single political party has been in the position of having a "super majority", a two-thirds majority, which typically means that any legislation passed by that party is potentially "veto proof".

Book Corner

SWORDHEART by T. Kingfisher

Book Review by Sue Ryan Osegueda



T. Kingfisher's Swordheart is a wonderful blend of fantasy, humor, and adventure. With its quirky characters, witty dialogue, this novel is both funny and genuinely entertaining.

The story follows Halla, a recently widowed woman who unexpectedly inherits a fortune then finds herself trapped by relatives, eager to control her inheritance. When she discovers an enchanted sword, she accidentally summons Sarkis, a centuries-old warrior bound to serve whoever possesses the blade. What follows is an entertaining journey filled with danger, unexpected companionship, magical complications, and the slow development of a relationship neither of them quite anticipated.

One of the greatest strengths of this novel is its characters. Halla is wonderfully relatable, with her insecurities, stubbornness, and determination to reclaim control of her own life. She isn't a typical fantasy heroine, and that's precisely what makes her so appealing. Sarkis, meanwhile, is an entertaining combination of gruff warrior, reluctant protector, and surprisingly thoughtful companion.

Kingfisher's writing is yet another standout, a lovely balance between the fantastical elements and the more personal themes of independence, trust, healing, and finding the courage to choose your own future.

Final Verdict: ***Swordheart*** is a wonderfully entertaining read that proves sometimes the best adventures begin with an enchanted sword and a very unexpected companion!

From the Kitchen

Festive Cranberry Pineapple Salad

Holiday Recipe from the kitchen of Nick and Kathy Schultz



Favorite Recipes from Our Members

Ingredients

1 can Dole crushed pineapple - undrained
1 large (8 serving) Raspberry jello
1 can whole cranberry sauce (16 oz)
1 medium apple-sliced in wedges for top of salad
2/3 cup of chopped walnuts



Directions

1. Drain pineapple reserving liquid in 1 qt measuring cup. Remove 1 TBS crushed pineapple to garnish top. Add enough water to reserved liquid to measure 3 cups.
2. Pour liquid into a large saucepan. Bring to a boil, then remove from heat. Add gelatin-stir at least 2 minutes until completely dissolved.
3. Add cranberry sauce and stir until thickened. Pour into a large bowl. Refrigerate 1 1/2 hours or until thickened (consistency of unbeaten egg whites).
4. Stir in remaining pineapple, apples and walnuts. Stir gently. Pour into a medium serving bowl. Refrigerate 4 hours until firm. Top with reserved crushed pineapple just before serving. Makes 14 servings - 1/2 C each. ENJOY!

Yakima County
School Retirees' Association
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