

National:

Older Americans Month

Fitness and Sports Month

Mental Health Awareness Month

Pima County School Retirees' Association

May, 2017

We welcome all retired school employees



President's Desk

~ Ann Reaban



PCSRA What a Year It Has Been!

“A Year in the Life of PCSRA” seemed a fitting title for the Tri-Board for our unit’s display at the AASRA Summer Convention’s “60 Years & Going Strong.” The Saguaro cactus identifies us as Southern Arizonans. The major categories are those concepts that are needed for effective living: Citizenship, Service, Patriotism, Heritage, Honor, and Remembrance.

PCSRA started the New Year with citizenship as our goal. “Democracy Is Not a Spectator Sport” was the topic presented by Betsy Bolding of the League of Women Voters. She encouraged all of us to fulfill our civic duty by voting. Marion Pickens initiated a “Call for Action,” which involved members expressing their views to the Arizona Legislators and the Governor through e-mails, phone calls, and personal visits to Phoenix regarding the funding for public schools and other vital issues.

Community Service is one of our goals. In the past year our members generously provided 11,914 hours, “Little Acts of Kindness,” to schools, churches, hospitals, election campaigns, family, friends, neighbors, and strangers to show that our hearts go out to those in need. Our members care; our members volunteer; and our members give their service with no expectation for rewards.

PCSRA followed the state’s recommendation to inform our members and older citizens of the need for “Defense Against FRAUD.” Terri Alexon, Investor Education Coordinator of the Securities Division, Arizona Corporation Commission, presented her Power Point vignettes, which were very cleverly designed, to demonstrate the vulnerability of people in the older demographics range.

The “Veterans’ Patriotic Celebration” was hosted by Marine veteran, Peter M. Bourret, who invited his veterans’ support group from various wars to be guests for this occasion. The topic, “Strands of Barbed Wire,” was a documentary of Pete’s return to Vietnam, in which he discussed his own challenges with PTSD.

One of PCSRA’s objectives is to offer avenues to continue serving education. The Rincon/University High School Choraleers, directed by Mareena Boosamra Ball, entertained our luncheon attendees with their beautiful music. The Choraleers ended their presentation by gathering around our entire group as we all sang together, “Let There Be Peace on Earth.” After this very inspirational experience, PCSRA presented a small stipend of \$100 for their choir fund.

Our yearly programs always include a reminder of Tucson’s rich heritage. Some of the members dressed in cowboy attire -- big hats, boots, and bandanas -- to get back to the feeling of the Old West. Bill and Sue Black added to the western tradition with cowboy songs accompanied by guitar and poetry readings from *Cattlemen at the Cantina*, poetry of the changing west.

PCSRA’s published authors were honored during February’s “Love of Reading” as they displayed their books for sale and autographing. The authors presented a panel discussion entitled: “The Joys and Tribulations of Writing” which covered the questions most asked about writing as well as questions from the audience.

In March, young Irish dancers from the Maguire Academy delighted our group with the joy of their traditional dances. “How to Catch a Swamp Frog” was Dr. Nicolas Clement’s topic about memorable teachers, “Legendary Teachers,” who knew how to grab students’ attention, fight hard to keep it, demonstrate patience, and create new challenges.

See **President’s Desk** on page 8.

PCSRA Book Club Might Head for the Hills -- Billies

Our PCSRA Book Club meeting had great energy, opinions, and insights into Lincoln in the Bardo by George Saunders. We also discussed a possible future selection by Tom Clancy. We tossed the idea around of convening in the White Mountains for one of our summer meetings. Consider this your open invitation to enjoy a lively conversation about literature and life!

Our selection for May is Hillbilly Elegy by J. D. Vance. His people (family) — hillbillies, rednecks, white trash, choose your epithet (or term of affection, depending on your point of view) — didn't step off the Mayflower and become part of America's ascendent class. "Poverty is the family tradition," he writes. His ancestors and kin were sharecroppers, coal miners, machinists, millworkers — all body-wearying, low-paying occupations that over the years have vanished or offered diminished security. Hillbilly Elegy has received speculation about how it may provide insight into a group of voters who are angry about being voiceless and unrepresented in our election process.

Our next meeting is on Thursday, May 18th at 1:00. Join us at Steve Poe's home at 3331 E. Waverly Street (east of Country Club) between Pima and Grant. All interested people are always welcome.

Please contact Jim Marr by email if you have any questions – jbm500@cox.net.

PCSRA Breaks the UA Ed. Scholarship Thermometer

Cognizant of roaring college education costs, the PCSRA Board decided to raise the UA scholarship amount from \$1,000 to \$1,500. Our members came through like gang-busters, raising \$2,696.61 with only \$318.50 in seed money.

Judy Hokett spear-headed the drive, organizing a Gaslight Theater fund-raiser and cheering on Terry Bagwell, who put together a record-breaking secret-ticket drawing event.

The PCSRA Board voted unanimously to provide a \$2,000 scholarship for an education student for 2017-18 school year at the University of Arizona. We are grateful for everyone's participation in and generosity toward this worthy cause.

PCSRA Wants You to Help Plan the 2017/18 Programs

Barbara Macpherson, First Vice President, has planned weekly programs for the Southern Arizona Association for the Visually Impaired (SAAVI) and Tucson Society of the Blind for twelve years. She has been a member of PCSRA for eleven years and has enjoyed past programs.

She is excited to be the new PCSRA program chair and vows to organize a variety of entertaining and informative presentations for the 2017-18 year.

Barbara invites all interested members to attend the first program meeting on Wednesday, June 21, from 9:30 - noon at Mimi's on Broadway & Wilmot.

Meanwhile, tell your teacher friends what fun and interesting programs we have at PCSRA and invite them to come to our September lunch meeting.

The PCSRA Board set next year's schedule so that members could mark their calendars in advance.

September: Luncheon/Program	Sept. 14, 2017
October: Luncheon/Program	Oct. 12, 2017
November: Luncheon/Program	Nov. 9, 2017
December: Luncheon/Program	Dec. 14, 2017
January: Luncheon/Program	Jan. 11, 2018
February: Luncheon/Program	Feb. 8, 2018
March: Luncheon/Program	March 8, 2018
April: Luncheon/Program	April 12, 2018
May: Luncheon/Program	May 10, 2018



April Report

Membership

PCSRA: 189 [185 (5/16)]

AASRA: 92 [57 (5/16)]

Scholarship Fund: \$696.61
[\$318.50 (5/16)]

Indecisive

*I used to be indecisive.
I couldn't make up my mind.
I couldn't even decide
What should be in this next line.*

*How long should it be?
What should it say?
Would anyone care
What I said today?*

*But I've written this,
So I've got a quandary:
I thought I was indecisive,
But now, I'm not sure.*

Bill Black

Shoulda, Coulda, Woulda

*Let's take all the kids to the park.
There's a house to be cleaned before dark.*

*Let's visit a friend, just for fun.
There are too many errands to run.*

*Let's fix a surprise for your honey.
There's work to be done for more money.*

*Let's read a good book in the shade.
There are too many papers to grade.*

*Please take the time to enjoy life right now.
I would, but I've forgotten how.*

Paris Rebl



“realization”

*sharing the meaning of our friendship
listening to friends
both old and new
savoring the richness of the gift
seeing and feeling the love grown over the
years*

*each gentle act of acceptance
nurtured slowly
like a fragile potted plant
and so each day
one friend or another
gifts from God
saturate my soil with the water of caring
kindness*

*I know I'm blessed
as the warm August air hugs me*

peter m. bourret

(selected sections from “realization”)

PCSRA Newsletter

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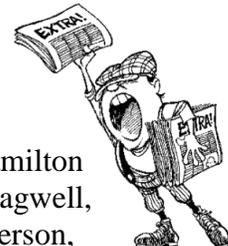
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Education News

~ Jerry Holmes

Arizona Legislature Guts Education

For the several years that I have written this column I have tried to keep my opinions to myself and share the facts that I can discern about the legislature and politics in Arizona. I can no longer restrain myself.

This column has, in addition to a lot of facts, some of my opinions.

The Arizona legislature has finished their budget process and will soon adjourn *sine die* – with no set date to resume. That’s the best news that we can take from this session. This legislature has done more damage to public education in Arizona than any legislature previously and that’s saying a lot. And folks, I can’t make this stuff up. My imagination is not vivid enough to come up with all the twists and turns this story takes.

I have tried to keep my opinions to myself ... I can no longer restrain myself.

At the time I wrote my column for the April newsletter, the legislature had just passed an expansion of Arizona’s ESA (Empowerment Scholarship Accounts = vouchers) program. All 1.1 million school children in Arizona will be eligible to receive a voucher to attend the school of their choice – public, private or parochial. The limit to the number granted will increase by 5,500 each year for the next four years until there are 30,000

available scholarships annually by 2022. If there are not 30,000 vouchers in use at that time, the number in use would become the indefinite cap. However, the legislature could change that at any time between now and then.

Backers of the vouchers have already bragged that the cap, the entire deal’s centerpiece, will be eliminated. Darcy Olsen, CEO of the Goldwater Institute and the woman who helped negotiate the new deal in the legislature, boasted in an email to supporters one day after passage of the expansion even before Gov. Ducey had signed the law, “There is a cap at 5000 new kids per year; we will get it lifted”. One of the legislators who helped mold the majority vote, Sen. Bob Worsley (R) responded, “She was negotiating in bad faith with us if that was her intention.” In this writer’s opinion, the 31 Representatives and 16 Senators who voted in favor of this bill, all Republican, were naïve, gullible or simply opponents of public education.

Most vouchers would be limited to a value of \$4400 if the child currently attends a public school. However, if the child attends a charter school they would carry with them a voucher worth about \$6300. Low income students and those children who have been or are in foster care can take 100% of funding with them, all others will be limited to moving with 90% of state funding.

All ESA-funded students would be required to take a nationally recognized test in reading or math annually with the results reported to parents. But, unless a school has 50 or more ESA funded students in attendance, they do not need to publicly report any testing results to show that students are making progress or are on a level with other schools. My tax money, your tax money, everyone else’s tax money would then be given to any school in Arizona and they can teach a child anything they wish without oversight or accountability.

This legislature has done more damage to public education in Arizona than any legislature previously...

Nevada’s voucher system was recently overturned by its Supreme Court.

ESAs were approved initially for the 2011-12 school year. At first, they were given only to special needs children who had the opportunity to change schools if parents felt the child’s needs were not being met at the current school. The following year it was expanded to include children from poorly performing schools or districts. This school year

3,360 school children are attending schools other than their neighborhood public school on a voucher. Each voucher is currently worth about \$5600.

One of the following criteria must be met for current eligibility - learning disabled, attending a poorly performing school labelled D or F, be a former or current foster child, be a sibling of a student in the ESA program, or live on an Indian reservation. Those criteria are now, mostly, eliminated. This pattern of expansion, from a single category to several, to available for all is seen throughout the country where vouchers are introduced. Twenty seven states have some type of voucher program, but Arizona and Nevada now lead the nation in voucher availability. Nevada’s voucher system was recently overturned by its Supreme Court.

Who uses these ESAs? The **Arizona Republic** did a study of the 3300 children currently receiving Arizona vouchers. They found that more than 75% of vouchers were from districts with an A or B rating and only 4% were from districts with a D or lower rating. These results fly in the face of Gov. Ducey, legislators and State Supt. Diane Douglas who claim that vouchers benefit disadvantaged families to escape from failing schools. If that were true, the families that take advantage of the program would be overwhelmingly from poorly rated schools. Currently, it seems, better off families are taking state money and putting their children in private or parochial schools with the help of a state subsidy. Rep. Randy Friese (D) Tucson responded to the study with, “There will be a point where it breaks the backs of public schools.”

The Republic published another story the day the legislature approved the voucher expansion. The article detailed how they had tried for over two years to get data from the Arizona Department of Education (ADE) on which schools were receiving children accompanied by vouchers. The ADE was unwilling or unable to provide that data for many months. When they finally did, the data was rife with errors and incomplete to say the least. **The Republic** said the data was unusable in the form provided. State Supt Diane Douglas responded to these criticisms by writing a letter to Republican legislators in which she said, “I am writing to respond to fake news that was published by a failing news organization”. [Now where have we heard that before?] She went on to say that the “so-called reporter’s” story was “disingenuous at best or completely false.” Douglas also claimed in the letter that her “...staff worked around the clock to complete (the report) for them...” For two years???

So, the legislature passed the bill that expands vouchers, ignoring the data that says more well off parents will send their children to more private schools. And the legislature ignored the fact that those schools do not have to account for the expenditure of state money and can indoctrinate kids at the expense of taxpayers and the State Department of Education can’t keep track of who’s getting the money or how much. Oh wait, it wasn’t the entire legislature. Not a single Democrat voted in favor of voucher expansion nor did one Republican vote against it. The “Yes” votes were all from the Republican side of each house.

Response from the education community was swift. The last six Arizona Teachers of the Year signed a protest letter to Governor Ducey. Referring to the shortage of teachers in Arizona, the letter stated in part, “Funneling public money into private hands with a total lack of oversight will only exacerbate that crisis; we have the third highest classroom sizes in the nation and the voucher bill will also exacerbate that; we are funded at 49th in the nation and the voucher bill will ensure that we remain near the bottom for the foreseeable future because more resources will be drained from public schools.” The letter went on to say, “However, we already rank #1 in school choice. Is there a correlation between the above statistics and this one?”

Many of those teachers supported Gov. Ducey’s efforts to get Prop 123 passed by the barest of margins, a year ago to raise spending for public schools. As one of those Teachers of the Year, Beth Maloney, said, “And now there is a very real sense of we got played. I think the taxpayers of Arizona just got played.”

It would seem Prop 123 did not help improve classroom funding in Arizona according to the Joint Legislative Budget Committee. The JLBC says in 2008 Arizona funded education at the level of \$4,949 per student. Including Prop 123 funds and accounting for inflation, Arizona now funds classrooms, in terms of 2008 dollars, at \$3,911 per student.

“I think the taxpayers of Arizona just got played.”

Now there is an effort being made to collect signatures to place an initiative on the ballot to halt the voucher expansion. With a deadline of early August, the group hopes to collect over 75,000 signatures to place the issue on the ballot in November. As pointed out by anti-voucher backers, Arizona is 49th in the country in average teacher salary and 48th in the country for per pupil funding. “We’re at the bottom of the barrel”, said one backer and now the legislature wants to siphon more money away from public schools.

... the legislature ignored the fact that those schools do not have to account for the expenditure of state money and can indoctrinate kids at the expense of taxpayers ...



Education News

~ Jerry Holmes

for classrooms, this suit centers on the state's failure to fund capital needs (buildings, facilities, computers, buses, equipment, etc.) for schools in the state. The suit will try to make the case that due to the state's failure to fund appropriately, as spelled out in the state constitution, school districts have had to shift their capital financing to local taxpayers via bonds.

Arizona's Supreme Court has already decided in three cases since 1994 that the state cannot shift the burden of school funding to local taxpayers because it puts low income schools and districts at a disadvantage. That is a violation of the state constitution which requires "a general and uniform public school system." Tim Hogan, lead attorney for ACLPI, made the point that class sizes and teacher pay are being affected by transferring funds to cover costs that never should have been cut. Hogan was the lead attorney in the lawsuit won by the school districts that ultimately resulted in Prop 123 being sent to voters. Gov. Ducey responded that his budget proposal had \$17 million in funds for school facilities. Wait - \$17 million vs. \$2 billion - What????

It's impossible to write about all of this without including teacher salaries in the mix. Remember in his January State of the State address, Gov. Ducey advocated for a 2% raise for teachers over 5 years – less than ½% per year or about \$2.00 per paycheck. As the legislature finally got busy talking about money near the end of the session Democrats advocated for an immediate 4% raise for educators. Republicans settled on 2% over two years, 1% each year, in the final budget. However, the language of the budget bill does not ensure that next year's increase is an ongoing raise. A close reading of the language makes it sound like a one-time bonus and does not ensure that it is in perpetuity. In

addition, the bill does not guarantee the 1% raise the following year. It states, the "Legislature and governor ...intend to include funding for an additional one percent teacher salary increase in fiscal year 2018-2019". Isn't the road to Hell paved with good intentions?

Chuck Essigs of the Arizona School Board Association responded to the final language by asking, "What happens in a year or two if the legislature decides we aren't going to fund this?" Essigs went on to say, "I've been around a long time and I don't ever remember permanent changes in law being done this way." No Democrats voted for the final budget. This is in a state that is in crisis because of the shortage of qualified teachers in classrooms, because, in part, of the low teacher salaries in Arizona. Arizona currently ranks 49th or 50th in average teacher salaries based on which metric is used. Remember there were close to 2000 vacancies in Arizona's teaching ranks during the current school year.

Both Gov. Ducey and House Speaker J.D. Mesnard referred to this year's budget as an "education budget". House Majority leader, Rep. John Allen (R), in the midst of one debate about teachers' salaries, referring to the many educators who have second jobs, said, "They want to increase their lifestyles. ... They want to pay for a boat." Rep. Allen thinks the lowest paid teachers in the country are not struggling to make ends meet, pay bills or set aside something for a rainy day. They want to buy a boat. That's insulting.

AZ Legislature continued from page 5

As budget negotiations were concluding, a coalition of parents, schools and other interested parties centered around the organization, the ArizonaCenter for Law in the Public Interest (ACLPI) has filed a \$2 billion lawsuit against the state. Rather than funding

AZ Rep. John Allen (R) ... referring to the many educators who have second jobs, said, "They want to increase their lifestyles. ... They want to pay for a boat."

Isn't the road to Hell paved with good intentions?



And finally, let's spend a minute talking about the teacher shortage and the fix Gov. Ducey and the legislature devised. Once again, think back to Ducey's State of the State address in January. He talked about how restrictive teacher credentialing was and how retired Supreme Court Justice and lifetime Arizona resident Sandra Day O'Connor would not be able to teach a Civics class in Arizona because she does not have the appropriate credentials.

Senate Bill 1042, passed by the legislature and signed by Ducey, allows school districts, not the State Board of Education, to decide if an individual is qualified to teach. The bill says applicants must have a bachelor's degree, have at least five years of work experience in the content area for which they apply and pass a background check. No training in classroom management, lesson planning, curriculum alignment, content area testing or any other facets of teacher training are required.

Even State Supt. Diane Douglas objected, saying "...lowering the standards for new teachers is not the way to correct the problem." Once again, the bill was passed along party lines with only one Democrat supporting the measure.

And that's where we stand as the legislature approaches their adjournment.

In conclusion, I would like to repeat an oft repeated axiom that originated in the late 20th century and seems quite apt to these events. "If you're not outraged, you're not paying attention." Please pay attention, tell others what you learn and let your legislators know about your outrage.

We are mad as hell and we are not going to take it anymore.

Just one more bit of humor...

Rep. Paul Mosley (R) of Lake Havasu City has seven children under the age of 10. Those that are old enough are home-schooled by his wife, since he's in Phoenix with the legislature. He told the **Arizona Capitol Times** that the one law he would like overturned in Arizona is compulsory education. Currently Arizona law requires that students between the ages of 6 and 16 attend school, even if it's at home. Mosely said, "Education used to be a privilege." He continued, "...the kids who don't want to be there are a larger distraction to the kids who do want to be there." He also complained about school lunch programs by saying, "So now schools are not only tasked with educating our children, but also feeding our children. What happened to the personal responsibility of a parent to feed and educate their kids?"

Are you kidding me? Would I rather pay for child to go to school or quadruple that cost to house an uneducated adult in prison? Let me think on that.

<p>July</p>  <p>Honey, I got this great gig. Working as an aeronautic engineer qualifies me to be a middle school teacher!</p>	<p>August</p>  <p>I'll get three months off every year, plus major holidays. I only have to work six hours a day What a cushy job!</p>	<p>October</p>  <p>Next year? Five million dollars couldn't get me to finish THIS year.</p>
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Farewell

Cowser, Jean (62) ~ 4/24;
Public School Employee

Crouch, John (72) ~ 4/8; Pueblo High Teacher

Edmondson, Juanita (?) ~ 3/29; Teacher

Gahn, Stephen (63) ~ 4/28; Teacher and Coach

Garcia, Betty (87) ~ 4/19; Teacher,
Principal at Richey Elem.

Heilman, Karlyn (30) ~ 3/27; Teacher, Flagstaff

Hoover, Rebkah (77) ~ 4/10; Administrative Assistant

Mittelsteadt, Vivian (69) ~ 3/19; Teacher

Olson, Paul (68) ~ 4/7; Teacher

Pitts, Martha (65) ~ 4/5;
Administrative Assistant

Runyon, JoAnn (90) ~ 4/14;
Teacher at Flowing Wells

Upshaw, David (72) ~ 4/29;
Amphitheater Teacher/Coach

Walker, Rebecca (67) ~ 3/27;
Teacher

Young, Blanch (102) ~ 4/2;
Teacher Home Ec. Little Rock



Friends

Colleagues

Mentors



For your eyes only!

By Terry Bagwell



I had always thought that the Lions Clubs collected our used eyeglasses to redistribute to people in areas with need for them. While that may have been true at one time, that has certainly changed, per a member of the Lions Club that I spoke with recently when they were collecting donations outside of my favorite grocery store.

The gentleman who spoke with me has been very involved with the project for several years, and he shared several bits of information which I'm now passing along.

- * The Lions Clubs do not want our glasses' cases. They throw them away.
- * They do keep and use some pairs of eyeglasses, primarily those with plastic frames. Apparently, this does not happen very often.
- * Eyeglasses in metal frames are sold for the value of the metal which the Lions then invest back into their mission of providing improved vision.



TO DATE THIS YEAR: PCSRA members have donated more than forty pairs of eyeglasses to the Tucson Lions Clubs.

President's Desk continued from page 1.

Honoring one of our special members with the PCSRA Service Award is important to our organization. Mary Belle McCorkle, Ed.D., a "Legendary Teacher" with 50 years of service to education was this year's recipient. Cecilia Aros expressed her gratitude for receiving the PCSRA - U of A Scholarship because it helped her complete her dream of becoming a teacher. Ironically, she happened to meet Mary Belle for the first time and will be teaching at Mary Belle's School next year!

PCSRA members had several opportunities to extend their lifelong learning through excursions to the Rosson House in Phoenix, the Gaslight Theater, and the Empire Ranch in Sonoita. Additionally, PCSRA has organized a monthly Book Club.

The PCSRA Year will end with the Initiation of Officers by AASRA President Duane Nelson; Volunteer Service Awards will be presented to Tom Arthur, Jim Marr, and Sam & Phyllis Turner; and finally, "In Remembrance," we will honor and remember the friends we have lost this year.

When asked, if I had completed all that I hoped to achieve, my answer would have to be: "Not yet . . . There's always tomorrow!" Heraclitus, the Greek philosopher, who knew a thing or two, stated: "It is in changing that we find purpose."

Blessing & Love to all PCSRA Members! Ann Reaban