



AFT Washington Retiree Chapter RETIREE NEWSLETTER

A Union of Professionals

AFT Washington Retiree Chapter, Local 8045R
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AARP doesn't get it, but the ARA does!

By Ross Rieder
Chapter President



The other day my mail contained just about every publication from AARP that I would ever want in one month.

Underneath the masthead of *AARP The Magazine* is this little slogan: "Feel

Great. Save money. Have fun." I can't imagine how they could have described their view of our society any better than with such drivel. It's as if they have no sense of the deprivations going on in our nation since the great recession began.

For that reason, I bring to your attention an organization with serious intent (as well as an opportunity to "have fun" if you like really serious endeavor.) I mean the **Alliance for Retired Americans**.

I'm of an age to remember that some of the organizations (i.e. ACLU, UN organization, my local teachers' union) were considered "front" organizations for the so-called far left. You, too?

Ross Rieder, President
Susan Levy, Vice President
Roger Carlstrom, Secretary
Mary Hale, Treasurer
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Rachael Levine, Director
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Well, ARA is an AFLCIO front organization with spine.

ARA is open to all retired workers, meaning people who saw themselves as workers when they were working.

The chapter in Tacoma of which I am a member contains two former college presidents, teachers,

other public employees, bus drivers, teamsters, building-trades members, etc.

We meet monthly for lunch, discussion, politics and action. We support picket lines and politics. We are affiliated with the Washington State Labor Council, AFL/CIO; the Washington State Alliance for Retired Americans (WASARA); and Puget Sound ARA (PSARA). We stand FIRMLY for no cuts in Social Security and Medicare. We oppose FIRMLY raising the retirement age for Social Security and Medicare. (Retirement at age 65 is a jobs program, you realize. Make more jobs – lower the retirement age.)

So, my recommendation is simple: be a part of your union's specific retirement group, like AFT Washington Retiree Chapter, Local 8045R, and in your community find or create an ARA chapter to broaden the base of working class retirees.

Inside this issue

Mary Hale on Politics

Rachael Levine on Social Security & Medicare

J. Kaye Faulkner: Working for Collective Bargaining Rights

Gary London: Retiring with Children

Roger Carlstrom on Students Recognizing Teachers

Chapter Executive Board Vacancy

A director position on the chapter's executive board is presently vacant. We encourage any chapter member who is interested in social, political, and economic matters affecting retirees and working people to apply for the position. The term of office will expire in the spring of 2013.

The executive board generally meets in the Puget Sound area three or four times a year, including the annual meeting of the membership in the spring.

If you would be interested in filling the position, please contact chapter president **Ross Rieder**, at 206-406-2604 or by email, rossr241@aol.com.



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Political Happenings in Brief

By Mary Hale
Chapter Treasurer



AFT Washington, along with most of Washington's labor movement, recommends a "no" vote on two state-wide ballot initiatives. A "yes" vote is recommended on a third.

Vote NO on I-1125 (a **Tim Eyman** initiative): Would prohibit use of motor vehicle fund revenue and vehicle toll revenue for other transportation purposes, require that road and bridge tolls be set by the legislature and be project specific, ban peak-hour tolling and the use of gas taxes and toll funds for light rail.

Vote NO on I-1183: Would close state liquor stores and sell their assets, license private parties to sell and distribute spirits, set license fees based on sales, and regulate licensees.

Vote YES on I-1163: Concerns long-term-care workers and services for elderly and disabled people.

Special Legislative Session: In November state legislators will convene to address an anticipated additional \$2 billion deficit for the 2011-2012 fiscal year. Working in coalition with other labor and progressive groups, AFT Washington's entire lobbying focus for this special session will be to convince legislators to pass a referendum to the people to mitigate the cuts.

For more information about ballot initiatives and the special legislative session, see the fall issue of AFT Washington's Union Spotlight, which will be published in October.

COLA Action: According to legal counsel for the **Retired Public Employees Council of Washington**, retirees with **TERS 1** and **PERS 1** pension plans may soon see lawsuits filed to reverse the state legislature's 2011 action to eliminate their COLAs. Filings may occur as early as November. The outcome will have an impact on many AFT Washington retirees and their spouses.

Social Security and Medicare are vital programs



Rachael & husband
Phillip

*Ed. Note: In mid September, chapter executive board members **Mary Hale**, our Political Action Chair, and **Susan Levy**, AFT Washington's representative to the Social Security Works Coalition, asked chapter members by email to send letters to Washington Senator **Patty Murray**, who is co-chair of the Congressional Joint Select Committee on Deficit Reduction (a.k.a. the "Super Committee" or the "Deficit Panel").*

*Mary and Susan pointed out that Senator Murray "has been a strong supporter of social security and Medicare but she needs to hear from us, her constituents about how important these programs are." Several letters were sent. Here is **Rachael Levine's**:*

Dear Senator Murray,

Just try to imagine how much more difficult this recession would have been without the safety nets of Social Security, Medicare and Medicaid.

In my own case, it would have meant selling our home to meet the ongoing medical needs of my husband. I would have had to deplete the small savings account I did accumulate as a teacher. This account has gradually lost its value as we have seen the value of our home diminish. My husband and I are 79 and 80 years old, not ages that lend themselves to finding work.

Our two sons, who began their families in their 40s, as have many of their peers, are now themselves trying to keep both mortgages and household expenses going. As self-employed artists, they have no pension safety net for their future. We offer as much help as we can with child care and occasional contributions to new school clothes for our grandchildren, etc., but in the end, they would all be harmed by not having the Social Security and Medicare we, their parents, have.

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I have also reminded our sons that the Survivors Insurance provided by Social Security is something they could count on in the event they were disabled or died.

Every penny of our Social Security checks is returned to our local economy in purchases of basic necessities, utilities, and taxes. We paid for this insurance, and we are returning its monetary value to our community.

One other thing about value. Because we have had Social Security and Medicare, we are able to be active volunteers in our communities. For 16 years I was a volunteer Court Appointed Special Advocate (CASA) for neglected and abused children and have served on the Board of Neighborhood House, the Board of Puget Sound Alliance for Retired Americans, and the Evergreen Democratic Club. My husband helped organize and serves on the board of White Center Arts. In addition, he chairs an art scholarship committee for Puget Sound Group of Northwest Painters.

The real "deficit" we have in this country is in the well-being of all our citizens. This is real deficit measured by health statistics, educational achievement, incarceration rates, income decline, and delayed or crumbling infrastructure. This is the deficit of now that will continue to wreak its effects long after you and I are gone. I was an Early Childhood instructor whose education and experience have shown me the long term effects of neglect that continue through generations. Surely this is not what we want, when the interventions necessary to practice "prevention" are available.

Thank you for your efforts. Our best "angels" come out of compassion for the humanity of others.

Rachael Levine

Rachael Levine retired from Seattle Central Community College in 1991 after 26 years of teaching in the Parent and Early Childhood Education programs, as well as classes for the nursing, dental-technician and coordinated-studies programs. She serves as a director on the chapter's executive board.

Collective bargaining for four-year faculty did not come easily

By J. Kaye Faulkner

Ed. Note: In 2002, the Washington state legislature extended collective bargaining rights to faculty in public four-year institutions of higher education (RCW 41.76). The legislature declared that its purpose was to "assure that the responsibilities and authorities granted to these institutions are carried out in an atmosphere that permits the fullest participation by faculty in determining the conditions of employment which affect them." This law was a long time coming and involved years and years of dogged effort by many faculty members. One such faculty member was J. Kaye Faulkner from Western Washington University. Here he reflects on his days in the 1970s near the beginning of those efforts.



Last March I travelled to the Washington State Capitol campus with some faculty and staff from Western Washington University to demonstrate against budget cuts to the poor, the elderly, welfare, and the budgets for many state institutions including, of course, the universities. I felt a most curious feeling of nostalgia as the bus traveled down I-5, just as I travelled many times nearly forty years ago. (It had been at least 35 years ago that I was last there.) It all came flooding back—the travel as well as many days in which I lobbied the Democrats and Republicans of that period of 1975-1978 and the futile conversations we had about collective bargaining for four-year faculty.

I realize now that I was not good at it. Very likely because I did not like many of the senators and representatives of both parties with whom I had to talk—but I tried. We failed to get the collective bargaining law in that period. I always felt a certain obsequiousness creeping in if I were not careful. And that obsequiousness may be what I lacked.

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I traveled for the State Federation in an *ad hoc* manner, taking assignments for many community college and university campuses throughout Washington to speak in support of collective bargaining. After I had given presentations about both the need for bargaining and potential solutions to the obstacles we faced, I slept on couches of friends of the union in their living rooms many times. The State Federation did not have the money for much other than gas and sometimes meals—so we were careful about the money we spent, saving what we could where we could. I did these trips when I had a break in my schedule of classes and later when I applied for and got a grant from the American Federation of Teachers, which allowed me to take time off from my teaching assignments at Western. I took a leave of absence for two years to do this very thing. It was an exciting time of learning the ropes, of organizing, and of dealing with the many problems of agency-representation elections. At the same time, it was frustrating.

The statutory right to collective bargaining for four-year faculty would not come until after the turn of the century.

J. Kaye Faulkner started at Western Washington University (then College) in 1962 and received tenure in 1965 in the Economics Department. He left his tenured position in 1976 to work full time for the Washington Federation of Teachers, after having spent the previous two years on leave to serve as a lobbyist and organizer for WFT. Subsequently, he worked for the national AFT as an organizer. In the 1990s, he helped to organize the faculty at Eastern Washington University, who ultimately elected a merged AFT/WEA union as their bargaining agent. He believes what happened at Eastern was instrumental in the legislature's creation of a collective bargaining law in 2002.



Retiring with children can be rewarding!

By Gary London



When I finally decided to retire in 2004, I worried that I wouldn't have enough to do. My worry proved groundless.

I am truly as occupied now as I was during my teaching life.

A significant share of my time now goes into work, which I actually began before I retired, as a specially-trained **Court-Appointed Special Advocate (CASA)** in children's dependency court.

The sole obligation of a CASA is to represent the best interests of a child under twelve years old who has become a dependent of the state because of parental abuse, neglect, or imminent harm. This obligation requires not only staying close to the child, but to other principals in a case—parents, other relatives, foster parents, medical doctors, counselors and therapists, case managers from service agencies and, of course, assigned social workers. Periodic reports must be made to the court, and attendance at hearings is essential.

When I tell others about my work as a CASA, they often respond with concern, as in "It must be emotionally draining to deal with children under such circumstance." There can be no denying that such is sometimes the case, but that can scarcely be unexpected, given the very nature of the work. What may be less obvious is that the work can also be emotionally satisfying—when a child is placed with responsible relatives, taken into a caring foster home, returned to rehabilitated parents, put under the custody of willing guardians, or adopted by hopeful individuals or couples.

Years ago, when my wife and I had a foster child of our own, I became acutely aware of the need for advocates for children, and I vowed to myself that, given the chance, I would do what I could for children in desperate conditions.

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At that time, I had no idea of the existence of the CASA program. I am happy that, like many other retirees, I have found this way to reach beyond my own beloved grandchildren to include the children of the larger community.

If that sounds like something you'd like to do, check the website for the Washington State CASA Association: <http://www.washingtonstatecasa.org/>.

Gary London began teaching political science at Everett Community College in 2006, left for a year to teach at Weber State in Utah, and then returned to Everett in 1966. He retired in 1966 and claims forty years of teaching, which he thinks doesn't seem possible.

Yakima artist knows how he got his start

By Roger Carlstrom, Editor



The Yakima Herald Republic publishes what it calls "a special interest publication" every other month. The publication is called *Yakima High Desert Living*, and the July/August 2011, issue contains an article by

Melissa Labberton called "Capturing the Beauty of Yakima." The article is about a local artist named **Bill Brennan**, who, Labberton says, has taken "40 years to hone his artistic talent that so perfectly captures the beauty of the Yakima Valley and surrounding area."

Where did he get his start? Right at Yakima Valley Community College in art classes taught by my long-time friend and former colleague there, **R. Keyes Smith**, who usually goes by the initials "R.K." "He was the best teacher I ever had," Brennan told Labberton. "He was so upbeat and it was so fun and I was getting A's."

Brennan became a landscape artist who uses acrylic paints because "he likes the fast drying water-based medium." His methods and subject matter were influenced by "Andrew Wyeth and the impressionists," Labberton tells us, but R.K. influenced him too. Of R.K., Brennan said,

He taught me to be loose and move fast. Use the happy accidents and don't control your brush too much. Painting is weird because sometimes it flows, but sometimes it's like pulling my hair out. . . . It never bothers me to fail at painting.

R.K. became an Instructor of Art and Director of the Larson Gallery in 1960 at the college. He retired from the college in 1983, some 28 years ago.

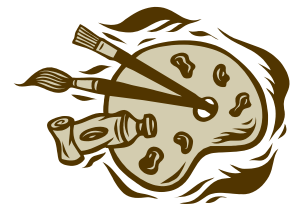


R. K. Smith

Such recognition by a former student is remarkable to me and admirable, and no one I know deserves it more than my friend R.K.

Now and then, I myself will run into someone who remembers that I was her or his teacher, and I enjoy that. (I taught English at the college for 30 plus years and retired in 1998.) More frequently than I like, however, my former student will ask what it was that I taught.

I have learned over the years to be humble.



For back issues of the Newsletter, go to <http://wa.aft.org> and click on "Retiree Members"