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Labor Arts Fest draws accolades for its quality

Accolades have been pouring in from those attending the first-ever Pacific Northwest Labor Arts Festival held Nov. 10 at Portland State University.

November is Labor History Month in Oregon, and to help celebrate this year, the Labor History Committee of the Northwest Oregon Labor Council decided to throw a festival.

The idea was the brainchild of Jim Cook (pictured above center singing), chair of the Labor History Committee and recently retired member of Letter Carriers Branch 82.

The festival featured singers, authors, poets, filmmakers and painters. They displayed their talents at various venues at Portland State over an eight-hour period Saturday, Nov. 10.

"Attendance wasn't what we had hoped," Cook said. "But we learned from this. Next year, I think we will spread it out so that smaller events are held throughout the month."

Not surprisingly, Cook said he had a difficult time getting the general media to promote the labor event. "I saw a couple of short blurbs prior to the festival, but nothing more than that," he said.

The lineup of artists was stellar. It included nationally-renowned singer/songwriter Anne Feeney; her



husband, Julie Leonardsson, a noted political and labor artist who hails from Sweden; Portland hip-hop artist Mic Crenshaw; and banjo master Dick Weissman. Weissman, once toured with the legendary Journeymen, along

with John Phillips (Mamas & Pappas) and Scott McKenzie (*If You Go To San Francisco, Be Sure To Wear Some Flowers In Your Hair*).

"I have to admit, I was a bit skeptical that Jim could pull this off. But he did, and it was wonderful," said Judy O'Connor, executive secretary-treasurer of the Northwest Oregon Labor Council.

Numerous unions donated money to help pay for the venues, talent, printing and other costs. Despite the contributions, the festival, which was free to the public, suffered a deficit. Cook wound up paying \$1,500 out of pocket to cover the costs.

Contributions are still being accepted. Checks can be sent to the NW Oregon Labor Council in care of the Labor History Committee at 1125 SE Madison, Suite 100-D, Portland, 97214.

For more information about the Labor Arts Festival, go to their Web site at www.nwlaborarts.org.

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