

# Union families celebrate Labor Day at picnics in Oregon

Jobs and the economy were on the minds of many attending union-sponsored Labor Day picnics in Oregon.

An estimated 20,000 people showed up at Oaks Park in Southeast Portland for a gathering sponsored by the Northwest Oregon Labor Council. Among the crowd was U.S. Sen. Jeff Merkley, Portland Mayor Sam Adams, Multnomah County Chair Jeff Cogen, Attorney General John Kroger, and State Treasurer Ted Wheeler.

Numerous other elected officials and political candidates used the day to mingle and introduce themselves to union members.

The message labor delivered to politicians at every picnic in the state was to get some backbone and start standing up vocally for public- and private-sector workers, who continue to take the brunt of the blame for the poor economy.

“The answer to what ails this country is a good-paying job with benefits,” said Oregon AFL-CIO President Tom Chamberlain. “A job is the answer to the low-income housing shortage; it is the path to quality education; a job decreases the crime rate; and a job will increase revenue for the state and city so that we can afford to provide vital services.”

At Oaks Park, Sen. Merkley said the time is ripe for investing in infrastructure. “Infrastructure is jobs. We need to do a lot more nation building here in America, and if that means doing a lot less by ending the war in Afghanistan and bringing those funds home, that’s what we need to do. Less nation building abroad and more nation building at home.”

But the day wasn’t all about politics. Many people came for the grilled hamburgers, hot dogs and chicken, music, bingo, horseshoes, raffles, face painting, dunk tanks, and carnival rides.

Picnics were held at Ferry Road Park in North Bend sponsored by the Southwestern Oregon Central Labor Council; at Jasper Park in Pleasant Hill arranged by the Lane County Labor Council; at Tou Velle State Park in Central Point sponsored by the Southern Oregon Central Labor Council; at Riverfront Park in Salem organized by the Marion-Polk-Yamhill Central Labor Council; at Sorosis Park Shelter in The Dalles sponsored by the Mid-Columbia Central Labor Council; and at Pioneer Park in Bend hosted by the Central Oregon Central Labor Council.



Letter carrier Jamie Partridge gathers signatures at Oaks Park for petitions calling on Congress and the U.S. Postal Service and its Board of Governors to “Save Our Postal Service” and six-day delivery. One of the petitions seeks Congressional approval of HR 1351, a bill that would correct the overfunding of the Postal Service’s pension accounts and bring the Postal Service into financial solvency, with no use of taxpayer money.



The mother and daughter duo of Tami and Sarah Marston (photo left) performed labor songs at Tou Velle State Park. The picnic, which drew more than 200 people, was sponsored by the Southern Oregon Central Labor Council. (Photos by Wes Brain)



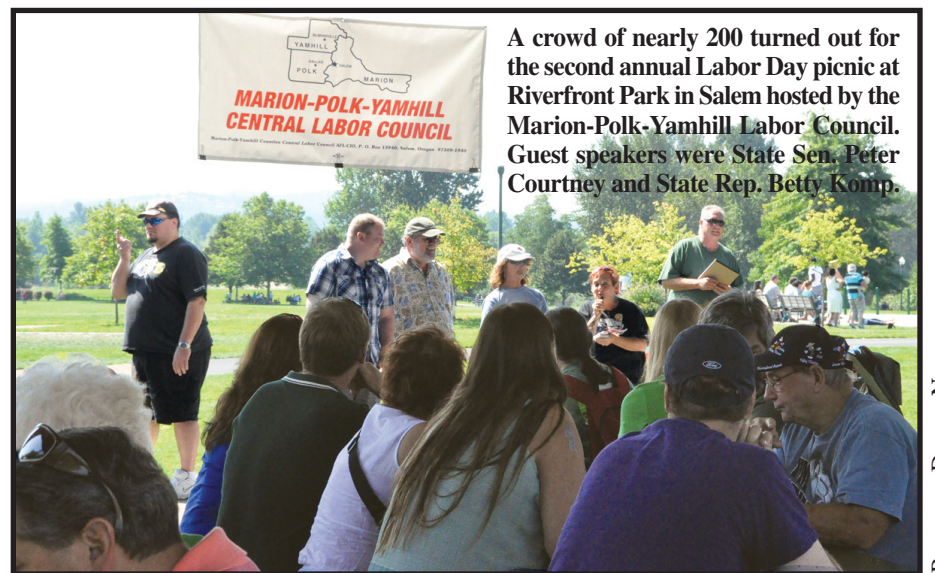
Portland mayor Sam Adams took a turn in the dunk tank at Oaks Park to raise money for Labor’s Community Service Agency.



Gene Thrasher, a school bus driver in Bend, flips burgers at Solidarity Day picnic at Pioneer Park.



The Oregon AFL-CIO held a press conference under the Sellwood Bridge following speeches at the Labor Day picnic at Oaks Parks to discuss the need to focus on job creation projects. At the podium is Melinda Clark, an unemployed member of Sheet Metal Workers Local 16. Behind her is U.S. Sen. Jeff Merkley (D-Ore.), who called for greater spending on the nation’s infrastructure. “We need to do a lot more nation building here in America, and if that means doing a lot less by ending the war in Afghanistan and bringing those funds home, that’s what we need to do,” Merkley said.



A crowd of nearly 200 turned out for the second annual Labor Day picnic at Riverfront Park in Salem hosted by the Marion-Polk-Yamhill Labor Council. Guest speakers were State Sen. Peter Courtney and State Rep. Betty Komp.

PHOTO BY DONNA NYBERG