



PHOTOS BY RUSSELL SANDERS



## Hugs from union 'thugs

By JACKIE TORTORA  
National AFL-CIO

Forget the kissing booth. A hug from a "union thug" is so much better.

On July 28, the Oregon AFL-CIO set up three "Hug a Thug" tables at Jamison Square, Laurelhurst Park, and Irving Park, all in Portland, where passersby were treated to hugs from Letter Carrier Willie Groshell and members of Theatrical Stage Employees Leah Okin and Patrick Landers.

Anti-union politicians and pundits love to call hard-working union members "union thugs," so the Oregon AFL-CIO went out in the community to dispel this myth by reminding people these so-called "thugs" are firefighters, teachers, nurses, postal workers and dozens of other workers we interact with every day.

Groshell, Okin and Landers gave 14 hugs, spoke with

dozens of people and handed out "Work Connects Us All" postcards and bookmarks, spreading the word about the good work unions do.

Intrepid hug recipients posed for a picture and received a sticker that read, "I Hugged a Thug."

"The conversations we had were high-value, including one union skeptic who had a previous negative experience but was interested in what we had to say," said Elana Guiney, legislative and communications director for Oregon AFL-CIO. "Many people we spoke with had no previous union contact."

Guiney said the union volunteers were able to reach the young, urban demographic which is often skeptical about what unions have to offer. "We initiated peer-to-peer conversations about the value unions bring to people," she said.

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## ...AARP 'anxiety index'

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economic downturn (77 percent). Almost half (49 percent) of these voters disapprove of President Obama's job performance, and more than eight-in-10 (81 percent) disapprove of Congress. As of now, voters 50-plus evenly are split in their presidential vote preference (45 percent for President Obama, 45 percent for Mitt Romney, and 10 percent not sure).

The concerns of 50-plus voters highlight the importance of Social Security and Medicare as election issues. They think the next president and Congress need to strengthen Social Security (91 percent) and Medicare (88 percent). They also overwhelmingly (91 percent) think that these issues are too big for either party to fix alone and require Republicans and Democrats to come together.

Voters 50-plus are looking to the candidates for more information on these key issues. These voters overwhelmingly think the candidates have not done a good job of explaining their plans on Social Security (67 percent) and Medicare (63 percent). Moving forward, these voters — across party lines — say that getting more information on the candidates' plans on Social Security (72 percent) and Medicare (70 percent)

will help them determine their vote on election day.

"The message from voters 50-plus is clear," added LeaMond. "In a razor-tight election, candidates have a major opportunity to reach key voters by speaking about their plans on Social Security and Medicare — and they are making a huge gamble if they ignore them."

For complete results of AARP voter surveys, go online at [www.aarp.org/voters50plus](http://www.aarp.org/voters50plus).

## Motorcycle poker run fundraiser for Guide Dogs Aug. 25

The 6th annual Guide Dogs Dash motorcycle poker run will be held Saturday, Aug. 25. The event, sponsored by Machinists Lodge 63, will start and finish at Machinists District W24 Hall, 25 Cornell Ave., Gladstone. Registration is at 9 a.m. Registration is \$25 per rider and \$10 per passenger and includes a T-shirt, barbecue, and raffle prizes. All proceeds go to Guide Dogs of America.

For more info, go on line to [www.iamll63.org](http://www.iamll63.org) or at [www.iamw24.org](http://www.iamw24.org).



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