

This 81-year-old star has never been hotter

By **Shaun O'Brien**
AFL-CIO NOW

Okay, so you don't quite know what to expect with that head-

line. I'm not talking about Betty White (age 94) or Tony Bennett (age 90). And this isn't an AARP The Magazine cover

story about Harry Potter's Professor McGonagall ... I mean Maggie Smith (yes, she is 81). Don't have my number yet?

Odds are you have your own number, though.

Yes, I am talking about Social Security, and it is still the star of financial security for American families, even as it turned 81 on Aug. 12. More than 60 million Americans count on Social Security for its guaranteed monthly income.

It's not just retirees. Close to 9 million workers with disabilities get it. So do 4.3 million children. Social Security keeps more than 21 million people out of poverty. Without it, nearly half of elderly women in the United States would be poor, compared with 1 in 8 today.

Through all of its success, Social Security has remained modest. Too modest. The average monthly benefit for a retired worker is just \$1,348. For workers with disabilities, it's \$1,166.

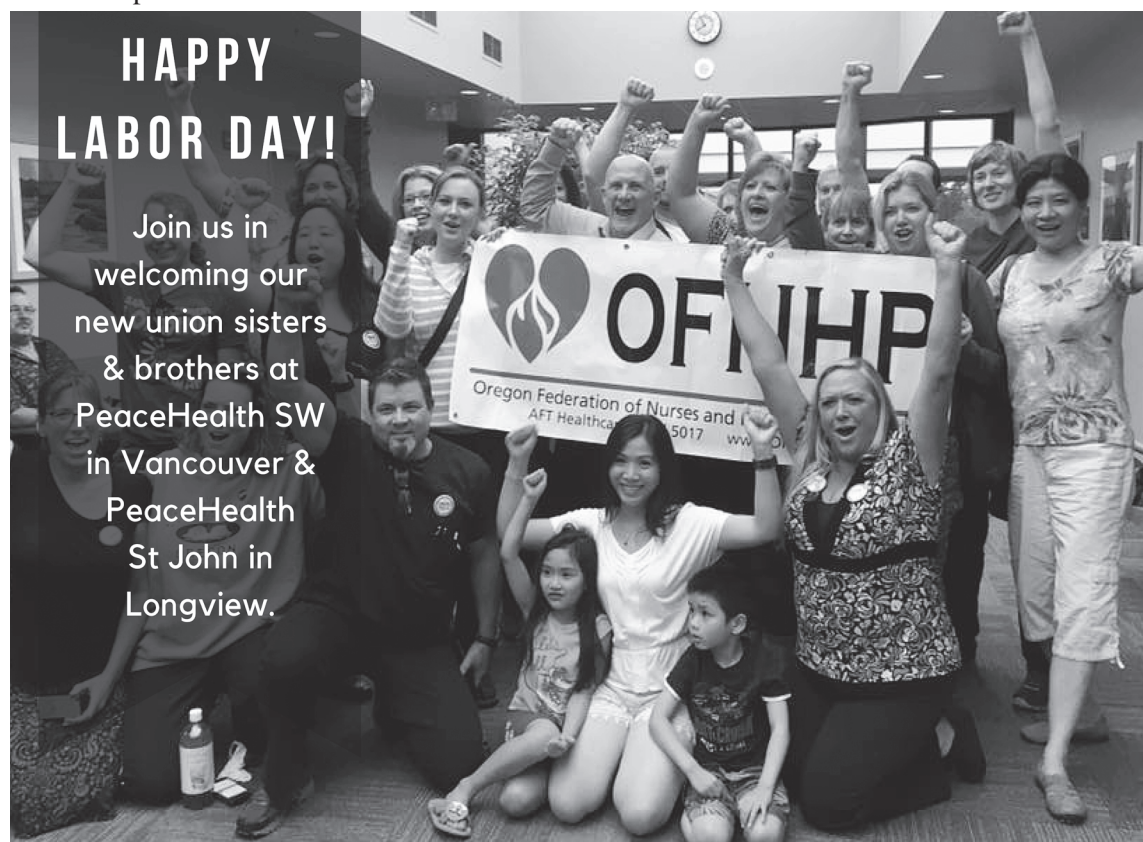
Social Security's position atop the marquee has not always gone unchallenged. In the retirement world's version of All About Eve, 401(k) individual savings accounts, once a bit player, first knocked guaranteed pensions out of their leading role among workplace retirement plans in the private sector. Then 401(k)s' Wall Street and Washington publicists pushed to

have Social Security cut from its starring role and replaced by privatized individual accounts. What was supposed to be individual accounts' breakout performance in the 2005 privatization campaign directed by President George W. Bush, however, was a flop, and the campaign closed early.

Social Security has long been working people's choice. In 2012, the AFL-CIO called for Social Security to be expanded in the face of the growing retirement security crisis, with across-the-board benefit increases and an improved annual cost-of-living adjustment.

Now Social Security is getting critical acclaim once again. Last month, delegates to the Democratic National Convention nominated Social Security for an even bigger starring role, committing in their platform to "expand Social Security so that every American can retire with dignity and respect, including women who are widowed or

Turn to Page 28



HAPPY LABOR DAY!

Join us in welcoming our new union sisters & brothers at PeaceHealth SW in Vancouver & PeaceHealth St John in Longview.

Uniting healthcare professionals in Oregon & SW Washington for quality patient care—everywhere!



OFNHP

NORTHWEST LABOR PRESS

(International Standard Serial Number 0894-444X)
Established in 1900 in Portland, Oregon as a voice of the labor movement. Published on a semi-monthly basis on the first and third Fridays of each month by the Oregon Labor Press Publishing Co. Inc., a non-profit mutual benefit corporation owned by 20 unions and councils including the Oregon AFL-CIO. Serving more than 120 union organizations in Oregon and Southwest Washington.

Office location:
4275 NE Halsey St., Portland, Oregon

Mailing address:
P.O. Box 13150, Portland, OR 97213

Phone: (503) 288-3311

Web address:
<http://nwlaborpress.org>

Editor & Manager: Michael Gutwig
Associate editor: Don McIntosh
Office manager: Cheri Rice

Printed on recycled paper, using soy-based inks, by members of Teamsters Local 747-M.

SUBSCRIPTIONS: Individual subscriptions are \$14 a year for union members, \$22 a year for all others. Pay by credit card online at nwlaborpress.org/subscribe, or send a check to our mailing address (above) along with your name, address and union affiliation, if any. **Group rates of \$10.08 a year per person** are available for 25 or more subscriptions; call 503-288-3311 for details.

CORRECTIONS: See an error? Please let us know at editor@nwlaborpress.org or by phone at 503-288-3311.

PERIODICALS POSTAGE PAID AT PORTLAND, OREGON.

CHANGE OF ADDRESS: If you move, let us know at nwlaborpress.org/subscriber-services or by mail at our mailing address (above). Be sure to provide your old and new addresses and the name/number of your local union. Please allow three weeks for the change to take effect.

POSTMASTER: Send address changes to NORTHWEST LABOR PRESS P.O. BOX 13150 PORTLAND, OR 97213-0150



Carpenters, Electricians, Laborers, Glaziers, Sheetmetal Workers, Floorcoverers, Bricklayers, Cement Masons, Roofers, Asbestos Workers, Millwrights, Painters, Elevators, Plasterers, Family



Need help with all those back to school costs? Apply for a Credit Union VISA card and combine your current VISA balances.

No balance transfer fee

No annual fee

One convenient monthly payment

Call 503-253-8193 ext.340 or apply on online at www.ibewuwfcu.com



9955 SE Washington Portland OR 97216
503-253-8193 ext. 340

Carpenters, Electricians, Laborers, Glaziers, Sheetmetal Workers, Floorcoverers, Bricklayers, Cement Masons, Roofers, Asbestos Workers, Millwrights, Painters, Elevators, Plasterers, Family