

# Social Security Act turns 75!

*Hundreds gather to celebrate the anniversary of one of the country's most valued social programs*

BY LYNN SEREDA

*Housing Choice Voucher Holder*

One of the most important government acts to arise out of the Great Depression was the Social Security Act, which passed on Aug. 14, 1935. This act created the safety net of Social Security benefits, which today are received by 53 million people, including over 1 million in Washington State.

To commemorate the 75th anniversary of the Social Security Act, a birthday party was held at the Greenwood Senior Center on Monday, Aug. 16. More than 350 people came to the event, which was sponsored by the Puget Sound Alliance of Retired Americans, the Economic Opportunity Institute, and several labor and human rights groups.

The program opened with a short film produced by the Older Women's League,



PHOTO BY LYNN SEREDA

*Birthday cake and banners highlighted the 75-year history of the Social Security Act, which was adopted Aug. 14, 1935.*

which focused on the personal stories of people who have benefited from Social Security. After the film, several speakers were introduced, including U.S. Senator Patty Murray and Congressional Representative Jim McDermott.

Senator Murray, greeted by a standing

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ovation, proclaimed, “The stories told today illustrate the critical need to protect our seniors. The Social Security Act gave our seniors dignity.

“When I look at Social Security, I don’t see just a program — I see a promise from one generation to the next.”

Rep. McDermott noted that Social Security isn’t just about seniors. One third of

beneficiaries are disabled, and there are also 3.2 million children who collect benefits due to the death of a parent who provided the family income.

Marilyn Watson, a Harvard-educated woman who is the Policy Director of the Economic Opportunity Institute, told her own personal story of the sudden death of her father when she was a child.

Because her family was able to access Social Security benefits, they were able to escape slipping into homelessness and poverty. The Social Security checks provided stability as her mother re-entered the workforce.

Watkins attributed her own path to college and a productive adulthood as one that might not have been possible without the safety net Social Security provides.

All of the speakers noted that there must be a large effort to keep Social Security as the successful program it is. Will Parry, editor of The Senior Advocate noted that former President Bush tried to initiate the privatization of Social Security, which means the money would be invested in the stock market instead of in secure U.S. Treasury bonds.

While this effort was blocked, Senator Murray said we just can’t take things for granted, because there are still special interest groups who want to change the program or even make cuts to benefits.

With an annual administrative cost of only 1 percent, Social Security is the most cost-efficient government program to run, according to Parry.

Following the speeches, everyone was poured a sparkling apple cider toast. The crowd then sang Happy Birthday to Social Security as a chocolate birthday cake was presented.

### To get involved or learn more

Social Security Works/Washington has

to get a copy of this letter, contact PSARA at 206-448-9646 or e-mail info@psara.org. You can also find out more information about why Social Security is so important to preserve as a government entitlement by visiting the website [www.socialsecuritymatters.org](http://www.socialsecuritymatters.org).

## Community notes

### Take an SAT practice test

Kaplan and The Seattle Public Library are offering a two-session practice SAT exam for high-school students at two locations in Seattle. Scores are confidential. Receive your results at the follow-up session and learn how to improve your scores through smarter test-taking. Get tips on how to use free online resources to prepare for the test. Bring a pencil, eraser, calculator and a snack. Preference is given to high school students. Registration required. Limited to students who can attend both sessions:  
Practice test – 10:30 a.m. – 3:30 p.m. Saturday, Sept. 25  
Test results and study tips – 10:30 a.m. – noon Saturday, Oct. 2

### Rainier Community Center

4600 38th Ave. S.  
Call the Columbia Branch at 206-386-1908 to register.

### Lake City Community Center

12531 28th Ave. N. E.  
Call the Lake City Branch at 206-684-7518 to register.

### Story time programs with Dora and Kai-lan

Story Time is extra special with Dora the Explorer reading from one of her Spanish/English bi-lingual books, and Kai-lan reading from one of her Mandarin Chinese/English bi-lingual books. Bring your young children (recom-

mended ages 2-8) to meet Dora and Kai-lan, and experience fun giveaways and photo opportunities!

### Story Times with Dora Central Library

Microsoft Auditorium, Central Library  
1000 Fourth Ave.  
10:30 and 11:30 a.m. Saturday, Sept. 25  
**South Park Community Center**  
8319 Eighth Ave. S.  
3:30 p.m. Saturday, Sept. 25

### Story Times with Kai-lan Northgate Community Center

10510 Fifth Ave. N.E.  
10:30 a.m. Saturday, Oct. 2  
**Beacon Hill Branch**  
2821 Beacon Ave. S.  
3:30 p.m. Saturday, Oct. 2

Both visits promote the brand-new stage shows “Storytime Live!” with Dora and with Kai-lan, coming to The Paramount Theatre on Oct. 23-24, co-presented by Seattle Theatre Group.

### Reminder: Seattle Public Libraries closed Aug. 30 – Sept. 6

All Seattle Public Libraries will be closed Aug. 30 – Sept. 5 due to city budget cuts. They will also be closed Sept. 6 for Labor Day.

Libraries will resume regular hours Sept. 7.

### Social Security: Facts and figures

In June 2010, 53.4 million people, or about one in every six U.S. residents, collected Social Security benefits:

- Retirees comprised more than three-quarters (77 percent) of Social Security recipients.
- 10 million people, or 19 percent, received Social Security disability insurance.
- 4 percent of Social Security recipients were young survivors of deceased workers.

Statistics bear out that Social Security benefits lift elderly Americans out of poverty:

- 45 percent of Americans aged 65 and older receiving Social Security benefits would be below the poverty line without their benefits.
- Social Security benefits provide the majority of cash income for 55 percent of elderly beneficiaries.
- Almost 90 percent of people aged 65 and older receive some of their income from Social Security.

— *Compiled by Voice editor Tyler Roush from Center on Budget and Policy Priorities information.*