

Considering Visiting the Oregon Coast This Summer?

Seaside Chevra Congregation Sets Sail!

by Laurie Young 5/15/24

Scenic Seaside is now home to the Seaside Chevra Congregation, Oregon's newest Jewish Center on the North Coast. This newly established modern orthodox congregation welcomes Jews of all backgrounds and observance levels, including both local residents and summer visitors. Its name "chevra" is indicative of its friendly and welcoming orientation. Chevra is a Hebrew/Yiddish word that alludes to caring friendship.

The congregation's summer programs will begin in Seaside on June 20. Offerings will include weekly Shabbat morning services followed by a kosher community kiddush, Shabbat hospitality, and learning opportunities. Additionally, a Klezmer Band concert is being planned.

Rabbi Yehuda Leib Brown will be the initial visiting rabbi, anticipated to join the community for weekly Shabbat celebrations through July 21. As an educator at Portland's Maayan Torah Day School, Rabbi Brown is passionate about teaching Torah and Jewish topics in general. Rabbi Brown has offered to teach a Thursday evening Torah class to locals and visitors. He has graciously shared his email for people looking to arrange group or private learning or simply to answer Jewish questions. (rbrownscc@gmail.com).

After July 21, the Seaside Chevra are planning a weekly rotation of rabbis from Portland and Seattle to enhance the summer Shabbat and learning experience. Both the Seattle and Portland Kollels have expressed an interest in helping the congregation. The Klezmer live music performance is slated for late August.

Historically, Seaside has been a popular summer destination for Jewish families from Portland and Seattle, dating back to the 1960s-70s. Old-timers tell of a small summer minyan that was held in downtown Seaside in a resident's home. There is more history about Seaside to be explored in the Portland Jewish Museum.

The idea of launching the Seaside Chevra was sparked in the summer of 2023 when community members gathered for a kosher barbecue followed by a kumsitz at the beach. Soon thereafter, the group came together and held traditional Rosh Hashana services in a rental home overlooking the ocean. Though the group had to fly in a few minyan members, the inspiring services led by Rafael Hileman of Baltimore (a Seattle native) and Amitai Coplon (a New Jersey rabbinic student) were a huge success and very appreciated by the local participants.

Subsequent to the High Holidays, Jewish holiday celebrations continued in Seaside. A sukkah was erected and was shared by members of the community. The local City Hall hosted their first ever community candle lighting ceremony every night of Chanukah. A community Chanukah party, featuring kosher New York Chanukah donuts and latkes by Portland's kosher Kashrootz Catering, was attended by about 30 people from not only Seaside, but from the surrounding small towns and even Longview, Washington. Rabbi Shimey Wilhelm, rabbi of the Chabad of Lake Oswego, came with his family and delivered inspiring Chanukah thoughts. Purim was joyfully celebrated with two Megillah readings by Rabbi Brown, a festive Purim meal, and the traditional sharing of food gifts (shlach manot).

As the newly established Seaside Chevra strives to bring more Jewish life and Jewish enrichment opportunities to the North Coast, the group is also working with the local Seaside Safeway to expand their kosher food offerings. Call the Safeway store manager for the most up-to-date information. For more information about the new congregation, Shabbat hospitality, learning opportunities, or to be on the communication list, please contact Laurie or Ze'ev at SeasideChevra@gmail.com. Rabbi Yehuda Leib Brown can be reached at rbrownscc@gmail.com.

