

New Silver Lake Resort owners focus on family, education

- Ginny McCabe For The Daily News
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Two former teachers recently purchased Silver Lake Resort, and plan to incorporate their educational backgrounds into the campground business.

Alan Kahn, 60, and Ember Crippen, 63 were both longtime teachers at different schools.

Crippen most recently taught kindergarten in Berkeley, California for more than two decades, and Kahn, a magician since he was in college, worked as a middle school science teacher at San Ramon, California prior to taking over ownership of the resort this summer.

The pair was looking for an environmentally friendly site where they could use their skills while running a business in retirement.

With an appeal to school and scouting groups, the resort plans to host special programs similar to the recent Summer Solstice and Fourth of July events, where they cooked hot dogs and smores in a solar oven for customers, whether they were there for day use or overnight.



“We plan to do more fun things like that, where we can incorporate science, magic and some of the hands-on things that we’ve done in the classroom with the fun of being outdoors,” Kahn said.

The change

Silver Lake Resort has offered tent and RV camping, cabins and a waterfront hotel overlooking the lake for more than 70 years, with Mount St. Helens in the background.

The resort, which sits on 3 acres of land off Spirit Lake Memorial Highway, also offers boat rentals, fishing, a store, a playground, a meeting room, and open, outdoor space. Guests can also bring their own boats. For those looking to sightsee, the [Washington State Parks Mount St. Helens Visitors Center](#) is a mile away. After the ownership change, all of the previous employees stayed on, while a few high school students have also been hired for the summer.

Kahn said Crippen is the point of contact between the resort, employees and the guests since she's a "people person."

Boats sit docked at Silver Lake Resort on Thursday, Aug. 1 in Silverlake. Silver Lake Resort has offered tent and RV camping, cabins and a waterfront hotel overlooking the lake for more than 70 years.

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Thanks to her, in the short time they have owned Silver Lake Resort, the site won a regional silver place award for hotel and lodging. In The Daily News' [2024 Best of Lower Columbia](#), Silver Lake Resort was also voted a favorite place for a kid's birthday party.

Kahn is behind the innovative promotions and events since he has a background in public relations and marketing.

Kahn said the idea to own their own campsite came after a touring national parks from California to New York in their own recreational vehicle during on of their six-week summer vacation.

“We came across the fact that a campground was for sale, and that was so interesting to us that they are actually bought and sold on the open market,” he said. “So, we gave ourselves a couple of years to research the idea, and to determine if we could do this.”

They chose Silver Lake partly because Crippen grew up in Hood River and has nearby family and friends.

“I always wanted to come back to the Northwest,” she said.

Growing roots

The new owners plan to upgrade the resort’s infrastructure and facilities to ensure the business remains a top destination for those who love the outdoors, in addition to Kahn’s unique tricks.

“On the weekends, when kids are walking around, they might want to get a balloon animal, and I will make them a balloon animal, or I will show them a magic trick,” said Kahn.



A view of Silver Lake and Mount St. Helens at Silver Lake Resort on Thursday, Aug. 1. The resort has a boat launch and boats available for rent. [Emily Urfer](#)

Guests might also see a bubble machine or a tie-dye table as part of the newly offered activities.

An instructor from Castle Rock’s Studio 117 has been teaching a weekly Yoga by the Lake class, which will continue throughout the summer. Participants from the studio attend, and resort guests can join for \$10.

“We like involving the community,” Crippen said.

The resort is also sponsoring a bull rider in the Greater Castle Rock Chamber of Commerce’s inaugural bull riding event Aug. 17 so the participant has a place to stay.



Kahn said the site is relaxed, but have a few rules like quiet time at 10 p.m., when people are asked to move conversations into their campers.

“We come from a place of creating a safe space in our classrooms,” he said. “We don’t have a lot of rules, but we do have some.”

A sign directs visitors to Silver Lake Resort on Thursday, Aug. 1 in Silverlake.

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Over spring break in April, they said more than 50 people attended Silver Lake Resort’s grand re-opening and ribbon cutting event with the Kelso-Longview Chamber of Commerce. People were invited to tour the grounds, and many brought stories of their own past experiences with the site.

“We had a chance to meet some of the neighbors and people that came by,” Kahn said. “Some of them told us stories of how their grandparents brought them fishing here as children, or how they worked the docks when they were in high school.”

A painted rock sits next to a pot of carnivorous plants at Silver Lake Resort on Thursday, Aug. 1 in Silverlake. The resort offers rock painting as one of their activities. Alan Kahn, a new owner and retired science teacher, enjoys teaching children how carnivorous plants help with pest control.



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Silver Lake Resort

Location: 3201 Spirit Lake Memorial Highway, Silver Lake.

Hours: 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. daily, and open 364 days a year. The resort is closed on New Year’s Day. Seasonal operation typically runs from Memorial Day through Labor Day.

Info: www.silverlake-resort.com or 360-274-6141.

https://tdn.com/news/local/new-silver-lake-resort-owners-focus-on-family-education/article_a8b93b7c-4a0f-11ef-a580-6f83d010fc79.html