



THE spotlight

The esteemed industry publication for campground owners & suppliers.

PARK SPOTLIGHT

JOHNNY'S AT THE BEACH

EUREKA, CA





JOHNNY'S AT THE BEACH

Picture an idyllic setting where one can look across the dunes to the distant swells funneling between boulder-laden jetties, the water rushing to fill a quiet bay, and a protected marina. Inside the marina, the docks are alive with birds and sea life sounds. A harbor seal named Flip, who visits, lurks below the fish table, waiting for an easy scrap. Above the marina is an office where the new owner, Johnny, son of the original business founders, is surrounded by shoulder-high boxes and loose paperwork, some dated to when the business opened in 1948. Johnny's niece, Annie, and her husband, Mark, are here too. They watch as contractors rip the windows from the front and rear of the office; the remodeling adds destruction to the cacophony within. Johnny and Annie worked hard to decipher trash from treasure, pushing the chaos aside to create enough space for computers and a printer to begin the work. Electronic records replaced a system of carbon copies, paper receipts, and handwritten bookings. They are mentally, emotionally, and physically overwhelmed, having already shredded over 1,000 pounds

of old paperwork and hauled away more than 10,000 pounds of debris - Johnny thought to himself, "What have I just done," as the heavy weight of the business pressed down. Suddenly, buried somewhere in the disorder, the phone rings once, twice, three times unanswered. On the fourth ring, with overtones of resignation and dread, the phone is answered; it was clear - They were NOT ready for the public! From concession to enthusiasm, this is a story of modernizing, beautifying, and monetizing a family business--a story of creating a legacy from bedlam.

When Johnny decided to purchase the resort from the family estate in January 2021, the business was in a verifiable state of decline. For over a decade, the business struggled to maintain the status quo. With rents 50% below market value, maintenance costs increasing yearly, contributing to the neglected infrastructure and park decay. So, Johnny directed his efforts at reversing the decline and raising the business valuation. He rebranded the business as "Johnny's At the Beach."

Johnny needed experienced advice to realize his vision. He contacted CalOHA for resource information and contacted Horizon Outdoor Hospitality, who made hardware recommendations, set up all the back-office systems, and provided guidance. Hardware and software are helpful, but people make the systems work. Fortunately, Annie and her husband, Mark, remained onsite for three months and were a tremendous resource. Annie used her considerable skills with a Master's in Administration to manage the office and oversee the remodel of the onsite vacation rental unit while coalescing the various back-office functions for the RV resort and marina. Mark, a retired Coast Guard Commander and skilled project manager, assisted in the vacation rental rehab while completing a project charter. When Annie and Mark went home, the business had an operation's manual, a comprehensive vision, clearly defined objectives, discrete tasking, and a mission to move forward.

Documenting ideas as a project with timelines and objectives was the secret sauce that kept Johnny's ambitious vision on track. The attack was threefold: revitalize, modernize, and monetize. Revitalization was the most straightforward of the objectives. It needed the aid of a team of contractors, painters, several local artists to design murals and signs, an attorney to ensure the enforcement of the revitalization measures, and, of course, Annie to track and sequence everything, keep it all on schedule and budget. Fresh paint for all the buildings, new signage throughout the park, a wrap-around mural on the main office depicting a school of salmon accompanied by nighttime lighting giving the appearance of crystal blue-green waters through which the salmon move. Though fresh paint and new signs played the most visible role, revitalizing also meant fixing the RV resort's dysfunctional and functionally obsolete portions. The infrastructure work of installing and replacing outdated water/electric meters and obsolete sewage attachments was vital. It also meant removing old mobile homes and RVs neglected to the point of being hazardous. Revitalizing also meant improving the guest experience by re-establishing and enforcing RV resort rules to focus on the safety and habitability of the resort—vehicle registrations, proof of insurance, and limiting new guests to RVs no more than ten years old were some key aspects. Unfortunately, these efforts resulted in conflicts with long-term guests, resolved by Johnny's focus on communicating the vision and legal action in a few cases.



Johnny's At the Beach no longer relies on paper nor accepts cash or checks. Digital bookings, billings, and bookkeeping allow for conveying financial information in near real-time. Annie designed Johnny's logo and website. The website gets rave reviews for design and functionality. There is now a growing presence on Facebook. The park has a WIFI network with integrated security cameras, smart lights, and electronic locks.

Monetizing was perhaps the most difficult. There are seasonal challenges to understanding what the market will bear for monthly, weekly, and daily rental rates. Johnny's had to find its value in the market. Additionally, long-term rental rates were also well below market value. So, part of increasing business valuation meant raising the rents of long-term residents, some of



whom had been there for 20+ years. California limits on rent increases and COVID restrictions were even tighter.

Although Johnny's took 20 months to stand on its own financially, it is still 16 months ahead of the timeline established in the project charter. Johnny's At the Beach is now the number one rated RV park in the Humboldt Bay Area based on reviews posted to Google, Campendium, Yelp, and RV Life. The guests feel they are part of a community and actively engaged as stakeholders. Johnny would say, "Only by surrounding himself with more innovative, skilled, and ambitious people than himself could there be success." In 2023, its 75th year in business, Johnny's At The Beach met the RV public for the first time in 20 years with a great family story and a rich history.



(707) 442-2284
johnnysatthebeach.com

JOHNNY'S AT THE BEACH

Amenities

- Full hook-ups
- Marina with mooring availability
- Fish cleaning table
- Pet friendly
- All weather RV parking

Local things to Do

- Visit Redwood Forest
- Canoe, kayak, surf
- Fish, hunt, clam
- Marine mammal watching and birding
- A foodie paradise

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