



# B'NAI B'RITH CAMP

Building Friendships For Life

PRESS RELEASE

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## **The newest nonagenarian: B'nai B'rith Camp**

*B B Camp started in 1921 and is hosting a Birthday Bash to celebrate 90 years*

Most 90<sup>th</sup> birthdays focus more on nostalgia than planning for the future. But that's not the B'nai B'rith Camp way. On Sept. 17, B'nai B'rith Camp turns nine decades old, and its 90<sup>th</sup> Birthday Bash will include a light order of looking back, yes, but also an impressive helping of looking forward and, of course, *ruach*.

The adults-only, open-seating event starts at 6 p.m., and will take place at the historic Montgomery Park Building at 2701 N.W. Vaughn St. It costs \$36 per person, or, for \$500, you can reserve a table of eight. The Camp-inspired, kosher-style menu will include vegetarian options and no-host beer and wine.

“To celebrate an organization that has truly impacted generations of our Jewish community is such a gift,” said Michelle Koplan, B B Camp’s executive director.

She continued, “For me and so many others, BB Camp was as a child – and continues to be as an adult – an integral part of my Jewish identity. It’s such a joy to bring together BB Camp’s alumni and friends to honor 90 years of community and Jewish identity-building.”

It goes without saying that B'nai B'rith Camp has undergone myriad changes since it first opened in 1921, at the birth of the Roaring 20s. World War I and Prohibition came to an end, Flappers, a booming economy – and BB Camp – entered the scene.

Irving Potter, BB Camp’s outgoing board president, remembers, “For my dad, his two older brothers and the other Jewish kids from Old South Portland who attended BB Camp’s first session – then in a small town in Washington – Camp offered their first opportunity to get out of the neighborhood and experience some carefree, fun time.”

In 1924, after Camp had moved to its current location on Devils Lake in North Lincoln City, there were no cabins, just tents and separate sessions for girls and boys. And, while



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the campers ate kosher-style meals, the Camp kitchen was not certified kosher, as it became in 2002.

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There also was no pool, but a “crib,” which was a small area cordoned off by the dock on the shore of the lake, designated for the campers who weren’t the strongest of swimmers. In the mid-1960s, Camp built its 9-foot-deep, heated pool.

“We bathed daily in the lake, with soap and lake water,” said Gerel Blauer, who remembers camp in the 1940s. “Well...This is modern times, and everyone has it easy,” she added, referring to the end of the crib and the advent of the pool and nice shower houses on both sides of Camp.

Today, the pool and its wide, wrap-around deck hold many kids and counselors during summer overnight and day camp camping sessions. Adults get their chance for a dip in the pool as well as adjacent hot tub, too, during, for example, weekend getaways like ReJewvenation in the fall, Family Camp in the spring and, for the past 81 years, Men’s Camp, a week-long getaway.

Camp inaugurated its B’nai B’rith Camp Retreat Center decades ago but has more recently ramped up its use. Organizations such as Camp Starlight, Oregon Episcopal School and University of Oregon have rented Camp’s grounds for student and business retreats, weddings, quinceaneras, reunions, anniversaries and much more.

Matt Stewart, vice president of the Pi Kappa Phi fraternity, said he chose BB Camp for his group’s weekend retreat – available outside the summer overnight camping season – because “it provided an entertaining environment for a large number of people. And the atmosphere there was fun and relaxing, not to mention the great customer service and price.”

Families, too, have turned BB Camp into a family reunion destination, renting the renovated Lake House that sleeps up to 10 people, along with the myriad of cabins. Olga Mazzeo of Portland, Ore., relished her family’s recent reunion at BB Camp. “We liked the proximity to Devils Lake and the fact that the house was right on the lake. It was a blast!” she said.

While every possible addition, upgrade and renovation Camp has undergone since its birth in 1921 can’t possibly be listed here, it’s worth noting some key ones, such as Camp’s addition in 2006 of Day Camp for Lincoln City kids; a new, two-story cabin, bringing its cabin count to 17; and the popular ropes-challenge course, completed in the early 1990s. And, the Mess Hall is scheduled to be bigger and better by this time next year.

“We know from the most recently released study, ‘Camp Works: The Long-term Impact of Jewish Overnight Camp,’ that Jewish camp builds individual and communal Jewish identity in significant ways,” Koplman, Camp’s executive director, said. “Our commitment



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at BB Camp to grow capacity, so that we may serve even more campers to continue to build Jewish identity, is extraordinarily exciting.

“As we embark on our capital CAMPAign to create amazing programs and new, updated buildings and structures, we know the positive impact we’ll make on our community will endure for the next 90 years and beyond,” Koplán said.

In 1921, a couple dozen Jewish kids from Old South Portland headed to BB Camp’s inaugural session. This year’s summer camping season welcomed 630 kids, including children with special needs, overnight and Day Camp campers from all over the West Coast and as far away as the East Coast even France. As the number of campers has grown, so, too, has BB Camp’s staff. This summer, nearly 93 staffers – including 19 from abroad (Israel, England, Scotland, Brazil, Hungary, Poland, and New Zealand) – took care of BB’s campers.

Blauer, a former BB Camp camper herself and mother and grandmother to campers and counselors, is impressed by the huge number of changes Camp has undergone since her day. While acknowledging the cliché, she doesn’t shy away from using it about B’nai B’rith Camp on the eve of its 90<sup>th</sup> birthday: “You’ve come a long way baby.”

For more information and to register, click to <http://bbcamp.org/events/bb-camp-90th-birthday-bash>.

**B’nai B’rith Camp**, located on a lakeside campus on the scenic Oregon coast, is the premier Jewish resident camp in the Pacific Northwest. Since 1921, the camp has been dedicated to providing the best summer experience for today’s campers while preparing them to be tomorrow’s community leaders. B B Camp strives to teach the values and ethics of Jewish living by example, experience and creative expression. B’nai B’rith Camp has consistently proven to be a great place for youth to learn about themselves, their Jewish identity, their environment and how to relate to others.

B'nai B'rith Camp offers a wide range of activities, including arts and crafts, Jewish enrichment, athletics, waterskiing, sailing, canoeing, hydro-tubing, swimming in the heated, outdoor pool, dancing, nature, singing, high- and low-ropes challenge courses, leadership, community service, drama, creative writing, Shabbat celebrations, overnights and trips. B'nai B'rith Camp, an independent JCCA camp, is licensed by the State of Oregon and accredited by the American Camp Association (ACA).

BB Camp offers one 1-week session and two 3-week sessions for its overnight camp. Additionally, there are seven individual 1-week sessions of day camp for Lincoln County residents. B’nai B’rith Camp is under the guidance of the trained and experienced BB Camp staff. ###

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