



Photos by Kirby Neumann-Rea

HOOD RIVER Hostel owner Lorena Lowell in one of the dormitories, where sheets and towels are provided, and Ahi's Ohana owner Mark Whitehead, in the kitchen he leases at the hostel.

HR Hostel, Ahi's host open house

Hood River Hostel opens next month on Clearwater Lane, off West Cascade, for individual guests or groups.

Owner Lorena Lowell and chef Mark Whitehead of Ahi's Ohana Catering are working together to provide a variety of shared or separate event, meal and accommodation services at the hostel.

The Hostel hosts an open house Friday from 6:30 to 9 p.m., to help introduce the business. The event is free, though there is a cash bar for specialty martinis and other drinks.

The facility formerly was Bambino's Learning Center, also operated by Lowell. Former classrooms have been transformed into lodging space, with new toilet and shower facilities replacing the toddler-sized original fixtures.

The hostel provides male- and female-shared rooms, a family room, and a private single, with rates starting at \$40 per person. It offers dining (self-provided or catered by Ahi's) and business space with Wifi. The hostel has meeting room space for up to 350 people.

Whitehead spent the last 10 years as chef at Cornerstone Cuisine, at Hood River Hotel, before developing Ahi's during 2014. At the hostel he prepares Hawaiian-influenced food for catered events, and can do meals for any number of hostel guests, who can be seated in the large dining room or the expansive north-facing deck with its view of Mt. Adams.

Whitehead leases the kitchen from Lowell and together they can cater weddings, meetings, reunions or other events on- or off-site. Ahi's has weddings

of up to 250 guests booked for the summer. Whitehead can also cater smaller events at the hostel or off-site, including pre-ordered lunches to a business or home. Ahi's also plans a pop-up brunch at the hostel from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. on Feb. 8; start with the chef's table for \$10, and add ala carte entrees.

■ Ahi's Ohana, on Facebook and 541-399-1299

■ Hood River Hostel: 541-806-8525, www.hoodriverhostel.com



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