

SignalViewpoints

Man on a mission to make the beach accessible to all

Seaside will join Manzanita and Cannon Beach as the third coastal town with free wheelchair access for visitors.

The program, which will offer wheelchairs to the disabled at no cost through the Sunset Empire Park and Recreation District, was inspired by Seaside resident Randy Anderson.

"I would like to propose to the city of Seaside to begin a long-needed service in a 'free of charge' beach wheelchair program to help people experiencing mobility disabilities to be able to safely and easily access our beaches," Anderson said in a June 25 City Council presentation. "Typical wheelchairs and sand do not mix."

The beach wheelchairs are designed with "fat balloon tires" to provide easy access and mobility on the sand.

"I've walked down the Prom and seen people with mobility issues looking out at the beach wishing they could get out there," Anderson said. "It's just heartbreaking to see."

Anderson, whose daughter is a person with a disability, said he is a "huge advocate" for all people experiencing disabilities.

Anderson researched the Cannon Beach wheelchair program initiated in 2017 by the Haystack Rock Awareness Program and the Cannon Beach Chamber of Commerce.

The chairs may be checked out at Cannon Beach City Hall. Anderson met with outreach coordinator Pooka Rice, who helped initiate the program.

From Jan. 1 through June 18, Cannon Beach has accommodated 84 requests for the use of their wheelchairs, Anderson said.

'Good partnership'

Anderson brought his concept to Russ Vandenberg, general manager of the Seaside Civic and Convention Center.

With construction underway at the convention center, Anderson's first choice, storage of the wheelchairs at a city location close to the beach, was impractical.

Vandenberg encouraged Anderson to initiate discussions with Skyler Archibald, executive director of the recreation district.

Archibald saw it as a "good partnership" and brought the proposal to the district's board of directors for consideration.

When Patrick and Denise Duhachek, owners of Wheel Fun Rentals in Seaside agreed to donate two wheelchairs, the program got an added boost.

The Duhacheks had provided wheelchairs to visitors at no cost through Wheel Fun, but will transfer storage and administration to the district.

The wheelchairs, which run about \$1,800 to \$2,200 each, will be available for free from the rec district at the Bob Chisholm Center on Avenue A.

"I'm thrilled that they're going to take it over," Denise Duhachek said. "But now that they (the wheelchairs) are actually going to leave, it's kind of sad. We've gotten so many letters of gratitude. We're going to miss the interaction."

The audience at the June 25 City Council meeting greeted Seaside's new program with applause.

"I thought it would take some time and I was really pleased how little time it took," Anderson said after the meeting.

With a council endorsement, Anderson plans to purchase and donate a third wheelchair, he said.

If successful, he said he will apply for grants or solicit donations to expand the program.



Denise Duhachek, Patrick Duhachek, Randy Anderson and Skyler Archibald demonstrate a beach wheelchair.

SEEN FROM SEASIDE

R.J. MARX



The city of Gearhart has shown interest in creating their own wheelchair loan program, he added, with details to be presented at the city's July 13 council meeting. The effort was also spearheaded by Anderson.

Wheelchairs become available from the rec district this week, Archibald said. "The only challenge we're working through is our proximity to the beach, which is not as great as it could be."



Window sign providing information about beach wheelchairs in Cannon Beach.

'I'VE WALKED DOWN THE PROM AND SEEN PEOPLE WITH MOBILITY ISSUES LOOKING OUT AT THE BEACH WISHING THEY COULD GET OUT THERE. IT'S JUST HEARTBREAKING TO SEE.'

Seaside resident Randy Anderson



Cajun mac and cheese from Maggie's on the Prom.

Entertaining an out-of-town visitor in Seaside

Our dear friend Carolyn came out for a visit from our old town in New York. This wasn't her first visit; she came two summers ago to Gearhart to our rental house. Last time, we got coffee and croissants every morning at the Pacific Way bakery; we walked in the dunes; we had cocktails on the terrace at Maggie's on the Prom; we hit the Astoria Sunday Market; we strolled Cannon Beach.

VIEW FROM THE PORCH
EVE MARX



On this visit, we repeated a lot of the same things. And why not, Carolyn said. It was all so great the first time.

On her last visit, after flying into PDX, Carolyn rented a car. I'm not sure she ever got over the shock of driving over the mountain behind a logging truck. This time I suggested she try taking The Point. We picked her up in front of the Seaside Lodge and International Hostel. She said she loved looking out the window and being a relaxed passenger and gave high points to The Point.

Some tourists come to the North Coast to hike and bike. Others come for the craft beer and recreational marijuana. (For the record, Carolyn does not imbibe and prefers wine.) It wouldn't be an exaggeration to say she came to beat the heat. Temps back home hovered at 100 degrees. Every day, there was an excessive heat warning.

Her first day, we headed into Cannon Beach to pay homage to Haystack Rock before heading over to the Cannon Beach Hardware Store aka Screw & Brew for lunch. Because I knew the three-hour time difference would be catching up with her, we got a Papa Murphy's "Cowboy" pizza to bake at home. On her first full day, we took a nice walk in Seaside on the beach near the estuary. We swung by Los Tacos Locos to pick up a light lunch. In the afternoon, we watched surfers in the Cove. That night we had a beautiful seafood dinner at The Pacific Way Café.

The next morning we returned to Cannon Beach where after coffee at Sea Level, we took another walk. We dined that evening at Maggie's where I broke my diet rules to have crab mac and cheese. Carolyn had fettucine with prawns, and my husband had the special of the evening, surf and turf. North Coast Iron Chef finalist Jason Lancaster came out of the kitchen to talk to us. Every evening we walked out to the beach to watch the sunset. Carolyn took a lot of pictures to share with friends back east.

On Sunday we drove into Astoria to take a turn around the market. Carolyn purchased dried cranberries from Cranberry Kitchen, based in Gearhart. We each got a cup of the scrumptious crab chowder and then split a crab sandwich from the Pacific Crab Co. We walked over to the waterfront hoping to see sea lions, but they were busy elsewhere. On the drive home, she briefly spied her first elk.

For Carolyn's last night, we stopped by Josephson's Smokehouse to pick up maple smoked salmon which I served with asparagus and scrambled eggs for dinner. As she was catching The Point Monday morning, we turned in early, but not before a final walk along the painted rock beach for one more sunset.

As I write this, I know she's spending the day in Portland before her red eye flight back East. I told her she had to go to Powell's; her Uber driver suggested she visit the Lan Su Chinese Garden and the Pink House Café. It's really something to have such an appreciative visitor from so far away. It's an impressive journey to get here. I know she loved her visit and hope she comes back to stay.

MEETINGS

MONDAY, July 9
Seaside City Council, 7 p.m., City Hall, 989 Broadway.

THURSDAY, July 12
Seaside Convention Center Commission, 5 p.m., Civic and Convention Center, 415 First Ave.

Gearhart Planning Commission, 6 p.m., 698 Pacific Way, Gearhart.

TUESDAY, July 17
Sunset Empire Park and Recreation District, Bob Chisholm Community Center, 5:15 p.m., 1225 Avenue A, Seaside.

Seaside Planning Commission, work session, 7 p.m., City Hall, 989 Broadway.

WEDNESDAY, July 18
Seaside Tourism Advisory



Committee, 3 p.m., 989 Broadway.

THURSDAY, July 19
Seaside Tree Board, 4 p.m., City Hall, 989 Broadway.

Seaside Transportation Advisory Commission, 6 p.m., City Hall, 989 Broadway.

MONDAY, July 23
Seaside City Council, 7 p.m., City Hall, 989 Broad-

Hall, 163 E. Gower St.

TUESDAY, Aug. 7
Seaside Community Center Commission, 10 a.m., Bob Chisholm Community Center, 1225 Avenue A.

Seaside Library Board, 4:30 p.m., Seaside Library, 1131 Broadway.

Seaside Planning Commission, 7 p.m., City Hall, 989 Broadway.

THURSDAY, Aug. 9
Gearhart Planning Commission, 6 p.m., 698 Pacific Way, Gearhart.

MONDAY, Aug. 13
Seaside City Council, 7 p.m., City Hall, 989 Broadway.

TUESDAY, Aug. 14
Seaside School District

Board of Directors, 6 p.m., 1801 S. Franklin.

WEDNESDAY, Aug. 15
Seaside Tourism Advisory Committee, 3 p.m., City Hall, 989 Broadway.

THURSDAY, Aug. 16
Seaside Transportation Advisory Commission, 6 p.m., City Hall, 989 Broadway.

TUESDAY, Aug. 21
Sunset Empire Park and Recreation District, Bob Chisholm Community Center, 5:15 p.m., 1225 Avenue A, Seaside.

Seaside Planning Commission, work session, 7 p.m., City Hall, 989 Broadway.



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