



BUSINESS

Former biologist opens CB surf school

■ Winter trips to be offered

By **KATHY LENIUS**
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When Rebecca Johnston learned to surf ten years ago, she grabbed a board and followed friends down to the coast off Tofino, British Columbia.

But she knows that not everyone's so lucky to have friends with the time and expertise to teach technique, and that there are safer ways to learn how to answer the call of the waves.

At the end of May, Johnston opened Oregon Surf Adventures in Cannon Beach. Located in Midtown, the surf school will focus on group and individual surf lessons, surf camps and wintertime surf trips.

With Johnson and fellow instructors Mike Selberg and Melissa Simons, the business offers daily group, family or individual lessons for people who have never touched a surf board to individual lessons for those who want to work on their duck dive, turtle roll or other aspects of their surfing, Johnston said.

Johnston is a Portland State University graduate who worked as a biologist with Oregon Department of Forestry and the U.S. Geological Survey before she and her husband, Rodney, decided to move to Seaside for Johnston to start the school and teach other people her passion.

Her biology background rubs off on the two-day surf camps for children ages 8-15. In addition to basics about surfing, Johnston wants to teach participants about ocean safety and ecology.

"This is the ocean and this is how you take care of it," Johnston summarized what she hopes students in the surf camps learn. "It's a beautiful, fragile ecosystem."

The surf camp will also include a trip to local surfboard maker Lanny Shuler's

shop on Highway 101.

Johnston came to the Oregon Coast via Hawaii. After she graduated from high school, she followed the waves to more challenging surf.

"I went there because I was just in love with surfing," she said. In Hawaii, Johnston surfed every day — and sometimes three times a day — and "really learned a lot about surfing," she said.

In 2001, Johnston came back to the mainland, graduated from PSU and started work as a biologist. Last year, Johnston, who had volunteered her services as a surfing instructor to many friends over the years, decided to start a surfing school.

"I saw a need for instruction in Oregon in general," she said.

She traveled to various surfing schools looking at how they set up the programs, including back to her surfing hometown of Tofino.

One of the business' offerings that developed from Johnston's research was "surfer girl camps" for girls of all ages. Many women and girls prefer to learn surfing in an all-female environment, Johnston said.

"It makes them feel comfortable in what could be an intimidating situation," she said.

The female surf camps will start with yoga taught by local instructor Danille Bennett.

"Yoga is a lot of ... core work, a lot of balance and a lot of patience, and those things go hand-in-hand with surfing," Johnston said.

In the winter, when the surf isn't so inviting in northern Oregon, the school is planning week-long surf camps (with all-female and co-ed options) in Costa Rica.

Surfing is a way for everyone — no matter the age — to become a child again and enjoy the water, Johnston said. Her goal in starting a surf school is to introduce people to that joy in a safe way and help start them on what could be a life-long interest.

"I want people to have a fun time out in the water," she said. "I want their first experience surfing to be safe and I want them to want to go surfing again."

"I want people to not be intimidated and to learn about it so that they'll be comfortable to go out again on their own," she said.

Oregon Surf Adventures, located at 1235 South Hemlock, is open 9 a.m.-5 p.m. seven days a week during the summer.

