



## Second Generation Taking Over At Lincoln City KOA

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**KOA NEWS SERVICE (Monday, June 13, 2016)** – Living in a home with five kids age eleven and under, with your parents and your in-laws next door might seem crazy to most, but for Steve and Heidi Long, it's the ideal situation.

Steve and Heidi are a part of a multi-generational operation running the Lincoln City, Oregon KOA Journey in Otis, Ore. Long's parents, Mel and Barbara Lay, have owned the park for 35 years. As Long's parents transition out of the day-to-day operations and pass the torch to him and Heidi, the couple must navigate doing business with family and taking over campground business operations.

Long and his siblings grew up in the KOA campground from the time their parents purchased it in 1981. Even though he ventured out after high school and found a career in surveying for almost 13 years, Long and his wife brought their five kids back to the family business to begin the process of taking over last July.

"I was the best fit for it," said Long. "My brother and sister have careers in Portland and are established there. I came back because I grew up in it and because I wanted to be close to family. My parents want to do other things – travel more."

While the family gets along, it's been an adjustment with a learning curve for Steve and Heidi who had to re-adjust to life on the campground and the ins and outs of the business.

"Mel knows everything in this park. I can ask him about anything and he has definitely dealt with all the problems before. Having my parents on site definitely helps. Their background and knowledge after so many years is invaluable," said Long. "I'm open to critique and take their advice on how to handle specific situations, but they also let me make decisions and run it so I get the real experience of doing it on my own."

"This past year has been about learning everything we can and being hands on. We're just focusing on learning the business and all it entails, including employee relations, the KOA Work Kamper program, infrastructure and maintenance. We're still trying to wrap our heads around it all."

Long says being a part of the KOA system has helped to smooth the transition and hopes to take advantage of the educational opportunities available to him through KOA conventions and training as time goes on.

"There are a lot of benefits to belonging to the KOA system. The marketing and advertising is a huge benefit and the franchise provides a large and loyal customer base."

As much as Steve and Heidi have enjoyed the change, their kids seem to enjoy it even more.

"They love it. The transition was easy for them. We live on the campground year round," said Long. "There's a playground to play in, new people and friends to meet all year and it's a good way for them to learn work ethic and what it takes to earn a dollar. They're involved in chores, help with ice cream socials, stock shelves and count money."

"Living here is broadening their acceptance of other people. Also, not many kids get the chance to grow up with both sets of grandparents around all the time."

Heidi's parents live on site as well, and are involved in the KOA Work Kamper program. The program allows those involved to earn a wage while staying on and working in the campground.

The kids aren't the only ones happy to be there. Long's mother, Barbara Lay, said she and husband Mel are thrilled to have Steve and Heidi taking over, and the opportunity to see her grandkids every day is an added bonus.

"It all happened at the right time," said Lay. "Steve and Heidi are hard workers and doing a wonderful job. They're taking on every challenging opportunity and being successful with every problem resolution."

Reflecting on her time as an owner with husband Mel, Lay said, "It's been really good for us. We learned that we can work side by side without anger, to separate chores so the 'power' lines don't overlap, to communicate and agree on how to resolve really big problems, to watch the money flow and pay cash for everything. It has been a joy."

As for the future, Long says there are no immediate plans for major changes. Rather, he and Heidi are making small changes and measuring their success.

"If we failed we learned why, and if we succeed we're happy," said Long. "All of the family is excited and supportive. We're all looking forward to the next five or ten years to see what the business will do and how it will grow. Every day is a new day that brings something different."

Find out more about the Lincoln City KOA Journey or make your reservations today at <http://koa.com/campgrounds/lincoln-city/>.

*Kampgrounds of America is celebrating its 54th year in 2016. North America's premiere camping company was born on the banks of the Yellowstone River in Billings, Montana in 1962.*