



Fun ⁱⁿ the SUN

Soar Into Summer event helps open the season on LBI

By Susan Bloom

For NJ Press Media

If you can't wait for summer to start, you're not alone! LBI residents and visitors alike are invited to "Soar into Summer" with the area's first ceremonial season beach opening event, taking place at the 17th Street Beach in Ship Bottom from 10 a.m. to noon Saturday.

Events include a kite-flying contest, surf-fishing demonstrations, a welcome from Congressman Jon Runyan and more.

Beginning at 10:30 a.m., fishing pros from Surf City Bait & Tackle will offer tips on bait fishing along with pros from Oceanside Bait & Tackle in Long Beach Township, who will demonstrate the art of plugging, a technique that involves the use of artificial lures or baits.

"We'll be showing how plugs swim and how to present them to fish in different weather and ocean conditions," said Valerie Zak, owner of Oceanside Bait & Tackle. "We're excited to be a part of this cool event, which also coincides nicely with striped bass season."

At 11 a.m., Runyan, who represents N.J.'s 3rd Congressional District, will be joined by members of the 9th District legislation, local freeholders, area nonprofit groups, and the Ship Bottom Council on the ocean side of 17th Street Beach to officially cut the ribbon opening the area's summer season.

"I'm honored to have the opportunity to participate in the first annual Long Beach Island 'Soar Into Summer' Ceremony," Runyan said. "Long Beach Island is a vibrant community with a rich history driven by tourism and the commercial and recreational fishing industries. I

encourage everyone who has not already done so to come and experience LBI for yourself this summer."

In honor of the 175th anniversary of Barnegat Bay's Sneakbox, the opening ceremony will include the display and christening of an authentic sneakbox, a small boat traditionally used for duck hunting that was created in the Barnegat Bay area, provided by Tuckerton Seaport. Vintage surfboards from the New Jersey Surf Museum at Tuckerton Seaport also will be christened at the ceremony.

Other activities taking place during the event will include a summer kite contest, water sport demonstrations by Island Surf and Sail of Beach Haven, and a VIP Pass Giveaway for the 2011 Lighthouse International Film Festival on June 3 to 5.

From 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. that day,

Ship Bottom retailers will be hosting a sidewalk sale and offering shoppers a range of presummer deals, while the Long Beach Island Foundation's Green Business Panel will be taking a tour of numerous environmentally friendly businesses on LBI that day and streaming their footage live via computer and phone.

"We're delighted to offer this event," said Lori Pepenella, destination marketing director for the Southern Ocean County Chamber of Commerce. "Tourism is a very important part of our economy, and there are a lot of great things happening in LBI that we're very optimistic about. We're enthusiastic about the upcoming season and wanted to officially 'unlock' the beach with a formal ceremony to let everyone know what a great place LBI is to visit – and we're ready for the summer."



FOR MORE INFORMATION:

Call the Southern Ocean County Chamber of Commerce at 609-494-7211 or visit www.visitlbiregion.com.

Far left: Lauren Geffinger of Franklin enjoys the waves last summer. Center: New Jersey Surf Museum at Tuckerton Seaport. Left: A sneakbox disguised by sedge grasses on display at Tuckerton Seaport. FILE PHOTOS