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Frequently Asked Questions about the Jewish Community of South Beaufort County, South Carolina (Including Hilton Head Island, Greater Bluffton, and Sun City)

Shalom and welcome to the Low Country of South Carolina!

Our synagogue often receives inquiries from people asking if there is much of a Jewish presence here. We respond with a resounding YES! We are a vibrant, thriving Jewish community that continues to grow as people see what we have to offer. Since most of us came here from elsewhere, we are a Jewish community where one can quickly become rooted and involved.

In addressing specific questions that come our way and that may help you decide if South Beaufort County is for you, we have compiled this fact sheet. We hope you will find it informative and helpful.

We look forward to welcoming you to this beautiful area and to Congregation Beth Yam very soon. Please visit our website at www.bethyam.org to learn more about our current worship services and programs.

How large is the Jewish population of Hilton Head/Greater Bluffton?

The following estimates are based on the county demographic estimates and a 2005 survey of the Jewish community:

- ▶ The total permanent population of the Hilton Head Island/Greater Bluffton area is estimated at 65,000. Of that number, the Jewish population is estimated to be 1570, or 2.4% of the total.
 - Hilton Head Island total population is approximately 40,000, of which there are estimated to be 820 Jews (2%). The largest concentrations of Jews live in Hilton Head Plantation (290) and Indigo Run (50). The total population of Hilton Head Island is expected to grow to 50,000 by 2012.
 - Greater Bluffton's population is about 25,000, but is growing at a faster rate than that of Hilton Head Island. The Jewish population of Greater Bluffton is estimated to be 750 (3%), with the largest concentration living in Sun City (600). The total population of Bluffton is expected to grow to 85,000 by 2012.

What are the overall demographics of Hilton Head/Greater Bluffton?

As of 2005:

- ▶ The general population of Hilton Head can be described as follows:
 - 23% of resident households have children.
 - 77% of resident households are empty-nesters.
 - 32% are retirees.
- ▶ The general population of Greater Bluffton/Sun City can be described as follows:
 - 45% of resident households have children.
 - 55% of resident households are empty-nesters.
 - 25% are retirees.

What is the Jewish community like in Hilton Head/Bluffton/Sun City?

- ▶ We are a warm and caring Jewish community.
- ▶ The community is very diverse with people from Reform, Conservative, Orthodox, and Reconstructionist Jewish backgrounds.
- ▶ Jews in this area are very active in the larger community. In addition to our varied social action projects, members of our Jewish community volunteer at the many local non-profit organizations dedicated to serving those in need. These organizations include Volunteers in Medicine, the Beaufort County and Hilton Head Schools, Literacy Volunteers of the Low Country, CODA (Citizens Opposed to Domestic Violence), Heroes on Horseback, Habitat for Humanity, and many more.

How many synagogues are there? Where are they located?

- ▶ Congregation Beth Yam (Reform) on Hilton Head Island, at 4501 Meeting St. (off Main Street), is the only synagogue in Southern Beaufort County with a full-time rabbi.
- ▶ A newly-formed congregation in Bluffton offers monthly Shabbat services and High Holiday services in a local church.
- ▶ Beaufort, SC has one synagogue (Conservative).
- ▶ Nearby Savannah, GA has three synagogues (Reform, Conservative, and Orthodox).

What does Congregation Beth Yam uniquely offer?

Congregation Beth Yam has much to offer:

- ▶ Full-time rabbi, Brad Bloom, URJ-ordained (Union for Reform Judaism).
- ▶ Shabbat services every Friday Night.
- ▶ Religious/Hebrew School.
- ▶ Sisterhood and Men's Club.
- ▶ Adult education programs, Scholar-in-Residence programs, Torah study, and Adult Academy.
- ▶ Junior and Senior Youth Groups.
- ▶ Social Action Committee.
- ▶ Complete High Holy Day services.
- ▶ Extensive social activities.

What other Jewish organizations are in the area?

In addition to the synagogues, several other Jewish organizations exist in the area:

- ▶ Active Hilton Head Hadassah chapter with about 200 members.
- ▶ United Jewish Communities.
- ▶ Sun City residents can participate in the Shalom Club, which has over 400 members. The club holds monthly social, educational and cultural programs of interest to a Jewish audience. Yiddish classes are also held at Sun City.
- ▶ Invitations are extended to area residents for Jewish programs in Savannah and Charleston.

Are there Jewish cemeteries in the area?

- ▶ Congregation Beth Yam has its own section in Six Oaks Cemetery called Beth Yam Garden, open to members of the congregation. Six Oaks Cemetery is in Sea Pines Plantation on Hilton Head Island.
- ▶ The Jewish community in Savannah, GA has its own cemetery, and Bonaventure and Laurel Grove Cemeteries have Jewish sections.
- ▶ Beth Israel Cemetery is located in Beaufort, SC.

What cultural offerings exist in the area?

Hilton Head/Greater Bluffton has much to offer culturally. A brief subset is listed below:

- ▶ The Arts Center of Coastal Carolina on Hilton Head Island offers a variety of cultural experiences:
 - Elizabeth Wallace Theater featuring dramatic and musical productions.
 - The Walter Greer Gallery featuring high quality art exhibits.
 - Festivals for the Hispanic, Asian, and other communities.
- ▶ There are several other professional and community theater venues in the area, including:
 - Main Street Theater (Hilton Head).
 - May River Theater Company (Bluffton).
 - Savannah Theatre.
 - Johnny Mercer Theater (Savannah).
 - South Carolina Repertory Theater.
- ▶ The Sun City Community Theater, while not a professional theater company, puts on 4-5 major productions each year.
- ▶ The Hilton Head Symphony Orchestra has a year-long program. The conductor, Mary Woodmansee Green, is a member of Congregation Beth Yam.
- ▶ Choral Society.
- ▶ Chamber Music Hilton Head.
- ▶ Women's Shorenotes and Men's Barbershop groups.
- ▶ Several book clubs meet on a regular basis.
- ▶ Bravo Arts & Cultural Festival in April.
- ▶ The Jazz Club; Jazz Lovers of the Low Country.
- ▶ The Hilton Head Art League and The Society of Bluffton Artists have their own galleries.
- ▶ Many Art Galleries/shows.
- ▶ Coastal Discovery Museum.
- ▶ Hilton Head Island Gullah Celebration

What educational opportunities are available?

- ▶ The University of South Carolina Beaufort maintains a satellite campus adjacent to Sun City. In addition to its undergraduate programs, USCB has the Osher Lifelong Learning Institute (OLLI) program, which offers several hundred courses each year, including several visiting lecturer series, in a variety of locations.
- ▶ There is also a Hilton Head Lifelong Learning program.

Are there bridge or mah jongg players in the area?

- ▶ There are many people in the area who play mah jongg, bridge, poker, canasta, and other games.

Where can I buy kosher meat and other Jewish-type foods (Challah, bagels, etc.) in the area?

- ▶ Publix has challah, baked fresh daily and a selection of frozen kosher food (Empire).
- ▶ All of the major grocery chains stock Jewish food in their ethnic food sections.
- ▶ Woody's Darn Good Bagels is located in S. Island Square on Hilton Head Island and Sheridan Park in Bluffton.

Are there restaurants that cater to a Jewish audience?

- ▶ Gruby's New York Style Deli on Hilton Head Island.

Where can I buy Judaica and Jewish greeting cards?

- ▶ Congregation Beth Yam has a Judaica Shop. In addition, most local party and card stores carry Jewish holiday and B'nai Mitzvot cards and wrap.

Where can I go to locate a vacation or short-term rental unit?

- ▶ Marriott Vacation Club International, Westin, Crowne Plaza Resorts, and Disney have resort locations on Hilton Head Island. Marriott, Disney, and other companies offer numerous time-share options. In addition, there are dozens of vacation rental companies, which can be found in vacation magazines and on the Internet.

What types of activities are available?

The Low Country is a wonderful venue for outdoor activities. They include:

- ▶ Golf.
- ▶ Boating, fishing, and water sports.
- ▶ Bicycling.
- ▶ Tennis.
- ▶ Bird Watching/Nature Tours.
- ▶ Horseback Riding.
- ▶ The Beach.
- ▶ Shopping at the Outlet Malls.