

## Ithaca Carshare offers sustainable transportation

By Aly Dixon | Contributing Writer

For 13 years, William Pelto's car got him from place to place with no problem, but when it died this summer Pelto, the associate dean of the James J. Whalen Center for Music, was forced to make a change. After seeing the Ithaca Carshare cars in the Ithaca Festival this summer he decided to give the service a shot.

Ithaca Carshare is now his primary mode of transportation, and he has found it to be a positive experience.

"So far, it is working great," he said. "[I'm] finding it useful, practical and convenient — their phone service has been prompt, and their cars have always been in good shape."

Ithaca Carshare is a non-profit organization and part of a large network of independent car-sharing organizations across North America. Its service is membership-based, providing 24/7 access to vehicles on an hourly basis.

The launch of the Ithaca Carshare program has put a new Nissan Versa on the Ithaca College campus to offer a sustainable, alternative mode of transportation for students, faculty and staff.

The Carshare car on the college's campus can be found in the E lot, near the Textor flagpole.

Marian Brown, special assistant to the provost, advocated bringing Carshare to the college.

Brown said the college's involvement with Carshare started with motivation to employ new and improved methods of alternative transportation.

"I was interested in facilitating students to move around town without having to bring a car to campus," she said.

Encouraging faculty and staff to ride the bus or suggesting carpooling options to students were just some ways to reduce the number of cars brought on campus that ultimately spend most of the time parked, she said.

Brown said faculty, staff and students who are worried because they don't have a car will find Carshare helpful.

"Carshare gives choice, options and mobility," she said.

Members can simply reserve a car by phone or Internet and use their key fob to unlock the car and drive to wherever they need.

The two membership plans offered by Carshare include the "It's My Car" plan, which costs \$20 per month or \$200 per year and has a usage fee of \$4.95 per hour and 20 cents per mile. The "Just in Case" plan that costs \$50 per year with a usage fee of \$7.95 per hour and 20 cents per mile.

According to the "Cost of Car Ownership" study done by AAA this year, the average cost of owning a car today will set an individual back \$8,000 per year. The study factors in the cost of maintenance, insurance, gas prices and all the responsibilities that come with owning a car. A member pays only the cost of a membership and the usage and mileage rate for whichever plan the member chooses.

Some students, like sophomore Katie Hurley, said the plan was too expensive. Hurley, who brought a car to campus this year, said she feels better off in her current situation. She said having her own car offers her levels of security that Carshare cannot.

Brown recognizes this attitude as a problem in gaining popularity for Carshare.

"We're battling a car culture that has proven to be a long-standing problem," she said.

Jennifer Dotson, executive director of Carshare, said the benefits of Carshare are potentially very sustainable. If the program continues to gain users, Dotson said, one Carshare car could potentially take 15 privately owned cars off the road, decreasing fossil fuel use and greenhouse gas emissions.

"What I'm finding more and more is that this is really a way for people to save money," she said. "Not only [in] having access to a car but in only paying for the slices of what they're using instead of paying for a car 24/7."

Dotson has noticed more student users with the start of the school year and hopes it will continue to gain popularity.

"We're looking forward to fall break and having students know Ithaca Carshare is here, so they can really think hard if they should bring their car back or if it makes more sense to use Carshare," she said.

According to the Office of Parking and Traffic Services Web site, permits can be partially refunded if a student opts not to bring his or her car back to campus and returns the parking sticker to the office.

Dotson also said there are direct benefits that Carshare may have on the campus community.

"We can be a little more efficient by using Carshare and all of us save a little money at the same time," she said. "This can be a way for us to transform how we use our land in town and the way we are spending our money."

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