

## **The Ithaca Journal; June 26, 2008**

### **Ithaca Carshare starts its engines**

*By Linda Stout, Journal Staff*

ITHACA — Bill Ellis, 25, drove his shiny new car with its new-car smell for the first time Wednesday, and gas cost him only 20 cents a mile, or 60 cents for a trip to the grocery store.

He owns six identical Nissan Versas and a Ford Ranger pickup — or a slice of these cars — as one of about 70 members of Ithaca Carshare, which had its first day of operations Wednesday.

The cars are parked on College Avenue at Dryden Road, where Ellis picked up and dropped off his vehicle. Cars are also on Seneca Street near Cayuga Street, in front of Moosewood Restaurant, at Ithaca College in the circle near the new business school, at Cornell University on Tower Road at Garden Avenue and in the lot across from the Dairy Bar and at EcoVillage at Ithaca on West Hill.

The pickup, which will be parked on Cayuga Street at Farm Street in front of Gimme! is not in yet.

"People are using the cars," said Jennifer Dotson, executive director of the not-for-profit.

By about 7 p.m. Wednesday, there were five reservations, three of them for the car Ellis used.

He drove to Wegmans for some ice cream and fresh fish — items he was buying less often when carless.

Ellis has a \$50-per-year "Just in Case" membership, so his reserved hour and a half cost him \$11.93 (\$7.95 an hour) and 20 cents a mile. He paid \$15, an initial discount on the usual fee to check driving and criminal records.

There are also "It's My Car" memberships for \$200 a year for two drivers (who don't have to live in the same household); the hourly rate is \$4.95 and 20 cents a mile.

Ithaca College and Cornell University memberships are lower — about \$110 a year for the "It's My Car" membership for Cornell employees involved in a commuter benefit plan. Discount memberships are also available for businesses and other organizations.

Insurance is covered by the plans, except for drivers ages 18-20, who must be covered under another plan.

Dotson said that most American car owners spend \$650 a month on their cars including all expenses and most cars sit 95 percent of the time. Even without a car payment, costs for repairs, insurance, title and registration fees — and especially gas — can add up.

Ellis got rid of his relatively new Hyundai Sonata a few months ago because it was too expensive. With the start date planned for June 1, then postponed for more than three weeks, he had been looking forward to having occasional use of a car but didn't feel he needed one.

Ithaca Carshare plans to add more vehicles, though it's not likely to reach the numbers of Philly Carshare, which has 50,000 vehicles.

Ellis said it works better for him than having the car, which he only drove two days a week and moved in and out of parking spaces on the street.

"I would do a dance from one side of the street to the other," he said.

He also didn't want to pay for parking in Collegetown, which he'd seen as high as \$100 a month.

Living in Ithaca, where things are relatively close together, his commute and errand times when walking — about 20-30 minutes — are about the same as his time spent driving in Connecticut, where he grew up and did an internship with an architecture firm.

"I thought having a car was kind of a hassle," he said.