ESCAPE THE RAT RACE WITH CARTA EXPRESS

Leisurely reading the paper, knitting a scarf, solving a crossword puzzle: What once was reserved for Sunday mornings is now possible every morning and every afternoon, at least for College employees taking advantage of the new CARTA Express service.

Connecting the College to Mt. Pleasant, West Ashley, North Charleston and James Island every half hour during the rush hours, this free “park and ride” commuter service has steadily grown in popularity since it first became available in January. And, as more and more people sink into the plush, high-backed seats of the brand-new Express buses, more and more lives are changing. Suddenly, the morning commute is calm and worry-free: the sports car weaving in and out of traffic, no longer relevant; the emergency stop for gas, entirely eluded; the chance of a fender bender, nearly eliminated. And, perhaps best of all, the search for a great parking space – or any parking space – is over.

“We all recognize that we have a serious parking problem,” says Jan Brewton, director of business and auxiliary services, who hopes that Express will ease the parking shortage. Besides, she says, “Express is convenient and ends up saving you money.”

Brewton estimates that, by riding Express from James Island, she is saving $60 a month in gas alone. When she turns in her parking permit, she’ll be saving more than $110 a month. “And that’s without figuring in the wear and tear on my car that I’m avoiding.”

But savings and convenience are just added bonuses; the wear and tear on the environment is what most riders are trying to avoid.

“For someone who cares about the environment, there’s just no excuse not to take the bus,” says biology professor Deborah Bidwell, who manages to get her 2- and 5-year-old to the Express lot on James Island by 8 a.m. every day. “They’re learning early on that they can get around without a car.” Plus, “there’s a professional driver who is concentrating on nothing but the road, so I can focus on my kids.”

So, why not leave the driving to the professionals? “They have a better view of the obstacles up ahead and they can communicate with each other, so you end up getting there faster,” says David Tomayko, an associate engineer with physical plant who goes out of his way to catch the Express from North Charleston. “Anything to avoid that traffic.”

Avoiding traffic and the ensuing road rage is perhaps the biggest personal advantage to riding Express. “You carry the frustration of fighting traffic with you all day,” says computer science chair Christopher Starr. When he rides Express from Mt. Pleasant, Starr is relaxed and more effectual and, he says, “It comes across in my communication with people throughout the day.”

Sue Atwood of human resources agrees that, since she started riding Express from West Ashley, she no longer gets angry with the people on the road. Instead, she’s making friends with them. “It’s a great way to make connections with people on campus,” she says. “It really builds community spirit.”

For College employees who have discovered CARTA Express, the commuters’ rat race is just a memory of harder times: when there was no opportunity for Sudoku, when the roads were no place to nap and when the fellow rats were just that. For those employees still making the lonely commute, these buses still have plenty of empty seats.
When Robert Hylton was thrown onto the ceiling of his car and found himself staring through the sunroof at an 18-wheeler barreling toward him, it’s safe to say he wasn’t thinking about his next career move. Two years later, however, when most of his bones had healed and he was moving around again, he began to ask himself just where his priorities were. “The accident changed my entire lifestyle,” says Hylton, who was a co-owner and co-chef of Folly Beach’s Café Suzanne at the time. “The life of the restaurant owner no longer appealed to me. It had been my dream for so long, and it was hard to give it up, but I knew I had to align my career with my values.”

And that’s just what Hylton did in March 2006, when he signed on as the executive chef for catering services at the College. “This job really plays into my values” of commitment and teamwork, he says. “The catering team has so much integrity – it’s like one big family.”

Like one big family with a lot of food to produce! In the past year, the catering department was responsible for nearly 2,500 events, including staff and faculty parties, picnics, receptions and luncheons. “I have a hand in pretty much every catered event,” says Hylton, who often creates both the menus and the recipes for these events. “I might be behind the scenes, but I feel like I know the people we’re serving.”

Hylton enjoys being part of the greater College community. “It helps things stay fresh, keeps me excited about what I’m doing.” That’s important, he says, because “when you really put your heart into it, it shows. You can always taste emotion in food.”

Hylton keeps his heart in his food by constantly creating and recreating. “I love taking different kinds of cuisines and seeing how they combine,” he says. For example, “I might take shitake mushrooms and bok choy and put it with some lemongrass on top of salmon and then wrap it in a French pastry finished with a lobster dill cream sauce for a little French-Asian fusion.”

When Hylton isn’t creating food, he’s creating music – playing the bass, guitar and mandolin with several local bands. “I’ve lived my whole life surrounded by food and music,” he says. “I think both are a treat, but, at the same time, both are essential.”

For Hylton, cooking and music go hand in hand. “Cooking food is just like cooking music. It’s all about the rhythm,” he says. “There’s always a symphony in the kitchen.”

Well, at least when Hylton is in the kitchen. Lucky for us, he usually is.

Healthy Changes from Dining Services

Dining Services (which last month established the College’s dining facilities as trans fat–free zones) is taking steps to protect the health not only of their constituents, but also of local fisheries and marine life populations. The catering division of Dining Services recently joined the S.C. Aquarium Sustainable Seafood Initiative (SSI) and its mission to raise awareness about eating and serving environmentally friendly, locally caught seafood. The new affiliation means that catering services does not buy or serve certain at-risk species from declining populations and that it is taking every feasible step to buy seafood from sustainable and, when possible, local and domestic sources. These strides toward sustainable seafood help keep marine life populations, fisheries, restaurants and domestic economies healthy.

For more information about the S.C. Aquarium SSI, visit scaquarium.org/conservation/ssi.html.
NO LONGER BOUND BY BRANCHES
Lauren Rodgers Loses Herself in the Trees

Lauren Rodgers circles the magnolia, examining its mighty branches and its strong roots. When she stops to lay her palm on its trunk, she murmurs a few words, reassuring the tree and expressing her respect.

“I just say, ‘I’m not going to hurt you, I don’t have spikes on my shoes, I will respect you,’” explains Rodgers, an academic advisor who is also working on her master of public administration at the College. “You always have to ask a tree’s permission before you climb.”

Believe it or not, Rodgers has been rejected by one or two trees. “Sometimes you can just tell from the roots and the branches, like if there’s a huge dead branch,” she says. “But even if it’s a perfectly healthy tree, sometimes it’s just not your day to connect to the tree.”

This magnolia, however, grants Rodgers permission to climb, and – as if in a confirmation of their newfound friendship, an invitation to play catch – she hurls a throw line into its branches. “When you have to throw the rope up too many times, that’s another sign the tree doesn’t want to be climbed,” she says. But the tree catches the rope, letting it loop over a branch, and the beanbag-like “throw bag” at the end of the rope returns to the ground, where Rodgers is buckling into her army-green harness.

Rodgers didn’t know much about the sport of “rope and harness” tree climbing until she was about to graduate from college and enter the Air Force. “My dad said he heard about this two-day tree-climbing course in Atlanta and that we should check it out,” she says. “That was my graduation present.”

The course was taught by Tree Climbers International (TCI) and featured lessons on technique, knot-tying and safety. At the end of the course, Rodgers and her father passed both the written and physical tests, certifying them as graduates of the TCI school.

“The whole learning experience was just so incredible,” Rodgers says, tying the final safety knot and hoisting herself up in the branches, where she swings with ease and even flips upside down. “When you’re little, you’re bound by branches, but with the rope you can walk around, swing around, move from tree to tree. It’s indescribable.”

It’s something Rodgers thinks everyone should experience, which is one reason she plans to open a nonprofit rehabilitative tree-climbing camp for kids who have been victims of abuse. “That’s my goal in life,” she says. “You really can’t find a more soothing place than the branches of a tree.”

GARDENER’S PICK
Laurustinus

NAME: Laurustinus, Laurustinus Vibernum, Vibernum Tinus.


DESCRIPTION:
Evergreen; dark green, thick foliage; often used for privacy; pink buds appear in fall, becoming white flowers in late winter/early spring; blackish berries appear after flowering.

WHERE TO PLANT: Full sun or afternoon shade, ideally on a west-facing wall; most soils.

TIPS: Permit to grow into a full bush for best results; prune minimally after flowering; avoid watering in fall.
SACS REAFFIRMATION: Another Ten Years of Accreditation

The College of Charleston has sought reaffirmation of its accreditation with the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools (SACS) every 10 years since 1916. The 2006 reaffirmation was postponed at the request of SACS, making 2007 one of those years.

The current reaffirmation process has spanned more than three years and has involved more than 100 people. A major element of the process was the September 2006 compliance audit, during which all but seven items were found in compliance with SACS and federal requirements.

The College has since submitted a focused report, establishing compliance for those seven items.

Another key requirement is the development of a Quality Enhancement Plan (QEP), a 10-year plan tackling student-learning outcomes. The College’s QEP describes an “intentional freshman year” and focuses on learning committees, a discipline-based freshman seminar and co-curricular student-support services.

The QEP will be presented to the SACS representatives during their March 20–22 visit to the College. The visiting team will examine the items addressed in the focused report and interview various constituents to evaluate the soundness of the QEP and compliance documents.

Reaffirmation will be officially announced in December 2007, with the next reaffirmation process taking place in 2017, more than 100 years after the College’s initial SACS accreditation.

For more information, please visit https://drake.cofc.edu or contact Pam Niesslein, SACS liaison, at 953-7526 or niessleinp@cofc.edu.

RECYCLEMANIA
A “Cheesy Name” for a Good Cause

Sometimes even the simplest, most humdrum daily routines deserve a little attention – maybe even a little mania!

That’s the idea behind Recyclemania, the annual 10-week recycling and waste-reduction competition that the College is taking part in for the second year in a row. On January 28, the College joined 200 other colleges and universities across the country to see which institution, by April 7, can collect the largest amount of recyclables per capita, which can collect the largest amount of total recyclables, which produces the least amount of trash per capita, and which has the highest overall recycling rate.

The main goal of Recyclemania, of course, is more about raising awareness than winning. “I know it’s a cheesy name,” says Burton Callicott, librarian at the Marlene and Nathan A德尔stone Library and chair of the College’s Committee on Recycling and Environmental Responsibility, “but it’s a great way to raise awareness about the recycling program that we have in place and to show people what they can do to help.”

What can you do to help?

• Participate in weekly “waste audits” of campus trashcans (which are typically filled with 70% recyclable materials) and put the recyclables where they belong. Contact Burton Callicott for more information (see below).
• “Lug a mug” to campus dining facilities and even off-campus coffee shops to reduce waste and receive a discount.
• Place your used ink cartridge or old cell phone in a postage-paid baggie from one of the green-and-white boxes or bulletin-board hangers around campus, and drop it in any mailbox.
• Recycle everything you can and urge your students and co-workers to as well!

For more Recyclemania suggestions and information, contact Burton Callicott at 953-0016 or callicottb@cofc.edu.

SNAIL MAIL

- All “Business Reply Mail” from the College must include the 29401 zip code.
- Please do not use red envelopes or red cardstock. Any such mail will be returned to the College or discarded by the U.S. Postal Service.
- Please do not use glossy paper for mailing items. Your department will receive a surcharge of 5–16 cents per piece for any such mail.
- The following are criteria for bulk mail:
  - For postcards and enveloped pieces, there must be at least 200.
  - For flat mail or postcards larger than 4 x 6”, there must be at least 500.
  - All pieces must have the same return address information.
  - All pieces must have the same weight.
  - The College’s permit number (149) must be printed on the mail, unless it is being mailed from a department with its own permit number.

For more information, contact Robby Brand, of mail services, at 953-7157 or brandr@cofc.edu.

UNDER CONSTRUCTION

- The George Street project continues full-speed ahead. In March, the remaining scaffolding will come down and the roofing and sheetrock will be completed. Flooring will continue this month, as will the brick and stucco, electrical and plumbing work for the apartment building.
- The Cato Center (SOTA) project is on schedule, with the tower crane installed last month, and the grade beams and pile caps to be installed over the next eight weeks.
- All of the facility and site demolition work has been completed at the Carolina First Center and John Kresse Arena. Piles are being driven at a rate of 12–15 a day; pile driving will continue throughout March for a total of 559 piles.
HEALTHY COOKING DEMONSTRATION
Sip on wine and sample some tasty dishes as the College’s head chef, Robert Hylton, demonstrates how to cook a tasty and healthy meal.

When: Tuesday, March 13, 5:30 p.m.
Where: Faculty and Staff Dining Room
Fee: $30.00
Contact: Linda McClanahan, 953-8238, mcclanahanl@cofc.edu

MUSIC UNDER THE OAKS
Join the School of the Arts students for a concert of classical music and jazz.

When: Sunday, March 25, 3-5 p.m.
Where: Cistern yard
Fee: None. Refreshments will be sold at the event.
Contact: Nandini McCauley, 953-8228, sotaevents@cofc.edu

BALANCING WORK AND FAMILY
Learn some tips on making the most of your time so that you can enjoy both your work life and your family life.

When: Tuesday, March 27, 1 p.m.
Where: Human Resources Conference Room, Lightsey Center basement
Fee: None
Contact: Linda McClanahan, 953-8238, mcclanahanl@cofc.edu

All information is subject to change. Please verify times, places and registration requirements with listed contact.

NEWS BRIEFS: News You Can Use

• Katina Parthenos Strauch, head of the collection development department at the Marlene and Nathan Addlestone Library, recently received the 2007 Louis Shores-Greenwood Publishing Group Award for her collection-development achievements, including founding the Charleston Conference, launching the journal Against the Grain and establishing the Charleston Advisor, an online source.

• Norine Noonan, dean of the School of Sciences and Mathematics, is receiving the Distinguished Alumna Award from her alma mater, the University of Vermont.

• The deadline for applying for Maymester and summer 2007 staff training is March 15. Applications are available at https://cougartrail.cofc.edu. For more information, contact Deana Richardson at 953-5620.

• Enterprise Rent-A-Car now offers College employees discounted rates for both in-state and out-of-state rentals for business and personal use. Visit cofc.edu/~procure/ and click on the Enterprise logo for discounted reservations.

• With last August’s restructuring of the former Department of Classics, German, Italian, Japanese and Russian, there are two new departments within the School of Languages, Cultures, and World Affairs: the Department of Classics and the Department of German and Slavic Studies. For more information, contact the School of Languages, Cultures, and World Affairs, at 953-5570.
What could it be?

Thanks to everyone who participated in last month’s photo quiz, and congratulations to John Davis, campus arborist, who was the first to correctly say that the picture was the belly button of the torso statue on the Cougar Plaza!

Let’s see if we can stump you again. The object depicted in this photo can be found on campus right now. What is it? The first person to submit the correct answer will win a fantastic lunch for two at Craig Cafeteria, compliments of ARAMARK. Look for the winner’s name in the April issue of The Portico!

Send your submission to lutza@cofc.edu by Monday, March 19, 2007. Please include your name and your department in the e-mail. The contest is open to all College faculty and staff. One submission per person, please.