Alumna launches the Giddy Up shuttle service, offers “a journey as fun as the destination”

Every summer, thousands of tourists flock to Saratoga Springs, N.Y., to watch horse racing at the oldest track in the country, to catch the New York City Ballet and Philadelphia Orchestra at the Saratoga Performing Arts Center, or to take in the dining, shopping and nightlife that have flourished around these attractions.

A native of nearby Albany, N.Y., Traci Cornwell knew firsthand the lure of Saratoga’s attractions. She also knew that getting to Saratoga from Albany often poses a challenge because it requires finding a designated driver and searching for elusive parking. That was until Cornwell, a School of Tourism and Hospitality Management alumna, thought up a “funky” solution and rolled with her idea.

Last summer Cornwell launched the Giddy Up, a shuttle-bus service that offers rides between Albany and Saratoga Springs. While the ride usually takes about 50 minutes, a ride on the Giddy Up is far from usual.

For starters, the bus itself is a retrofitted 42-person school bus that Cornwell painted bright purple. Inside she installed multicolored lights, an amped-up sound system and seats that face each other.

“It’s not just this unmarked, black-limousine-looking bus,” Cornwell said. “It’s purple. It’s funky. It adds character.”

Cornwell’s experience working on cruise ships after graduation inspired the design.

“Whenever we were in these European ports, they always had these converted school buses,” she said. “That’s where I initially saw it, so when I started this, that was the concept I wanted to roll with.”

During the summer, the Giddy Up offers $10 rides between Albany-area pick-up sites and Saratoga attractions. In the off-season, the Giddy Up provides transportation to special events and is available for private bookings, including weddings and birthday parties. Year-round the Giddy Up boasts the slogan “a journey as fun as the destination.”

“I think my business is transportation, but I add a new twist because I’m a hospitality-driven person,” Cornwell said. “It’s so much more than transportation. It can really be an events business, too.”

Conveniently, Cornwell coaches soccer and lacrosse, and through her coaching she has met school-bus drivers who are happy to pick up extra work driving the Giddy Up, especially in the summer, when school buses are in less demand.

Cornwell also has a reliable market in her friends.

“My friends love it,” she said. “I’ve added an entirely new schedule to their lives. Every weekend there’s something going on. It gives us something to do and somewhere to go, and it gets us home safe.” —Christine Fisher