



Rent a Segway, just for fun

By JOHN DEMING
BEACH NEWS STAFF WRITER

HAMPTON FALLS | Her first love is flying airplanes.

But with her new business venture, you could see Certified Flight Instructor Kathryn Stewart zipping around local streets on that new device that may or may not prove — as the airplane did — that walking is for suckers.

"The Segway doesn't take a lot of training," she said. "You just need to know what to expect from it."

Stewart has recently begun the area's only Segway rental business, Seacoast Fun Rides, allowing people to take one out for an hour or a day of nearly effortless transportation.

The Segway is a self-balancing, battery-charged personal transportation that the traveler can stand on and operate simply by holding the handlebars and leaning forward or backward.

Shift your weight forward, and you go forward. Shift your weight backwards, and you go backwards — but it's not quite that easy. First, you have to learn to balance, which Stewart is more than happy to teach.

Stewart spends an hour teaching her customers the ins and outs of the

machine before sending them on their way.

"It turns on a dime," she said.

A Segway does not require licensing, though there has been some legislation with regard to the machine. The maximum speed is 15 miles per hour, she said, and they are permitted most anyplace that pedestrian walking is permitted, though not on state parks.

Most Segways max out at 12 miles per hour anyway, Stewart said.

"When you're on your two feet, that's kind of fast," she said.

The Segway operates by using a series of gyroscopes that communicate with a built-in computer. When you step on, you feel that little shift in your center of balance.

Then you regain your composure, and slowly get a feel for it.

"It's really a gas when you first stand on it," she said.

Most people don't know what it is from looking at it, though people are certainly intrigued. As she traveled around the center of town Tuesday, she got stares from virtually every motorist that drove past.

Stewart thinks people will enjoy her business because it is one of a kind, and because she's willing to bring the Segway to her customer.

"Nobody else does it," she said.

She currently has two machines, dubbed "Snowball" and "Giacomo." After a while, users of the device begin to learn "Segway-etiquette," she said — for example, make sure it's okay with a store-owner before entering.

Once, a Home Depot manager let her take it up and down the aisles, and even asked a lot of questions about how it worked.

"Speak to a store manager, tell them what it's all about, and see if they mind," she said.

They are also great to rent out for business functions, where they will interest everyone and serve as a good icebreaker, she said.

Though it may feel awkward for the first couple of seconds, it comes pretty quickly — just make sure you don't take your first step on to it with too much forward momentum, or you may find yourself in motion before you know it.

And make sure the machine is on before you step on it, or you could take a spill like President George W. Bush did when he stepped on one.

"It's almost as intuitive as walking," Stewart said.

For more information, or to rent a device, call Stewart at (603) 772-9041.



LET'S ROLL — Kathryn Stewart (pictured) hits the center of Hampton on her remarkably fun Segway, one of those which she rents out as part of Seacoast Fun Rides.

— Beach News Photo by John Deming

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