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DOWNTOWN MIAMI

Pedicabs give fresh, free look at downtown Miami

Posted on Mon, Sep. 22, 2008

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BY LAURA MORALES
 llmorales@MiamiHerald.com

A small crew of children came zipping around the bend, stopping when they caught sight of Mikey Angelo astride the bicycle attached to his rickshaw.

"Look, there he is!" cried one girl in a flowery red top, pointing. She and her five shrieking cohorts swarmed 19-year-old Angelo, jumping into his arms and into his green two-seater.

This, Angelo will tell you, is one of the coolest things about working for Go Green Pedicabs, the company responsible for the cute little carriages people have been seeing on the streets of downtown Miami and Brickell since mid-July. He's worked also as a pedicab driver in Fort Lauderdale and in Miami Beach, where they were introduced in February.

"You get to work outside and meet new people. Every day it's a new adventure, literally," said Angelo, a Hollywood resident.

Go Green Pedicabs owner Carlos Lastres keeps his 10 environmentally friendly rides stashed at Bayfront Park, in an inconspicuous nook just south of the Tina Hills Pavilion, across the street from the Intercontinental Hotel.

"People love it," Lastres said Wednesday. "They make no noise; they don't pollute the air; they don't burn gasoline; and it's a completely different experience than riding in a car because it's open."

In downtown Miami, they're free, kind of.

The drivers, who begin their shifts at 5:30 p.m. Wednesday to Sunday, work only for tips, carting around mostly tourists and weekend revelers. The activity level on the street dictates when they pack it up for the night.

Lastres, a mortgage banker during the day, isn't making any money on this venture just yet. He said a city permit now in the works will allow him to sell advertising space on the cabs.

Given the "incredible" response his service has received, Lastres said, Go Green will probably increase its fleet by about 10 or so pedicabs within the next couple of months.

Expect to see his drivers in Coconut Grove soon, he said.

Drivers trundle along through rain or scorching sun, picking up both impromptu riders and folks who have made pick-up appointments through Go Green's website: www.gogreenpedis.com.

"The way I see it, I'm getting paid to work out and meet people," said Allapattah resident David Bonilla, also 19, pumping his pedals and easily maneuvering between obstacles on the baywalk along the park and hotel.

"It's not the best-paying job, but it's fun, especially on the weekends down on Brickell," Bonilla said. "There's a club-like atmosphere and sometimes we're out there until 3 a.m."

Lastres says he doesn't want to impose an obligatory charge. "I think it would keep people



CHRIS CUTRO | FOR THE MIAMI HERALD

09.17.08 - With the Downtown Miami skyline in the background, Carlos Lastres gives a ride to Pablo Bonillo and Maisha Bonillo in his pedicab from Bayfront Park to Bayside at Bayfront Park's Tina Hill Pavilion in Miami.

DETAILS

- **What:** Go Green Pedicabs.
- **When:** Shift begins at 5:30 p.m. Wednesday through Sunday.
- **Where:** Pedicabs set out from just south of the Tina Hills Pavilion at Bayfront Park, 301 Biscayne Blvd. They can be hired on the street.
- **Cost:** Drivers work for tips only.
- **To schedule a pickup:** Go to www.gogreenpedis.com.

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away. Besides, I don't want to step on the cabdrivers' toes, either," he said.

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