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## Conferences on the yacht now a reality

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### **Yachts have long been available for charter on Lake St. Clair, but a local firm is offering a new twist to the traditional charter experience.**

Yachts have long been available for charter on Lake St. Clair, but a local firm is offering a new twist to the traditional charter experience.

"Our corporate client has been asking us what we could do to accommodate their conferences, meetings or presentations," said Steve Rybicki, general manager of Infinity Yacht Charters in St. Clair Shores. "They wanted something to allow them to go beyond the traditional dinner cruise."

So, the 100-foot Infinity was outfitted with audio-visual equipment and other items to accomodate working business groups.

Now, the ship can handle groups of 50-150 for weekday meetings or programs.

Rybicki said the ship also gives the Detroit region a ship-based venue to serve as a convection center.

"The Infinity offers a new dimension to our region's product offerings," said Brad Van Dommelen, senior vice president of the Metro Detroit Convention & Visitors Bureau. "It gives corporate meeting and events planners another alternative when considering the Detroit region for their function."

Rybicki said the ship puts the Detroit area on the same playing field as New York, Chicago and San Francisco, where similar ships operate.

When in operation, the ship operates with a crew and serving staff of 10-15, depending on the function.

In addition to serving corporate needs during the weekday, the ship will continue to be available for weddings, dinners and other private charters on the weekend.

Jim Bardy, who owns the ship, said last year, the Infinity fell short of projections, but still managed to have a record year in terms of revenue and number of charters.

"We've invested heavily to stay ahead of the curve," he said. "Obviously, the economy is working against us, but we have been able to stay one step ahead of the game."

The Infinity is home-ported at the Jefferson Beach Marina on the Nautical Mile in St. Clair Shores, but can also dock in downtown Detroit to handle clients or events in that area, Rybicki said.

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