



Carol Cain: Small business

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CAROL CAIN / WAYNE: Yacht for hire calls Motor City its home

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FREE PRESS COLUMNIST

It was a year in the making, but the Ovation is finally setting sail for parties, weddings and other special events in Detroit and St. Clair Shores.

The Ovation is a tri-level, 138-foot-long charter yacht owned by **Infinity Yacht Charters LLC** that can hold 325 passengers. The yacht, which was delivered June 6, operates from docks at **General Motors Corp.**'s headquarters and at **Jefferson Beach Marina** in St. Clair Shores.

Infinity General Manager Steven Rybicki, 29, of Grosse Pointe Woods has worked at **Continental Dining and Refreshment Services** in Belleville, parent company of Infinity, for 13 years. He has worked on the yacht-business side for six years.

The company already has one charter yacht, the Infinity, which is 100 feet long and holds up to 150 passengers on its two decks.

Rybicki knew they were missing out on more charter business without a larger craft, so the company decided a year ago to do something about that. They commissioned it to be built by **SkipperLiner** in Lacrosse, Wis., with assistance from **Timothy Graul Marine Design** of Sturgeon Bay, Wis.

Though he hesitates to put a price tag on the new yacht, he did say that together the two crafts are worth more than \$10 million.

Though the Ovation technically has two homes -- Detroit and St. Clair Shores -- Rybicki considers the Motor City its core base. The yacht is registered in Detroit.

Indeed, local tourist officials believe it will be a boost to the region.

"We are pleased to have the Ovation as yet another key attraction to add to the lineup of new entertainment and meeting options in metro Detroit," says Larry Alexander, president and CEO of the **Detroit Metro Convention & Visitors Bureau**.

Considering the charter yacht business is seasonal, Rybicki says they will continue to operate until at least New Year's Eve.

When asked about the Super Bowl in Detroit on Feb. 5, he says they will evaluate the situation later on.

"We'll have to wait and see; probably not as the river system gets too ice congested," he says.

Renting each yacht costs from \$75 to \$150 per person, depending on the type of event, food and other things. Continental provides the food.

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The Ovation also features the latest technological bells and whistles such as satellite radio and television, Wi-Fi service and audio-visual equipment.

Each charter typically goes on a three- or four-hour cruise along the Detroit River and Lake St. Clair, depending on the client's wishes.

Contact Infinity Yacht Charters at 586-778-7030 or www.infinityyacht.com.

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