

COCA profile

LaCivita shows visitors Tallahassee's true charms

By S. D. Green

Special to the Democrat

Beth LaCivita is the owner and researcher of Guided Tours in Florida's Capital, which organizes tours of Tallahassee and the surrounding area. LaCivita has one simple descriptor for herself.

"I'm Tallahassee's No. 1 cheerleader," she said.

You can see her driving guests around in her Guided Tours SUV, or doing hop-on hop-off tours in the electric citEcar she's named "Wilma." A regular fixture around town, LaCivita started doing the tours in 2004.

"I was asked to be a guide for a special plantation tour organized by the former Leon County Convention and Visitor's Bureau," she said.

Since that time, the company has been giving tours to locals and visitors alike, covering history, culture and nature. The tours leave no stone unturned with visits to the Midtown shopping area, the Florida Supreme Court, canopy roads and natural environments.

A native of Massachusetts, LaCivita relocated to Tallahassee to attend FSU. So, for LaCivita —



Beth LaCivita in her electric car, Wilma. SPECIAL TO THE DEMOCRAT

who holds a master's degree in history and has served as a historic preservation consultant — creating a tour company was a natural fit, and Tallahassee held a special allure. She finds that people are impressed by all that Tallahassee has to offer.

"They're often surprised by the beauty of the city," she said. "Especially the hills, the lush tree-lined streets and the historic buildings. People also love Railroad Square Art Park."

It turns out the diversity is crucial, as the visi-

tors are a diverse bunch with a variety of interests.

"Our tour bookings include families, seniors, nature explorers, artists, campers, internationals, sports goers, educational field trippers, scientists, lawyers, doctors, travel writers and journalists," she said.

The college campuses are popular destinations for parents of freshmen students settling in.

"We often book parents visiting who want to know about the community which their college-bound children are about to call home," she said.

LaCivita and her team spend time researching and digging for new and interesting information about Tallahassee. Guides get basic scripts about the local history, off which they are allowed to improvise.

"We give them information about things like First Fridays, local art exhibits, Seven Days, the FAMU Lyceum program, and show them public outdoor art," she said.

Tours are tailored to the interests of the visitors, and LaCivita covers everything from the ghosts that allegedly haunt the Chain of Parks to the architecture of the Wakulla County Courthouse.

"I get the biggest reaction from people who visit Goodwood Museum & Gardens," she said. "They fall in love with it. Visitors also love the tours of the Governor's Mansion and Sandy Proctor's sculpture depicting the children of Florida installed by for-

mer First Lady Rhea Chiles."

And LaCivita is tickled by some of the sights she sees as well.

"I love it when a northerner sees an alligator cruising on Lake Miccosukee," she said.

LaCivita is proud of the feedback she gets for her efforts to push into uncharted territory. Indeed,

she is fond of quoting Herman Melville: "It is not down in any map; true places never are."

To schedule a tour, call 212-2063 or visit www.ToursInTallahassee.com.

The Council on Culture & Arts (COCA) is the capital area's umbrella agency for arts and culture. For more information visit www.cocanet.org.

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