

Night gliders

Segway city tours now available in the evening

By Kristie Grier
Philly EDGE General Manager

Despite whizzing along on Jetson-style transportation through the Art Museum District, riders taking an I-Glide tour might feel transported back to historic Philadelphia, especially if their tour guide is 22-year-old Temple student Ryan Cronrath.

As one of five conductors of the I-Glide tours— all of which are taken using Segway Human Transporters— art history major Cronrath peppers a 90-minute evening ride with lesser-known facts of the Fairmount Water Works facility, the Azalea Gardens and even Equestrian Sculptural Protocol aka “Heroes on Horses.” After just a 2-mile trek with Cronrath, you’ll not only be able to impress your friends with your newfound coordination on a futuristic device, but also with the knowledge that a sculpture of George Washington on horseback features only the head of the first president, and another military icon’s body and horse. (Washington was never wounded in battle, yet the statue features symbols that denote otherwise. Cronrath said the sculptor, when faced with a deadline, added Washington’s head to a statue

he had nearly completed of another military hero.)

You also might find a deep appreciation for six men honored for contributions during the Revolutionary War as you Segway through the Terrace of Heroes on Water Works Drive northwest of the Philadelphia Art Museum: men from Marquis de Lafayette to General Nathaniel Greene.

Even if you’re not tempted by historical highlights of the I-Glide tour, you can’t help but feel part of an elite group — despite a safety helmet and neon vest — of a sightseeing trend that’s sweeping major metropolitan areas throughout the world, including Miami Beach, San

Francisco, Chicago, Venice and Paris. And \$49 seems a small price to pay for an entertaining evening ride (including an instructional session), when you consider the \$5,000-plus price tag on Segways. Daytime rides are slightly more (\$69), but tours last an additional hour.

Although I-Glide celebrated its one-year anniversary on May 14, it’s been just over a month since they’ve launched evening tours. Though the Parkway view at dusk from the top of the museum steps would seem to be enough reason to have begun the evening sessions, one of the company’s founders, Lew Robbins, 33, a Delaware County native, says while the later sessions were added to keep up with the demand of the day-time tours, there were other reasons.

“The city needs more nighttime attractions; we’re helping to fill the void,” Robbins added.

Robbins, who is one of the Segway guides as well, explains that the tour is accessible to a variety of

people. Last year, customers ranged in age from 13 to 85.

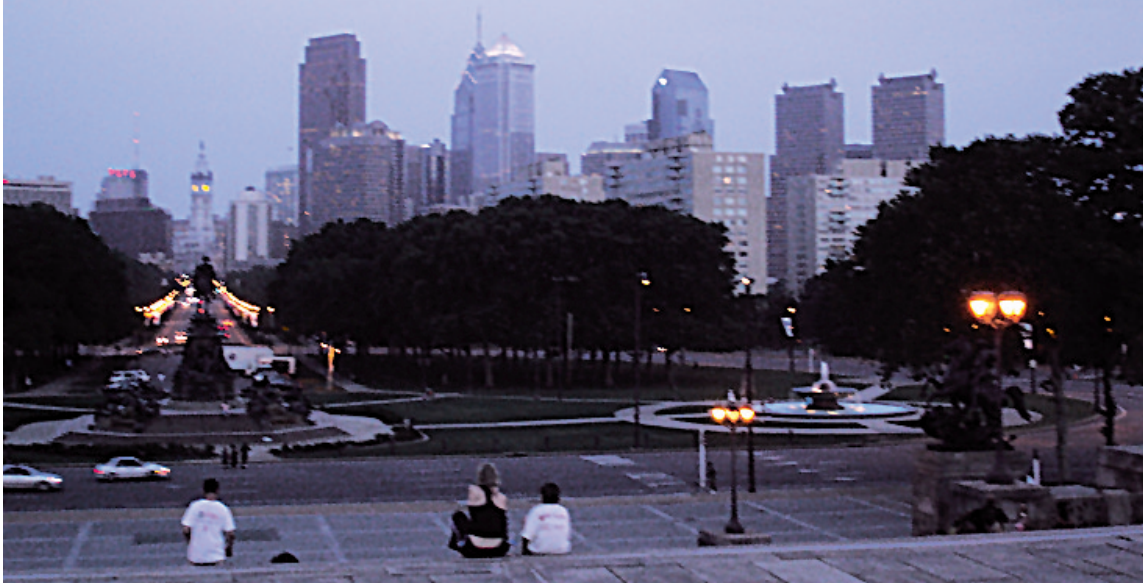
“Each (tour guide) is a little different. We encourage them to insert their personality because they come from different backgrounds — a musician, a 15-year city tour guide, an art history major,” Robbins said.

The plan works with Cronrath’s tour. He instills instant trust in the first 15-minutes — when some riders might feel a little uncoordinated on the space-age scooter — and continues when he helps them key up their speed from 5 mph to 12 mph.

You get the feeling Cronrath truly enjoys his job. His love of history rubs off on riders, as do his skills on the Segway.

“I love to work with people; I’m planning to be a teacher,” he says.

Past riders of the tour might suggest that he already is.



Philly EDGE photos/ Margo Christiansen



No Mister Softee in this van, kids. But futuristic treats await with its travel cargo displayed nearby.

I-Glide tour guide Ryan Cronrath, 22, preps a customer on basic Segway skills.



I-Glide Tours

Eakins Oval and Art Museum
off Kelly Drive, Philadelphia
www.iglidetours.com
877.GLIDE.81

Tours operate 7 days a week
but reservations are required.

I-Glides also available for
team building sessions and
conventions.