



EVENT CALENDAR

| << July 2006 >> | | | | | | |
|-----------------|----|----|----|----|----|----|
| S | M | T | W | T | F | S |
| | | | | | | 1 |
| 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 |
| 9 | 10 | 11 | 12 | 13 | 14 | 15 |
| 16 | 17 | 18 | 19 | 20 | 21 | 22 |
| 23 | 24 | 25 | 26 | 27 | 28 | 29 |
| 30 | 31 | | | | | |

Home > News > Business

Ground control

At 'parkit here,' the shuttle-to-airport enters the next level

By Rob Robertson
Contact
June 26, 2006

For most air travelers, getting a taste of premium service means purchasing a first-class ticket and waiting until you're on the plane.

Travelers' vehicles -- in Memphis, at least -- aren't even part of the equation, where the choices have been limited to more expensive covered parking at the airport or cheaper exposed parking at a nearby lot.

Advertisement

Enter Johanna Ellis, owner of parkit here, a new parking facility on Winchester and Airways that aims to do for parking in Memphis what Starbucks did for coffee.

"We've created a better parking experience for travelers who want their cars taken care of while they're gone," Ellis said. "We think it's something that nobody else currently offers in Memphis."

Parkit here opened for business in March, immediately distinguishing itself from other off-site airport parking facilities by being the only such facility to offer covered parking -- 180 spaces in all -- under a 70,000 square foot steel-framed roof that once served as the service area for her grandfather's car dealership that used to occupy the lot. The price for covered parking is \$10 per day.

Ellis, 26, was planning on attending business school to get her MBA degree when her family suggested she gain hands-on experience by transforming her grandfather's land into an airport parking facility.

Ellis' family has been in the car business for more than a generation, and owns two Mercedes dealerships in Atlanta and an Infinity dealership in Memphis.

Capital for the new business would come from the sale of another dealership her family owned in St. Louis after which Ellis set about redesigning and refitting the lot into a cutting-edge, "retro-meets-modern" facility.

Ellis borrowed many of the high-end client service concepts from her family's dealerships to extend the "premium" experience for her customers, including car washes while travelers are away, an Internet cafe so travelers can check e-mail before leaving, dry cleaning services and free newspapers and bottles of water for travelers to take on the plane.

Travelers get to the airport via shuttle -- parkit here has five of them so there's no waiting -- which takes about seven minutes.

On the style side, Ellis hired the Memphis-based architectural design firm archimania to help parkit here look the part of a premium service facility.

"We were able to work with (Ellis) through branding phase, which was a blast," said archimania partner Barry Yoakum. "We put as much into this as anything we've done. We looked at it as a retail environment -- people come and go and spend time there so we wanted to make that experience a pleasing one."

Off-site airport parking facilities have been doing steadily better business in the past few years, said Kim Jackson, executive director of



A.J. Wolfe
The Commercial Appeal

Johanna Ellis is the owner of the new parkit here, a luxury off-site airport parking facility. Features include covered parking, car washes, oil changes, valet service, dry cleaning and free wireless Internet.

[Buy this Photo](#)

STORY TOOLS

[E-mail this story](#) | [Print](#)

Hot Stock Picks

Make Money With These Hot Stock Picks, Penny Stocks, and Investments.
www.RocketStockPicks.com

Wells Fargo Home Equity

The smart way to get it done. Use your home's equity to do big things.
www.wellsfargo.com

Screaming Stock Picks

Stocks, Penny Stocks, Investments and Hot Stock Tips.
www.screamingstocks.com

[Buy a link here](#)

FIGHT S.V.D. WITH
KENNY'S CLIPS OF THE WEEK!

CLICK HERE TO WATCH THE ENTIRE CLIP!

ESPN 360

#1 #2 #3

MID-SOUTH SHOP & SAVE

Today's Newspaper Ads
Browse or search for print ads

Sales Circulars
Find local sales and online deals!

Coupons
Grocery Coupons

the International Parking Institute, one of the largest trade organizations for the \$28 billion parking industry.

"The entire air travel industry took a tremendous hit after 9/11 but has been recovering since about 2003," Jackson said. "There's actually a boom in off-site airport parking right now because the airports don't have the spaces to accommodate all the travelers."

As more lots crop up, parking facilities must do more to attract customers.

"Lot owners are recognizing that you can't just operate a shuttle service," Jackson said. "Adding premium services and customer perks are business concepts that have already proven to be successful in other markets."

Ellis estimates the lot needs to be 65 percent full in order to turn a profit. The lot hasn't approached that number yet, but business has been picking up steadily, she said.

"We've had some good weeks and some slow weeks," she said. "That's how it's going to be for just about any new business, especially when you have something that no one has seen before."

Once the word gets out about the facility, Ellis expects to see the lot's roughly 900 spaces start to fill up.

Parkit here will hold its official grand opening in July and has secured deals to sponsor radio broadcasts of University of Memphis football and basketball games.

"We've got great ideas, a great team, and we're going to be very aggressive with our marketing and advertising," Ellis said. "I have a lot confidence that once people see what we're about, we'll be fine."

-- Rob Robertson: 529-5888

parkit here

Premium service off-site airport parking facility.

Owner: Johanna Ellis.

Employees: 21.

Address: 3441 Airways Blvd.

Phone: (901) 260-7800.

Web site: parkitX.com.

[Grocery Coupons](#)

• [Community Coupons](#)

Special Sections

View special sections published by The Commercial Appeal

Place An Ad

Place your ad securely online 24 hours a day!

TOP JOBS

SECURITY ONE, INC.

Management
MCDONALD HAMBURGERS CLAS

Instructor- LPN/LPTN to RN Transition Program
SOUTHEAST ARK COLLEGE

HealthCare
INTERIM HEALTH CARE

RNs, LPNs and Pharmacist
NATIONWIDE ADV SERVICE

» More Top Jobs «



Copyright 2006 - commercialappeal.com is an E.W. Scripps Company website.

Other E.W. Scripps sites:



[Audit results](#) | [Amplifications & corrections](#) | [Newspapers in Education](#)

[Comparison Shop for Laptop Computers and Women's Clothing at BizRate & Shopzilla](#)

[User agreement](#)
[Privacy statement](#)
[E-mail Webmaster](#)
[Market Data](#)
[Advertise](#)