



## **Golf Cart Instruction Booklet**

### **Parents and youth,**

It is the intention of the park to make this booklet available to the parents/grandparents and memberships of the youth and the youth wanting to operate golf cart as transportation at Sandy Pines.

Golf carts are a major method of transportation at Sandy Pines. The Board of Directors, the Park Director, the Safety/Security Department have put this booklet together for parents and grandparents to review with their youth and make known the responsibilities, liabilities, and rules for operating golf cart at Sandy Pines. This is an educational effort to assist in reducing unnecessary accidents and/or injuries while operating a golf cart within the park.

Good and/or poor driving habits begin as the youth develops experience in driving a golf cart. Youth operating a golf cart are assuming a great amount of independence and responsibility when driving. In addition, the driver, owner(s) of the golf cart, the membership and the parents/guardians of youth are also responsible and potentially liable for way the golf cart is operated. By allowing the youth to operate a golf cart within the park the golf cart owner, the membership and the parent/guardian assume full responsibility and liability for the golf carts proper operation in a safe manner.

The driver, owner of the golf cart, the membership and the parent/guardian should understand that they will be liable and accountable for any damages caused to any person or property because of the operation of the golf cart which may have financial, civil, or criminal consequences. It is the responsibility of the golf cart owner, the owners of the membership, the parents, or guardians to ensure that the golf cart is driven in a safe manner.

It is the responsibility of the owner of the golf cart, the owner of the membership and the parent/guardian to visually supervise the youth's operation of the golf cart.

It is important for the parent(s) and all other parties assuming responsibility and liability to take this opportunity to ensure the safe and proper operation of the golf cart.

Sandy Pines strives to provide a safe environment for families and guests to relax and enjoy themselves. Please take the time to review this information with individuals operating your golf cart.

### **Hold Harmless Clause:**

As a Member, Parent, Guardian or Owner/renter operator of a Golf cart I understand that I assuming all risks and hazards incidental to the use and operation of the golf cart or instruction of use or operation of a golf cart and do hereby release, waive, absolve, indemnify and agree to protect, defend and hold harmless Sandy Pines Wilderness Trails Inc., their supervisors, employees, affiliates, others, and The Board of Directors for any claim arising out of any injury to myself/child or other party to the fullest extent allowed by law. I understand and am fully aware of potential dangers and risks inherent in the operation of a golf cart, including physical injury, death or other consequences that may arise as a result directly or indirectly from operation of a golf cart. As a Member, Parent, Guardian, or Owner/renter of a Golf cart I understand that I assume all responsibility to teach and ensure that the golf cart is operated in a safe manner.

## **Note to parents and golf cart owners:**

### **Is the youth ready to drive a golf cart?**

The youth may be of age to operate a golf cart in the park, but it is the parents/guardian's and/or the owner of the golf cart's decision to determine if the youth can properly and safely operate the golf cart.

### **Questions to consider are:**

#### **Can the youth adequately operate and reach all the controls on the golf cart?**

Is the youth capable of operating the golf cart's braking system, the gas pedal and steer the golf cart? Can the youth physically reach or operate the controls?

#### **Does the youth have the coordination to operate the golf cart?**

Can the youth utilize the steering system, the vehicle, gas pedal and braking system together to operate the golf cart? Does the youth have the coordination to avoid accidents?

#### **Does the youth have good depth perception, peripheral vision, and the ability to judge distances?**

#### **Does the youth have the social emotional maturity to understand the risks involved and can make good decisions, avoid accidents, and drive safe and responsible?**

## **Parents, grandparents, adults, and golf cart owner's role:**

As the person(s) responsible for the youth's safety and others safety it is your responsibility to supervise and teach the youth too properly and safely operate the golf cart. The youth need to be shown and explained the controls on the golf cart and how to properly operate the golf cart.

The manufactures owner manual should be reviewed by the youth and person instructing the youth. Maintenance, care, and safety issues must be discussed with the youth.

Proper driving skills and techniques/skills and safety instructions must be taught to the youth. Sandy Pines requires youth to operate during a restricted probationary period. This is the time and the opportunity for the parent, grand parent, adult, or golf cart owner to teach good driving skills and habits. It is also the time for the parent/guardian, or golf cart owner to determine if the youth have the maturity, and skill to operate the golf cart.

Supervision of the operation of the golf cart extends beyond the restricted or probationary period. Golf cart owners and parents are responsible in visually supervising grandchildren, children, and friends in the safe proper operation of the golf cart.

## **Requirements to take the golf cart safety test:**

The youth must be at least 12 years of age. Proof of age must be provided to the Security staff upon requesting to take the golf cart safety course test. The document for proof of age may be the youth's birth certificate, state identification card, passport or other form of adequate identification that indicates the month, day, and year of the youth's birth.

Prior to taking the test the youth is required to study this safety packet. After studying the packet, the youth may take the written golf cart test.

### **Twelve-year-old golf cart drivers:**

After successful completion of the test, twelve (12) year old youth may qualify for a restricted license and are under a one-year probationary period, in which the youth must drive with an adult, 18 years of age or older. The probationary period is the opportunity for parents/grandparents to teach and assist the youth in developing good driving habits. When the youth become 13 years of age the youth may qualify for a license to operate the golf cart by themselves.

### **Thirteen-year-old or older golf cart drivers:**

Youth that begin the golf cart certification course after their thirteenth birthday may also qualify for a certification to operate a golf cart upon successful completion of the test. Upon successful completion the thirteen (13) year old youth will be issued a probationary golf cart operator certification that is restricted for three weeks after its issuance, in which the youth must drive with an adult 18 years of age or older.

### **Youth that has been issued a State automotive license:**

Youth that have successfully completed, passed, and possess a current and valid State issued automotive vehicle license or driving permit do not have to complete the golf cart safety course. It is suggested the young driver review this safety packet and park rules.

### **What is the cost of the golf cart permit?**

The cost for a golf cart permit is \$10.00. The golf cart permit is issued after the written test is passed and a adult/membership has authorized the issuance of a permit.

### **Where can you take the Golf Cart test?**

The golf cart safety test is given at the Security Station, at the Main Gate Entrance. The Public Safety Department will require proof of age and a \$20.00 certificate fee upon passing.

### **When is the golf cart test given?**

The Public Safety is open 24 hours per day and 365 days per year. Tests will be issued on all days except for peak holiday periods.

### **What if I fail the test?**

A youth may retake the test after a 24-hour waiting period. During this time the youth and the parents should review the study guide to have a successful completion.

### **What type of vehicle does the State of Michigan Classify Golf carts as?**

Michigan law defines golf carts as an Off-Road Vehicle (ORV)

Michigan law defines an ORV as any vehicle that can be operated cross country (without benefit of road or trail) over land, snow, and other natural terrain. This includes multi-track or multi wheeled vehicles; all\* terrain vehicles, motorcycles or related multi wheeled vehicles; amphibious machines, hovercraft, and other vehicles that use mechanical power including 2- or 4-wheel drive vehicles that are highway registered but operated off highways or roads.

### **Is it possible for my golf cart to be considered as a Low-speed Vehicle?**

Under current National Highway Traffic Safety Administration interpretations and regulations, so long as golf cars and other similar vehicles are incapable of exceeding 20 miles per hour, they are subject to only state and local requirements regarding safety equipment. However, if these vehicles are originally manufactured so that they can go faster than 20 miles per hour, they are treated as motor vehicles under Federal law. Similarly, if golf cars are modified after original manufacture so that they can achieve 20 or more miles per hour, they too are treated as motor vehicles. Further, as motor vehicles, they are currently classified as passenger cars and must comply with the Federal motor vehicle safety standards for that vehicle type. This creates a conflict with the state and local laws because compliance with the full range of those standards is not feasible for these small vehicles.

To resolve this conflict, and to permit the manufacture and sale of small, a-wheeled motor vehicles with top speeds of 20 to 25 miles per hour, this final rule reclassifies these small passenger carrying vehicles. Instead of being classified as passenger cars, they are now being classified as "low speed vehicles." Since conventional golf cars, as presently manufactured, have a top speed of less than 20 miles per hour, they are not included in that classification.

As low-speed vehicles, these 20 to 25 mile-per-hour vehicles are subject to a new Federal Motor Vehicle Safety Standard No. 500 (49 CFR 571.500).

In the State of Michigan low speed vehicles have many requirements to be operated on a public roadway. The operator must have a valid State operator's license, they are required to be registered with the state, have a light to illuminate the registration plate which must be secured to the rear, must have proof of and no fault insurance, must be electrically powered and be designed to have a maximum speed of 25 mph, must not have a capacity to carry more than four persons including the driver, must have at least 2 head lamps not more than 54" high and not less than 24", Must have at least two tail lamps that are visible for a distance of 500 feet, must have turn signal lamps, must have reflectors on the sides as far to the rear as practical, and one reflector on the rear, a mirror mounted on the driver's side and either a mirror mounted on the passenger's side or an interior mirror, must have two separate means of applying the brakes which are adequate to control the movement and stop the vehicle, new vehicles must be equipped with brakes on all wheels, must have a parking brake, must be equipped with a horn, a windshield sufficient to protect driver and occupants, must have windshield wipers, must have a bumper, must have a permanently affixed VIN (vehicle identification number), Safety belts, a roof that meets or exceeds the standards for roof crush resistance or helmets must be worn by driver or occupants, maximum speed may not exceed 25 mph, and may not be operated on a road or street with a posted speed limit of more than 35mph. Please check with the State of Michigan to determine if your golf cart complies with "Low Speed Vehicle" laws.

Most golf carts within the park do not conform to these state regulations and the public/county roadways have a speed limit of 55mph preventing the use of low-speed vehicles on public roadways.

### **Golf carts are not toys:**

There are roughly 9,000 golf cart related accidents requiring emergency room treatment in the United States each year. Most of these accidents are related to either braking, cart rollover or passenger ejection. These problems are common to golf carts due to their open design, lack of seat belts, poor braking capabilities and the uneven terrain they are driven on. Although industry standards prohibit golf carts from exceeding a maximum speed of 15 mph, rollovers and ejections still occur due to sharp turns, steep inclines, mechanical failures, and driver error. In addition, most golf carts are equipped with mechanical rear brakes only, significantly limiting their stopping ability.

Forty one percent of deaths resulting from off road vehicles were youth under the age of 16 years of age. Lack of supervision, machine design characteristics and lack of training were contributing factors.

### **Requirements for Golf carts:**

#### **Site numbers:**

All golf carts within the park must have Golf Cart License Plates on the front and rear of the Golf Cart. These Golf Cart License Plates must have a registration on the right upper corner of the plate.

#### **Golf carts must be owned by the member:**

The golf cart must be owned by a member of the park to be operated in the park.  
A membership may have no more than two golf carts.

#### **Raised golf carts:**

The height of a golf cart shall not be altered to exceed 20" from the ground level to the top of the floorboard. Three wheeled golf carts may not be raised.

#### **Liability Insurance:**

All golf carts must have at least \$300,000 liability insurance to be operated in the park. The golf cart owner must sign a liability insurance waiver at the administration office or Public Safety Department indicating that the golf cart has \$300,000 in liability insurance.

Members and owners of golf carts are fully responsible for any injury to person or property including damage to the golf cart while in being used by the member, their family, or their guests. Sandy Pines shall not be liable for any injury to person or property, which might result from use of golf carts. Members and guests use and rent carts at their own risk.

### **Golf cart owners:**

Please take the time to check with your insurance company to verify that you have insurance coverage for the golf cart, for the persons operating your golf cart and for its type of use. Ensure that the insurance company understands that you, your family/friends, and youth are operating the golf cart. Make sure you have insurance coverage other than just on a golf course.

### **Head lamps & Tail Lamps:**

Golf carts are required to have headlights and taillights if operated from dusk to dawn. Dusk is one half hour after sunset and dawn is one half hour before sunrise. Flashlights be used a substitute for headlights or taillights.

### **Golf carts must be in good repair:**

Golf carts must be in good mechanical condition to be operated in the park. The brake system, steering system, accelerator system, lighting system, tires, muffler, and other systems must be in good, safe operational condition to be driven in the park. Golf carts with operational or mechanical problems that jeopardize the safety of the driver, passengers or others may not be driven within the park. Golf carts that are a nuisance with excessive motor, or muffler noise may not be driven in the park.

## **Know your Golf Cart:**

### **Understanding how your Golf Cart Works:**

F= Forward, N = Neutral and R= Reverse. Before you drive the golf cart have the owner or your parent/Guardian show you how it functions. It is the responsibility of the owner of the membership, the owner of the golf cart and the parents/ Guardian of the youth to explain each function of the golf cart to the youth. Golf carts vary in how they shift, brake, accelerate and steer. Please take the time and explain and review each of these functions.

### **Shifting:**

Within the park are various models, types, and ages of golf carts. Different manufactures have developed different methods of making the golf cart go forward and reverse. Most common is a shifter or key switch that has three positions (F — N — R). These letters indicate how to shift the golf cart. Golf cart shifting mechanisms should be checked for proper operation routinely by the owner and a qualified service technician

### **Brakes:**

Golf carts commonly have brakes only on the rear wheels. These brakes are the method in which assist you in slowing and stopping. Most golf carts only have brakes on the rear wheels unlike autos which have brakes on all wheels. This reduces stability and stopping distance. This rear wheel braking system can contribute to skidding or sliding or the golf cart to become out of the drivers control if applied too quickly. Drive your golf cart as the weather conditions permit. Wet conditions, areas with leaves or loose gravel, stones or sand, uneven, bumpy road surfaces or snow requires the driver to be more attentive to conditions and slow down to allow reaction time to stop.

Most golf carts have a parking brake and a mechanism to release the parking brake. Always use the parking brake when you park your golf cart.

Please have the owner or your parent/Guardian explain how to apply the brakes, set the parking brake, and release the parking brake.

Golf cart brakes should be checked for proper operation routinely by the owner and a qualified service technician. If the brakes on the golf cart are not properly operating the golf cart must not be driven until repaired.

Brakes are not a substitute for attentive safe driving. Drivers must be aware of their surroundings to permit gradual stopping. Quick abrupt stopping may cause the golf cart to become out of control and/or injure or eject passengers or cause property damage. When driving a golf cart, you must always drive at a speed that will permit you to stop within the clear distance ahead. Remember to keep a safe distance behind the vehicle ahead of you.

### **Gas Pedal:**

The pedal is commonly located to the right of the brake pedal. The gas pedal is the method in which manufacturers have developed to cause the golf cart to move. As the gas pedal is pressed down the speed increases. The gas pedal should be pressed down slowly and gradually as you begin to move. Take the time to have the owner and your parents/Guardian show you how to operate the gas pedal.

Some accidents are caused by persons pushing the gas pedal instead of the brake. Use care when starting to prevent accidents.

Gas pedals should be routinely maintained by the owner and a qualified service technician. If not working properly the golf cart must not be used until repaired.

### **Steering:**

Golf carts are equipped with a steering wheel to provide movement to the left or right. Steering should be a gradual movement when in motion. Quick abrupt turns of the steering wheel can cause the golf cart to tip over and/or eject passengers. Only the operator is to have their hands on the steering wheel and the golf cart is to be steered by the person behind the wheel.

Golf carts have a narrow wheelbase. Quick, sharp turns can result in the cart rolling onto its side. Because the driver and passenger(s) are not seat belted the passengers commonly are ejected or become trapped under the golf cart. The weight of a golf cart can be crushing, resulting in injuries or death. If the golf cart is an electric golf cart the acid from the golf cart may leak onto the person trapped and cause chemical burns. If the golf cart is gas operated the gas can leak resulting in fire and cause burns to the person trapped resulting in severe injuries or death. Quick, abrupt, sharp turns by golf carts should be avoided. Drivers must use caution and take turns at a slow speed.

The steering system should not pull to the right or left while driving. This may be a sign of damage or wear to the steering system components and should be corrected by a qualified service technician.

The golf carts steering system should be maintained and inspected routinely by the owner and a qualified service technician.

### **Fueling/Charging:**

Two types of golf carts exist. Electric or gas carts.

Both require a form of energy to operate. Gas golf carts require gasoline which is pumped into a tank on the golf cart. The gas golf carts may require a two-cycle oil to be added to the gasoline tank or a reservoir. Open flames ignition sources should not be present or around or when filling the gas tank. Please have the owner of the golf cart or your parent/Guardian show you how to refill the gas tank on your golf cart.

Electric golf carts require charging the batteries. Most golf carts have chargers that recharge the batteries of the golf cart. Use the battery charger intended for your golf cart, Disconnect the battery charger before using the golf cart.

When charging your golf cart batteries open flame or an ignition source should not be present. Batteries produce hydrogen gas when charged which may explode if an open flame or ignition source is nearby.

If battery acid gets on your skin or in your eyes you should flush with water and seek medical assistance.

Please have the owner or your parent/Guardian show you how to recharge your golf carts batteries. Battery chargers that deliver an electrical shock must be repaired or be disposed. Use caution when plugging in your charger during damp or wet weather conditions.

### **Headlights:**

The Park requires that all golf carts are equipped with head lamp and tail lamps if operated from dusk to dawn. Dusk is commonly the one-half hour after sunset and dawn is commonly defined as one half hour before sunrise. Headlights and rear taillights must be in working order and adequate to provide visibility.

The head lights should be properly adjusted so oncoming traffic are not blinded by the lights and taillights must be visible on the rear and not obstructed by passengers or cargo.

Head lamps and tail lamps should be checked for proper operation and adjustment.

The golf carts lighting system should be maintained and inspected routinely by the owner and a qualified service technician

Flashlights may not be used as a substitute for headlights or taillights.

Golf carts must use headlights and taillights from dusk to dawn. Golf carts may not be driven with the head lights turned off from dusk to dawn.

### **Tires:**

Golf cart tires should be checked for proper inflation and condition. Tires under inflated may cause the golf cart to pull to the left or right or cause damage to the under inflated tire.

Worn tires should be replaced.

Prior to driving your golf cart, you should check the equipment on your golf cart. If items are not properly working or the golf cart is unsafe the golf cart should be parked until the equipment is in proper working order.

The owner, the parent/Guardian of the driver and the driver all assume responsibility and liability for the proper maintenance and repairs to the golf cart. The owner and youth's parent/Guardian also has the responsibility in instructing the youth in the golf carts safe operation.

### **In the event any golf cart becomes inoperable:**

If your golf cart becomes inoperable or broken down on the roadway, please hand push the golf cart off on the right side of the roadway out of traffic. Please contact the Public Safety Department and advise of your problem and location. Inoperable golf carts should be removed by service persons or adults in a timely manner. Golf carts creating a road hazard may be towed at the owner's expense.

### **Who may operate a member owned golf cart within Sandy Pines?**

Persons with a valid state issued motor vehicle license or driving permit, youth that have completed and successfully passed the golf cart safety written test that are at least 12 years of age. Twelve-year-old may operate with an adult and thirteen-year-old or older after a three-week probationary period with an adult.

Operation/driving of a golf cart within the park is a privilege. This privilege may be revoked or suspended by Sandy Pines, the Public Safety Department, the membership, or parent/Guardian of the youth.

Persons operating a golf cart within the park must have a park issued driving permit or valid state motor vehicles permit on their person.

### **Who may not operate a golf cart within Sandy Pines?**

Persons without a valid driver's license, or with a suspended license, persons under the age of twelve years, and persons that have not taken the golf cart safety written test and do not have a valid State issued driver's license may not operate a golf cart within Sandy Pines.

Twelve-year-old will be issued a restricted license upon successful completion of the golf cart safety written test and are required to operate the golf cart with an adult (18 years of age or older) until their thirteenth birthday. Twelve-year-old may not operate a golf cart without an adult present on the golf cart.

Thirteen-year-olds will be issued a restricted license for three weeks after the successful completion of the golf cart safety written test. Upon successful completion the thirteen-year-old driver

will be required to operate the golf cart with and adult (**18 years of age or older with a valid Driver's License**) for three weeks.

Persons that have had their driving privileges suspended or revoked by Sandy Pines or the Public Safety Department and may not operate a golf cart within the park.

### **Rental Golf carts:**

A person must be at least 18 years of age, have a valid state issued driver's license and have the consent of the rental agency to drive/operate the golf cart. Rental golf carts with under aged drivers may be confiscated by the Public Safety Department, parked, keys taken, rental agency notified and may have a violation issued. Use of the rental golf cart by the person(s) in the park may be prohibited.

Rental golf carts must abide by and obey all the rules in the park. The Public Safety Department may prohibit a person(s) the use of rental golf cart in the park for careless, reckless, or unsafe driving.

Any rental fees lost will be determined by the rental agency and the renter. Sandy Pines will not reimburse lost rental fees for golf carts confiscated for underage drivers or unsafe driving.

### **Who is responsible and liable for the golf carts proper and safe operation?**

As the driver/operator of the golf cart you are responsible for the safety of yourself, your passengers, pedestrians, and property. In addition, the owner of the golf cart, the membership that golf cart belongs to, the parents/Guardian of the youth or grandparents and the membership that invites the youth or guest to the park are responsible and liable for the drivers' actions while operating a golf cart.

Owners of golf carts and members/parents/Guardian of youth are assuming full responsibility and liability for the youth to operating a golf cart within the park. It is the owner of the golf cart, the membership and the parents/guardian's responsibility to ensure the proper, safe, and visual supervision of operation of the golf cart within the park.

Failing to supervise youth operating a golf cart is a major contributor of accidents. Parents/owners of golf carts are responsible in visually supervising the youth or others operating their golf cart and in the golf carts proper and safe operation.

### **Procedures for safe operations of Golf Carts:**

#### **Getting on and off the golf cart:**

Your passengers must wait until the golf cart is at a complete stop before getting on or off the golf cart. Never allow persons to get on the golf cart when in motion. Do not jump on or off the golf cart while in motion. Horseplay while the golf cart is in motion can result in injury.

#### **Proper Seating:**

Do not overload the golf cart with more persons or cargo than the golf cart is intended to carry. Each person on the golf cart is required to be properly seated in a seat. Persons may not stand or hold onto the sides while the golf cart is in motion. Persons may not kneel on their knees in seats. Persons may not sit on the hood of a golf cart while in operation. Persons may not be in the laps of others while the golf cart is in motion.

Hands, arms, legs, and feet must be inside the cart while in motion. Children may not be strapped in the golf club holders. Sitting on the golf carts fenders, standing on the sides, standing on the back, and sitting on the hood while the golf cart is in motion is not permitted. Seating is limited to the capacity design of the golf cart as determined by the manufacture. Two seats should have two persons; four seats should have four persons etc... each person must be seated in a seat as the design of the golf cart permits safely.

Young children should be in a seat in which the driver can observe them. The potential for young children to fall out of the golf cart as the golf cart turns is great. Small and young children should be in a child safety seat. The child safety seat should be properly seat belted to the golf cart. If a child seat is not available or the child is too large for a child seat a seat belt should be utilized. Small children should be in a location in which the driver can always observe.

Small children can fall out of golf carts and do receive injuries from cuts and abrasions to broken bones. The potential exists for small children to fall out of the golf cart and suffer severe trauma injuries

or death. The small handrails at each end of the seats do not prevent persons from being ejected from carts or from falling out of carts.

Small children should not be in the laps of drivers. Children on laps can restrict the ability of the driver to steer the golf cart. In the event of an accident the weight and force of the driver will compress the child between the driver and the steering wheel which may cause internal injuries to the child.

The driver is responsible in stopping the golf cart when persons are not properly seated and wait until each passenger is seated safely before putting the golf cart in motion.

Some manufactures have installed seat belts in golf carts. If your golf cart has seat belts utilize them. The potential exists for small children falling out or being ejected from the golf cart. Small children should be belted in when seat belts are present. If your golf cart does not have seat belts have them installed.

Studies indicate handrails do not prevent persons from being ejected when drivers make immediate turns. Children should not be in the lap of the driver, as they can impede the driver's ability to maneuver the golf cart. Packages should be secured to the cart, not held by passengers.

### **Injuries related to improper seating and unsafe driving:**

One of the most common injuries related to golf cart accidents are head injuries, arm injuries and leg injuries. Most of these injuries are a result of the driver making a sudden, abrupt stop or turn. These are caused by persons falling out, off or being ejected from the golf cart or when the golf cart rolls over onto its side. Most injuries occur to the passengers of the golf cart. Most deaths occur because of persons falling off or being ejected from a golf cart and sustaining a head injury or crushing injury. Because of the potential injuries all passengers must be properly seated and should utilize seat belts when present on golf carts.

Injuries are also sustained by persons with their arms, legs, and feet outside the golf cart while in motion. Do not drag your feet or permit your passengers to drag their feet on the roadway when the golf cart is in motion. Feet should not hang over the rear of the golf cart. In the event of a rear end collision the passenger's feet may be severely injured or amputated.

Injuries also occur because of the golf cart hitting stationary objects or other vehicles. Driving a golf cart requires the operator's full attention to operation of the golf cart. Impact with stationary objects and with other vehicles can cause severe injuries, and death.

Horseplay, standing up on the rear of the golf cart, turning abruptly, stopping quickly, following other vehicles too closely, speed, mechanical problems, driver error and inexperience are common factors that contribute to golf cart accidents.

Drive responsibly, safely, defensively and require the passengers to be properly seated on your golf cart.

### **Switching drivers:**

Only one person may have their hands on the steering wheel of the cart while the golf cart is in motion. The golf cart is to be driven by the driver, on the driver's side of the cart. Never attempt to switch drivers while the cart in motion or permit passengers to drive the golf cart while seated in a passenger seat on the golf cart.

The golf cart must be at complete stop when switching drivers.

### **Starting the golf cart:**

Slowly press the gas pedal of the golf cart to put your golf cart in motion. Pressing the gas pedal quickly may cause you to throw gravel or throw your passengers around or off the golf cart. Be aware of your surroundings. Watch for pedestrians, other vehicles, and property. If you are backing your golf cart walk to the rear of the golf cart to check that nothing is behind your golf cart before reversing.

### **Leaving your site or pulling onto the roadway:**

**Stop, look, and listen** as you proceed into the street. When traffic is clear carefully pull onto the roadway. Take the time to check before pulling into the roadway and do so in a gradual safe manner. Failing to stop look and listen may cause you to pull out into another vehicles path causing damage to your cart, the other vehicle and/or injuries.

### **Backing Up:**

Take your time when backing into or out of a parking space. Walk to the rear of the golf cart to check that nothing is behind your golf cart before reversing. Check to see if you have properly shifted the golf cart into reverse. Check for persons, vehicles or for property behind you before reversing. Wait until pedestrians are clear and vehicles are not present before you proceed. Check to make sure the golf cart is in the reverse gear before pressing the gas pedal. Then slowly press the gas pedal while reversing. Pressing the gas pedal quickly may cause the golf cart to be out of your control. Gradually press the gas pedal.

Slowly press the accelerator pedal when reversing. After reversing, be sure to shift the golf cart into forward.

Most golf carts do not have reverse lights to illuminate what is behind you. If it is dark be sure to check behind you for objects, persons, or other vehicles before reversing in the dark.

Golf cart accidents sometimes occur because the golf cart was still in a forward gear. When the gas pedal was pressed the golf cart went forward striking a building, or other object.

Golf cart accidents happen when the driver presses the gas pedal quickly and the golf cart darts backwards into another vehicle or object.

### **Drive defensively:**

Being defensive means to be alert and aware of your surroundings, permitting you to react and avoid incidents. Watch for vehicles backing out of their sites, watching out for pedestrians (people walking), vehicles passing, persons on bikes, persons along the roadway, vehicles stopping or turning and persons in the roadway or crossing the roadway. Driving defensively also means to use caution at intersections and be prepared to stop if the other vehicle does not.

### **Keeping a safe driving distance:**

Keep a safe driving distance behind the vehicle ahead of you. A safe driving distance for a golf cart is at least two golf cart lengths behind the vehicle ahead of you. However, road/weather conditions may require slower speeds and greater stopping distances. Rain, snow, fog or wet pavement, pavement with loose gravel or stones, roadways with wet leaves, or traffic congestion may require you to operate your golf cart at slower speeds and require greater stopping distance to drive safely.

**It is the responsibility of the driver to always have the golf cart under control.** Drive at a speed that will permit you to stop within the clear distance ahead of you.

### **Driving at Night:**

Golf cart drivers must utilize their head lamp(s) and tail lamps when operating the golf cart from dusk to dawn. Head lamps must be adjusted to provide maximum lighting distance without blinding oncoming traffic.

Visibility is reduced in the dark. You can only see what your head lamps illuminate. Your visual distance and peripheral distance are reduced in the dark. Oncoming traffic lights can have a blinding effect reducing your vision. Drive your golf cart as visual conditions permit its safe operation.

Items in the roadway, pedestrians, other traffic, and parked vehicles will not be as easily noticed at night as it is in the day light hours. Drive only at a speed that will permit you to stop or react to avoid accidents. Drive according to your ability to see what is ahead of you or behind you if reversing. Reduce your speed and use caution.

Be aware of pedestrian traffic in the roadway or along the roadway.

Pedestrians wearing dark clothing may be hard to see. Use extreme caution when driving in the dark. The park has many persons walking along the roadway in the dark. After special events such as fireworks many persons will be walking along or in the roadway. Use extra caution and reduce your speed. It is the golf cart driver's responsibility to operate the golf cart in a safe, responsible manner in the dark.

### **Driving properly on the park roads:**

Golf carts are to be driven in a manner that does not jeopardize the safety of others, create a nuisance, or damage property.

Golf carts are to be driven in single file down the roadway. Golf carts are not to be driven two or more across unless one golf cart is passing.

Golf carts are not to be driven backwards or in reverse down the roadway.

Golf carts are to slow down when turning at corners or at curves. Quick turns and quick "U" turns are commonly the cause of golf cart rollover accidents and injuries.

Golf carts are to be steered down the roadway properly. Swerving, making the golf cart rock side to side, placing the golf cart on two wheels are all improper, unsafe methods to drive the golf cart.

Pay attention to the roadway, to other vehicles and pedestrians. Horseplay and failure to keep your attention to the roadway may result in accidents and injuries.

Obey Park signage. Stop at all stop signs, drive the correct direction down one-way streets, and keep out of restricted areas.

### **Passing:**

Great care and caution must be used when passing another vehicle in motion. Drivers with little experience should not attempt to pass other vehicles until they are familiar with the golf cart. Never pass going up a hill, around curves, going through intersections, narrow roads, when weather conditions are poor, or traffic is congested. If you decide to pass another vehicle, make sure you have enough space and time between you and oncoming traffic. Watch for persons turning, entering the roadway and for pedestrians or other traffic. Remember to drive defensively. If traffic is heavy and congested it is recommended that you move with the flow of traffic. Also, you must follow the ten mile per hour speed limit when passing.

The speed limit in the park is 10 miles per hour. All vehicles within the park must abide by this rule including golf carts. In addition, road conditions, weather and traffic congestion may require slower speeds for the golf cart to be driven in a safe manner.

Always drive the golf cart in a manner that will permit you to stop in the clear distance ahead of you.

Public Safety Officers often hear the excuse "I don't have a speedometer". Golf carts are issued speeding citations just like other types of vehicles.

### **Hand/Arm Signals for turning and stopping:**

Some golf carts have mechanical turn signals and braking signals installed. However, most of the golf carts within the park do not. If your golf cart does not have turn signal and brake signals it is required that you utilize hand/arm signals when stopping or turning.

Stop = the signal for stop is holding your left arm out bent down at the elbow.

Left Turn = Left arm held straight out.

Right Turn = Holding the left arm out bent up at the elbow.

### **Intersections:**

Pull up to intersections far enough to see both ways but not so far that other vehicles will hit you. Look around yourself in all directions and when it is safe proceed.

Be courteous. Let others go first that were stopped before you at four way or three way stop intersections. If the intersection is marked with a stop sign you must make a complete stop before proceeding.

### **Unmarked intersections:**

If you are entering into the roadway at an unmarked intersection you are required to use great caution and care and **stop, look, and listen** and proceed with caution. It is the driver's responsibility to safely enter upon the roadway.

### **Off road or driving in the green areas or on beaches:**

Golf carts are not permitted to be driven off road, in green areas, on beaches, through campsites, or other restricted areas. Golf carts are to be driven on the park roadways or in parking lots. Golf carts are **not** permitted to operate on sidewalks, lawns, green areas, in buildings, shelters, beaches, playground areas, tennis courts, basketball courts, across campsites, or areas restricted by the park.

Golf carts are **not** permitted to be driven in posted or non-posted green areas. Not all restricted areas are posted. It is the responsibility of the driver of the golf cart to know and understand the park

The only exception is that persons with a handicap or disability that has a park issued handicapped sticker may be granted permission to have access and park in green areas not intended for parking or operation of golf carts to load and unload or transport passengers. The golf cart must be parked near the watercraft.

### **Golf cart Parking:**

Golf carts may be parked on the member's site or a designated parking lot area.

Golf carts **may not** be parked in the roadway, blocking exits, parked on the sites of others, near or blocking fire hydrants, in front of or blocking trash receptacles, restricting traffic, parked on beaches or in green areas, on tennis courts basketball courts, lawns, in park buildings or shelters.

Golf carts may **not** utilize handicapped parking spaces unless the person is handicapped and has a park issued handicapped sticker.

**Remove the keys from your golf cart** place the golf cart in neutral and set the parking brake. If you have younger brothers or sisters do not let them play on the golf cart. Accidents have happened because the keys were left in the golf cart and a young child playing on the golf cart pushed the gas pedal and ran over a family member. Other accidents have occurred in which keys were left in the cart with children and the golf cart was driven into park buildings and property.

Golf carts must be parked or stored properly or may be removed or towed at the owner's expense.

### **Theft prevention:**

Many golf cart keys are interchangeable. To protect you golf cart from theft the Public Safety Department suggests that you chain the golf cart to a fixed object or to your second golf cart when stored. Some persons remove one wheel from the golf cart when stored for the off season as a deterrent,

### **Park Signs:**

Sandy Pines has posted various signs within the park to make persons aware of rules within the park.

### **Speed Limit Signs-**

As indicated these signs indicate the maximum allowed speed within the park.

Golf carts are required to comply with the 10-mph speed limit.

**Stop Signs-** As indicated these signs require vehicles to make a complete stop at the intersection.

**One-way Signs** - these signs only permit vehicle traffic to travel in the designated direction as posted.

**Do Not Enter Signs** - These signs advise vehicle operators not to enter the street.

These are commonly posted on one-way streets.

**Green Area Signs** - These signs advise and remind persons that they may not drive off the roadway in green areas. Operating golf carts off road in green areas is prohibited.

**Handicapped Signs** - These signs indicate parking space reserved for persons with park or state issued handicapped stickers for persons with disabilities.

**Other Miscellaneous Signs** - The Park also has signage that refers to specific areas that are regulated for parking which are present as reminders and educators to vehicle operators.

### **In the event of an accident:**

If persons are injured call or have someone dial 911 for medical assistance. Then call the Public Safety Department.

All accidents are to be reported to the Public Safety Department and local law enforcement at the time of the accident.

#### **Always stay at the scene of the accident.**

The Public Safety Department or police will need your name address and phone number, your passengers name(s), addresses and Phone numbers and the name of your insurance company, the owners name address and phone number and the owner's insurance company information.

### **Pushing or towing persons or objects:**

The driver/operator of a golf cart may not permit a person on a skateboard, roller blades, bike, sled, or other item to be pulled or pushed by the golf cart.

Golf carts with mechanical problems should be towed by service persons or adults.

Do not permit passengers to sit on the hoods of golf carts and utilize their feet to push an inoperable golf cart. A severe injury could result to the passenger.

### **Pedestrian traffic:**

Yield to pedestrians. Pedestrians have the right of way in the park. Pedestrians are persons walking, jogging, or running. Not everyone is on a golf cart or in a vehicle. Pedestrians are of all ages. Adults, youth, and small children cross or walk in or along the roads in the park. The operator of a golf cart should use great caution and be aware of pedestrian traffic.

Golf carts must yield or stop for persons crossing the roadway or provide adequate space to safely pass the pedestrians walking along the roadway. Do not assume that the pedestrian sees you. If you see young children in the or around roadway, use great caution. Pedestrians have the right of way within the park.

Also use great caution when around persons on bikes or children on toys near or in the roadway.

Be aware of pedestrians after dark. Pedestrians in dark clothing will be difficult to see. The visibility of pedestrians is greatly reduced by head lamps compared to daylight hours. Be aware of persons walking, biking, or jogging along or in the roadway after dark.

### **Blind Pedestrians:**

When you see a person with a white cane or guide dog stop and yield the right of way to the person. Wait until the blind pedestrian has cleared the roadway and then proceed with caution.

### **Golf cart etiquette:**

Be considerate and respectful of others and their property.

Ride only where the park permits.

Keep your stereo or radio at a sound level only you and your passengers can hear.

Drive safely and ensure your passengers are properly seated.

Keep your trash and litter and dispose of properly. Do not litter.

Pay attention to what you are doing and what others are doing to avoid accidents. Do not stop your golf cart in the roadway to talk to others or sight see. Move to an area designated for parking.

Only permit persons that have a valid license or park golf cart certificate to operate the golf cart.

Be considerate when you park. Don't block others in, don't park on other sites. Don't let underage or unlicensed persons drive your golf cart,, Use common sense. Be respectful of others.

Swerving down the road, overloading the cart with passengers, driving carelessly, or recklessly, driving too fast for conditions, being a nuisance, being inattentive, or horseplay on or with a golf cart is prohibited.

Be aware that you share the roadway with others such as walkers, bikers, and other vehicles. Be respectful and courteous. They have a right to the roadway also.

### **Use of cell Phones:**

Golf cart drivers should pull over to the right side of the roadway, in a safe place or wait until the Golf cart is parked to make or answer cell phone calls. Answering a cell phone call or talking while driving can contribute to the driver being distracted and not aware of the traffic or pedestrians. The use of Cell Phones, iPads, or any other electronic device while operating a golf cart on Sandy Pines Roadway is prohibited. The golf cart operator should only focus on operating the golf cart in a safe and undistracted manner.

### **Throwing Items from golf carts:**

Don't throw objects from the golf cart or at other golf carts. Don't throw water balloons or use squirt guns or throw off items toward golf carts in motion or while your golf cart is in motion. Horse play may result in injuries from golf carts swerving to avoid the objects being thrown or water being squirted.

### **Horseplay on golf carts:**

Drivers of golf carts are required to operate the golf cart in an attentive safe manner. This means that the driver must be focused on the roadway, other vehicles, and pedestrians to drive the golf cart safely.

Passengers moving around on the golf cart and reacting to other traffic, pedestrians, or causing a distraction to the driver may contribute to an accident. The driver of the golf cart is responsible in stopping the golf cart until distractions cease and horseplay stops. Golf carts are not a toy.

### **Crossing public roadways:**

Public roadways outside the park have a speed limit of 55mph. The park would like to caution persons in crossing these roadways against the dangers of being struck by a vehicle. Sandy Pines advises against crossing any public roadway.

### **Golf carts may not be driven on County/Public Roadways:**

Golf carts **may not** be driven on the county/public roadways outside the park. Golf carts do not comply with the safety requirements and do not have the protection which is required of motor vehicles to be driven on public roadways. The speed limit on county roads is 55mph. Operating a golf cart along with these vehicles can be disastrous and deadly.

Persons driving their golf carts on public roadways are subject to state and local laws and law enforcement. Golf carts found on public roadways may be towed and impounded at the owner's expense by State or local law enforcement. Drivers and or owners/parents/Guardians may also receive traffic citations from state or local law enforcement

**Nature Trails are no longer open for Golf Cart operation.**

### **Rental golf carts:**

The park requires an individual to be at least 18 years of age with a valid State motor vehicle license to operate a rental golf cart. Youth issued a golf cart driving certificate **may not** drive a rental golf cart.

If the Public Safety Officer stops a rental golf cart with a underage driver the golf cart will be parked, the keys to the rental cart confiscated and returned to the rental agency, and a violation may be issued in which the driver, the parent/Guardian or the owner of the golf cart will be obligated to pay.

### **Yield to emergency vehicles:**

**It is the responsibility of the driver of the golf cart to yield to emergency vehicle permitting them to pass.** The driver of the golf cart must pull to the right, stop, and permit a vehicle with flashing lights, and or a siren to pass.

If you see a vehicle with flashing emergency lights ahead slow down and be prepared to stop. Be aware of pedestrians, or in the case of an accident other vehicles in the roadway or injured pedestrians or passengers from other vehicles, or emergency workers working at the accident scene.

If the Public Safety Officer pulls behind your vehicle and turns on the flashing emergency lights and/or siren pull to the right of the roadway and stop. Stay in your golf cart and wait for the Public Safety Officer to approach you.

### **Modified golf carts and stability:**

Modified golf carts are those golf carts that have been modified or changed after being manufactured. This includes installing larger tires, raising the body of the golf cart adding more seating for passengers, increasing the speed, and changing the materials on the body to mention a few. Sandy Pines does not permit three wheeled golf carts to be raised or lifted. Four-wheel golf carts may be raised no higher than 20" from the ground to the top of the floorboard. Golf carts higher than this rule are **not** permitted to be driven in the park.

Golf carts have a narrow wheelbase. When raised by tires or lift kits the center of gravity becomes higher. A raised golf carts center of gravity, its unsafe or careless operation, braking capability and speed, and a narrow wheelbase can contribute to the golf cart being rolled onto its side.

All golf carts have the potential to tip over or roll over if the operator is unfamiliar with the golf carts stability and when driven improperly. Careless, quick, sharp, abrupt turns can result in severe injuries or death to the driver or passengers. As a result of a rollover accident with golf carts the driver or passengers commonly become ejected or trapped under the golf cart. The golf carts weight and force can severely injure or crush the driver or passengers. The force of ejection can cause broken bones and or head injuries causing severe injuries or death.

### **Adding larger tires, high speed motors or controls can increase the speed of the Golf:**

Industry standard design for golf cart speed is a maximum of 15 mph. Modifications to increase the speed of a golf cart can be a contributing factor in causing an accident. Persons making modifications to golf carts may also be liable in the event of an accident.

### **Operation of a golf cart under the influence of alcohol or illegal drugs:**

Operation of a golf cart under the influence of alcohol or illegal drugs is prohibited. Golf carts are considered off road vehicles by the State of Michigan and drivers under the influence of alcohol or illegal drugs are subject to State and local laws, fines, driver's license suspension and arrest by local law enforcement.

### **Suspension of golf cart license or driving privileges:**

Driving a golf cart at Sandy Pines is a privilege. This privilege is often taken for granted. Drivers of golf carts must consistently drive in manner that shows that the driver has the skill, knowledge, and maturity to operate a golf cart safely in the park.

The Public Safety Department may suspend driving privileges for improper, unsafe, careless, or reckless driving behavior. Irresponsible unsafe, careless, or reckless acts or operation may result in suspension or revocation of driving privileges within the park.

Park driving privileges may be suspended or revoked because of written member complaints in reference to unsafe, distracted, careless, or reckless driving.

Park driving privileges may also be suspended or revoked for violations issued for unsafe, distracted, careless, or reckless driving.

Park driving privileges may also be suspended or revoked for accidents which were a result of unsafe, irresponsible, careless, distracted, or reckless driving.

A Public Safety Officer may suspend or revoke the driving privileges of an individual that fails to operate a golf cart in a safe manner based on written witness accounts, written complaints, accidents, or violations.

It is the responsibility of the driver of the golf cart to drive the golf cart in a manner that does not place the safety of persons or property in jeopardy. Driving a golf cart within the park is a privilege which can be revoked for unsafe, irresponsible, or hazardous driving.

The Public Safety staff may also issue violations, fines and community service time for persons operating a golf cart in an unsafe, improper, careless, or reckless manner.

## **Conclusion:**

Each year the Public Safety staff witness youth, young adults, and adults operating golf carts improperly. Each year the Public Safety staff receives numerous complaints in reference to the way in which a golf cart is being driven. The Public Safety staff does write many citations reflected to improper or unsafe use of golf carts within the park. Our effort is to prevent injury or death to a child, youth, or adult.

### **Golf carts are not toys.**

Severe injuries or death can result from their improper operation. Supervision, enforcement, and discipline is first that of the parent/Guardian, or owner of the golf cart. Owners and parents/Guardian are responsible in visually supervising persons using their golf cart. What starts a fun day on a golf cart then turns to horseplay, distracted driving and then an accident can have disastrous consequences. Please take the time to read the following real case study of an incident that occurred in Michigan recently.

## **Real Case Study:**

**LAKE TOWNSHIP** Huron County Assistant Prosecutor Stephen Allen described an agonizing struggle to a group of Detroit middle school students.

"I've got a case where this person was driving a vehicle down the road," he told the class in early April, "He crossed over the center line and struck an elderly lady on the side of the road, in her driveway. He dragged her a few feet, bailed out of the vehicle, and took off. He killed her. What should you do to him?" The class was unanimous: "Lock him up and throw away the keys."

"One more thing," Allen said. "The driver was 9 years old, and he was driving a golf cart." The students went silent.

What should be done about the boy? Or his parents? Or the owner of the golf cart?

It sounds so harmless, letting a child drive a golf cart. It sounds so ordinary, especially in this state, where thousands of people haul off-road vehicles Up North every weekend. Sometimes, parents let their kids drive them on public roads, even though it is illegal in most situations.

This case shows everything that can go wrong, from the woman's death to, now, criminal charges.

For several months, Allen has struggled with the unusual case, which happened Oct. 2 in this cottage community in Michigan's Thumb. A 9-year-old boy from Bloomfield Hills drove a golf cart illegally down a two-lane public road. He told Michigan State Police that he lost control, swerved across the double yellow line onto the wrong side of the road and ran over Ursula Nitzko, 75.

He left the cart and ran back to where his parents were staying. "You're going to be mad," the boy yelled to his parents. "You're going to kill me."

Nitzko, who suffered broken bones in her lower leg and a fractured skull, died at a hospital.

"I am still suffering," Hans Nitzko said of his wife's death. "My life has come to an end." Charges and court cases

As Nitzko and his relatives grieve the loss of a wife, mother, and grandmother, two families from metro Detroit face unusual criminal charges and civil lawsuits.

Originally, Allen decided to charge the boy with negligent homicide, although it would be rare for someone so young to face such a charge. If convicted, he could be sent to a juvenile facility for up to 2 years or be put on probation.

But Allen is reconsidering those charges, waiting for more information about the boy. "The information that I am getting is that he's a pretty good kid, pretty good student," he said.

Allen has filed charges against the boy's father and the owner of the golf cart, linking two families that were Up North together for the weekend. Ali Chahine, the boy's father, was charged with aiding-and-abetting negligent homicide, a 2-year circuit court misdemeanor, and aiding-and-abetting, allowing an unlicensed driver to operate a motor vehicle causing death, a 5-year felony. He is to be arraigned Thursday in district court in Bad Axe.

Carlo J. Ciaramitaro of Harrison Township, who owns the golf cart, was charged with allowing an unlicensed driver to operate a motor vehicle causing death, a 5-year felony, and contributing to the delinquency of a minor, a 90-day misdemeanor, upon conviction. He is to be arraigned May 4.

Allen said he charged the adults because they were in a position of responsibility.

"Someone has to be held accountable, No. 1," he said. "Secondly, we have to send a clear message to the community that this behavior will not be tolerated. And maybe it would have been different if it had been isolated, if the golf carts were on the lawn and the kid, unbeknownst to the adults took the cart, "but this is with the adult's approval."

It is against the law to drive a golf cart on a road without a driver's license and registration.

'A form of babysitter'

In the last 10 years, fatal accidents involving off-road vehicles increased dramatically in Michigan, according to State Police statistics. From 1995 to 2004, 81 people died in off-road vehicle crashes on Michigan roads. There were 2,545 accidents, although experts say they believe the number of crashes was under reported. Lake Township Supervisor Clay Kelterborn said he has seen a spike in the number of complaints regarding children on golf carts. "I think the trend is becoming, and I hate to say this but I'm not the only one who has said this -- that this is a form of babysitter for kids," Kelterborn said.

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The defendants have denied responsibility in court papers, saying the boy admits to being involved in the accident but claims he was "confronted with a sudden emergency, not of his own making".

Michigan State Police, in a report obtained by the Free Press through a Freedom of Information Act request, say the boy told them he swerved to avoid a branch or stick in the road. The police did not find a stick or branch.

Several neighbors told police a similar story: All weekend, a group of children drove golf carts up and down Van Road, racing, making quick U-turns in driveways and on M-25, spinning the tires in gravel.

Francis and Kathleen Pytlowany told police that "the kids driving the carts were not paying attention to where they were going, but instead were watching the other carts."

The couple did not see any adult supervision and told police in a joint written statement: "None of the little girls could barely reach the pedals." A premonition?

About 15 minutes before the tragedy, Pamela Volz and Michael Osmond told police they were riding bicycles home from the beach. Two golf carts cut in front of them sharply. Osmond told Volz, "unless somebody gets control of those kids, they will be getting into a lot of trouble."

They saw Ursula Nitzko at the end of her driveway spreading sealant. It was a perfect fall day 79 degrees, partly sunny, with a gentle breeze.

Around the same time, Jean and Stanley Scott were taking their dog for a walk to the beach. They noticed a boy on a golf cart turning quickly on Van Road. They walked by Nitzko and talked to her. "I noticed her family around and how happy she seemed," Jean Scott said.

A few minutes later, a boy raced down the road in a golf cart, crossed from one side to the other and struck Nitzko.

#### **I lost control:**

About two hours after the accident, the boy admitted to Michigan State Police that he hit Nitzko. He said, "I lost control and hit her."

There were no other witnesses.

At the time of the accident, the boy's mother was inside the house where the family was staying, while Ali Chahine and Carlo Ciaramitaro were outside, according to the report.

A police officer noted: "There was a large white cube van parked in the driveway so anyone sitting on the deck could not see down the road because of the large van in the driveway."

The report did not state how fast the golf cart can travel. To use a golf cart on a public road, it must be registered with the Secretary of State as a low-speed vehicle. It cannot exceed 25 m.p.h.

A State Police officer talked to the Ciaramitaros and Chahines. The original incident report states: "Mr. Chahine said the wives did not want the kids driving the carts, but if they did get into one, he would just turn his head." A grisly scene

Nitzko, who loved to dance and garden, was married to Hans, a retired engineer from General Motors Corp. She died 25 days before their 50th wedding anniversary.

Hans Nitzko was on the other side of their house at the time of the accident. He said there were tire tracks on her body. Her skull was fractured. An autopsy revealed bleeding in her brain and lungs, she suffered a compound fracture of both her tibia and fibula of her left lower leg.

A state trooper saw blood on the driver side dashboard and gray hair on the driver side floor of the golf cart.

#### **Good intentions:**

Susan and Ali Chahine, through their attorney, declined to speak to the Free Press.

Mary Ciaramitaro expressed her sadness about the tragedy. She said the Chahines were invited to their cottage for a weekend,

"It was just an awful thing," she said. "It's sad, we brought them up there for fun, it was a tragedy."

Carlo Ciaramitaro spoke to the Free Press once but declined to comment again.

"It has kind of changed my life a lot," he said in a telephone interview April 5. "I don't know how to explain this. I'm sick over it, still. And we haven't even gotten to step one of what is happening and what's going on."

He said that his insurance company has denied coverage. It is Ciaramitaro's understanding that the boy, now 10, does not know that Nitzko died.

"I don't think the parents have told him", he said. "I don't know if I agree with that, really. We don't bring it up that often."

#### **We can't be every place:**

In the last two or three years, the number of complaints about children driving golf carts in Lake Township has spiked, said Kelterborn. He said he met with law enforcement officials several times about the offroad vehicle, or ORV, problem.

Lake Township, wedged between Caseville and Port Austin, has about 1,100 residents year-round. It does not have a police force but is served by the Huron County Sheriff's Department, Michigan State Police, and the state Department of Natural Resources.

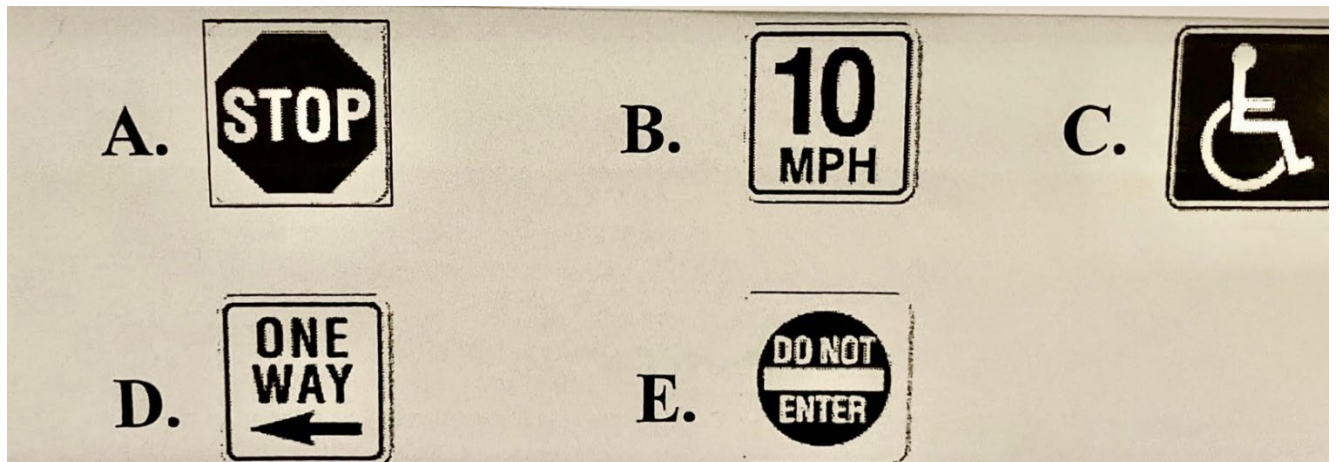
Kelterborn said he contacted all of them with phone calls and letters and held a half-dozen meetings over the years about the ORV issue.

"They said they'd get back to me or check into it,"

Kelterborn said. "We've tried to raise the level of awareness. And we are putting it back in the lap of law enforcement. But I don't know where it's getting us. 'I

Huron County Sheriff Kent Tibbits said because of budget cuts, the department has 14 full-time deputies and might have one to four on the road at any time, to patrol 28 townships and 93 miles of shoreline.

"We try to do the best we can, but we can't be every place," Tibbits said. "We are certainly aware of it. ... We've been at their meetings. We ask the people, when they see a problem, to call.



**Signs:**

- A. Stop Sign**
- B. Speed Limit Sign**
- C. Handicap parking only Sign**
- D. One Way Sign**
- E. Do Not Enter Sign**