

By **Bill Parsons**, Vice Chairman, Seven Oaks CDD



Seven Oaks Elementary School flashing light on Mystic Oak Blvd.



Accident on Ancient Oaks Blvd between Amberside and the traffic circle on April 5, 2014 about 7 a.m. during the Seven Oaks Semi-Annual Garage Sale

KEEPING Seven Oaks SAFE

A quote used by Walt Kelly, who created the comic strip Pogo, on a poster in 1970 to promote environmental awareness is very appropriate for safety at Seven Oaks. The quote is “**we have met the enemy and he is us**”. At Seven Oaks as well as other communities, it is the residents who can make it a safe community.

For example, the overwhelming majority of speeders stopped by Pasco County Deputy Sheriffs using radar at Seven Oaks are Seven Oaks residents. At Seven Oaks during March 2013 to March 2014, there were 32 traffic accidents on Ancient Oaks Blvd (6 were serious), 8 on Summergate Blvd (2 were serious), 6 on Mystic Oak Blvd (1 was serious), 5 on Eagleston Blvd (1 was serious), and 35 in other areas of Seven Oaks. Also during this period, there were two pedestrians hit by vehicles. One of the main causes of these accidents was the vehicles were speeding.

To help reduce speeding, traffic calming was included in the design of Seven Oaks. This included curved streets, traffic circles, and signs such as the ones posting the speed limit, pedestrian crossings, and traffic circles (see pictures on next page).

The CDD Board has also tried to reduce speeding by asking the Sheriff’s office to park the electronic sign that shows the speed of each car approaching. As mentioned earlier, radar traps are periodically set up by the Sheriff’s office. Even with these traffic calming measures, some residents at Seven Oaks still exceed the 30 mph speed limit on the main roads (Ancient Oaks Blvd, Summergate Blvd, Mystic Oak Blvd, and Eagleston Blvd) and even the 20 mph speed limit on the neighborhood streets.

Several actions have been taken by the Seven Oaks Residents Council and the CDD Board to make the Seven Oaks Elementary school zone on Mystic Oak Blvd safer. When the school opened in August 2005, there were no crosswalks or signs indicating a school zone.

The Residents Council invited Commissioner Mulieri to their November 2005 meeting to address this issue. Within a few weeks after the meeting, she had signs posted and crosswalk painted on Mystic Oak Blvd. She also coordinated a Traffic Control Jurisdiction Agreement between the county and the CDD so the county could enforce the 15 mph speed limit in the school zone.

Since the crosswalk and school zone were completed in 2005, the CDD Board has taken two actions to make the area safer for the school children.

- The first action was to post a no U-Turn sign near the school zone on Mystic Oak Blvd., costing the CDD \$600 for the sign. Pasco County approved the sign on February 7, 2013. The CDD staff installed it on February 20, 2013.

- The second action was to move the flashing lights on Mystic Oak Blvd indicating a school zone from the prior location to the new location. This was approved by the Traffic Operations Manager for Pasco County on March 4, 2014. The CDD paid \$5,930 for the lights and \$5,288 to install them. They are maintained by Pasco County as part of their school zone program.

On March 3, 2014, The CDD Board sent a letter to all residents at Seven Oaks concerning "Safety on Roads and Sidewalks in Seven Oaks". The primary focus of the letter was children using the neighborhood streets for playing games and other recreational purposes. It pointed out that in some neighborhoods, the children obstructed

the streets with physical barriers such as hockey nets and basketball hoops. Being involved in the games, they would pay little or no attention to approaching vehicles.

In addition to encouraging residents to have their children play in the recreational areas instead of the neighborhood streets, the letter also addressed speeding at Seven Oaks and that golf carts and ATVs were prohibited on sidewalks as well as the nature trail -- as these were designed for pedestrian traffic.

The CDD Board has taken several other actions to make driving on Seven Oaks safer. For example, a No U-Turn sign was installed on Ancient Oaks Blvd near S.R. 56 for people entering Seven Oaks. It was approved by Pasco County on September 19, 2013. The CDD paid \$132 for the sign.

In summary, we do not need to be our own enemy -- as residents at Seven Oaks, we just need to limit our speed to 30 mph on the main roads, 20 mph on the neighborhood streets, 15 mph in the school zone, and obey the other signs such as no u-turn. ❖



Golf carts and ATVs are prohibited on sidewalk and nature trails. These were designed for pedestrian use.



The speed limit at Seven Oaks is 20 mph in the neighborhood and 30 mph on the main roads.



At Seven Oaks, street signs are posted to help reduce traffic accidents and make it a safe area for pedestrians running, walking, or riding a bike.