

Rista Malanca ~ 20 Lovely St, Winsted CT ~ 860-309-0368

TO:

Sandisfield Fire Department	Tolland Fire Department	New Marlborough Fire Department
ATTN: Chief	ATTN: Chief	ATTN: Chief
207 Sandisfield Road	206 West Granville Rd	205 Norfolk Rd / PO Box 69
Sandisfield, MA 01255	Tolland, MA 01034-9403	Mill River, MA 01244

On May 23rd my son Lucas Holda and I were at a family picnic in Sandisfield Mass celebrating Hunter Sarcia's 16th birthday. Around 7:30, it was still light, a friend had offered to take his two children (ages 8 & 10) and my son (then 8 years old) out for a quick ride "around the loop" on the John Deer Gator. This friend had not been drinking and was familiar with the woods, so I said sure, what could go wrong? I figured they would be back in less than 10 minutes and threw a burger on the grill for Lucas to eat when he came back.

It was just before 8pm when I started to get worried as the sun was starting to set and they had not come back yet. Carlos Sarcia, property owner, suggested the Gator probably just broke down and went out on his quad to find them on the trail. He searched the all of the main trails and did not find them. When he came back, around 9, to find they had not returned we knew something was wrong. It was now pitch dark, there are thousands of acres of woods they could be lost in and they had been gone for an hour and a ½. Carlos and Hunter both got on their quads and continued to search further. We called 911. Sandisfield volunteers responded immediately. Firemen with radios were on the back of Carlos and Hunters quad searching further into the woods...

Tolland and New Marlborough were called to assist in the search and rescue. They arrived quickly and with off-road vehicles to help search other areas of woods. Finally about 11:45pm we heard on the radio that voice contact had been made, the Firemen continued on foot to find them stuck in the woods. It was after 1am by the time they were all out of the woods. They were all a little shaken up but they were all OK!

I am so grateful to the volunteer fire departments in the Towns of Sandisfield, New Marlborough and Tolland. One of the Tolland Firemen said that last year they had fundraised to purchase their off-road vehicles and that this was the first time they were used. I cannot express how pleased I am that their inaugural search and rescue found everyone safe and sound. I hope all their rescues have such a happy ending.

To show our gratitude I was planning on sending a donation to each of the fire departments immediately after it happened; however, when my son heard me say I was going to do this, he asked that we wait until after his birthday so that he could help raise more money to send. He asked everyone in lieu of gifts to please bring a donation to the fire departments. The Malanca, Sarcia, Palmer, Ortman, Ley, Napoleone and Passini/Dimock families donated \$460, which has been divided evenly between the 3 departments.

From the bottom of my heart, I want to thank you for volunteering your time and for safely rescuing my 8 year old son who was lost in the woods. This is a perfect example of how accidents and mistakes can happen anytime or anyplace. Your dedication and courage help prevent these accidents from becoming tragedies.

Thank you



Rista Malanca

Lucas's VERY thankful mother

Cc: [Sandisfield Times – editor@sandisfieldtimes.org](mailto:editor@sandisfieldtimes.org)
[Patch – tips@patch.com](mailto:tips@patch.com)
[Otis Gazette – editor@otisgazette.com](mailto:editor@otisgazette.com)
New Marlborough 5 Village News – via website