

Private

in Michigan

LOCHENHEATH GOLF CLUB

7951 TURNBERRY CIR | WILLIAMSBURG, MI

RESTING ON LAND covered in native grasses and overlooking East Grand Traverse Bay, LochenHeath Golf Club is named after the environment that surrounds it. Kevin O'Brien, general manager at LochenHeath Golf Club, indicated the name of the course comes from "loch" meaning "lake," and "heath," meaning "native grasses." Originally opened in 2001 and reopened with new owners in 2011 after being closed for two years, the golf club has recently transitioned to a private club.

"January first [of 2021], we made that complete transition to a private club, and the response has been overwhelmingly positive," O'Brien said.

"When we announced it, it was amazing. We had sent an email out to those that had played [at LochenHeath] before, letting them know the change and thanking them for their past support. The phone rang off the hook immediately, I was blown away. We had probably 48 solid leads just from that email," O'Brien added.

Four types of membership are available to those wanting to make LochenHeath their private club. These membership options include a national membership, a seasonal resident membership, a resident membership, and a corporate membership.

"A national membership is someone who would not have any type of residence or long-term rental in the area. When they come up here, they are going to stay in the cottages and entertain friends or clients or golf buddies, and have the ultimate experience," O'Brien said.

The seasonal resident membership is for those who spend less than 40 days of a year within 50 miles of LochenHeath, such as someone who visits the local area on the weekends, or for a few weeks' vacation, but have some type of residency nearby. For golfers that permanently reside in the area, a resident membership allows them to utilize the club's services whenever they choose.

The last tier of membership option at LochenHeath is a corporate membership, which is for companies that would like to utilize the course and club for client relations. With this membership, companies can name two designees as their corporate members to use the club's services.

O'Brien noted that after LochenHeath announced their shift to a private club, their goals for signing on new members were blown out of the water. The club's initial goal for the 2021 season was to establish 28 new golf memberships, and they ended with more than 60 new private members for the year.

When applying for membership, people do have to interview with O'Brien to make sure they are a good fit for the club, and likewise, the club is a good fit for them. For O'Brien, it is important that everyone at LochenHeath has a good at-

titude and positive energy when on property, so he has five rules for all members. The rules include respecting the other members, respecting the club staff, supporting the club, having a good time when on property, and leaving egos at the door when they walk in.

Originally opened in 2001, LochenHeath is a links-style course with some parkland-style holes tied in, designed by Golf Course Architect Steve Smyers.

"Steve [Smyers] is a very talented architect and to this day still one of the best playing architects in America. The golf course has great strategy to it, it is all about the angles coming into the greens, as opposed to just hitting the golf ball. The fairways are very wide and generous. There are really no forced carries over water, so it is very playable. The greens have a lot of movement to them, then you pair that with the overall land it possesses—there are elevation changes up to 85 feet," O'Brien said.

"It is a fun golf course to play, but the vistas are spectacular. You can look behind you, forward, to the side, and you'll see the East Grand Traverse Bay on 13 holes in some shape or form," O'Brien added.

At LochenHeath's practice facility, golfers can practice in the short game area, which features six varying target greens, and at the large teeing area.

O'Brien described the restaurant at LochenHeath as casual fine dining, serving lunch and dinner with a menu that utilizes locally sourced farm-fresh ingredients. The drink menus include a carefully curated wine, bourbon, and single malt Scotch list. An attached patio allows guests to dine outside, enjoying views of Grand Traverse Bay and the golf course.

Just a short stroll from the clubhouse and private practice tee, the cottages at LochenHeath offer space to accommodate up to eight overnight guests, with four suites that each have two queen-sized beds and a private bathroom, and an expansive living area and guest bathroom as well. O'Brien indicated by 2023, they hope to add one to two more cottages at LochenHeath, so that the club can host more overnight guests at a time.

LochenHeath plans to host a variety of golf events throughout the upcoming 2022 season, including more competitive events like club championships and tournaments that will range from members-only to allowing both members and their guests. The club will also host seven nine-and-dine events, which is a social event that entails a nine-hole scramble for couples.

"We were entering uncharted waters [becoming a private club], and credits to the ownership group to take this leap of faith; it started off great," O'Brien said. "There are a lot of people moving here, and we are a part of a lifestyle for them. It is our job to make sure they are having a good time."

