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FOR RELEASE AFTER 6 P.M., SUNDAY, OCTOBER 22

October 22, 2000

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Little Caesars Pizza Becomes MHSAA Corporate Partner; Good Sports Are Winners! Program Returns

PONTIAC, Mich. – Oct. 22 – Little Caesars Pizza today became the newest corporate partner of the Michigan High School Athletic Association, underwriting the Good Sports Are Winners! sportsmanship program, and providing support for the media efforts of the Association. The announcement was made during the Selection Sunday Show on FOX Sports Net.

The Good Sports Are Winners! program is a comprehensive approach to sportsmanship, providing MHSAA member schools with materials through which they can develop a campaign to suit their needs as it relates to the topic; and a recognition program where over 1,400 teams will be honored annually for displaying outstanding sportsmanship at selected MHSAA post-season tournaments. The program goes back into effect with the upcoming fall tournaments, which begin in football and boys soccer this week.

“Sports at the high school level are different than all other forms of sports. Sportsmanship is a key ingredient of that difference,” said John E. “Jack” Roberts, executive director of the MHSAA. “The efforts of the MHSAA, as an association of schools, in the area of sportsmanship, have been among the most proactive in the nation. However, lacking corporate support for the past four years, we have been unable to fit that last piece into the puzzle – honoring those schools which make a difference by making sportsmanship a goal above wins and losses.

“We are excited that Little Caesars Pizza has come to the support of the MHSAA to promote good sportsmanship across the state,” Roberts continued. “As a result of this partnership, and the resources that Little Caesars brings to the table, our education and awareness efforts will soar, and we will be able to provide our schools once again with a recognition program that is unequalled in this country.”

The MHSAA’s sportsmanship education efforts, which have included sportsmanship summits in three of the past four years; annual sportsmanship kits; and financial mini-grants to schools, and leagues and conferences sponsoring sportsmanship initiatives on the local level; will be enhanced by Little Caesars in several ways:

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2-2-2 – Little Caesars Becomes MHSAA Corporate Partner

- Brochures and posters will once again be made available to member schools to distribute to students and parents, delivering the message of sportsmanship. The posters will also be prominently displayed in Little Caesars stores statewide. These educational materials may carry with them messages from respected members of the Detroit Red Wings and Detroit Tigers organizations.

- Students and parents promising to uphold the standards of good sportsmanship at the local level will also be provided pledge cards, a daily reminder of their desire to be good sports. These cards will also be good for discounts at Little Caesars stores.

- Public service announcements for radio and television promoting sportsmanship will be released, featuring messages from respected members of the Detroit Red Wings and Detroit Tigers organizations. These messages may also be repackaged in a future video to be provided to MHSAA member schools to be shown at pre-season meetings for student-athletes and parents.

On the recognition side, the Good Sports Are Winners! Award returns at the district, regional and final levels of the following MHSAA post-season tournaments: Girls basketball, football and boys soccer in the fall; boys basketball, ice hockey, girls volleyball and team dual wrestling in the winter; and baseball, girls soccer and softball in the spring.

District winners will receive certificates, regional winners plaques, and final winners will receive a crystal trophy, banner and \$1,000 donation from Little Caesars Pizza.

The program has also been enhanced in several ways. At the district and regional level of MHSAA tournaments, all schools which meet a set of sportsmanlike standards will receive awards, which will result in nearly 500 additional schools being recognized. There have also been standards introduced into the program which would automatically disqualify a school from consideration from the award which include: Ejections from events of athletes, coaches and spectators for unsportsmanlike actions; antics on the part of spectators (such as body painting) which are intended to attract attention to themselves; and the use of game-ending derogatory cheers, chants or songs.

Additionally, any team which is disqualified for the Good Sports Are Winners! Award at the District or Regional level of a tournament becomes ineligible for the award at higher levels of that same tournament.

“We felt that it was necessary to recognize all schools when they meet or exceed behavior expectations at MHSAA tournaments, and we’re pleased that with Little Caesars’ support, we can add that element to the awards program,” Roberts said. “In initiating disqualification criteria, we’re also responding to requests from our schools where they have seen a team or community behave badly at an early round of an MHSAA tournament, and later on win the top sportsmanship award at the finals level of that tournament.

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3-3-3 – Little Caesars Becomes MHSAA Corporate Partner

Sportsmanship is a full-time job, and this new twist in the program will help schools realize that they need to be on their best behavior every day.”

Future enhancements to the Good Sports Are Winners! Award program under consideration include expanding the team awards program; and instituting awards to individual coaches and student-athletes in all sports in which the MHSAA sponsors a post-season tournament.

“The MHSAA fits perfectly within the Little Caesars community focus,” said Susan Sherbow, vice president of corporate communications for Little Caesars Pizza. “Little Caesars has been committed to children and amateur sports for more than 30 years. We hope to bring the experience we have with kids and sports to the MHSAA, and provide additional incentives to these gifted athletes.”

In addition to supporting the Good Sports Are Winners! program, Little Caesars will also be a sponsor of MHSAA championship events televised statewide on FOX Sports Net Detroit; a sponsor of the MHSAA Championship Radio Network for the Girls and Boys Basketball Semifinals and Finals; and a sponsor of other Association media and public relations initiatives, including the popular CHAMPS (Cooperation, Hard work, Attitude, Motivation, Participation, Sportsmanship) Clinics for junior high/middle school players at the MHSAA Girls Basketball and Girls Volleyball Finals. Little Caesars joins Farm Bureau Insurance in the stable of MHSAA corporate partners.

Little Caesars Pizza, founded in 1959 by Michael and Marian Ilitch, is an international pizza chain with locations on 5 continents. The Ilitch family has been a proud sponsor of amateur sports since 1964. The Little Caesars amateur sports program started with the sponsorship of one hockey team, and today more than 17,000 children participate in Little Caesars sponsored sports throughout the community.

The MHSAA is a private, not-for-profit corporation of voluntary membership by over 1,300 public and private senior high schools and junior high/middle schools which exists to develop common rules for athletic eligibility and competition. No government funds or tax dollars support the MHSAA, which was the first such association nationally to not accept membership dues or tournament entry fees from schools. Member schools which enforce these rules are permitted to participate in MHSAA tournaments conducted in 12 sports for girls and 12 sports for boys which attract approximately 1.6 million spectators each year.

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NOTE – For more information about Little Caesars, contact Public Relations Manager Lisa Cosnowski at 313.983.6175.

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Farm Bureau Insurance & Little Caesars Pizza are year-round MHSAA Corporate Partners