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2002 Sportsmanship Summit Full; Features Character Counts! Program & Michael Josephson

EAST LANSING, Mich. – Date – Since 1997, the Michigan High School Athletic Association has conducted three statewide Sportsmanship Summits to assist its schools in promoting the values of good sportsmanship in educational athletics.

The fourth Sportsmanship Summit, scheduled for September 25 at the Lansing Center from 9 a.m. until 3 p.m., adds a new approach to give the Association's ongoing sportsmanship efforts a broader reach as it incorporates the growing Character Counts! Movement.

Character Counts! is a program of principled living, promoted by the Josephson Institute of Ethics of Marina del Ray, California. Character Counts! is being implemented across the country by schools, community education and recreation departments, and other groups to emphasize that lifetime values like ethics, integrity and respect are in play in all facets of life. Character Counts! Sports is a division of the Josephson Institute which provides a curriculum to be implemented in athletic programs, emphasizing the core values that sports can teach.

At the MHSAA Sportsmanship Summit, Michael Josephson, president of the Josephson Institute of Ethics and Character Counts! will be the keynote speaker, and will also conduct a panel presentation in which statewide and national sports leaders will be challenged to respond to a variety of situations involving character issues in sports.

Josephson, a regularly-featured guest on national television and radio talk shows on the topic of character, is a University of Michigan Law School graduate who was a successful lawyer before founding the non-profit institute. He was honored in 1996 by former President Ronald Reagan with the America's Award for Integrity, and served the current administration's transitional team as a nonpartisan expert on character education. A key theme of the Character Counts! Sports program is its Pursuing Victory With Honor program, where coaches and athletes are challenged to achieve athletic excellence without compromising the game or themselves.

Panelists in the morning program at the MHSAA Sportsmanship Summit are Jim Ballard, executive director of the Michigan Association of Secondary School Principals; Kathy McGee, athletic director and

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2-2-2 – 2002 Sportsmanship Summit Full

girls basketball coach at Flint Powers Catholic High School, who entered the 2002 season as the winningest girls basketball coach in Michigan high school history with 501 victories; Karen Leinaar, athletic director at Benzie Central High School and president of the Michigan Interscholastic Athletic Administrators Association; and Bob Still, communications manager for the National Association of Sports Officials.

The afternoon portion of the program will feature workshops on the following topics: Character Based Athletic Programs; The Role of the Official In Fostering Sportsmanship; Junior High/Middle School Sportsmanship Initiatives; Hazing – Effective Means of Control and Prevention; and League and Conference Sportsmanship.

Past Sportsmanship Summits in Michigan have been the largest the country. The 2000 Summit attracted 1,353 student-athletes, coaches and administrators. A different approach is being taken with the 2002 program. One hundred schools will be represented with six-person teams comprised of coaches, administrators and adult community leaders.

“We’ve always believed that sportsmanship does indeed begin at home, and that’s why these summits can be effective – they give school and community leaders the tools to take back into their homes to build their sportsmanship campaigns,” said John E. “Jack” Roberts, executive director of the MHSAA. “We’ve also believed that good sportsmanship, once displayed on the playing surface, permeates the halls of the school and reaches out into the community. We think that by beginning to incorporate Michael Josephson’s Character Counts! programming into our own sportsmanship efforts, we can be more effective than before in having a message that touches every aspect of our daily lives.”

The Sportsmanship Summit is being underwritten in part by MEEMIC Insurance, the MHSAA’s corporate partner in promoting sportsmanship.

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, which attract approximately 1.6 million spectators each year.

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MEDIA ADVISORY – We strongly encourage you to send a sports, education or general assignment reporter to the Sportsmanship Summit. Media registration for the Summit is free. Contact Randy Allen or John Johnson at the MHSAA for additional information.

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