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information**



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Carl Van Heck To Receive 2004 Norris Award

EAST LANSING, Mich. – April 14 – In his fifth decade of officiating high school sports, Carl Van Heck of Grand Rapids has seen it all and enjoyed his share of honors. Now, he can add one more: the Michigan High School Athletic Association's Vern L. Norris Award for 2004.

The Norris Award is presented annually to a veteran official who has been active in a local officials association, has mentored other officials, and has been involved in official's education. It is named for Vern L. Norris, who was executive director of the MHSAA from 1978-86, and well-respected by officials on the state and national levels. Van Heck will be presented with the award at the MHSAA's 25th annual Official's Awards and Alumni Banquet on April 24 at the Sheraton Lansing Hotel.

Van Heck embodies the spirit and letter of the award through his tireless efforts during the last 44 years. Currently registered in football, baseball and track and field, Van Heck also has officiated boys and girls basketball, girls softball, and boys and girls cross country during his illustrious career.

A retired inventory manager who resides in Grand Rapids, Van Heck is still going strong in the avocation he was introduced to in 1952 when he began umpiring Little League baseball while attending Grand Rapids South High School.

After graduating from South in 1955, Van Heck attended Grand Rapids Junior College, and then Western Michigan University, graduating in 1960, when he first registered as an MHSAA football official.

A decade later, he began working high school baseball, and mixed in basketball, softball and track for good measure.

A member of the West Michigan Officials Association and West Michigan Umpires Association, Van Heck has held several positions on both boards, including his current position as treasurer of the WMUA. He also serves as secretary/treasurer for the Diamond Officials of West Michigan.

He is also renowned mentor of young officials in West Michigan, helping countless people get started in the field.

Van Heck is equally as involved in Special Olympics, as a track starter on both the local level and at the State Summer Games in Mt. Pleasant for the past 23 years. He is also a certified Alpine ski instructor by the Special Olympics, and has volunteered at the State Winter Games in Traverse City for 18 years.

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He was one of the founders and coached teams in the Kentwood youth football and baseball leagues.

It is easy to understand Van Heck's willingness to help people and become involved in community activities, given the fact he and his wife Carol raised 14 children, 10 adopted. And, there was still plenty of time and attention for some 60 foster children in the past 35 years.

"Carl Van Heck epitomizes the virtues and lifetime contributions to officiating and education for which the Vern Norris Award was instituted," said MHSAA Executive Director John E. "Jack" Roberts. "We are pleased to recognize not only a dedicated and deserving member of our officiating fraternity, but a sincere and caring human being who has touched so many young lives."

Previous recipients of the Norris Award are:

1992 – Ted Wilson, East Detroit

1993 – Fred Briggs, Burton

1994 – Joe Brodie, Flat Rock

1995 – Jim Massar, Flint

1996 – Jim Lamoreaux, St. Ignace

1997 – Ken Myllyla, Escanaba

1998 – Blake Hagman, Kalamazoo

1999 – Richard Kalahar, Jackson

2000 – Barb Beckett, Traverse City; Karl Newingham, Bay City

2001 – Herb Lipschultz, Kalamazoo

2002 – Robert Scholie, Hancock

2003 – Ron Nagy, Hazel Park

The MHSAA is a private, not-for-profit corporation of voluntary membership by over 1,200 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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