

Little Caesar's buys diner chain

AP — The Farmington Hills-based Little Caesar's pizza chain, out to conquer a piece of the Canadian market, has agreed to buy the bankrupt Mother's Restaurant chain.

Little Caesar's, which has 41 outlets in Canada, said it will become one of the country's largest pizza restaurant groups by picking up the assets of nearly 90 Mother's locations in Ontario, the Maritimes and Western Canada.

Denise Hiltz Lites, a vice president of Little Caesar International Inc., said the company is buying the assets of the Mother's chain from its bankruptcy trustee. She declined to give a purchase price.

Mother's, on the book for \$20 million in Canadian dollars to Citibank Canada, was petitioned into bankruptcy in January. Citibank said at the time it planned to preserve the chain and sell it off.

Little Caesar's bills itself as the world's largest carry-out pizza chain, with 2,300 outlets worldwide and projected sales of \$1.4 billion for 1989.

The company is owned by Mike Hiltz, whose other holdings include the Detroit Red Wings.

MOTHER'S, BASED in Burlington, Ontario, is a full-service restaurant specializing in pizza and pasta. Mother's outlets, most of them franchises, have annual sales of more than \$95 million.

Lites said the chain will be operated as is "for now," but wouldn't discuss future plans.

The news that Mother's has found a rescuer didn't impress Lorraine Rupert of Toronto, who said that in 1983 she received the first Mother's franchise.

"I was the first one in and now I'm the first one out," said Rupert, who decided to leave before the sale was announced because of the chain's declining fortunes.

"They'll have some growing pains," she said of Little Caesar's. "They're bringing in Americans who don't know the Canadian market."



RANDY TOPPER/staff photographer

Special ed teacher wins award

A veteran special education teacher from Cloverdale Training Center was named "Teacher of the Year" by the Association for Retarded Citizens of Oakland County.

Jack Merritt received the award at a March 10 banquet hosted by ARC.

"As the leisure, recreation and adaptive physical education instructor, Jack Merritt serves every student at Cloverdale," said an ARC representative in giving the award.

"He cares for each student no matter how severe the impairment. He brings a special mixture of patience, humor and most importantly love to every student, never asking for anything in return."

Merritt also helped start a staff/parent committee that planned, raised money and installed a barrier-free play area adjacent to their school on Freedom Road.

He was nominated by his principal, Douglas Smith, and a number of

other co-workers and parents, according to ARC.

"Jack is an excellent teacher of young people," said Smith in nominating the teacher who has served the Farmington district since 1974.

"Though he came to us with excellent skills, Mr. Merritt has grown markedly in his understanding of the developmentally disabled. I feel that Jack's greatest contribution to the students of Cloverdale is his great love and respect directed individually to each student."

Merritt holds an undergraduate physical education degree and a master's in recreation from Indiana State University. He received his educational specialist's degree in instruction of the Emotionally Impaired at Wayne State University.

He taught with Dearborn schools before coming to Farmington in 1974. He has served as Cloverdale's physical education teacher and recreation/leisure time coordinator since 1983.

Handful of fun

Warner Middle School finished a reading project with the theme "Get Your Hands on a Good Book." Colorful paper hands containing information about each book were submitted. Sixth-grade hands were blue, seventh grade red and eighth grade white. All were used to form a large American flag in the Farmington Hills school hall. About 1,800 "hands," representing 345,000 pages read by 466 Warner students, were submitted. Reading specialist Hope Aiken, social studies teacher Judy Monroe and art teacher Motria Heffernan collaborated. Pictured, from left, are sixth grader Taal Ashmann, eighth grader Randy Topper and seventh grader Stephen Blumenfeld, top readers for their grades.

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