

7-Eleven pours money into sports

By TIM SMITH
STAFF WRITER

To paraphrase a certain Labor Day telethon host, this Super Big Gulp for the kids — more specifically, for those youngsters who play on West Bloomfield High School athletic teams.

During a two-hour period after Friday night's West Bloomfield High School home football opener, the 44-ounce fountain drinks will be courtesy of Ted and Gail Iakovidis, new co-owners of the 7-Eleven store on Orchard Lake Road near Lone Pine Road. Well, almost.

Actually, the Super Big Gulp's will sell for 99 cents. But for each one sold after the game, the Iakovidis will turn around and donate that dollar to the West Bloomfield High School Athletic Department.

The money will help students from high school families who are possibly feeling the financial pinch

to go out and buy cleats, tennis shoes, other equipment or whatever accessories (such as sweat bands or socks) they need that the district doesn't already have available for them.

"It's for the necessary things that kids have to buy that the district doesn't provide," Mrs. Iakovidis said. "The first dollars will go to kids of need. . . . But they (high school officials) will handle that. The coaches will know more than anyone else who needs it and who doesn't."

The Novi couple, which took over the store June 1, hopes to sell maybe 300 of the drinks Friday night and repeat the process at the beginning of the season for every other high school boys and girls varsity squad throughout 1992-93.

"We could raise \$2,000 to \$3,000 per year for the athletic department," Ted Iakovidis said. "That's

a lot of money. That's a lot of shoes."

Don't forget cheerleaders

They also hope cheerleaders also will benefit from the proceeds.

"What I don't want neglected in this are the cheerleaders," Gail Iakovidis said. "Sometimes, cheerleading gets neglected in terms of being a sport. They are athletes too."

Because so many teenagers buy lunch and snacks at their store, the owners cooked up an idea to give something back. "We just thought, 'We've got all these kids (as customers), and they're not bad kids,'" Ted Iakovidis said.

But Mrs. Iakovidis emphasized, however, that helping out high school athletes isn't the only goal they hope to achieve through the Super Big Gulp sales.

Possibly just as important is drawing adults to what has long been perceived as a teens-only han-

gout, to show them that going to the 7-Eleven at night isn't hazardous to their health.

Adults welcome

"We want the adults to know this is a safe place to come and that we want their business," she said. "They've been lost in the shuffle. . . . There's no reason the teenagers and families can't share the same place."

Not helping the situation is the penchant for groups of teenagers to congregate in front of the convenience store, both during school hours and at night, underscoring a common criticism of the township that teens lack supervised places to gather.

And, when adults are faced with the prospects of having to wade through a group of teenagers, they typically decide to go elsewhere for that loaf of bread or gallon of milk, said West Bloomfield police Sgt. Michael Madigan.

Celebrities turn up at convenience store

By TIM SMITH
STAFF WRITER

Who says adults don't ever come to the 7-Eleven store on Orchard Lake Road near Lone Pine Road, owned by Ted and Gail Iakovidis?

Famous folks such as Detroit Tigers pitcher Frank Tanana, Channel 7 news anchorman Bill Bonds and former Detroit Pistons guard Vinnie Johnson stop in to buy a thing or two from the convenience store — mangled in recent years as a place where teenage rowdies hang out, hence keeping older people away.

"Frank Tanana came in for coffee," Ted Iakovidis said. "He was looking for the Secretary of State's office (actually located across Orchard Lake Road in the Crosswinds Mall). Vinnie Johnson comes in for everything and Bill Bonds always comes in for a New York Times."

Apparently, Johnson spread the word about the 7-Eleven store to ex-tennmates such as

Bill Laimbeer and Dennis Rodman, who come in occasionally, Iakovidis said.

He mentioned Detroit Red Wings superstar Steve Yzerman as yet another steady customer.

Of course, it would be fine with Iakovidis if some regular adult folks start frequenting his business, which he and his wife bought in June.

The store owners this week are embarking on a yearlong fundraising program for the West Bloomfield High School Athletic Department, kicking it off by donating proceeds from every Super Big Gulp sold (for 99 cents) after Friday's opening home football game.

Besides raising funds to help out high school athletes who might have a hard time purchasing shoes or other items needed to compete, the Novi couple also wants to raise awareness of township adults so that they don't have to be fearful of coming to their store.

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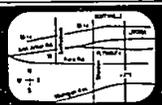
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