Soccer crew seeks kids for contests

BY RALPH R. ECHITNAW
STAFF WRITER

The Michigan Host Committee for next year's World Cup soccer matches in Oakland County is trying to recruit students and schools for several programs and contests leading up to the games.

Although their sign fell off the wall at an Oakland University press conference, committee members and staff hope to involve hundreds of kids and dozens of schools in the programs and contests.

All of the hoopla will lead up to the World Cup matches in the Pontiac Silverdome June 18-28. Six teams are expected to play first-round playoff games here. One of the teams will be the United States. The others will be determined in a Dec. 19 Las Vegas drawing. Given the popularity of soccer around the world, it's expected that Southeast Michigan will be deluged with foreign visitors during the games.

Committee member Sandra Packard, the president of OU, hopes that having five foreign soccer teams and their fans visiting Michigan will make the world community seem more real to area kids.

"An event like this in their own backyards really brings that home," she said. "It will encourage young people to gain a better understanding of the world."

Committee president Roger Faulkner, a Rochester Hills resident and native of Great Britain, said that hosting World Cup matches is nearly a once-in-a-lifetime event. It would take at least 30 years to get the games back, he said.

Janet Stecher, a committee staff member, said a brocure describing the programs and contests was mailed to 2,100 schools in Macomb, Oakland and Wayne counties. The roster includes:

■ A soccer theme poster contest for students aged 9-11 years. Contest ends Jan. 31. Call Belinda Boothroyd at (313) 222-4359.

■ A soccer ball juggling contest for kids in kindergarten through 12th grade. Gym teachers at participating schools will conduct the contest in March. The idea is to see how long you can keep one soccer ball in the air without using your hands. Call Gary Parsons at (313) 370-3190.

■ A program where students are taught about the methods used for growing grass in the Silverdome. Interested teachers should call Sandy Boswell at (313) 237-6740.

■ A program where students learn the economic implications for communities hosting a World Cup event. This one is intended for middle school students and will be administered by Junior Achievement. Volunteers should call Gail Hietzker at (313) 255-3900.

■ A soccer skills contest for kids aged 6-16. Three finalists from each category will qualify to compete at the finals. Everybody gets a shirt. Registration is $10. Teachers or students may call Mary Jane Johnson at (800) 825-2536.

■ A program whereby members of the Detroit Rockers soccer squad will visit classrooms. Teachers should call Donna Hunter at (313) 396-7574.

Individual volunteers are also being sought to help spread the word on all these programs and contests. Stecher still needs people to visit schools and explain everything. "People have to see it a couple times to figure out there's no gimmick," she said.

If 50 of the 2,100 schools solicited actually participate in the programs and contests, Stecher said, "we'd be ecstatic."

The Michigan Host Committee has a budget of $4 million, with $3 million raised privately already. There are five paid staff members.

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Seniors call friends, relatives for holiday

Approximately 140 Oakland County senior citizens were given the opportunity to call their friends and relatives around the world for free on Saturday, Dec. 4, at Merrill Lynch in Bloomfield Hills.

Merrill Lynch teamed up with the Oakland Livingston Human Service Agency in coordinating the 14th annual Christmas Calls event. Employees and their families assisted seniors in making their phone calls and in hosting the event. OLHSA identified the most needy seniors, registered them and provided transportation to Merrill Lynch.

The seniors arrived on the hour between 9 a.m. and 4 p.m. and they placed calls for a half hour. They were then treated to a small Christmas party, where gifts were distributed.

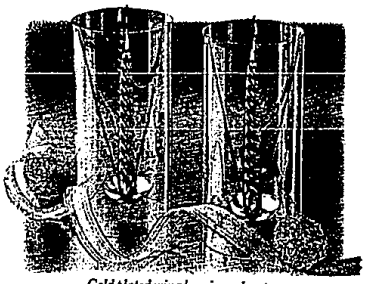
"This is a wonderful opportunity for seniors to contact loved ones who live far away and cannot come home for the holidays," said Caroljean Tennant, OLHSA senior citizen department head. "The seniors have looked forward to this event, and they have planned well in advance so they can reach as many friends and relatives as possible."

This year, more than 100 Merrill Lynch offices in the U.S. and four in Central Europe opened their doors to more than 10,000 seniors through the Christmas Call event. Other businesses that donated refreshments for the event included: Westborn Market in Dearborn, Pic-A-Deli of Rochester and Papa Romano's of Bloomfield.

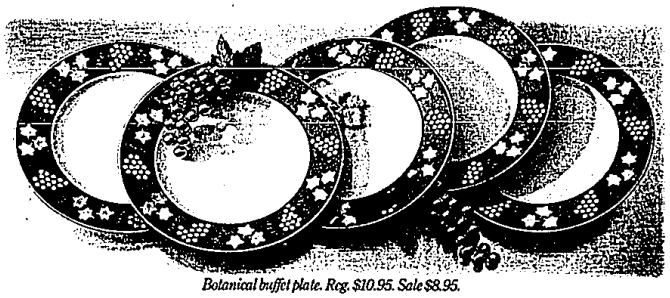
"Firenze" 13½" round serving bowl. Reg. $39.95. Sale $29.95. Oval platter. Reg. $28.95. Sale $22.95. 14½" round platter. Reg. $34.95. Sale $27.95.

"Star" 7½" dessert plate. Reg. $6.95. Sale $5.95. 11" buffet plate. Reg. $12.95. Sale $9.95.

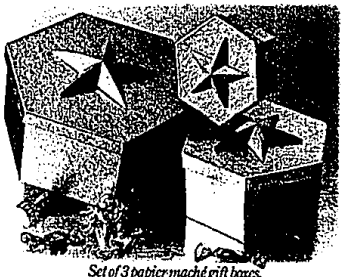
Some gifts seem to outshine all the rest.



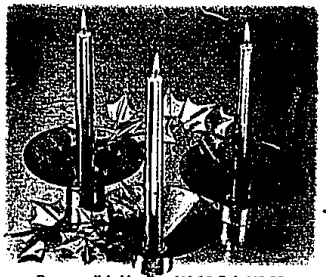
Gold plated wing hurricane lamp. Reg. $29.95. Sale $23.95.



Botanical buffet plate. Reg. $10.95. Sale $8.95.



Set of 3 papier-maché gift boxes. Reg. $23.95. Sale $17.95.



Brass candleholder. Reg. $18.95. Sale $13.95. Candlestick. Reg. $39.95. Sale $29.95. Extra bobeche in green, blue or clear. Reg. $12.95. Sale $8.95.

"Firenze" wine. Reg. $12.95. Sale $8.95. "Firenze" footed dessert. Reg. $12.95. Sale $8.95.

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The Crate and Barrel Golden Gifts Sale. Through December 24.

At the Somerset Collection in Troy (313-643-6610).