



May 8, 2009

## Pizza party in Detroit marks Little Caesars' anniversary

By *MARY FRANCIS MASSON*  
*Free Press Business Writer*

A big “thank you, thank you” was bestowed today on the couple that made “Pizza! Pizza!” a catchphrase.

At a 50th anniversary celebration of Little Caesars, the kudos came from employees, franchisees, elected officials and even celebrities like Kid Rock, Eminem (who once worked at Little Caesars) and former President George W. Bush. Via videotape, Gov. Jennifer Granholm declared today as Little Caesars Day in Michigan.

Mike and Marian Ilitch opened their first Little Caesars restaurant in Garden City on May 8, 1959. Now there are about 2,500 Little Caesars pizza outlets, located on five continents and in every U.S. state.

Thousands of Little Caesars franchisees, suppliers, employees and others attended the pizza party today, which culminated with cake and pizza served on the parking lots in front of Comerica Park — where the Detroit Tigers, another Ilitch venture, play.

Recognizing that the Ilitch sports teams have collected their share of championships, Little Caesars' franchisees donated funds to have championship-style rings created for Mike and Marian Ilitch. The rings were presented to the couple today and featured a pizza shape with a diamond crust topped off with the Little Caesars logo.

Mike and Marian Ilitch told the thousands gathered how much they valued the people who helped them build a business.

“I believe the heart and soul of Little Caesars is our caring attitude,” Mike Ilitch said. “Caring has been a part of my business plan and rewarded me and in so many ways ... I love you all!”

Franchise owners Jason and Scott Ziemann of Akron, Ohio, were at the event Friday and said the Ilitches are a big part of the brand's longevity.

“Unfortunately, you see a lot of people who give up and the Ilitches never did that,” said Jason Ziemann.

Contact **MARY FRANCIS MASSON** at 313-222-6159 or [mmasson@freepress.com](mailto:mmasson@freepress.com).