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## **What Happens in Detroit, Stays in Detroit**

We want our presence in Final Four cities to make a difference. What we are doing in Detroit is a pilot for future legacy initiatives.

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President of the NCAA

There is a long-held -- but not very honorable -- axiom among road warriors that what goes on the road stays on the road. It's an unspoken, universally understood, no-tell agreement among both friends and foes that the tales of travel won't follow you home.

In a way, I suppose, we are giving a whole new meaning to the term this week. In this case, the "road" is the extraordinarily popular Road to the Final Four -- the culmination of the NCAA Division I Men's Basketball Championship. And this year, the road leads to Detroit.

So, what happens in Detroit, stays in Detroit.

And what happens in Detroit is a first-time-ever legacy program -- a collaborative, long-term partnership among the city, the NCAA and the United Way that will benefit preschoolers throughout the city.

Detroit is legendary, of course, in American culture. For more than a century, this is the town where the world knows that cars are made. It is Motor City. Motown.

This is the city most associated for more than 100 years with America's manufacturing might. Detroit is the place where industry turned a nation into a world power.

In the last few months, and certainly in the last few days, it has also become a city living under a cloud. As the worst economic downturn since the Great Depression has settled in on the nation and the world, Detroit and its automakers have become the epicenter of a financial earthquake that has shaken the foundation of America's confidence in itself. Detroit's is a story that to some may look like a sped-up documentary of a city in decline -- a fast-motion dramatization of how things that can go wrong will go wrong.

Don't believe it.

As we worked with Detroit over the last year to prepare for the 71st Final Four, I have come to understand that this is a city as confident in its great future as it is aware of its great history. And what I've come to understand best is that the best of Detroit are its people.

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There is no sit-down-and-quit in this town and its extraordinary citizens. In the midst of living out an economic nightmare getting worse, the Detroit Local Organizing Committee has never faltered in its efforts to make this Final Four the most successful yet.

Detroit will benefit in many ways.

The largest crowd in the history of the Final Four will watch three outstanding basketball games over the weekend. We anticipate that there will be more than 100,000 visitors to the Motor City by tip-off Monday night in Ford Field. The economic impact of the Final Four will be in the range of \$30 to \$50 million. Every downtown hotel room is already booked. It will be a shot in the arm for a city that is reeling from a financial fever.

But we want to do more.

Over the last decade, the interest in the Division I men's basketball tournament and the Final Four has mushroomed. Cities across America have stepped up to host the various components of the tournament, and a few perform the extraordinary by playing host to the four teams competing for the title of National Champion. The NCAA and its member colleges and universities have benefited enormously from the growing popularity of the event.

We want to give back.

Working with Detroit's leadership, including the United Way for Southeastern Michigan, we have identified a need for the creation of Early Learning Communities. These communities are designed to enhance school readiness for young children through regional centers and neighborhood hubs throughout the Detroit area. The centers will focus on promoting early childhood reading; positive family, friend and neighbor-child relationships; and child development through training and access to reading materials for young children up to five years of age and their caregivers.

In addition, the NCAA and the Detroit Local Organizing Committee will request book donations during all of the events surrounding the Final Four. This effort will support the early learning centers.

As a university professor for more than 40 years, I like this approach. I like the natural connection it represents between athletics and education.

But the facts about the value of early childhood learning are what is really compelling.

It is estimated that 90 percent of brain development occurs in the first three years of a child's life. Children that are unprepared for kindergarten have a 10 percent chance of being able to read in

the first grade. If you cannot read at grade level in the first grade, you have a 12 percent chance of reading at grade level in the fourth grade. And if you can't read at grade level in the fourth grade, you have only a 2 percent chance of graduating from college.

And in the Detroit area, 50 percent of the region's children are entering kindergarten without the literacy foundation they need to be successful.

Frankly, we want our presence in Final Four cities to make a difference. What we are doing in Detroit is a pilot for future legacy initiatives. Gone are the days when we roll into a city, make a big media splash, throw a heck of a party, and then leave town. We want to make a lasting impression on those communities that do so much to make the Final Four successful.

So now we know. What happens in Detroit, stays in Detroit.