



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: Tuesday, Nov. 7, 2023

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Bronchos help pioneer, expand Michigan's first high school girls flag football league

League partner Detroit Lions honors lady Bronchos for efforts during this fall's 'Women in Football' celebration

HOLLY, Mich. — The **Holly High School Girls Flag Football Team** helped pioneer Michigan's first high school girls league last year, and they're continuing efforts to expand the program to schools across Michigan. The lady Bronchos were honored for their continued efforts to grow the sport in high schools statewide during a Detroit Lions game in September.

The 30-member Holly girls flag football team played three games in the league's inaugural season last spring, including at Ford Field, Stoney Creek High School and the Lions' practice facility in Allen Park. This spring, additional games will be added to the roster when the season kicks off in May.

"More than 24 schools have contacted us about joining the league and we look forward to growing this sport in all corners of our state," said **Joseph Merlo**, a Holly High School math teacher who helped spearhead the program. "It has been truly exciting to watch our team members hone their skills on the field and encourage girls in other schools across Michigan to participate in this engaging and challenging sport."

At halftime of the Sept. 24 Detroit Lions game against the Atlanta Falcons, the Lions honored the Holly girls for their efforts in starting Michigan's first girls flag football league during the "Women in Football" celebration. The student-athletes were presented with a trophy and a \$5,000 check that will help cover team costs. The students also had an opportunity to interact with NFL executives before the game and stand on the sidelines during the national anthem before kickoff.

Holly High School is among the first four Michigan high schools to launch the girls flag football league last school year, along with Lapeer Community Schools, Rochester Community Schools and Bishop Foley Catholic High School. The schools, coordinating with the Detroit Lions, established the league and developed a rule book and game schedule. The Lions provided equipment and uniforms to the teams.

“Holly Area Schools is committed to providing a well-rounded education that incorporates athletic opportunities for all Bronchos, and we’re grateful to the Detroit Lions for their continued partnership in making this new league a reality,” said **Scott Roper**, Holly Area Schools superintendent. “Our girls flag football team is the latest example of our top-notch athletics programs that provide real-life skills and help prepare our students for the real world and in-demand careers.”

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Learn more about Holly Area Schools by visiting www.hask12.org, or visit us on [Facebook](#) and [Twitter](#).



Cutline: The Holly High School Girls Flag Football Team poses on the field during the Detroit Lions game on Sept. 24.



Cutline: The Holly High School Girls Flag Football Team poses with a \$5,000 check from the Detroit Lions.