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Press Release

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Saint Mary's Hall Speech Team Claims Top Spot in State and Nation

(San Antonio, Texas) –The Saint Mary's Hall 2017-2018 Speech and Debate team has taken the top honor at two very prestigious competitions that include both public and private schools: The Texas Forensic Association (TFA) State Championship and National Individual Event Tournament of Champions (NIETOC). The speech and debate team awarded first place in the TFA State Championship, with the speech team winning the NIETOC Team Sweepstakes. This marks the second time in three years that the team has won the State Championship and the first time ever to win the NIETOC Championship.

In addition to their competitive success, the team was honored with the TFA Community Service Award for their work in supporting the Food Bank of San Antonio in their continuing efforts to combat hunger, as well as support the Hurricane Harvey relief efforts in the Gulf region.

"The success of our Speech and Debate Program is a testament to our students' hard work. They have attended 31 tournaments this year and their dedication is something we are all very impressed by and proud of. The future is indeed bright for these talented actors and speakers," says Director of Fine Arts at Saint Mary's Hall Bethany Bohall.

The students build on their talent through hard work, beginning (for most of them) in the Saint Mary's Hall Middle School. Last summer, the National Speech and Debate Association (NSDA) National Tournament named the Saint Mary's Hall Middle School speech and debate program as a "*Middle School School of Excellence*," which is a distinction reserved only for the top five middle school speech teams in the nation.

"The team works hard and we all have to be dedicated, not just to doing our best, but to supporting each other as well. It's like my second family and we work in an atmosphere of love. Being with this group has afforded me so many wonderful opportunities and memories that I will cherish for years to come," says senior Drake Leach, who won 1st place Individual Sweepstakes at the NIETOC competition.

Upper School Debate Teacher Colin Malinak, Speech and Drama Teacher Joe Muller, and Middle School Speech and Drama Teacher Rachel Warnecke are currently at work preparing their students for the NSDA Tournament in Florida this June.

Since 1879, Saint Mary's Hall has set the standard for college preparatory education in San Antonio by providing a wide-range of exceptional opportunities in academics, athletics, fine arts, and core values education to create well-rounded students that are successful in college and life. Saint Mary's Hall offers exceptional opportunities for children ages 3 through grade 12.

The Tobin Fine Arts School at Saint Mary's Hall offers by far, the most extensive fine arts curriculum in the region, with nearly 50 different courses in our Dance, Theater, Speech, and Debate, Media Arts, Music, and Visual Arts Programs. The Fine Arts Department is led by an impressive faculty of 34 visionaries in their respective fields.