

HOUSE JOINT RESOLUTION NO. 376

Commending the St. Christopher's School wrestling team on winning their ninth consecutive VISAA State Championship.

Agreed to by the House of Delegates, March 3, 2010

Agreed to by the Senate, March 10, 2010

WHEREAS, the St. Christopher's School wrestling team won its ninth consecutive Virginia Independent Schools Athletic Association (VISAA) Championship on February 20, 2010, shattering the previous record for consecutive state titles held by Woodberry Forest School; and

WHEREAS, despite losing a number of precious weeks of competition due to a series of snowstorms and cancellations, the St. Christopher's wrestlers entered the VISAA Tournament fresh off a strong performance against Prep League rivals Woodberry Forest, Collegiate, and Fork Union in an impromptu match billed as the Virginia Prep League Quad; the team was inspired by senior Edward Custer (171), who pinned 2009 VISAA State runner-up Daniel Burke of Fork Union, as well as his opponent from Collegiate, and won his final match by a technical fall, routing Woodberry's Phil Rogers 20 - 3, to culminate his career with a record of 40 - 31, and be named St. Christopher's Wrestler of the Week; and

WHEREAS, the St. Christopher's wrestlers put in a remarkable team effort, racking up 332 team points, to win the Championship by a commanding margin of 112 points, despite a very strong performance by runner-up Episcopal High School; and

WHEREAS, after winning 10 out of 12 semi-finals matches, the defending champion Saints held an almost insurmountable lead in the team standings going into the finals round; and

WHEREAS, showing consistently superior technical skill, physical courage, and steadfast discipline, the St. Christopher's Matmen dominated the field of 28 teams from around the Commonwealth, with 12 Saints wrestlers finishing in the top three places in the final round; and

WHEREAS, five Saints took home individual gold medals as State Champions, including freshman Brandon Jeske (119) who captured his first individual title for the Saints with a commanding 16 - 1 tech fall over Episcopal's Quinn Caslow, senior Loren Phillips (145) who defeated Liberty Christian Academy's Marcus Miller 1 - 0 to win his first state title, junior David Wesley (160) who, in one of the most exciting bouts of the evening, defeated returning state champion and National Preps All-American Sam Law from Cape Henry 6 - 3, senior Ted Gottwald (171) who won his third straight VISAA title with a commanding 3 - 1 decision over VES senior Win Higginbotham, and senior Chris Gill (215) who avenged a 2009 State tournament loss to Pope Paul VI's Sammy Ojeh by defeating the powerful Panther 3 - 2 to win his first State Championship; and

WHEREAS, freshman Brandon Jeske was named the Outstanding Lightweight Wrestler of the tournament by scoring the most falls in the least total time, and junior David Wesley was named the Outstanding Heavyweight Wrestler of the tournament for his series of technically flawless and physically dominating victories; and

WHEREAS, sophomore Andy Pitts (112), sophomore Tyler Cornett (135), junior Trey Tarr (140), senior Rennie Merhige (152), and senior Mark Burlee (189) each had strong Silver Medal finishes to qualify for Nationals; and

WHEREAS, freshman Robert Janis (125) placed third, soundly defeating Fork Union's David Barker in a "fistfight" in the Consolation Finals, and, in his first year as a wrestler, junior Ben Thompson (285) brought home third place when he defeated Blue Ridge's Cameron Njomo 5 - 1, to round out the field of 12 St. Christopher's wrestlers who qualified to compete in the National Prep League Wrestling Tournament at Lehigh University; and

WHEREAS, in the National Prep League Wrestling Tournament on February 26, 2010, the Saints wrestlers grappled with a field of elite wrestlers from over 100 schools from around the United States, capturing 7th Place in the Nation, on the strong showing of Ted Gottwald (6th), Loren Phillips (5th), David Wesley (2nd), and Brandon Jeske (2nd) who each earned the title of "All-American"; and

WHEREAS, the triumphant performance of the St. Christopher's School wrestling team is a tribute to the leadership and dedication of Head Coach Frank Kiefer; Assistant Coaches Ray Baldwin, Ace Caldwell, Adam Canady, Matt Erwin, Charlie Hudson, Josh Moses, Rob Prebish, and Tim Rose; and the steadfast love and support of the parents, students, faculty, and administration of St. Christopher's School; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED by the House of Delegates, the Senate concurring, That the General Assembly hereby commend and congratulate the St. Christopher's School wrestling team on winning its ninth consecutive Virginia Independent Schools Athletic Association Championship; and, be it

RESOLVED FURTHER, That the Clerk of the House of Delegates prepare a copy of this resolution

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for presentation to Head Coach Frank Kiefer as an expression of the General Assembly's admiration for the championship performance of the St. Christopher's School wrestling team.