Pope John Paul II High School Model UN Team Tops 200 Awards and 300 Members in Seven Years

November 23, 2009

The Pope John Paul II High School College Model United Nations (UN) Team participated in the Arkansas Model UN Conference from November 19th to November 21st, 2009. The team continued its winning ways, earning 21 awards and raising their seven year total to 212 awards.

During the past seven years, Pope John Paul II (JPII) students have participated in twenty-two Model UN Conferences in Tennessee, Georgia, Kentucky, Arkansas, Missouri, North Carolina, Florida, Illinois and as far away as Washington, DC, competing at the local, regional, and national level at such fine institutions as George Washington University, Vanderbilt University, Washington University, the University of North Carolina Chapel Hill, Georgia Technical Institute, and the University of Illinois. The team has seen great success at these conferences, earning 191 awards or an average of eight awards per conference in an activity where schools routinely earn few or even no awards at a particular conference, something that JPII has managed to avoid.
“We have been successful in the past because of the growing interest in the College Model UN program at JPII. We have many older, experienced people who are always willing to help the newer people, which helps us improve,” explained junior Ian Reding. “We know what we are talking about and we enjoy Model United Nations because it gives us the chance to play roles as members of the United Nations and to solve world issues going on today,” added sophomore Sarah Missimer.

On November 19th, 48 JPII students traveled to Conway, Arkansas to participate in the 44th Annual Arkansas Model UN Conference sponsored by the University of Central Arkansas, Hendrix College, and the University of Arkansas. This year’s conference included over 350 students from 20 high schools from Arkansas, Mississippi, and Tennessee. The students were lead by College Model UN Advisor Mr. Paul Saboe, Mrs. Lyndsey Saboe, parent chaperone Mrs. Arleen Zola, and Head Delegates Justin Hickerson (Belarus), Leah Loven (Brazil), Ryan Phillips (Canada), Annalea Wilson (Greece), Tommy Joe Bednar (India), Rob Wieber (Norway), Aidan Leonard (Portugal), Schyler Cox (Romania), and Hannah Vickery (Sweden). This group included 22 students who were new to the College Model UN Team.

“The Arkansas Conference is great because it is huge and has tons of options for committees and countries to represent,” said junior Will Vanderslice.

During the two-day conference, the students simulated several UN Committees, including the International Court of Justice and the Special Political Committee. Through these experiences, the students gained the opportunity to become working diplomats and to learn from students from the surrounding states. In addition, the JPII students were actively involved in their committees, helping to write and sponsor 13 resolutions or 76% of the resolutions that were passed by their respective committees during the conference. Maggie Musacchio, Schyler Cox, Carlee Pritchard, Sara Missimer, Tommy Joe Bednar, Avery Story, Rob Wieber, Mary Gilstrap, Ally Harpootlian, Wilhelm Bunjor, Bryan Melcher, Joseph Griggs, Ian Reding, Hannah Vickery, Stephanie Kerrigan, Matt Lucas, and Ryan Phillips all saw one or more of their resolutions approved by their fellow delegates. “To get my resolution passed when I had seen four before mine fail was both a shock and a relief and made me feel as though I really understood the dilemma facing the Legal Committee,” said junior Ally Harpootlian.

For the sixth year in a row, a JPII student was elected to serve as President of the International Court of Justice (ICJ). This is the sixth year that the ICJ was simulated and senior Jeremy Wilson (Brazil) was elected President to help the court preside over three cases.

After participating in the final committee sessions on Saturday, the JPII students went into the Awards Ceremony with high expectations. Those expectations were realized when the students received 21 awards, more than any other school.

Pope John Paul II received four awards for Best Position Papers. JPII Countries recognized for this achievement included Greece (Head Delegate Annalea Wilson, Carlee Pritchard, Alex Abdo, Alex Price, and Kristen Wieber), India (Head Delegate Tommy Joe Bednar, Julia Ross, Stephanie Kerrigan, Wilhelm Bunjor, and Daniel Weber), Norway (Head Delegate Rob Wieber, Kelsey Harrell, Ally Harpootlian, and
Will Vanderslice), and Sweden (Head Delegate Hannah Vickery, Tommy Fleming, Grace Caddle, Mary Catherine Fleming, and Ian Reding).

Five students were selected by their fellow committee members for the prestigious award of Rappoteur or Best Delegate, including Tommy Joe Bednar (India) for the Special Political Committee, Stephanie Kerrigan (India) for the Economic Finance Committee, Wilhelm Bunjor (India) for the Legal Committee, Joseph Griggs (Brazil) for the Economic and Social Council, and Jeremy Wilson (Brazil) for the International Court of Justice. These students accounted for five of the nine students recognized at the conference with this honor, more than any other school. Each received a special engraved gavel and gave a report before the entire General Assembly regarding their committee’s progress during the conference.

Numerous students were recognized individually for their public speaking skills by the conference administrators. Maggie Musacchio (Brazil) and Stephanie Kerrigan (India) earned Outstanding Delegate Awards while Schyler Cox (Romania), Julia Ross (India), Avery Story (Brazil), Tommy Joe Bednar (India), Wilhelm Bunjor (India), Joseph Griggs (Brazil), Ian Reding (Sweden), and Jeremy Wilson (Brazil) accounted for JPII’s eight Outstanding Delegate Honorable Mention Awards.

In addition, Pope John Paul II earned an Honorable Mention Best Delegation Award for Brazil (Head Delegate Leah Loven, Maggie Musacchio, Avery Story, Matt Lucas, and Joseph Griggs) and earned the highest conference honor, the Overall Best Delegation Plaque, for India (Head Delegate Tommy Joe Bednar, Julia Ross, Stephanie Kerrigan, Wilhelm Bunjor, and Daniel Weber). These awards are given to the delegations that best represented the character of their country in all aspects of the conference activities.

Overall, 27 of JPII’s 48 delegates or 56% received one or more awards at this conference. In addition, Stephanie Kerrigan, Wilhelm Bunjor, and Tommy Joe Bednar won four awards at the conference for Rappoteur, Outstanding Delegate, Position Paper, and Best Delegation, the most awards possible for an individual. As of this conference, Tommy Joe Bednar has earned more awards than any other JPII student in the history of the school with 20 awards. Overall, 312 JPII students, including 120 current students or almost a fifth of the student population, have now attended twenty three College Model UN Conferences, earning 212 awards in just seven year’s time.

“As a team, we are fortunate to have such dedicated and talented students, parents who strongly support their children’s efforts, and a strong ethos that defines and distinguishes us from other programs,” commented advisor Mr. Saboe. “We have a great future ahead of us.”