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For Immediate Release

Contact: Nat Connors
Pope John Paul II Catholic Academy
Phone: 617-265-0019 x 7006
Email: nat.connors@popejp2catholicacademy.org

8TH GRADE STUDENTS AT THE POPE JOHN PAUL II CATHOLIC ACADEMY QUALIFY FOR NATIONAL FENCING TOURNAMENT

DORCHESTER—Soraya Francois and Ashley Jean, two eighth grade students from Pope John Paul II Catholic Academy – Mattapan Square Campus, have qualified for the United States Summer National Fencing Championships scheduled for July 3-5 in Dallas, Texas. The two young fencers qualified at a regional fencing tournament held in Waltham on Sunday, May 3, 2009.

At the competition, both fencers placed within the top five of all competitors: Francois placed 3rd and Jean placed 5th. For both young women, this was the first regional competition they ever entered. They will be traveling to Dallas to represent Pope John Paul II Catholic Academy and Dorchester this summer.

Francois and Jean have been fencing at the Academy for five months and have excelled in the sport in a very short time. "I enjoy fencing because it's a challenging, unique, and strategic sport," said Francois. "Since I started, I seriously live, breathe, eat, and sleep fencing." The program has encouraged the young fencers to be confident, strong, and determined to succeed.

"We are thrilled with the accomplishment of our young student-athletes," said Mary Russo, Regional Director of the Pope John Paul II Catholic Academy. "Their success is the result of effort and discipline. They bring great pride to the Academy as well as to their families, parish, school, and community."

Cesar Morales, Fencing Coach at Pope John Paul II Catholic Academy encourages the girls—as Jean said—to "always keep pushing to the end." Morales, who came to the United States as a young man, is sensitive to the concerns of young people of color from

low-income families. His long-standing dream of using fencing to help Boston students improve their lives and communities is becoming real on all the campuses of Pope John Paul II Catholic Academy.

Jean's mother, Jorane Jean, praised Morales and the fencing program. "Since she started fencing, my daughter has become more confident and has overcome timidity," she remarked. "She has also increased her social interactions with others."

Francois' mother, Verlandes Francois, said, "Before, I did not know if Soraya had a dream. Now, I know that her dream is to go to the Olympic Games."

These dreams could become a reality thanks to Morales and the fencing program at the Pope John Paul II Catholic Academy.

For more information about the Pope John Paul II Catholic Academy or the fencing program, please contact Nat Connors at 617-265-0019 x 7006 or at nat.connors@popejp2catholicacademy.org.

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Soraya Francois at a Regional Fencing Competition in Waltham on May 2, 2009.



Ashley Jean (left) and Soraya Francois (right) in their fencing attire.