



**For Immediate Release  
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# SALEM HIGH FORENSICS TEAM IS ONCE AGAIN “THE TALK OF THE TOWN”

*TEAM CAPTURES SIXTH STRAIGHT  
VHSL STATE TITLE*

The Salem High School Forensics Team won its 6th straight Virginia High School League state title on Saturday at the Group AA championships in Harrisonburg. Salem captured its latest VHSL championship by beating 39 other high schools, including second place Waynesboro.

The team’s 56-18 victory over the Little Giants was once again fueled by head coach Mark Ingerson. Salem put 14 individuals into the final round of competition and won individual state titles in 5 of 10 events.

"I think at this point, people take for granted that we will win each year, but trust me when I say that when the season begins nothing is set in stone," says Ingerson. "This year we had the smallest team I've ever coached at Salem, but the members worked extremely hard and perfected the art of speech. There were moments of doubt, but in the end, this season proved that hard work and dedication do pay off. "

Salem has now accumulated 35 individual state championships, which is the fourth most in VHSL history across all Groups. Only Blacksburg (AA) with 66 individual winners, Madison (A) with 57, and James Madison (AAA) with 36 have had more state champions since 1971 when modern forensics events were initiated in the Virginia High School League.

"Champions are not born, they are created," he says. "There are no 'Rec. league forensics' or 'travel team forensics.' These kids learn to take criticism, both good and bad. They win, they lose and they continue to improve. We don't hide from failure. We learn from it."

Ingerson, who announced this week that he is stepping down as the team’s coach after an ultra-successful championship run, created a culture of winning at Salem High by encouraging students to never give up. Four team members who scored critical points in the state finals this year didn’t even make the Forensics team in past seasons and were cut from the squad.

"I lift up these students as models to teach us all character," he says. "Their hard work and perseverance are the reasons we win championships."

## **THE 5 INDIVIDUAL STATE CHAMPS:**

- **Senior Jerrel Ledbetter** (Extemporaneous Speaking) - Jerrel is only the 16th three-time Forensics state champ in VHSL history. He is the fourth Salem student to join this elite club.
- **Sophomore Austin Peters** (Impromptu Speaking) – Last year he finished 6<sup>th</sup> in This Category
- **Junior Emily Shelton** (Humorous Interpretation)—VHSL State Champ in Storytelling in 2010
- **Juniors Kathryn Zamorski & Drew Kearns** (Serious Duo Interpretation)—Last year Kathryn became only the third girl in 25 years to win Humorous Interpretation in Group AA
- **Junior Mary Cameron Brooks and Sophomore Savannah Stevens** (Duo)—Back-To-Back titles in this category for this duo.

## **ALSO - SCORING POINTS IN THE FINALS:**

- **Sophomore Dylan Wade** – State Runner-up in Prose
- **Senior Leslie Brittain** - 3<sup>rd</sup> Place in Original Oratory
- **Senior Jade Andrade** – 3<sup>rd</sup> Place in Serious Dramatic
- **Sophomore Katelyn Barker** - 3<sup>rd</sup> Place in Poetry
- **Senior Joanne Tranquille** – 3<sup>rd</sup> Place in Impromptu Speaking
- **Junior Asheley Kennedy & Freshman Dylan Halstead** – 4<sup>th</sup> Place in Serious Duo
- **Sophomore Cady Garst** – 4<sup>th</sup> Place in Storytelling
- **Junior Olivia Mischianti** – 5<sup>th</sup> Place in Poetry
- **Freshman Taylor Barker** – 5<sup>th</sup> Place in Storytelling

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