Pope John Paul II HIGH SCHOOL

THE STEWARD

WINTER UPDATE | JANUARY 2026

Build.

JPII Cross Country Makes History

Pope John Paul II Cross Country capped a season for the record books with historic team accomplishments and well-earned recognition for longtime coach Larry Weber. The Eagles finished as Washington State Champions, as the boys' team claimed the first boys' state athletic title in school history and junior Kevin Hu became JPII's first boys cross-country runner to capture an individual state championship.

The girls' team added to the success with a strong showing, placing third overall and finishing first among 1B schools in a highly competitive 1B/2B field. Their performance showcased the depth, determination, and unity that continue to define JPII Cross Country.

> It's truly a great day to be an Eagle.
> -Coach Larry Weber

Coach Weber led both teams through a season rooted in perseverance, discipline, and faith. "Our boys captured the state title, and Kevin earned the individual championship with an outstanding performance. Our girls competed with great heart and determination," he said. "Above all, we give thanks to the Lord for the strength, unity, and blessings that made this achievement possible. It's truly a great day to be an Eagle."

Hu described his individual title as a shared achievement. "Today was such a blessing. I couldn't have done this without the support of God, my coaches, and my teammates," he said. "This season has truly been a wonderful experience and a blessing from God."

(Above) The boys cross country team dominated the field at the 2025 WIAA 1B State Meet. (Below) Hall of Fame coach, Larry Weber.

The championship season also brought significant statewide recognition for Coach Weber's leadership and long-standing influence on the sport. The Washington State Cross Country Coaches Association Executive Board named him B Boys Coach of the Year and inducted him into the Washington State Coaches Cross-Country Hall of Fame, honoring not only this season's success but decades of dedication to high school cross country. Both honors were presented at a ceremony on January 23, 2026, in Tacoma.

Through Weber's leadership, JPII Cross Country has grown into more than a successful program. Athletes train in a culture that values humility, teamwork, and character alongside performance—qualities clearly reflected throughout this historic season.

Believe.

Trusting God Beyond Comfort Zones

(Above) A glimpse from the bus. (Right) Amy at Mass in Vietnam.

Senior Amy Kondrat returned to JPII this fall with a deeper understanding of faith, service, and trust after a transformative mission trip to Vietnam with the Saint Michael Parish Vietnamese community. What began as a last-minute opportunity quickly became one of the most formative experiences of her high school years—largely because it required her to step far outside her comfort zone.

On October 15, 2024, Amy sent an urgent message to her parents: "My wonderful parents, one of my friends invited me to go on a 10-day trip over the summer to Vietnam… the deadline is today." To her surprise, they said yes—despite her knowing only two people going, having little detail about the mission, and no knowledge of the Vietnamese language.

The months that followed were filled with preparation: passport applications, fundraisers, and weekly Thiếu Nhi Thánh Thể (TNTT) youth meetings. Yet the social transition proved difficult. Coming from the familiar environment of JPII, where she felt secure and known, Amy suddenly found herself among peers who had grown up together, shared cultural references she did not, and spoke a language she could not understand. Stepping into this unfamiliar space forced her to confront her discomfort and grow.

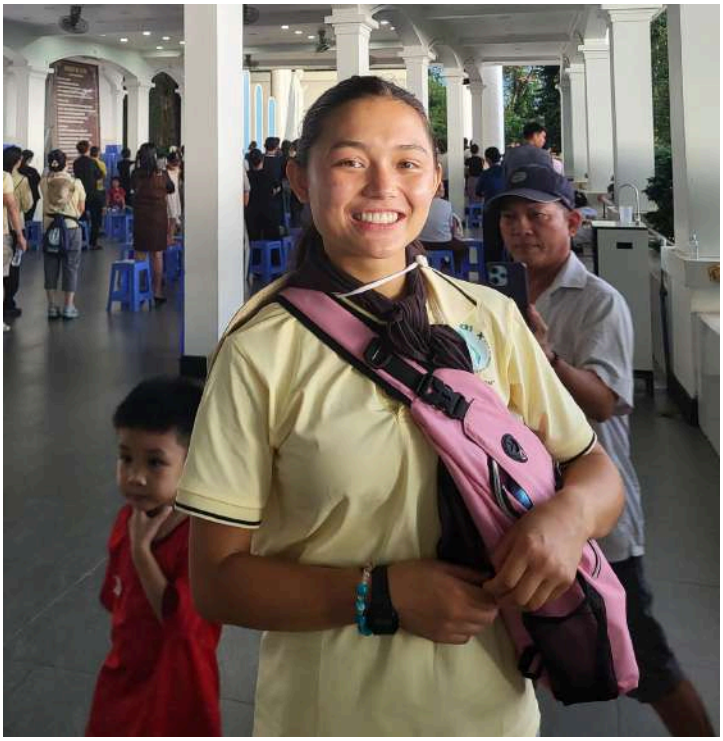
In Vietnam, the challenges intensified. Nineteen-hour service days and 4:00 AM Masses disrupted her routines. "Immediately, I saw how much I struggled with change I could not control," Amy reflected. Language barriers made prayer and conversation difficult, and she often felt disconnected. Still, she found beauty everywhere—from Vietnamese chants at Mass to hillscapes passing by the bus and meals shared in Cơ Ho villages.

> **Seeing the sisters serve so selflessly helped me let go of my small worries.**
>
> **-Amy Kondrat**

Serving alongside the Lovers of the Holy Cross, especially Sisters Linh and Theresa, deeply shaped her. Amy witnessed their compassion toward orphans and elderly residents, their perseverance in hardship, and their joy in service. These moments helped her move beyond her own insecurities. "Seeing the sisters serve so selflessly helped me let go of my small worries," she said.

One night by the water, Sister Linh shared her own struggles with God: "Many times, I asked God, 'Why? Why? Why?' Now I've learned to keep that question peacefully in my heart, trusting that He will answer me with time." That encounter stayed with Amy long after returning home.

Amy came back with vivid memories—monsoon rains, bus karaoke, shared meals, and unexpected grace. More importantly, she returned having learned that growth often begins where comfort ends. As she prepares for her future and plans to attend Notre Dame, she now carries her own "whys" with patience and faith, confident that God is guiding her path.



Belong.

Coming Full-Circle to JPII

Now serving as Development Director at Pope John Paul II High School, Shelley Sprouffske is grateful for the opportunity to introduce herself to the JPII community and begin building meaningful relationships. With more than 25 years of experience in nonprofit fundraising, she brings both professional expertise and a lifelong commitment to Catholic education.

Raised in Gig Harbor, she proudly counts herself first as a St. Charles Cougar, then a Bellarmine Lion, and later a Portland Pilot after earning her degree from the University of Portland. “I’m delighted to now add ‘JPII Eagle’ to that list,” she shared. “It’s an honor to join such a faith-filled and mission-driven community.” Today, she lives with her family on a century-old Christmas tree farm in Rainier and remains deeply invested in supporting young people as they grow in faith, knowledge, and service.

That commitment runs deep. Her father, Tom Mauss, devoted much of his life to Catholic education, serving the St. Charles community and helping co-found what is now St. Nicholas Catholic School in Gig Harbor. “His legacy, and the values he instilled in me, continue to guide my work,” she said.

> **“It feels wonderfully full circle to now serve on the JPII staff.”**
>
> **- Shelley Sprouffske**

She also remembers when Pope John Paul II High School existed only as an idea. Years ago, her husband’s (Jonathan) law firm, Connolly Tacon & Meserve, offered office space for the school’s earliest development efforts. “It feels wonderfully full circle to now serve on the JPII staff,” she reflected.

Inspired by Pope St. John Paul II’s words—“We are not the sum of our weaknesses and failures; we are the sum of the Father’s love for us”—she looks forward to connecting personally with students, families, and supporters in the months ahead. She hopes to meet many members of the community soon, especially at the upcoming Light & Truth Gala, and shared simply, “I’m so glad to be here.”

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Truth ◆ Virtue ◆ Community

Winter Update Inside!

Build. Believe. Belong at JPII

Every day, JPII connects bright, curious students with opportunities to become who God intends them to be. Applications are being accepted for the 2026-27 school year! Scan the QR code below or contact our Admissions Office to schedule a personal tour and find out how to become part of the Eagle family!

ADMISSIONS@POPEJP2HSEAGLES.ORG

POPEJP2HS.ORG

Our Mission

The mission of Pope John Paul II High School is to provide a Catholic secondary education within a challenging academic, spiritual, and co-curricular environment that will develop men and women who are intellectually strong, spiritually alive, and committed to serving the needs of others.

See the Eagles in Action...

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