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## **Debate, Speech Teams Help with Gospel Defense**

**CEDARVILLE, OHIO** – While it would be easy for members of Cedarville University's debate and forensic speech teams to boast about their national titles and individual honors, winning is not their primary goal. In fact, if you asked them, they'd probably tell you that winning is much farther down the list than most people would think.

It's true that both teams have had incredible success. In 2013-14, the forensic speech team won the National Christian College Forensics Association (NCCFA) Invitational Division II national championship, and followed it up with a second-place showing last year.

This year, the team has finished in the top five at two tournaments, but their focus isn't on where they finish. Instead, the team is focused on building relationships with each other and sharpening their skills to defend their faith and spread the Gospel to those around them.

"Getting up and speaking in front of people is great practice to share your faith," said Rebecca Adams, a junior management major from Wadsworth, Ohio. "When you're standing in front of a room full of strangers, you become very vulnerable. It's a lot like sharing your faith with someone for the first time, and it's been a great opportunity to sharpen our speaking and critical thinking skills."

Adams has had the opportunity to create speeches based on writings from Christian authors, which often stand in stark contrast to other competitors, many of whom come from universities without a Christ-centered focus.

"You'll hear a lot of competitors give speeches that are laced with profanity or vulgarity," said Adams. "But we're able to communicate a positive message that doesn't use either of those and is not like other performances. It opens the door for others to ask questions as to why we are different, and it gives us the chance to share our faith in Christ."

On the debate side, Cedarville has remained in the top 10 of the National Parliamentary Debate Association's (NPDA) national rankings all year, currently sitting in seventh. They've finished first in tournaments at Loyola-Chicago and Wheaton College, but like their colleagues on the forensic speech team, it's not all about the accolades.

"Debate isn't just a way to learn how to think on your feet or form a convincing argument," said Aaron Alford, a senior broadcasting/digital media major from Cincinnati. "It gives us a chance to become better listeners, something that is essential when sharing your faith with someone. In order to properly explain or defend your beliefs, you have to be able to understand what the other side is saying."

Alford also pointed out that debate allows students to better understand their own beliefs in a world that is often vastly different than what they experience at Cedarville and hostile to the Gospel message.

"Debate really helps Christians as they enter an often hyperliberal, atheistic environment," he said. "There's a lot of great creative thought that goes into a debate round, and it often spills over into conversations outside of competition, where we get to talk to other competitors about what we believe."

So while Cedarville's debate and speech teams continue their success in competition, they're also helping to spread God's word to others through articulate, intelligent speech and by building relationships with those around them.

"We are blessed with great students on both teams who have a passion for communicating a positive message every time they speak," said Derrick Green, chair of the department of communication and speech coach. "What makes me the most proud isn't the awards, it's seeing our students grow closer to each other, closer to God, and growing in their faith."

Located in southwest Ohio, Cedarville University is an accredited, Christ-centered, Baptist institution with an enrollment of 3,711 undergraduate, graduate and online students in more than 100 areas of study. Founded in 1887, Cedarville is recognized nationally for its authentic Christian community, rigorous academic programs, strong graduation and retention rates, accredited professional and health science offerings and leading student satisfaction ratings. For more information about the University, visit [www.cedarville.edu](http://www.cedarville.edu).