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For Immediate Release:

Cross Country has taken afoot at Saint Michael School

Cross Country, a new extracurricular club for Saint Michael School's middle school students in grades 6 through 8, kicked-off it's first season with two of the 8th graders, C.S. Scott and Savannah Lips, winning first place finishes in the boys' and girls' races. "We wanted to create an opportunity that would be open to any potential athlete willing to work hard and be a positive team player," says coach and school parent Jennifer Butler. "We now have 30 runners with a wide range of abilities and degrees of experience, but somehow, it works!"

St. Michael's Cross Country program was developed by Jennifer Butler and John and Luann Wiggernhorn; it was the Wiggernhorns who learned of another private school's success with starting a Cross Country club. At Saint Michael School they are fortunate to have a number of parent volunteers, as well as faculty support, all of which is present at practices and meets. Yet it's the runners who make the club; "We have some kids who are really driven and focused, a few who just went to XC camp over the summer," explains Butler, "and then we have some kids who have never run outside of PE (physical education) class! We emphasize the individual nature of running, in that each athlete is working to the best of their ability at that moment, whatever that may mean... there is no right or wrong, it's just running!!" That individualism is complemented by the team environment, in which runners support and motivate one another. "Team-building is a huge part of this cross-country club. It has to be fun; we want it to be oozing with excitement and energy!" Butler exclaims.

Those qualities were evident at the club's first meet with The Franciscan School and Our Lady of Lourdes, held on Tuesday, September 1st, at Blue Jay Point in Raleigh. "That was so exciting – to see the two of them (C.S. and Savannah) come in 1st at our inaugural meet with two other schools," says Butler. "We were so proud of all of our kids – they all ran smart races, they supported each other – and we even had a number of teammates who were not running that day make the 30 minute drive to cheer on the kids who were running. They all cheered for every single runner sprinting towards the finish line, regardless of the runner's school or place in the race. It was a beautiful exhibit of sportsmanship."