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***** **NEWS/PHOTO OPPORTUNITY** *****

WHO: Incarnate Word Academy High School Lady Angels Basketball Team
WHAT: TAPPS Playoff Game – IWA vs. Northland Christian of Houston
WHEN: Friday, February 17
WHERE: Incarnate Word Academy Mother Patricia Gunning Gymnasium

8-0 DISTRICT CHAMPS, IWA LADY ANGELS TO HOST PLAYOFF GAME

Lady Angel's Cinderella season continues in playoffs, taking on Northland Christian of Houston

CORPUS CHRISTI, TX – When the IWA Lady Angels Basketball Team began their 2011-12 season, the players and coaches knew they were part of a solid program with a team that would play well. They knew the team could hold its own on the court for the upcoming season even though *playing well* may not translate into many notches in the win column. After all, they were 1-7 in district last year.

Yet here they are; regular season is over and **the Lady Angels are district champs! They have fought hard to earn an 8-0 record for league play and 27-6 overall—and are now playoff bound.**

Senior Amelia Gonzales, guard/forward, offers several reasons for this year's remarkable season. "First, I would have to say Coach [Malcolm] Smith has really brought a lot to our team. He has worked with us on the fundamentals and taught us so much. Our freshmen have also brought a lot of new talent." Gonzales began playing basketball in the eighth grade at IWA Middle Level and stayed with the program throughout high school. "For those of us who were determined to stick with it through the tough years," Amelia adds, "I think God is blessing us with a winning season after working so hard."

The "tough years" as some of the juniors and seniors refer to them, were the past three seasons where the program was going through a period of rebuilding. In the 2008-09 season, Coach Ashley Stark came on board to coach the team. Toward the end of the season Coach Smith, who had previously coached IWA's boys team, volunteered as assistant coach.

"In 2009 we had a team meeting to see who was coming back for the next year," says Coach Smith. "This was a turning point for the team." The girls voiced their commitment to their team and their coaches. In the seasons that followed, Smith took over as head coach and Stark, who is also head coach of the Lady Angel Volleyball Team, stayed on as an assistant coach. The team had the coaching stability it needed and players who were dedicated to work hard.

"We work on the fundamentals every day in practice," says Smith. "I tell them I know it can be boring, but they have learned that it pays off." And paid off it has. The Angel's bench runs deep and the team has had several big scoring turnarounds in the fourth quarter. "We just wear them down," says Smith.

ABOUT IWA:

Incarnate Word Academy, established in Corpus Christi in 1871, is owned and operated by the Sisters of the Incarnate Word and Blessed Sacrament. IWA provides education to over 800 students throughout the Corpus Christi community and surrounding areas starting at 3 years of age to grade 12.

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