



OREGON ARTS
COMMISSION

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Oregon Arts Commission Announces Poetry Out Loud Competition

Competition Builds Public Speaking Skills and Offers Scholarship Money for High School Students

September 5, 2008 -- Salem, ORE. — The Oregon Arts Commission, in partnership with the National Endowment for the Arts and the Poetry Foundation, announces the 2009 *Poetry Out Loud: National Recitation Contest*. Now in its fourth year in Oregon, *Poetry Out Loud* encourages high school students to learn about great poetry through memorization, performance and competition. Schools are invited to adopt the 2008 – 2009 *Poetry Out Loud* curriculum, present school-wide contests, and advance to the state competition, to be held Saturday, March 14, 2009 in Salem. Oregon's state champion will advance to the national finals taking place April 26 - 28, 2009 in Washington, DC.

Oregon's 2008 state champion, Sophia Soberon from Brookings-Harbor High School, took second place in the national finals and was awarded a \$10,000 scholarship. That scholarship will defray her tuition at Southern Oregon University, where she is a freshman this fall.

"I didn't truly appreciate poetry until *Poetry Out Loud*," says Soberon. "I remember thinking, 'What an opportunity. I wonder how far I can go?'"

Poetry Out Loud seeks to foster the next generation of literary readers by capitalizing on the latest trends in poetry - recitation and performance. The program builds on the resurgence of poetry as an oral art form, as seen in the slam poetry movement and the immense popularity of rap music. *Poetry Out Loud* invites the dynamic aspects of slam poetry, spoken word and theater into the English class. Through *Poetry Out Loud*, students can master public speaking skills, build self-confidence, and learn about their literary heritage.

The NEA and the Poetry Foundation have awarded grants to state arts agencies, established prizes, and will coordinate the national finals next April. With this support, the Oregon Arts Commission is able to make *Poetry Out Loud* -- and its scholarship opportunities -- available to all public, private and parochial high schools across the state.

"Learning great poetry by heart develops the mind and imagination," says Dana Gioia, chairman of the National Endowment for the Arts. "By immersing themselves in powerful language and ideas, students develop the ability to speak well, especially in public. This is a skill they will use in the workplace and the community for the rest of their lives."

"The public recitation of great poetry," adds John Barr, president of the Poetry Foundation, "is a way to honor the speaker, the poem, and the audience all at once. *Poetry Out Loud* brings new energy to an ancient art by returning it to the classrooms of America."

Poetry Out Loud prizes

Students who participate in the official *Poetry Out Loud* program may be eligible to compete in the 2009 state and national finals. The state champion receives \$200 and an all-expense-paid trip to Washington, DC to compete for the national championship. The state champion's school receives a \$500 stipend for the purchase of poetry books. The runner-up in the state competition receives \$100, with \$200 for his or her school library. The national champion wins a \$20,000 college scholarship; the first runner-up, \$10,000; and the third runner-up, \$5,000, with additional money for the respective school libraries. In total, *Poetry Out Loud* awards \$50,000 in scholarships and school stipends at the national finals.

How Oregon high schools can get involved with Poetry Out Loud

I adore poetry, but finding ways to bring it alive for students is difficult. Poetry Out Loud provides a way. The 500 poems in the anthology play to students' interests, allowing them to find poetry that they like.

-- Clancy Rone, English teacher, South Medford High School

The NEA and the Poetry Foundation provide state arts agencies with free, standards-based curriculum materials for use by participating schools. These materials include print and online poetry anthologies, a teacher's guide with sample lesson plans to help instructors teach recitation and performance, and a CD with poetry readings by well-known actors and writers such as James Earl Jones, Anthony Hopkins, Alyssa Milano, and N. Scott Momaday. Downloadable program materials and additional resources are available at www.poetryoutloud.org.

Poetry Out Loud requires less than two or three weeks of class time. Registration information for Oregon high schools has been posted at www.oregonartscommission.org/education. Schools that wish to be part of the official *Poetry Out Loud* program must contact the Oregon Arts Commission by November 3, 2008. Contact Deb Vaughn, arts education coordinator, at 503-986-0085, or deborah.vaughn@state.or.us.

About the National Endowment for the Arts

The NEA is a public agency dedicated to supporting excellence in the arts – both new and established, bringing the arts to all Americans, and providing leadership in arts education. Established by Congress in 1965 as an independent agency of the federal government, the Arts Endowment is the largest national funder of the arts, bringing great art to all 50 states, including rural areas, inner cities and military bases.

About the Poetry Foundation

The Poetry Foundation, publisher of *Poetry* magazine, is committed to a vigorous presence for poetry in our culture. One of the largest literary organizations in the world, it exists to discover and celebrate the best poetry and to place it before the largest possible audience. The Poetry Foundation seeks to be a leader in shaping a receptive climate for poetry by developing new audiences, creating new avenues for delivery, and encouraging new kinds of poetry through innovative literary prizes and programs. In addition to launching a major new poetry Web site, the Poetry Foundation recently conducted the first-ever study designed to find out where poetry stands in American culture. For more information, please visit PoetryFoundation.org.

About the Oregon Arts Commission

The Oregon Arts Commission provides leadership, funding and arts programs through its grants, special initiatives and services. Nine commissioners, appointed by the Governor, determine arts needs and establish policies for public support of the arts. The Arts Commission became part of the Oregon Economic and Community Development Department in 1993 in recognition of the expanding role the arts play in the broader social, economic and educational arenas of Oregon communities. In 2003, the Oregon legislature moved the operations of the Oregon Cultural Trust to the Arts Commission, streamlining operations and making use of the Commission's expertise in grantmaking, arts and cultural information and community cultural development. The Arts Commission is supported with General Funds appropriated by the Oregon legislature, federal funds from the National Endowment for the Arts and funds from the Oregon Cultural Trust.