



For Immediate Release

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**Kari Morgan of Oregon School for the Deaf  
named Oregon's 2023 Poetry Out Loud champion;  
Maria Daniels from St. Stephens Academy named runner up**

Salem, Oregon –For the second consecutive year, a student from Oregon School for the Deaf is Oregon's Poetry Out Loud champion. Kari Morgan, a 16-year-old sophomore, was named the 2023 Oregon Poetry Out Loud state champion at Saturday's Poetry Out Loud State Contest in Salem. Trayshun Holmes-Gournaris, a recent graduate of Oregon School for the Deaf, was Oregon's 2022 state champion.

Morgan was one of 10 finalists who competed at the state contest after winning their school competitions and advancing through regionals; she will now represent Oregon at the national Poetry Out Loud competition to be held May 8-10 in Washington D.C.

Also for the second consecutive year, Maria Daniels of Beaverton was named runner up. Daniels, a junior at online St. Stephens Academy, would be invited to represent Oregon in the national competition should Morgan be unable to attend.

Morgan, "like most humans her age," loves to sleep in late. She is an artist, a performer, a writer and signer of poetry. She is crafty and likes to make things with her hands. Her best quality may be her love of encouraging others to shine their brightest. She describes herself as a "twinkling star."

"I'm feeling shocked and very happy!" said Morgan. "I get to be a future role model for Oregon School for the Deaf – Go Panthers!"

"Kari is a star in so many ways," said Gayle Robertson, the Oregon School for the Deaf Poetry Out Loud coach, who has now coached three state Poetry Out Loud champions. "I am proud of her determination and independence."

The poems Morgan presented at the state contest were: "Self-Portrait" by Chase Twichell; "Ways of Talking" by Ha Jin; and "Invictus" by William Ernest Henley.

"Poetry Out Loud continues to be an excellent demonstration of how the arts enrich and empower young people to broaden their horizons through poetry," said Andre Middleton, who served as an accuracy judge for the state contest. "Kudos to all the participants and especially this year's winner Kari Morgan for making it a such a memorable experience."

"I was completely transfixed by Kari Morgan's performances throughout the competition," said Tiffany Harker, the Arts Commission's Arts Education & Grants Coordinator. "She embodied the poise, expressiveness, vulnerability and confidence that makes Poetry Out Loud so special. All of the students did a wonderful job and I'm still in awe of their performances."

The other nine students who competed, after winning their school competitions, are: Lillyan Carroll, South Medford High School, Medford; Amelia Farrell, Lakeridge High School, Lake Oswego; Tempus Hillstrom, Oregon Charter Academy; Benson Lawson, Redmond High School, Redmond; Naomi Margolis, Lincoln High School, Portland; Thu Nguyen, Lakeridge High School, Lake Oswego; Katie Olson, West Linn High School, West Linn; and Drew Williams, Crook County High School, Prineville.

The Arts Commission established accessibility guidelines for deaf students to participate in Poetry Out Loud in 2009 when the Oregon School for the Deaf began participating. Those guidelines have now become a national standard. Morgan is the third state champion to be named from the school; in addition to Holmes-Gournaris, Tiffany Hill of Oregon School for the Deaf served as the 2009 Poetry Out Loud state champion.

Poetry Out Loud is a national recitation contest for high school students, organized in Oregon by the Oregon Arts Commission in collaboration with the NEA and the Poetry Foundation. Participants memorize and present poems, practicing public speaking skills while exploring the complexity of poetry.

**Editor's note: Video to be available on request after 8 p.m.**

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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 Business Oregon (formerly 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 and with federal funds from the National Endowment for the Arts as well as funds from the Oregon Cultural Trust. More information about the Oregon Arts Commission is available online at: [www.oregonartscommission.org](http://www.oregonartscommission.org).