



## PRESS RELEASE

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### NORTH DAKOTA COUNCIL ON THE ARTS ANNOUNCES THE WINNERS OF THE POETRY OUT LOUD STATE FINALS

The North Dakota Council on the Arts and Dakota West Arts Council are pleased to announce that the first place winner of the North Dakota State *Poetry Out Loud: National Recitation Contest* is Ryan Berry of Shanley High School in Fargo, ND. The second place winner is Connor Weik of Cavalier Public School in Cavalier, ND. Alex Davidson, Kendra Lewellyn and Kristen Pinks, all from Century High School in Bismarck, ND, participated in the competition as well. The competition was presented in partnership with The National Endowment for the Arts (NEA) and the Poetry Foundation. The state finals competition took place on Friday, April 7, at the State Capitol. Ryan Berry will advance to the National Finals in Washington, DC on May 16, 2006, where a total of \$50,000 in scholarships and school stipends, with at least a \$20,000 college scholarship for the *Poetry Out Loud* National Champion, will be awarded.

*Poetry Out Loud* is a national arts education program that encourages the mastery of great poetry by offering educational materials and a dynamic competition to high schools across the country. *Poetry Out Loud* uses a pyramid structure. Beginning at the classroom level, winners advance to the school-wide competition, then to the state capital competition, and ultimately to the National Finals in Washington, DC. More than 250,000 students across the country are expected to take part in *Poetry Out Loud* this year.

Teachers Judith Cooper and Brian Geffre accompanied Ryan to the state competition where he recited the poems "Jabberwocky" and "Kubla Kahn." Connor, who was accompanied by his teacher Geri Beckman, recited the poems "The Charge of the Light Brigade" and "Annabel Lee." All the contestants recited works they selected from an anthology of more than 400 classic and contemporary poems. The NEA and Poetry Foundation created a standards-based teacher's guide, a comprehensive website, and a CD featuring poetry recitations by well-known actors and writers such as Anthony Hopkins, Alyssa Milano, N. Scott Momaday, and Rita Dove. A representative from the Poetry Foundation, Elizabeth L. Stigler, Program Assistant, attended the North Dakota state finals competition.

First Lady Mikey Hoeven presented the awards to the participants. As first place winner, Ryan received a plaque, certificate, engraved bookmark, \$200 plus an all-expenses-paid trip to Washington, DC, and his school will receive a \$500 stipend for the purchase of poetry books. Ryan, who is in the 12<sup>th</sup> grade, competed against 200 other students who participated in the *Poetry Out Loud* contest at Shanley High School. As second place winner, Connor Weik

received a certificate, an engraved bookmark, \$100, plus \$200 for his school library. Connor Weik, who is in the 9<sup>th</sup> grade, competed against 175 other students who participated in the *Poetry Out Loud* contest at Cavalier Public School.

After the competition *Teens Roc the Mic*, a Twin Cities ensemble of spoken word artists, recited some of the powerful poems they wrote about their own life events, then opened the floor up to questions and comments. After lunch *Teens Roc the Mic*, along with Melissa Borgman, their adult mentor, hosted a workshop which was attended by the participating and visiting students, adults, and teachers. *Teens Roc the Mic* is a part of The Juno Collective, which is devoted to leadership and literacy in and through the arts.

The North Dakota state competition judges included: Larry Woiwode, State Poet Laureate; Shadd Piehl, Associate Poet Laureate; Dr. Janelle Masters, Dean of Faculty, Bismarck State College; Dr. Nita K. Ritzke, Chair, Division of Humanities and Theatre Director, University of Mary; Wayne Paasch, Assistant Editor, State Historical Society of North Dakota; and Jan Webb, Executive Director, North Dakota Council on the Arts.

For further information on *Poetry Out Loud*, visit [www.poetryoutloud.org](http://www.poetryoutloud.org), or contact Linda Ehreth at (701) 328-7593 or via email at [lehreth@nd.gov](mailto:lehreth@nd.gov).

### **About the Poetry Foundation**

The Poetry Foundation, publisher of Poetry magazine, has embarked on an ambitious plan to bring the best poetry before the largest possible audience. In the coming year, the Foundation will launch a major new poetry website and sponsor an unprecedented study to understand poetry's place in American culture. Founded in Chicago by Harriet Monroe in 1912, Poetry is the oldest monthly devoted to verse in the English-speaking world. Harriet Monroe's "Open Door" policy, set forth in Volume I of the magazine, remains the most succinct statement of Poetry's mission: to print the best poetry written today, in whatever style, genre, or approach.

### **About the National Endowment for the Arts**

The National Endowment for the Arts 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 Endowment is the nation's largest annual funder of the arts, bringing great art to all 50 states, including rural areas, inner cities, and military bases.

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*The North Dakota Council on the Arts is the state agency responsible for the support and development of the arts throughout North Dakota, and is funded by the state legislature and the National Endowment for the Arts.*