



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 Michael Sly of Shanley High School in Fargo, ND. The second place winner is Ashley Boyko of Dakota Adventist Academy in Bismarck, ND. Third place was awarded to Natael Falk of Lisbon High School in Lisbon, ND. 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 Wednesday, March 14, 2007 at the Belle Mehus Auditorium in Bismarck, ND. Michael Sly will advance to the National Finals in Washington, DC on May 1, 2007, 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 competition, and ultimately to the National Finals in Washington, DC. A total of 507 North Dakota students participated in *Poetry Out Loud* at the classroom level, with a total of eight students advancing to the state competition.

Michael Sly, first place winner, was accompanied by his teacher Brian Geffre to the state competition where he recited the poems "Booker T. and W.E.B.," "The Cremation of Sam McGee," and "In the Basement of the Good Will Store." Ashley Boyko, second place winner, was accompanied by her teacher Gary Way, she recited the poems "Jabberwocky," "The Owl and the Pussy Cat," and "Song of the Powers." 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.

As first place winner, Michael received a trophy, medallion, \$200, plus an all-expenses-paid trip to Washington, DC. His school will receive a \$500 stipend for the purchase of poetry books. Michael, who is in the 12th grade, competed against 275 other students who participated in the *Poetry Out Loud* contest at Shanley High School. As second place winner, Ashley received a

trophy, medallion, \$100, and \$200 for her school library. Ashley, who is in the 10th grade, competed against 42 other students who participated in the *Poetry Out Loud* contest at Dakota Adventist Academy. All eight participants received a poetry book, certificate and engraved bookmark; their teachers also received a poetry book and bookmark, along with a gift certificate to Barnes & Noble.

John Ostrout, Director of State & Regional Partnerships for the National Endowment for the Arts, was in attendance and spoke about the *Poetry Out Loud* national initiative. Live entertainment was provided by the Hettinger Concert Choir of Hettinger, ND; the Century Jazz Band of Bismarck, ND; a recitation was performed by Larry Woiwode, State Poet Laureate; and musical interludes throughout the semi-finals rounds were performed by Trio Apollo, a Bismarck-based woodwind trio.

The North Dakota state competition judges included: Larry Woiwode, State Poet Laureate; Shadd Piehl, Associate Poet Laureate; Chuck Suchy, Associate Poet Laureate; and Jan Webb, Executive Director of the North Dakota Council on the Arts, who was the Accuracy Judge.

For further information on *Poetry Out Loud*, visit www.poetryoutloud.org, or contact Linda Ehreth at (701) 328-7593 or via email at 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. 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.