



## **PRESS RELEASE**

### **For Immediate 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 is pleased to announce that the first place winner of the North Dakota State *Poetry Out Loud: National Recitation Contest* is Stephen Gasser of Minot High School, Magic City Campus in Minot, ND. The second place winner is Matthew Donahue of Shanley High School in Fargo, ND. Third place was awarded to Levi Brown of Cavalier Public School in Cavalier, ND. Dorothy Tegtmeier of Northern Cass County High School, and Caleb M. Lee of Wahpeton High School also placed in the top five. 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 Monday, March 19, at the Belle Mehus Auditorium in Bismarck, ND. Stephen Gasser will advance to the National Finals in Washington, DC on May 13-15, 2012, 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.

At the state competition, 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.

Emcee Debra Marquart and *Poetry Out Loud* Coordinator Rebecca Engelman, presented the awards to the participants. All participating contestants received a \$25 book store gift card, certificate of participation, a poetry book, an engraved dog tag necklace and an engraved bookmark. As first place winner, Stephen also received a trophy, medallion, \$200, plus an all-expenses-paid trip to Washington, DC, and his school will receive a \$500 stipend for the purchase of poetry books. As second place winner, Matthew also received a trophy, medallion, \$100, plus \$200 for his school library. As third place winner, Levi also received a trophy,

medallion, and an additional \$25 gift card. As the first place winner, Stephen will also be taking home the North Dakota *Poetry Out Loud* traveling trophy.

Open to the public a Coffee House and Open Mic event was held between the semi-finals and finals round. This event was coordinated and facilitated by Christen Nagel and Mike Garvey from Bismarck High School, with assistance from the Bismarck Lit Club. Students from participating schools, visiting students, adults, and teachers alike took part in this event.

The North Dakota state competition judges included: Janelle Masters, Dean of Academic Affairs, Bismarck State College; Nita K. Ritzke, Ph.D., Associate Professor of Humanities, University of Mary; Bill Thomas, Director of Radio, Prairie Public; and the accuracy judge was Jan Webb, Executive Director, North Dakota Council on the Arts. Debra Marquart, author/songwriter and Professor of English at Iowa State University was the event Emcee. Debra entertained the audience with a selection of her poems and songs. Live entertainment during the semi-finals was provided by Trio Apollo of Bismarck.

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