



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 is pleased to announce that the first place winner of the North Dakota State *Poetry Out Loud: National Recitation Contest* is Janessa Hensrud of Northwood High School. The second place winner is Alexandra Howatt of Northern Cass High School. Third place was awarded to Reed Wagner of Bismarck High School. 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 18, at the Belle Mehus Auditorium in Bismarck, ND. Janessa Hensrud will advance to the National Finals in Washington, DC on April 29-30, 2013, 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 and a journal. As first place winner, Janessa also received a trophy, medallion, \$200, plus an all-expenses-paid trip to Washington, DC, and her school will receive a \$500 stipend for the purchase of poetry books. As second place winner, Alexandra also received a trophy, medallion, \$100, plus \$200 for her school library. As third place winner, Reed also received a trophy, medallion, and an additional \$25 gift card. As the first place winner, Janessa will also be taking home the North Dakota *Poetry Out Loud* traveling trophy.

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, and North Dakota poets Chuck Suchy, Shadd Piehl and Joe Davis.

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