



PRESS RELEASE

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For more information, contact Rebecca Engelman, North Dakota Council on the Arts, (701) 328-7593

NDCA Announces the Winners of the 2017 Poetry Out Loud State Finals

The North Dakota Council on the Arts (NDCA) is pleased to announce Zach Howatt of Northern Cass High School, as the 2017 State Champion and first place winner of the North Dakota State *Poetry Out Loud: National Recitation Contest*. Ellie Noah of Shanley High received second place honors. Placing third was Maddie Moch of Mandan High School. Zach Howatt will advance to the National Finals in Washington, DC on April 24-26, 2017, where a total of \$50,000 in cash and school stipends will be awarded. This year's North Dakota Poetry Out Loud State Finals competition took place on Monday, February 27, at the North Dakota Heritage Center & State Museum in Bismarck, ND.

Provided in partnership with The National Endowment for the Arts (NEA), the Poetry Foundation, and NDCA, *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.

At the school, state, and national competitions, contestants recite works selected from an anthology of more than 400 classic and contemporary poems. The NEA and Poetry Foundation provide support materials for classroom instruction, including 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 Elizabeth Gross, *Poetry Out Loud* Coordinator Rebecca Engelman, and NDCA Executive Director Beth Klingenstein presented the awards to the participants. All participating contestants received a \$20 book store gift card and a certificate of participation. Each lead teacher received a participation certificate. First place winner Zach Howatt received a trophy, medallion, \$200, plus an all-expenses-paid trip to Washington, DC. Zach's school, will also receive a \$500 stipend for the purchase of poetry books and the honor of displaying the POL Traveling Trophy. Second place winner Ellie Noah received a trophy, medallion, \$100, plus \$200 for her school library. Third place winner Maddie Moch received a trophy, and medallion.

The North Dakota state competition judges included: Nita K. Ritzke, Ph.D., Associate Professor of Humanities, University of Mary; Donna Stack, Former Associate Professor of

Communications, University of Mary; Bill Thomas, Director of Radio, Prairie Public; Shadd Piehl, North Dakota Associate Poet Laureate and Academic Dean of Rasmussen College Online; and the accuracy judge was Brenna Daugherty Gerhardt, Executive Director, North Dakota Humanities Council. Live entertainment during the event was provided by David Diebel of Bismarck, and Tanaya Winder of Boulder, Colorado.

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.