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MAINE ARTS COMMISSION ANNOUNCES POETRY OUT LOUD: NATIONAL RECITATION CONTEST

Augusta, ME —High school students in Maine are again invited to compete in a national poetry recitation contest for awards totaling more than \$100,000 in scholarships and school stipends.

The National Endowment for the Arts and the Poetry Foundation present Poetry Out Loud: National Recitation Contest, in partnership with the Maine Arts Commission. State winners receive \$200 and an all-expenses-paid trip to the Washington, DC national championship where a \$20,000 college scholarship will go to the Poetry Out Loud National Champion and that state winner's school will receive \$500 for the purchase of poetry books.

Poetry Out Loud is a program that encourages high school students to learn about great poetry through memorization, performance and competition. During fall and winter 2006 – 2007, schools are invited to participate in classroom and school-wide contests, advancing to a state competition on Thursday, March 8, 2007. State champions will advance to the National Finals, to take place on April 30-May 1, 2007 in Washington, DC.

Riva Dumont from Erskine Academy in South China was selected as the 2006 Maine Poetry Out Loud champion and represented the state in the 2006 National Finals in Washington, DC last May. The NEA recognized Dumont's accomplishment with a \$1,000 scholarship in addition to her \$200 state champion's award and \$500 for her school to purchase poetry books. She also met with Senator Susan Collins and Senator Olympia Snowe while in Washington.

Poetry Out Loud seeks to foster the next generation of literary readers by capitalizing on the latest trends in poetry - recitation and performance. The program builds on the resurgence of poetry as an oral art form, as seen in the slam poetry movement and the immense popularity of rap music among youth. Poetry Out Loud invites the dynamic aspects of slam poetry, spoken word and theater into the English class. Through Poetry Out Loud, students can master public speaking skills, build self-confidence and learn about their literary heritage.

"Learning great poetry by heart develops the mind and imagination," said Dana Gioia, Chairman of the National Endowment for the Arts. "It is not just an arts program. By immersing themselves in powerful language and ideas, the students will develop their ability to speak well, especially in public. This is a skill they will use in the workplace

and the community for the rest of their lives.”

“The public recitation of great poetry,” said John Barr, President of the Poetry Foundation, “is a way to honor the speaker, the poem and the audience all at once. Poetry Out Loud brings new energy to an ancient art by returning it to the classrooms of America.”

The NEA and the Poetry Foundation have partnered to provide materials, grants, prizes and the National Finals next May. With this support, the Maine Arts Commission will select at least 30 high schools in Maine to participate in the contest in 2006 – 2007.

Additionally, the NEA and the Poetry Foundation will provide State Arts Agencies with free, standards-based curriculum materials for use by participating schools. These materials include print and online poetry anthologies, a program guide to help instructors teach recitation and performance, and an audio CD featuring well-known actors and writers such as James Earl Jones, Anthony Hopkins, Alyssa Milano and N. Scott Momaday. Program materials are available for download on the website, www.poetryoutloud.org, which offers additional resources.

How to get involved in Poetry Out Loud

High school teachers who are interested in participating in Poetry Out Loud should know that the program requires less than two or three weeks of class time. High schools that wish to be part of the official Poetry Out Loud program must contact the Maine Arts Commission to participate. The Maine Arts Commission will determine which schools are eligible to take part in the official Poetry Out Loud program. Schools that are not in the official program may conduct their own contests using the online resources. Contact Allyson Lesley Day at aday@jmg.org, 207/557-0164, arts.education@maine.gov, 207/287-2790 or visit www.poetryoutloud.org for more information.

Poetry Out Loud Prizes

Students who participate in the official Poetry Out Loud program may be eligible to compete in the State and National Finals in 2007. Each winner at the state level will receive \$200 and an all-expenses-paid trip to Washington, DC, to compete for the national championship. The state winner’s school will receive a \$500 stipend for the purchase of poetry books. One runner-up in each state will receive \$100, with \$200 for his or her school library. Poetry Out Loud will award a total of \$50,000 in scholarships and school stipends at the National Finals, with at least a \$20,000 college scholarship for the Poetry Out Loud National Champion.

For further information on Poetry Out Loud, visit www.poetryoutloud.org.

The Maine Arts Commission is a state agency, building Maine communities through the arts. The agency conducts all of its programs in accessible spaces. If you require special accommodations to participate please call 207/287-2724 voice or 207/287-2360 TTY.

