

NATIONAL ENDOWMENT FOR THE ARTS  
and  
POETRY FOUNDATION  
present



**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

**April 15, 2010**

**POETRY FOUNDATION AND NATIONAL ENDOWMENT FOR THE ARTS  
ANNOUNCE THE 2010 NATIONAL FINALS OF POETRY OUT LOUD**

*April 26 and 27 in Washington, DC*

CHICAGO — At the end of National Poetry Month, 53 students who emerge from a field of nearly 325,000 competitors nationwide will gather in Washington, DC, to vie for the title of Poetry Out Loud National Champion and \$50,000 in awards.

On April 26 and 27, champions from every state, the District of Columbia, Puerto Rico, and the U.S. Virgin Islands will showcase their skills in poetry memorization and recitation at the Poetry Out Loud National Finals at the Lisner Auditorium in Washington, DC. The roster of judges for the National Finals will feature author Garrison Keillor, actress and activist Alfre Woodard, poets Valerie Martínez and Jane Shore, poet and critic Adam Kirsch, and the 2009 Poetry Out Loud National Champion, William Farley.

Poetry Out Loud is a partnership between the Poetry Foundation and the National Endowment for the Arts that encourages the study of great poetry by offering educational materials and a dynamic recitation competition to high schools across the country. Poetry Out Loud gives students an opportunity to master public speaking skills, build self-confidence, and learn about their literary heritage. Now in its fifth year of national competition, Poetry Out Loud has been embraced by thousands of students, teachers, schools, and communities as a dynamic way to discover classic and contemporary poetry, from Walt Whitman to Natasha Trethewey.

“Arts education is essential to raising America’s next generation of creative thinkers,” said NEA chairman Rocco Landesman. “The NEA is proud to provide leadership in arts education through high-quality national education programs like Poetry Out Loud.”

“To learn a great poem by heart is to make a friend for life,” said John Barr, president of the Poetry Foundation. “The national recitation program brings fresh energy to an ancient art form by returning it to the classrooms of America.”

**Poetry Out Loud Partnerships**

The National Finals are the culmination of efforts by many partners. As national partners, the NEA and the Poetry Foundation have contributed support for administration of the program, educational materials, and awards for both the state and national finals. State arts agencies have implemented the program in high schools nationwide and organized state competitions, often in collaboration with local arts organizations. The Poetry Out Loud National Finals are administered by Mid Atlantic Arts Foundation.

### **Poetry Out Loud Educational Materials**

The NEA and the Poetry Foundation provide free, standards-based curriculum materials for use by participating schools. These materials include print and online poetry anthologies containing more than 650 classic and contemporary poems, a teacher's guide, a DVD of the best performances from the National Finals, and a CD about the art of recitation featuring well-known actors and writers such as Anthony Hopkins, James Earl Jones, Alyssa Milano, and N. Scott Momaday. Schools that are not part of the official Poetry Out Loud competition are welcome to conduct their own contests using the online resources at [www.poetryoutloud.org](http://www.poetryoutloud.org).

### **Contests and Awards**

Poetry Out Loud uses a pyramid structure. Between September 2009 and February 2010, teachers at schools across the country introduced students to the poems and educational resources, later conducting classroom and schoolwide competitions. State contests were held by mid-March; the 53 champions of those contests will compete at the National Finals. A record-breaking 322,741 students from more than 1,998 high schools have taken part in the 2009–2010 Poetry Out Loud program.

In total, Poetry Out Loud will award more than \$100,000. Awards include \$20,000 for the Poetry Out Loud National Champion, and \$10,000 and \$5,000 for the second- and third-place finalists, respectively. Each state champion receives \$200 and an all-expenses-paid trip (with an adult chaperone) to Washington, DC, to compete at the National Finals. More than \$42,000 will be given to participating schools for the purchase of poetry books.

### **National Finals at the Lisner Auditorium**

The 53 champions will gather at the Poetry Out Loud semifinals on Monday, April 26, from 9:00 a.m. to 8:00 p.m. at the Lisner Auditorium, George Washington University, 730 21st Street NW, Washington, DC. Nine finalists will advance to the National Finals, also held at the Lisner, on Tuesday, April 27, from 7:00 to 9:00 p.m. Both events are free and open to the public; no tickets or reservations are required. For more information on the competitions, call 202.682.5001.

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### **About Mid Atlantic Arts Foundation**

Mid Atlantic Arts Foundation supports the richness and diversity of the region's arts resources and promotes wider access to the art and artists of the region, nation, and world. To learn more about MAAF and its programs and services, visit [www.midatlanticarts.org](http://www.midatlanticarts.org).

### **About the National Endowment for the Arts**

The NEA 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 NEA is the largest annual national funder of the arts, bringing great art to all 50 states, including rural areas, inner cities, and military bases. For more information, please visit [www.arts.gov](http://www.arts.gov).

### **About the Poetry Foundation**

The Poetry Foundation, publisher of *Poetry* magazine and one of the largest literary organizations in the world, exists to discover and celebrate the best poetry and to place it before the largest possible audience. The Poetry Foundation seeks to be a leader in shaping a receptive climate for poetry by developing new audiences, creating new avenues for delivery, and

encouraging new kinds of poetry through innovative literary prizes and programs. For more information, please visit [www.poetryfoundation.org](http://www.poetryfoundation.org).

Follow the Poetry Foundation and *Poetry* on Facebook at [facebook.com/poetryfoundation](https://facebook.com/poetryfoundation) or on Twitter @PoetryFound.

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