

Released 3/26/07

The Maine Arts Commission Announces the Winners of the Poetry Out Loud Maine State Finals



School finalists at the Poetry Out Loud finals. State Champion Kate Reynolds front right and second place Kenny Francoeur, front left. Photo taken by: Ken D'errico.

Congratulations to First Place Winner Kate Reynolds of China and Second Place Winner Kenny Francoeur of Biddeford

AUGUSTA – The winners of the Maine State Poetry Out Loud competition were announced recently at the end of a wonderful evening at the Penobscot Theatre in Bangor. The audience was treated to a night of linguistic mastery as Maine’s high school students dazzled while performing under both theatre and news camera spotlights.

The winner of first place was Kate Reynolds from Erskine Academy in China, while the winner of Second Place went to Kenny Francoeur from Biddeford High School in Biddeford. Both these students worked hard as they emerged from the initial group of 16 students, finding themselves in a hotly contested final group of five. Kate Reynolds enthralled the audience with her rendition of “The Shooting of Dan McGrew” By Robert W. Service, and went on to clinch first place by reciting “The Eagle Poem” By Joy Harjo. Kenny was a close second as he had enchanted the crowd with his theatrics during an earlier round performance of “Playing Dead” By Andrew Hudgins.

Kate, a 15-year-old sophomore attending Erskine Academy, who in her spare time runs cross country, plays French horn, and sings Phantom of the Opera, will have no time to rest on her laurels. The price of success at the state level is that Kate will now need to spend time preparing to represent the state of Maine at the national finals in Washington, D.C. on May 2007, where \$50,000 dollars in scholarships and school prizes will be awarded.

The competition winners are not the only ones to benefit from this event, the winner’s schools are recipient also. Kate Reynolds receives \$200 for winning the Maine state

finals, but her school will receive a \$500 stipend for the purchase of poetry books. The runner-up received \$100, with \$200 for his school library. The first and second prize winners also received handsome trophies and all school winners received a medallion and a certificate of excellence. The State of Maine Senate will recognize each school winner and their own senator will send recognition from their district to the school winner. The State Champion of the Poetry Out Loud Maine final receives an all expenses-paid trip (with a chaperone) to compete in the National Finals in Washington, DC, on April 30 – May 1, 2007. The Poetry Out Loud National Finals will award a total of \$50,000 in scholarships and school stipends, with a \$20,000 college scholarship for the Poetry Out Loud National Champion

Besides these rewards and the excitement of competing in the finals, the talents of these students were further recognized a few days later as five of the competitors accepted an invitation to participate in a two hour live television show at the studios of one of Bangor's local television stations.

“This entire experience highlights the importance of this annual event and will leave a positive and lasting impression on the students for years to come.” said Alden C. Wilson, director of the Maine Arts Commission. “The Maine Arts Commission congratulates all our school winners and we are proud to have Kate Reynolds represent the State of Maine at the National Finals for Poetry out Loud in Washington, D.C.”

Maine Arts Commission and National Endowment for the Arts Fellow Kathleen Ellis, Professor in English & Honors was the host for the finals. Featured speakers and participants included Felicia Knight from the National Endowment for the Arts, Maine Arts Commission Chair John M. Rohman, Baron Wormser, Former Maine State Poet Laureate, and Poet Martin Steingesser. Maine's current Poet Laureate Betsy Sholl sent a special message of congratulations to all of the winners.

Guest judges for the competition included Lucy Rioux, teacher/consultant for the Gifted-Talented program in the Litchfield schools; John Rosenwald from Farmington, professor of English and co-editor of the Beloit Poetry Journal; Dawn Potter from Harmony, author of the collection *Boy Land & Other Poems*, essays and poems in numerous journals, including the *Sewanee Review* and *Prairie Schooner*; and Accuracy Judge Kristen Andresen, award-winning arts reporter, columnist and feature writer for the *Bangor Daily News* in Maine.

To take part in this event contestants had to recite works they selected from an anthology of more than 400 classic and contemporary poems. To assist students and teachers the National Endowment for the Arts 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.

It is not too early to start thinking about taking part in this event for next year's finals. If you are interested please contact Paul Faria arts in education associate at 207/287-2790 or paul.faria@maine.gov. To take part in this or any of the many community

building programs offered by the Maine Arts Commission, please visit mainearts.com for details.

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.