



Michigan Humanities Council

*Michigan People, Michigan Places
Our Stories, Our Lives*

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Charles White Of Forest Hills Central High School (Grand Rapids) Wins *Poetry Out Loud* State Championship

*Charles White to receive \$200 and win a trip to national finals in Washington, D.C.;
Brian Weber of Dansville H.S. takes 2nd place*

(LANSING)----Charles White of Forest Hills Central High School in Grand Rapids won the 2008 *Poetry Out Loud* state championship hosted today in Lansing by the Michigan Humanities Council. White bested 13 other contestants from across Michigan to win the title. He will receive a \$200 cash award and an all-expenses paid trip to the national finals in Washington D.C. from April 28-29, 2008. Forest Hills Central High School will also receive a \$500 stipend for the purchase of poetry books. Brian Weber of Dansville High School was named the runner-up in the competition. He will receive \$100, along with \$200 for the Dansville High School library. The competition was held at the Michigan Library and Historical Center in Lansing.

Each student recited two poems; the top four students competed in a final, championship round. The students competing in the championship round recited a third poem. Each student's performance was judged on six categories: Physical Presence; Voice and Articulation; Appropriateness of Dramatization; Level of Difficulty; Evidence of Understanding; and, Overall Performance. Judges for the competition were: Sheri Jones, WLNS TV-6 news anchor; Chris McElroy, director of production for Michigan Television; and, playwright Sandra Seaton.

Charles White's three poems he recited were:

- *Mother to Son*, by Langston Hughes
- *Ode on the Death of a Favourite Cat Drowned in a Tub of Goldfishes*, by Thomas Gray
- *My Last Duchess*, by Robert Browning

The students competing on Saturday were:

MID- MICHIGAN

- Dansville High School. Student: Brian Weber. Teacher: Pauline Lee (leepauli@msu.edu, 517-623-6120 ext. 234).
- Holt High School. Student: Korrey Hurni. Teacher: Margaret Charette (mcharette@hpsk12.net, 517-699-6430).
- Ionia High School. Student: Kendra Moon. Teacher: Jack Powell (jlpowell@ionia.k12.mi.us, 616-527-0600 ext. 244).
- Owosso Christian School. Student: Kayleena Heslip. Teacher: Betty Melrose (bbmelrose@verizon.net, 989-723-4510).

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SOUTHEAST MICHIGAN

- Milan High School. Student: Megan Cary. Teacher: Erin Jones (growley@milan.k12.mi.us, 734-439-5000).
- North Branch High School. Student: Kyle Mathei. Teacher: Cindy Stevens (cstevens@nbbronzos.net, 810-688-3001 ext. 2153).
- Osborn High School (Detroit). Student: Angel Lipscomb. Teacher: Monique Guest-Schuh (momskorner@aol.com, 313-866-0343).
- Southeastern High School (Detroit). Student: Deaira Littles. Teacher: Angela Mahone (amahone2@aol.com, 313-866-4500 ext. 4792).

NORTHERN MICHIGAN

- Alba Public School. Student: Molly Hensley. Teacher: Judith Zimpfer (zimpferj@gmail.com, 231-584-2000 ext. 125).
- Leelanau School (Glen Arbor). Student: Kathryn “Kate” Elizabeth Little. Teacher: Norman Wheeler (nwheeler@leelanau.org, 231-334-5890).
- Mackinac Island High School. Student: Ariel Leeper. Teacher: Lance Greenlee (lgreenlee@eup.k12.mi.us, 906-847-3377).
- Houghton High School. Student: Kate Griffith. Teacher: Julie Antilla (paldrich@houghton.k12.mi.us, 906-482-0450 ext. 1850).

WEST MICHIGAN

- Buchanan High School. Student: Emily Elizabeth Chance. Teacher: Sharon Bitterman (sbitterm@remc11.k12.mi.us, 269-965-8403).
- Forest Hills Central High School (Grand Rapids). Student: Charles White. Teacher: Sarah Scobell (sscobell@fhps.us, 616-493-8700).

The *Poetry Out Loud* program, a Michigan Humanities Council partnership program with the National Endowment for the Arts, The Poetry Foundation, Michigan Council for Arts and Cultural Affairs, and the Library of Michigan, encourages high school students to learn about great poetry through memorization, performance, and competition. Since November, Language Arts/English teachers spent at least two or three weeks of class time to prepare students for each school competition. Each school champion advanced to the state competition held earlier today. *Poetry Out Loud* 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. Through this program, students master public speaking skills, build self-confidence, and learn about their literary heritage.

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White will compete at the National Finals, to be held on April 28-29, 2008, in Washington, D.C. Scholarships and school stipends totaling \$50,000 will be awarded at the National Finals, with a \$20,000 college scholarship for the *Poetry Out Loud* national champion.

Previous Michigan *Poetry Out Loud* winners were Sarah Harris of Holt High School in 2007, and Travis Walter from Holt High School in 2006.

The Michigan Humanities Council, founded in 1974, is the state's independent, non-profit affiliate of the National Endowment for the Humanities. For additional information on the Michigan Humanities Council, please visit: www.michiganhumanities.org or call 517-372-7770.

FACTS AND FIGURES FROM 2006-2007 MICHIGAN'S *POETRY OUT LOUD*

- 400 students in Michigan participated and returned evaluations
- 13 teachers participated and returned evaluations
- Teachers provided 180 hours of their time in addition to 139 hours of classroom time
- Over \$100,000 in prizes were awarded to students and schools at state and national levels

Students who returned evaluations reported the following about *Poetry Out Loud*:

- 94% saw connections between poetry and everyday culture
- 84% understood that poetry can be a powerful tool for expression
- 67% developed their own individual interpretation of poems
- 66% could understand and explain different poetic elements
- 60% understood that poems meet different purposes and were led to explore challenging and unfamiliar poems
- 51% were more confident in their public speaking from reciting poetry

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