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***Poetry Out Loud* Contest Open For High Schools**

Poetry Out Loud awards prizes to state winners, college scholarships for national winners

(LANSING)-----The Michigan Humanities Council announces the fourth annual *Poetry Out Loud* state poetry recitation competition is open to all Michigan high school students. Each participating high school will receive poetry curriculum materials and audio CDs of poetry recitations. Awards will be presented to the best students reciting previously published works. The winning student will also represent the state of Michigan in a national competition. Since *Poetry Out Loud's* debut in the 2005-2006 school year, 1,787 students have participated.

English and Language Arts teachers in all of the state's high schools are invited to contact the Council by November 1, 2008, if interested in participating. To express interest in the program, teachers can contact the Council by phone (517-372-7770), by letter, through email to nwireman@mihumanities.org, or by fax (517-372-0027).

"*Poetry Out Loud* has made a significant impact on our youth who perform and recite some of the world's finest poetry," stated Jan Fedewa, executive director of the MHC. "We are pleased to partner with the Michigan Council for Arts and Cultural Affairs, the National Endowment for the Arts, the Poetry Foundation, and the Library of Michigan to offer an educational program with a track record of success."

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. Last year, 85% of student participants who evaluated the program stated they saw a connection between poetry and everyday culture; 82% understood that poetry could be a powerful tool for expression.

Students participating in *Poetry Out Loud* will experience a workshop and guidance from a poet as teachers prepare students for school and state competitions. By late February 2009, teachers must select one student to represent their school in the state competition. The state

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competition is scheduled for March 7, 2009, at the Library of Michigan in Lansing. The winner will be named Michigan's *Poetry Out Loud* representative for the national competition. The national competition will be held in Washington, D.C., from April 26-28, 2009.

The state winner will receive \$200 and an all-expenses-paid trip to the national competition. The winner's school will receive a \$500 stipend for the purchase of poetry books. The runner-up in the Michigan competition will receive \$100, along with \$200 for their school library. 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.

Last year, Charles White of Forest Hills Central (Grand Rapids) High School won the state title and advanced to the championship round of 12 finalists at the national competition in Washington, D.C. Previous state winners were Sarah Harris of Holt High School in 2006-2007 and Travis Walter of Holt High School in 2005-2006. Each won an expenses-paid trip to Washington, D.C., to compete in the national championship.

The Michigan Humanities Council, founded in 1974, is a private, non-profit organization, funded in part by the National Endowment for the Humanities. For additional information, please visit: www.michiganhumanities.org or call 517-372-7770.

FACTS AND FIGURES FROM 2007-2008 MICHIGAN'S *POETRY OUT LOUD*

- 906 students in Michigan participated and returned evaluations
- 18 teachers participated and returned evaluations
- Teachers provided 153 hours of their time in addition to 163 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*:

- 86% developed their own individual interpretation of poems
- 85% saw connections between poetry and everyday culture
- 82% understood that poetry can be a powerful tool for expression
- 68% understood that poems meet different purposes and were led to explore challenging and unfamiliar poems
- 67% were more confident in their public speaking from reciting poetry
- 58% could understand and explain different poetic elements

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