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Contact: Scott Hirko, shirko@mihumanities.org, 517-372-0029 ext. 25

32 HIGH SCHOOLS SELECTED FOR STATE POETRY RECITATION CONTEST

State winner gets trip to national finals in DC; \$1,000 in state and \$50,000 in national prizes to be awarded

(LANSING)-----The Michigan Humanities Council announces that students from 32 Michigan high schools will participate in *Poetry Out Loud* program (see complete list below). Each participating school will receive standards-based curriculum materials to use. These materials include print and online poetry anthologies containing nearly 500 classic and contemporary poems, a teacher's guide, and a CD of recitations by well-known actors and writers. More high schools are participating in *Poetry Out Loud* this year than previous years. Since its inception, about 1,700 Michigan high school students have participated in the program.

Poetry Out Loud, a Michigan Humanities Council partnership program with the National Endowment for the Arts (NEA), 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. During the next three months, Language Arts/English teachers from the schools selected to participate will earmark class time to prepare students for the school competition, advancing to a state competition on March 7, 2009. Michigan's champion will compete at the National Finals on April 26-28, 2009, in Washington, D.C.

"*Poetry Out Loud* consistently demonstrates the opportunity for students to connect poetry to culture and use poetry as a powerful tool for expression," said Jan Fedewa, executive director of the Michigan Humanities Council. "The Michigan Humanities Council is pleased to partner with these organizations to bring *Poetry Out Loud* to Michigan high school students."

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.

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

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public speaking skills, build self-confidence, and learn about their literary heritage. Last year, 86 percent of student participants who evaluated the program developed their own interpretation of poems; 85 percent stated they saw a connection between poetry and everyday culture; 82 percent understood that poetry could be a powerful tool for expression.

Charles White from Forest Hills Central High School in Grand Rapids won the 2008 Michigan *Poetry Out Loud* championship and advanced to the final championship round of 12 students from across the country. Sarah Harris from Holt High School was the state champion in 2007. Travis Walter from Holt High School won the state championship in 2006. Margaret Charette, Holt's language arts teacher, said, "Teachers should participate because of the positive impact of Poetry Out Loud on the school culture. And, *Poetry Out Loud* helps raise the level of personal expectations the students have on themselves." Judy Zimpfer, an English teacher at Alba Public School, stated: "I could sense a real difference in the acceptance of students required to memorize a poem."

"By memorizing a poem, a student gets a profound and intimate understanding of literature," said NEA Chairman Dana Gioia. "The experience of reciting a poem before their peers and the public also develops practical skills that students will use every day in the workplace and in the community."

"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."

2008-2009 Michigan *Poetry Out Loud* participating schools

UPPER PENINSULA

- Big Bay de Noc School (Cooks)
- Houghton High School (Houghton)
- L'Anse High School (L'Anse)

NORTHERN LOWER MICHIGAN

- Alba Public Schools (Alba)
- Leelanau School (Glen Arbor)
- Petoskey High School (Petoskey)
- Roscommon High School (Roscommon)

MID-MICHIGAN

- Dansville High School (Dansville)
- Holt High School (Holt)
- Owosso Christian School (Owosso)

EAST MICHIGAN/THUMB AREA

- Carman-Ainsworth High School (Flint)
- Flint Southwestern Academy (Flint)
- Madison Academy (Flint)
- Mott Middle College High School (Flint)
- North Branch High School (North Branch)
- Powers Catholic High School (Flint)

SOUTHEAST MICHIGAN

- Bradford Academy High School (Southfield)
- Cass Technical High School (Detroit)
- Cleveland Intermediate High School (Detroit)
- Groves High School (Beverly Hills)
- Lincoln High School (Ypsilanti)
- Roosevelt High School (Wyandotte)
- Saline High School (Saline)
- Southeastern High School (Detroit)
- Stoney Creek High School (Rochester Hills)
- University Preparatory Academy H.S. (Detroit)
- Western International High School (Detroit)

WEST MICHIGAN

- Forest Hills Central High School (Grand Rapids)
- Muskegon Heights Sr. High School (Muskegon Heights)
- North Muskegon High School (North Muskegon)
2 classes

SOUTHWEST MICHIGAN

- Gull Lake High School (Richland)
- Portage Central High School (Portage)

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The Michigan Humanities Council, founded in 1974, is a private, non-profit organization funded in part by the National Endowment for the Humanities.

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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