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Council Invites High Schools to Join Poetry Out Loud

More than 4,000 Michigan participants in poetry recitation contest since its debut in 2005-2006

(LANSING)-----The Michigan Humanities Council announces the fifth 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, more than 4,000 students have participated; last year, 32 schools and an estimated 2,725 students participated.

Interested English and language arts teachers in all of the state's high schools are invited to apply by November 16, 2009. Applications are available online at www.michiganhumanities.org/programs/poetry. Contact Gregory Parker with questions (gparker@mihumanities.org; 517-372-7770).

"*Poetry Out Loud* has provided thousands of Michigan high school students with an ability to enhance their understanding and appreciation of poetry through recitation and competition," stated Jan Fedewa, executive director of the Michigan Humanities Council. "We are pleased to partner with the Michigan Council for Arts and Cultural Affairs, the National Endowment for the Arts, the Poetry Foundation, the Michigan Youth Arts Festival, 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, 97% of student participants who evaluated the program stated they developed their own individual interpretation of poems; 97% stated they understood and could explain different poetic elements; 87% stated they could see a connection between poetry and everyday culture.

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By February 26, 2010, teachers must select one student to represent their school in the state competition. The state competition is scheduled for March 6, 2010, 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 25-27, 2010. State finalists will also be invited to participate in the Michigan Youth Arts Festival, May 13-15, 2010 in Kalamazoo.

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, junior Daniel Bellomy of Detroit Cass Technical High School won the state title and advanced to the national competition in Washington, D.C. Previous state winners were Charles White of Forest Hills Central (Grand Rapids) High School in 2007-2008, Sarah Harris of Holt High School in 2006-2007, and Travis Walter of Holt High School in 2005-2006.

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 2008-2009 MICHIGAN'S *POETRY OUT LOUD*

An estimated 2,725 students participated in Michigan's *Poetry Out Loud* from 32 schools. Students who returned evaluations about the program reported:

- 97% could understand and explain different poetic elements.
- 97% developed their own individual interpretation of poems.
- 87% saw connections between poetry and everyday culture.
- 67% understood that poetry can be a powerful tool for expression.
- 55% understood that poems meet different purposes and were led to explore challenging and unfamiliar poems.

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