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Press Release

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Still Time To Enter “Poetry Out Loud” National Recitation Contest

Towanda, PA – There is still time for high school students in Bradford, Columbia, Lycoming, Montour, Sullivan, Tioga, and Wyoming counties to enter the regional qualifying round of the national poetry recitation contest, Poetry Out Loud. The regional competition will be Friday, February 24 at the Keystone Theatre in Towanda.

The National Endowment for the Arts and the Poetry Foundation present *Poetry Out Loud: National Recitation Contest*, in partnership with the Pennsylvania Council on the Arts and the Bradford County Regional Arts Council. *Poetry Out Loud* is a program that encourages high school students to learn about great poetry through memorization, performance, and competition. Each year, schools in every region of Pennsylvania are invited to participate in classroom, school wide and regional contests, advancing to a state competition March 26, 2012. State champions will advance to the National Finals, to take place in April 2012 in Washington, DC.

High schools that wish to be part of the official *Poetry Out Loud* program should contact the Bradford County Regional Arts Council to participate: Elaine Poost, 570-268-ARTS (2787) or elaine@bcrac.org for more information and/or registration forms.

Free, standards-based curriculum materials for use by participating schools will be provided. These materials include print and online poetry anthologies, a program guide to help instructors teach recitation and performance, and an audio CD featuring well-known actors and writers such as James Earl Jones, Anthony Hopkins, Alyssa Milano, and N. Scott Momaday. Program materials are available for download on the website, www.poetryoutloud.org, which offers additional resources, and can also be obtained by contacting the Bradford County Regional Arts Council.

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. *Poetry Out Loud* invites the dynamic aspects of slam poetry, spoken word, and theater into the English class. Through *Poetry Out Loud*, students can master public speaking skills, build self-confidence, and learn about their literary heritage.

Students who participate in the official *Poetry Out Loud* program may be eligible to compete in the State and National Finals in 2012. Each winner at the regional level will receive an all-expense paid trip to Harrisburg, PA to compete in the state finals. Each winner at the state level will receive \$200 and an all-expense paid trip to Washington, D.C. to compete for the national championship. The state winner's school will receive a \$500 stipend for the purchase of poetry books. One runner-up in each state will receive \$100, with \$200 for his or her school library. *Poetry Out Loud* will award a total of \$50,000 in scholarships and school stipends at the National Finals, with at least a \$20,000 college scholarship for the *Poetry Out Loud* National Champion.

About the Poetry Foundation: The Poetry Foundation, publisher of Poetry magazine, has embarked on an ambitious plan to bring the best poetry before the largest possible audience. In the coming year, the Foundation will launch a major new poetry website and sponsor an unprecedented study to understand poetry's place in American culture. Founded in Chicago by Harriet Monroe in 1912, Poetry is the oldest monthly devoted to verse in the English-speaking world. Harriet Monroe's "Open Door" policy, set forth in Volume I of the magazine, remains the most succinct statement of Poetry's mission: to print the best poetry written today, in whatever style, genre, or approach.

About the National Endowment for the Arts: The National Endowment for the Arts is a public agency dedicated to supporting excellence in the arts- both new and established – bringing the arts to all Americans, and providing leadership in arts education. Established by Congress in 1965 as an independent agency of the federal government, the Endowment is the nation's largest annual funder of the arts, bringing great art to all 50 states, including rural areas, inner cities, and military bases.

About the Pennsylvania Council on the Arts: The Pennsylvania Council on the Arts is a state agency under the Governor's Office. Its mission is to foster the excellence, diversity and vitality of the arts in Pennsylvania, and to broaden the availability and appreciation of those arts throughout the state. In 2004, the agency was named among government's top 50 "Best and Brightest" in the *Innovations in American Government Awards*, a national competition recognizing superior and unique programming initiatives within the public sector.

About the Bradford County Regional Arts Council: The Bradford County Regional Arts Council (BCRAC), established in 1976, is a regional non-profit organization committed to the promotion and support of the arts and culture. BCRAC provides Arts-in-Education programming to Bradford, Columbia, Lycoming, Montour, Sullivan, Tioga, and Wyoming counties striving to provide intensive, on-going arts experiences that: affirm the creative potential of each person; enhance technical knowledge and ability; inspire creativity; stimulate the expression of personal vision; and applaud achievement. BCRAC nurtures arts in education through collaborations among regional communities, schools and artists. For more information, visit BCRAC online at www.bcrac.org or www.facebook.com/BCRAC.

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Photo Caption(s): Students and judges from the 2011 Poetry Out Loud competition held at the Keystone Theatre. Nuria Hunter (front row, third from right) from Williamsport High School placed first and competed in the State Competition in Harrisburg.