



## **PRESS RELEASE**

### **For Immediate Release**

May 1, 2017

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## **North Dakota State Poetry Out Loud Champion receives Honorable mention at National competition**

From a competitive field of more than 310,000 students nationwide, Zach Howatt of Northern Cass High School in Hunter, North Dakota, placed 12<sup>th</sup> at the National Poetry Out Loud (POL) Finals held in Washington, DC on Tuesday, April 26, 2017. Zach also received an Honorable mention award during the semifinals. With this achievement he received a \$1,000 cash award, and his high school received a \$500 stipend for the purchase of poetry books. Howatt was among 53 state champions from around the country who participated in the 12<sup>th</sup> national poetry recitation contest, sponsored by the National Arts Endowment and the Poetry Foundation.

*“Out of a pool of over 310,000 competing students, I managed to claim a spot within the top 12 Poetry Out Loud participants in the country! I savored my final three recitations and went out with a bang! For that, I'm pretty proud. This competition has been by far my favorite. Through POL I've met incredible people from other schools in North Dakota and from every state in the country. I love reciting, writing and sharing poetry on stage. I'm already aching to be in front of the mic again! Though I'm sad to be done with POL, I'm not done with poetry.” ~ 2017 North Dakota State POL Champion, Zach Howatt, Northern Cass School*

On April 25, 53 high school students – Poetry Out Loud champions from every state, the District of Columbia, Puerto Rico, and the U.S. Virgin Islands – competed in three semifinal rounds based on geographic region. Nine students advanced to compete in the National Finals on April 26. Judges evaluated student performances on criteria including physical presence, articulation, evidence of understanding, level of difficulty, and accuracy. Students performed poems from the Poetry Out Loud print and online anthologies ([www.poetryoutloud.org](http://www.poetryoutloud.org)). The event was the culmination of a pyramid-structure competition that began last September among schools across the country.

Georgia high school senior Samara Elán Huggins, received the title of 2017 Poetry Out Loud National Champion. With her achievement, she also receives a \$20,000 award and her high school will receive a \$500 stipend for the purchase of poetry books.

For further information on *Poetry Out Loud*, visit [www.poetryoutloud.org](http://www.poetryoutloud.org), or contact Rebecca Engelman at (701) 328-7593 or via email at [rengelman@nd.gov](mailto:rengelman@nd.gov).

### **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.

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*The North Dakota Council on the Arts is the state agency responsible for the support and development of the arts throughout North Dakota, and is funded by the state legislature and the National Endowment for the Arts.*