

IOWA DEPARTMENT OF CULTURAL AFFAIRS

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Sergeant Bluff-Luton High School student wins 2015 state poetry championship *Josie Kasik of Sergeant Bluff-Luton High School to represent Iowa at National Finals next month in Washington, D.C.*

DES MOINES – Josie Kasik of Sergeant Bluff-Luton High School won the 2015 Poetry Out Loud in Iowa state championship last weekend at the State Historical Museum of Iowa in Des Moines. She was coached by Diana Wooley of LAMB Arts in Sioux City.

With the victory, Kasik receives \$200 and her school will receive \$500 to purchase poetry books. Kasik also won an all-expenses-paid trip to Washington, D.C. to compete in the Poetry Out Loud National Finals on April 28-29, 2015, where \$50,000 in scholarships and stipends will be awarded.

Kasik performed “For the young who want to” by Marge Piercy, “Abandoned Farmhouse” by Ted Kooser and “April Midnight” by Arthur Symons to earn this year’s victory. Ellen Podhajsky of Marshalltown High School took second place and Rakaila Pauley of Denison High School finished third.

Coordinated in Iowa by the Iowa Arts Council (IAC), a division of the Iowa Department of Cultural Affairs (DCA), Poetry Out Loud is a national arts education program created by the National Endowment for the Arts (NEA) and the Poetry Foundation that encourages the study and performance of great poetry. The program now includes all 50 states, the District of Columbia, the U.S. Virgin Islands and Puerto Rico.

Students participate at classroom, school and state levels for the opportunity to compete for the national championship. More than 1,000 Iowa students competed at classroom and school levels this year, and more than 375,000 students across the country competed in the program last year.

The program helps students master public speaking skills, build self-confidence and learn about their literary heritage. It also fosters the next generation of literary readers by capitalizing on the latest trends in poetry – recitation and performance.

Student competitors are judged on accuracy, physical presence, voice and articulation, appropriateness of dramatization, level of difficulty, evidence of understanding, and overall performance.

Iowa’s past state Poetry Out Loud champions follow:

- Josie Everett of Sioux City’s LAMB Arts Regional Theatre in 2014
- Dakota Meyer of the Iowa School for the Deaf in 2013
- Gwen Morrison of Marshalltown High School in 2012
- Grace Rants of Sioux City East High School in 2011
- John-Emmett Mahon of Sioux City’s PeaceMakers Academy in 2010
- Mia Pierson of Roland-Story in 2009
- Emily Mortvedt of Roland-Story in 2008
- Spencer Gilbert of West Des Moines Valley in 2007
- Ashley Baccam of Des Moines East in 2006

NEA and the Poetry Foundation provide state arts agencies free, standards-based curriculum materials for use by participating schools. These materials include print and on-line poetry anthologies, a program guide to help instructors teach recitation and performance, and an audio CD. For more information about Poetry Out Loud, visit www.poetryoutloud.org.

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The Iowa Department of Cultural Affairs is responsible for developing the state’s interest in the areas of the arts, history and other cultural matters with the advice and assistance from its three divisions: the State Historical Society of Iowa, the Iowa Arts Council, and Produce Iowa – State Office of Media Production. DCA preserves, researches, interprets and promotes an awareness and understanding of local, state and regional history and stimulates and encourages the study and presentation of the performing and fine arts and public interest and participation in them. It implements tourism-related art and history projects as directed by the General Assembly and designs a comprehensive, statewide, long-range plan with the assistance of the Iowa Arts Council to develop the arts in Iowa. More information about DCA is available at www.culturalaffairs.org.