

# IOWA DEPARTMENT OF CULTURAL AFFAIRS

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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: April 27, 2015**  
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## **Sergeant Bluff-Luton High School student competes in 2015 Poetry Out Loud National Finals April 28-29**

*Josie Kasik to compete against champions from all 50 states, the  
District of Columbia, U.S. Virgin Islands and Puerto Rico*

**DES MOINES** – Josie Kasik of Sergeant Bluff-Luton High School will compete in the Poetry Out Loud National Recitation Contest's 2015 National Finals April 28-29, 2015, in Washington, D.C., where \$50,000 in scholarships and stipends will be awarded. She is coached by Diana Wooley of LAMB Arts in Sioux City.

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.

"We are very proud and pleased Josie Kasik is representing her school, community and the entire state of Iowa at the Poetry Out Loud National Finals this week," Iowa Arts Council Administrator Matthew Harris said. "We wish her the best of luck and we hope her performance will inspire other Iowa students to participate in the competition next year."

"It has been such a thrill to witness Josie Kasik's growth and confidence throughout the entire Poetry Out Loud experience," Wooley said. "The training and performance opportunities are also translating into confidence and proficiency in other areas of her life. Throughout the years that we have been involved in the Poetry Out Loud program, we have witnessed the same sort of growth in all the students involved, along with a new and profound love of poetry."

This year's 53 state champions advanced from a field of more than 365,000 students nationwide to compete in the National Semifinals Tuesday at George Washington University. Nine finalists will advance to the National Finals on Wednesday. The top finalists and their schools will receive \$50,000 in awards, including \$20,000 for the National Champion.

Award-winning poet Taylor Mali will host the Finals, and the roster of judges includes poets Richard Blanco and Nikky Finney, writer and critic Maria Popova, novelist Brando Skyhorse, and educator Carol Jago. The National Finals will also feature a performance by composer and multi-instrumentalist, Gabriel Kahane.

During this year's contest in Iowa, more than 1,000 students participated at classroom and school levels to advance to the state contest. 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 state championship. Ellen Podhajsky of Marshalltown High School took second place and Rakailla Pauley of Denison High School finished third.

Poetry Out Loud 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.

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](http://www.poetryoutloud.org).

### **Live Webcast and Viewing Parties**

Not in Washington, D.C., but still want to see the competition? You can watch the entire semifinals and finals through a [live, one-time only webcast](#). You can also gather fellow poetry fans for a [Poetry Out Loud Webcast Viewing Party](#). [Register at arts.gov](#) and find tips on hosting your party, promotional materials, and details on other viewing parties around the country. Follow the Poetry Out Loud National Finals on Twitter at @PoetryOutLoud and @NEAarts, #POL15. For more information on the event, webcast, or viewing parties, visit [arts.gov](http://arts.gov) or call 202-682-5606.

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*The Iowa Department of Cultural Affairs and its three divisions – the Iowa Arts Council, Produce Iowa-State Office of Media Production and the State Historical Society of Iowa – empower Iowa to build and sustain culturally vibrant communities by connecting Iowans to the people, places and points of pride that define our state. The department's work enables Iowa to be recognized as a state that fosters creativity and serves as a catalyst for innovation where the stories of Iowa are preserved and communicated to connect past, present and future generations. [www.culturalaffairs.org](http://www.culturalaffairs.org).*