

For Immediate Release

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Arizona High School Student to Compete in National Poetry Recitation Competition

Hunter Hazleton of Laveen, Arizona, is Arizona's Poetry Out Loud State Champion

PHOENIX, AZ (March 14, 2016) – Hunter Hazleton, a senior at Betty Fairfax High School in Laveen, Arizona, was named 2016 Arizona Poetry Out Loud State Champion at the state finals competition held on March 11, 2016 at the downtown Phoenix studios of Arizona PBS. As State Champion, Hazleton will represent Arizona at the 11th annual Poetry Out Loud National Finals competition in Washington, D.C., in May.

A program of the National Endowment for the Arts and The Poetry Foundation, Poetry Out Loud is delivered in all 50 states and three territories through partnerships with the State Arts Agencies. The Arizona Poetry Out Loud program is managed and supported by the Arizona Commission on the Arts, an agency of the State of Arizona.

This year, 49 schools and over 10,000 students across the state participated in the competition at the school level. 52 students advanced to compete at one of three regional competitions held in February. Ten students advanced from the regional competitions to compete in the state finals:

Southern Region

- Deja Brown (Sonoran Science Academy) Tucson
- Caitlin McCormick (The Gregory School) Tucson
- Edgardo Flores (Villa Oasis High School) Eloy

Central Region

- Edel Healy, Xavier College Preparatory (Phoenix)
- Anisa Myers, American Leadership Academy (Queen Creek)
- Karina Morris, AAEC PV High School (Phoenix)
- Hunter Hazelton, Betty Fairfax High School (Laveen)

Northern Region

- Sophie Weinzinger, Coconino High School (Flagstaff)
- Hanna Heiden, Kingman High School (Kingman)
- Carly Smith, Coconino High School (Flagstaff)

As the Arizona *Poetry Out Loud* state champion, Hazleton receives a \$200 cash award and an all-expenses-paid trip for himself and a chaperone to the national finals, to be held in Washington, D.C., May 2-4, 2016. Additionally, his school will receive \$500 to purchase poetry books for its library.

“The students work hard to get to the finals,” said Robert C. Booker, Executive Director of the Arizona Commission on the Arts. “Watching such a diverse group of exceptional young people from around the state stand tall, recite, and display their understanding and love of poetry is truly remarkable and inspirational. These young people learn skills through this competition that will serve them for a lifetime.”

The distinguished panel of judges for the event included professional poets, performers, and educators:

- Jia Oak Baker
- Fatimah Halim
- Leah Marché
- Pamela Sterling
- Dr. Laura Tohe

Poet and teaching artist **Tomas Stanton** emceed the event. **Dr. Laura Tohe**, Poet Laureate of the Navajo Nation, appeared as a special guest, reciting her own work for an appreciative audience.

About *Poetry Out Loud*

Poetry Out Loud, a program of the National Endowment for the Arts and the Poetry Foundation, seeks to foster the next generation of literary readers by capitalizing on the latest trends in poetry—recitation and performance. 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. For further information regarding Poetry Out Loud, visit www.poetryoutloud.org.

About the Arizona Commission on the Arts

One of 56 state and jurisdictional arts agencies across the United States, the Arizona Commission on the Arts is a 49-year-old agency of the State of Arizona and a leading force in the creative and professional development of Arizona’s arts sector. Through robust programs, research initiatives and strategic grantmaking, the Arts Commission catalyzes arts-based partnerships that strengthen Arizona communities through the arts.

For more information about the grants, services and programs of the Arizona Commission on the Arts, visit www.azarts.gov.

We imagine an Arizona where everyone can participate in and experience the arts.

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