

For Immediate Release

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Arizona School for the Arts Sophomore Kellen Vu is Arizona's Poetry Out Loud State Champion

Vu will represent Arizona at national finals of poetry recitation competition

Kellen Vu, a sophomore at Arizona School for the Arts in Phoenix, will represent Arizona at the 12th Annual Poetry Out Loud national finals competition in Washington, D.C., April 25-26, 2017.

A program of the National Endowment for the Arts and The Poetry Foundation, Poetry Out Loud is a poetry recitation competition delivered in high schools in all 50 states and three territories through partnerships with State Arts Agencies. Arizona's Poetry Out Loud program is managed by the Arizona Commission on the Arts, an agency of the State of Arizona, with support from regional partners, University of Arizona Poetry Center and Phonetic Spit.

The Arizona Poetry Out Loud State Finals were held at the studios of Arizona PBS in Downtown Phoenix. 10 students, representing schools from Flagstaff to Tucson, recited poems by a diverse array of literary luminaries, including E. A. Markham, Emily Dickinson, and Suji Kwock Kim. After two rounds of recitations, four students were selected to advance to the final round. From these four, Kellen Vu was named State Champion while Sophie Weinzinger, a sophomore at Coconino High School in Flagstaff was named first runner-up.

As State Champion, Vu receives \$200 and an all-expenses paid trip to Washington, D.C., (with an adult chaperone) to compete at the National Finals. Vu's school will receive a \$500 stipend for the purchase of poetry books. As runner-up Weinzinger receives \$100 and her school receives \$200 for the purchase of poetry books.

2017 Arizona Poetry Out Loud State Finalists:

(students in **bold** advanced to final round)

- **Paul Cassidy, Brophy College Preparatory, Phoenix**
- Thea Cline, Tri-city College Prep High School, Prescott
- Chaiah Durst, Sedona Red Rock High School, Sedona
- **India Harris, Desert View High School, Tucson**
- Tillie Jones, Willow Canyon High School, Surprise
- Cynthia Oldham, Combs High School, San Tan Valley
- Amanda Rambert, American Leadership Academy Ironwood Campus, San Tan Valley
- **Kellen Vu, Arizona School for the Arts, Phoenix**
- **Sophie Weinzinger, Coconino High School, Flagstaff**
- Olivia Wrenn, Sonoran Science Academy, Tucson

The event was recorded and will be broadcast on Arizona PBS on Friday, April 7, at 9:30 pm.

The Poetry Out Loud national semifinals will be held in Washington, D.C., on Tuesday, April 25 at Lisner Auditorium at The George Washington University. Nine finalists will then advance to the national finals, also held at Lisner Auditorium, on Wednesday, April 26.

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 50 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.

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

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For more information on the Arizona Commission on the Arts or Arizona Poetry Out Loud, please visit www.azarts.gov/pol or contact Steve Wilcox, Communications and Research Director, Arizona Commission on the Arts, at (602) 771-6536 or swilcox@azarts.gov.

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Images available upon request.