

For Immediate Release

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Coconino High School Junior Sophie Weinzinger is Arizona's Poetry Out Loud State Champion

Weinzinger will represent Arizona at national finals of poetry recitation competition

Sophie Weinzinger, a junior at Coconino High School in Flagstaff, will represent Arizona at the 13th Annual Poetry Out Loud national finals competition in Washington, D.C., April 24-25, 2018.

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, Phonetic Spit, and William Cordeiro, PhD, a Flagstaff-based poet and lecturer at Northern Arizona University.

The Arizona Poetry Out Loud State Finals were held at the studios of Arizona PBS in Downtown Phoenix on Saturday, March 3. Ten students, representing schools from Tucson to Ganado, a chapter of the Navajo Nation, recited poems by a diverse array of literary luminaries, including Margaret Atwood, Maya Angelou, and Tato Laviera. After two rounds of recitations, four students advanced to the final round. From these four, Sophie Weinzinger was named State Champion while Antonio Juarez, a senior at Willow Canyon High School in Surprise, was named first runner-up.

2018 Arizona Poetry Out Loud State Finalists:

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

- **Victoria Aiken, North High School, Phoenix**
- Carly Cairns, Herberger Young Scholars Academy, Phoenix
- **Paul Cassidy, Brophy College Preparatory, Phoenix**
- Emma Collier, Flagstaff Arts and Leadership Academy, Flagstaff
- Sylvia Dale, Ganado High School, Ganado
- **Antonio Juarez, Willow Canyon High School, Surprise**
- John Oboyski, St. Augustine Catholic High School, Tucson
- Lily Sklar, The Gregory School, Tucson
- Braden Steiner, Sonoran Science Academy, Tucson
- **Sophie Weinzinger, Coconino High School, Flagstaff**

2018 Arizona Poetry Out Loud Judging Panel

An esteemed panel of judges evaluated the recitations, including two Poets Laureate and a former Arizona State Champion:

- Dr. Rosemarie Dombrowski, Poet Laureate, City of Phoenix
- Monique Espinoza, poet, performer and writer
- Hunter Hazelton, 2016 Arizona Poetry Out Loud State Champion
- Caress Russell, Poet and Public Speaker
- Dr. Laura Tohe, Poet Laureate, Navajo Nation

An Achievement Three-Years in the Making

This was Weinzinger's third year competing at the state level. In 2017 she was first runner-up, an accomplishment her older sister Leah previously achieved in the 2014 competition.

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

The Competition Continues

The event was recorded and will be broadcast on Arizona PBS on Friday, April 6, at 7:30 pm.

The Poetry Out Loud national semifinals will be held in Washington, D.C., on Tuesday, April 24 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 25.

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 51-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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