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PRESS RELEASE

Alameda County High School Students Speak Out with “Poetry Out Loud”

Alameda County high schools to participate in national poetry recitation program that emphasizes language skills and public speaking.

Alameda County Competition on Wednesday, February 13, 2013, 4:30pm in Oakland.

Alameda County high school students are among hundreds across the state working hard to interpret, memorize and recite classical poetry. At stake are hundreds of dollars on the state competition level and thousands at the national finals of Poetry Out Loud—a competition run by the California Arts Council in the state and started by the National Endowment for the Arts to engage high-school students in the presentation of poetry through memorization and performance.

“The Poetry Out Loud program celebrates the County’s commitment to youth and the support of the belief that the arts and creativity are an essential component to Alameda County’s successful and thriving community,” said Rachel Osajima, the Director of the Alameda County Arts Commission. “This is the third year that the Alameda County Arts Commission has organized the Alameda County competition.”

Participating schools include **Amador High School** in Pleasanton, **Dublin High School** in Dublin, **Foothill High School** in Pleasanton, **Oakland Military Institute**, and others. The **Alameda County Poetry Out Loud competition will be on Thursday, February 13th, 4:30pm** at the Alameda County Lakeside Plaza Building, 1401 Lakeside Drive, 11th Floor, Oakland. This event is open to the public.

The California Arts Council has partnered with the National Endowment for the Arts and the Poetry Foundation to support the expansion of *California Poetry Out Loud*, which encourages the state's youth to learn about great poetry through memorization and performance. This exciting program helps students master public speaking skills, build self-confidence, and learn about their literary heritage. *Poetry Out Loud* uses a pyramid structure that begins at the classroom level. School site winners advance to the county competition on February 13, then to the state competition to be held on March 24 and 25, and ultimately to the

National Finals on April 29 and 30. Each winner at the state level will receive \$200 and an all-expenses-paid trip to Washington to compete for the national championship. The state winner's school will receive a \$500 stipend for the purchase of poetry books. A runner-up in each state will receive \$100, with \$200 for his or her school library. A total of \$50,000 in awards and school stipends at the National Finals will be awarded to the winners.

"This program is amazing. It was beautiful to watch the students interpret and express their understanding of the poems they chose," said Erik Sherer, Librarian, Amador High School, Pleasanton.

For more information on the Alameda County competition on February 13 contact the Alameda County Arts Commission by email artscommission@acgov.org or phone at (510) 208-9646. For more information about the program, please visit www.cac.ca.gov and www.poetryoutloud.org; reporters interested in more information about the statewide program may contact CAC communications director Mary Beth Barber at mbarber@caartscouncil.com or 916-322-6588.

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