

Jacoby Arts Center Hosting 4th Annual Regional Poetry Recitation Contest

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ALTON, IL - The fourth annual regional competition among participating area high school students known as Poetry Out Loud takes place on Saturday, February 5. Starting at 1 p.m. in the auditorium at Lincoln Middle School in Edwardsville, this one-of-a-kind poetry recital is sure to inspire, surprise, and uplift anyone who takes part in the experience.

A maximum of twelve students will be competing – three each from Alton High, Beck Area Career Center-Red Bud, Edwardsville High, and Jersey Community High School. The two finalists from this region's contest advance to represent the region at the state level of competition in March. The state winner advances to the national competition held in the late spring in Washington, DC.

Students competing are scored based on their physical presence, voice and articulation, appropriateness of dramatization, the level of the selected poem's difficulty, the student's understanding of the poem, and the student's overall performance. Each of the two

regional finalists receives a cash award. Additionally this year, cash awards will be presented to each regional finalist's respective school for the purchase of poetry materials for their school libraries or classrooms.

In her third year directing the Poetry Out Loud regional contest, Jacoby Arts Center's executive director, Melissa Mustain, says the students continue to surprise her each year. "It is simply amazing to watch these students take command of the lone microphone in the middle of the stage and convey the message behind the poet's pen so well that you truly understand the intent behind the author's selected words," said Mustain.

"This is not a stereotypical poetry slam. It is, however, a wonderfully moving recitation of classic and contemporary poetry as first brought to us from such literary geniuses as Robert Frost, Carl Sandburg, Emily Dickinson, Kim Addonizio, and of course, William Shakespeare," Mustain further explained.

The event is free and open to the public and receives support from the Illinois Arts Council, a state agency. The Gannett Foundation/KSDK NewsChannel 5 St. Louis has also provided funding support for this year's contest. Created and presented by the National Endowment for the Arts (NEA) and the Poetry Foundation, this program encourages high school students to memorize and perform great poems. Poetry Out Loud invites the dynamic aspects of slam poetry, spoken word, and theater into the English class.

Poetry Out Loud seeks to foster the next generation of literary readers by building on the resurgence of poetry as an oral art form, as seen in the slam poetry movement and the popularity of rap music among youth. Through Poetry Out Loud, students can master public speaking skills, build self-confidence, and learn about their literary heritage. Now in its sixth year of national competition, Poetry Out Loud has inspired thousands of high school students to discover classic and contemporary poetry.

To learn more about the national Poetry Out Loud program, visit the website at www.poetryoutloud.org. For more information about the regional contest, contact Melissa Mustain at Jacoby Arts Center.

Located at 627 East Broadway in Alton, Illinois, the Jacoby Arts Center's winter hours through March 31 are Tuesdays through Saturdays from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m., closed on

Sundays and Mondays. For more information, visit the Center's website at www.jacobyartscenter.org or call 618-462-5222.

The Jacoby Arts Center is a nonprofit organization whose mission is to foster the artistic development and economic success of artists, and to expand accessibility to the arts through programs that promote education, participation and exploration.
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