

Oregon student advances to Poetry Out Loud nationals

by Bend_Weekly_News_Sources

The Oregon Arts Commission announces that Ian Jones, 18, of The Center for Advanced Learning, Gresham, has won Oregon's 2007 statewide Poetry Out Loud competition. The state competition took place in Loucks Auditorium of the Salem Public Library. Poetry Out Loud is a collaborative project of the National Endowment for the Arts, the Poetry Foundation and the Oregon Arts Commission.

As winner of the Oregon competition, Jones wins \$200 and an all-expense paid trip to Washington, DC for himself and a chaperone. His school receives a \$500 stipend for the purchase of poetry books. Erin Lynch was declared the state runner-up. Her prize is \$100, with her school library receiving \$200 for poetry purchases.

In Washington, Ian Jones will represent Oregon against 50 other state winners. The national competition takes place April 30 - May 1 at George Washington University's Lisner Auditorium and awards a total of \$44,000 in prize money to 12 finalists (\$20,000 for the winner; \$10,000 to the first runner up; \$5,000 in to the second runner; and \$1,000 each to the other nine finalists). Their schools receive another \$500 for their libraries.

Over 1,500 Oregon students participated in Poetry Out Loud this year. All contestants prepared two poems from a 400-poem anthology provided by the National Endowment for the Arts. Declared a winner at The Center for Advanced Learning, where Rita Ramstad is the Poetry Out Loud coordinator, Ian Jones advanced to the state competition against eight other contestants:

Josh John, 16, Beaverton High School, Beaverton (Shannon Kerry, coordinator)
Alex Mann, 18, Summit High School, Bend (Anita Hoffman, coordinator)
Laurel Goerger, 16, 4J Night High School, Eugene (Jon Labrousse, coordinator)
Lauren Hay, 18, Hood River Valley High School, Hood River (Carla Gomez, coordinator)
Erin Lynch, 17, Veritas School, Newberg (Megan Hills, coordinator)
Kriss Morton, 18, Madison High School, Portland (Daniel Fredgant, coordinator)
Catherine Young, 17, Northwest Academy, Portland (Brian Christopher, coordinator)
Sean Johnson, 18, Salem Academy, Salem (Sara Patrick, coordinator)

This is the second year of Poetry Out Loud competition; and, both years, a student from The Center for Advanced Learning has been named state champion. Last year's champion, Michael Santiago, was one of the 12 national finalists.

All the contestants memorized three poems for the state competition. Ian Jones recited "Litany" by Billy Collins and "To a Mouse" by Robert Burns. The judges were so impressed by the level of performance among the nine competitors that they asked four students - Catherine Young, Kriss Morton, Erin Lynch and Jones - to read one more poem. Jones' final selection was "Ikibana" by Cathy Song.

Oregon's Poetry Out Loud competition was judged by poet Judith Barrington, actress Gretchen Corbett, novelist Molly Gloss and actress Kimberly Howard, using criteria such as volume, voice inflection, evidence of understanding, level of difficulty, accuracy and eye contact.

Speakers included Christine D'Arcy, executive director, Oregon Arts Commission; Leslie Liberato, Poetry Out Loud program manager for the National Endowment for the Arts; Lawson Inada, Oregon poet laureate.

In addition to being an accomplished performer of poetry, Ian is a novelist and fitness instructor. He was the project manager for his school robotics team's 8 th place (out of 55) performance in a recent competition and has been an exchange student in Japan.

Poetry Out Loud encourages high school students to learn about great poetry through memorization, performance and competition. More than 200,000 students across the country are expected to take part in Poetry Out Loud this year.

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