



For Immediate Release

Contact: Brenda S. Thomas

October 16, 2009

570-268-2787

**BRADFORD COUNTY REGIONAL ARTS COUNCIL ANNOUNCES
POETRY OUT LOUD: NATIONAL RECITATION CONTEST**

High School students in Bradford, Columbia, Lycoming, Montour, Sullivan, Tioga, and Wyoming counties are eligible to compete in national poetry recitation contest

Towanda, PA – The National Endowment for the Arts and the Poetry Foundation present *Poetry Out Loud: National Recitation Contest*, in partnership with the Pennsylvania Council on the Arts and the Bradford County Regional Arts Council. *Poetry Out Loud* is a program that encourages high school students to learn about great poetry through memorization, performance, and competition. Starting in the fall 2009 and continuing through early spring 2010, schools in every region of Pennsylvania are invited to participate in classroom, school wide and regional contests, advancing to a state competition March 15, 2010. State champions will advance to the National Finals, to take place April 27, 2010 in Washington, DC. **Bradford County Regional Arts Council will implement one of the regional competitions on Friday, February 5, 2010 at the Keystone Theater in Towanda, PA.**

How to get involved in *Poetry Out Loud*

High School teachers who are interested in participating in *Poetry Out Loud* should know that the program requires less than two or three weeks of class time. High schools that wish to be part of the official *Poetry Out Loud* program must contact The Bradford County Regional Arts Council to participate - Contact the Brenda S. Thomas at 570-268-2787 or e-mail brenda@bcrac.org to receive your Poetry Out Loud 'information/registration packet.'

The NEA, the Poetry Foundation and the Pennsylvania Council on the Arts have partnered to provide materials, grants, prizes and the State and National Finals next spring. With this support, Bradford County Regional Arts Council will target high schools in this region.

Additionally, free, standards-based curriculum materials for use by participating schools will be provided. These materials include print and online poetry anthologies, a program guide to help instructors teach recitation and performance, and an audio CD featuring well-known actors and writers such as James Earl Jones, Anthony Hopkins, Alyssa Milano, and N. Scott Momaday. Program materials are available for download on the website, www.poetryoutloud.org, which offers additional resources, and can also be obtained by contacting the Bradford County Regional Arts Council (see above contact information).

Poetry Out Loud seeks to foster the next generation of literary readers by capitalizing on the latest trends in poetry – recitation and performance. The program builds on the resurgence of poetry as an oral art form, as seen in the slam poetry movement. *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.

Governor Edward G. Rendell remarked during a state final, “Poetry is something that isn’t in the common vernacular for young people these days. It’s not hip hop, it’s not rap, it’s not music – but as we get older we realize that poetry plays an important part in our lives. We should be doing all we can to expose students to poetry at an early age in order to create an interest, foster a love and develop young poets. Poetry, perhaps more than any other form of human expression, can give us words to live by, words to strive for and can inspire us.”

“Poetry recitation as a competitive event is as old as the Olympic Games.” Said Dana Gioia, former chairman of the National Endowment for the Arts. “Along with wrestling, long-distance running, and the javelin toss, the ancient Olympics included contests in music and poetry. Performers trained for years and traveled great distances to the games. Please join us in restoring the energy and esprit of poetry recitation nationwide as *Poetry Out Loud*.”

“Hearing the spoken words of the ancient poets we learn that we are not alone,” said John Barr, President of Poetry Foundation, “that men and women always have felt as we feel, that the human spirit has been the unchanging constant in the history of our kind. Hearing voices of our contemporary poets we learn again that we are not alone, that in our individuality we are a community. In this way the recitation of poetry brings history to life; in this way it creates community.”

Poetry Out Loud Prizes

Students who participate in the official *Poetry Out Loud* program may be eligible to compete in the State and National Finals in 2010. Each winner at the regional level will receive an all-expense paid trip to Harrisburg, PA to compete in the state finals. Each winner at the state level will receive \$200 and an all-expense paid trip to Washington, D.C. to compete for the national championship. The state winner’s school will receive a \$500 stipend for the purchase of poetry books. One runner-up in each state will receive \$100, with \$200 for his or her school library. *Poetry Out Loud* will award a total of \$50,000 in scholarships and school stipends at the National Finals, with at least a \$20,000 college scholarship for the *Poetry Out Loud* National Champion.

For further information on *Poetry Out Loud*, visit www.poetryoutloud.org

About the Poetry Foundation

The Poetry Foundation, publisher of Poetry magazine, has embarked on an ambitious plan to bring the best poetry before the largest possible audience. In the coming year, the Foundation will launch a major new poetry website and sponsor an unprecedented study to understand poetry’s place in American culture. Founded in Chicago by Harriet Monroe in 1912, Poetry is the oldest monthly devoted to verse in the English-speaking world. Harriet Monroe’s “Open Door” policy, set forth in Volume I of the magazine, remains the most succinct statement of Poetry’s mission: to print the best poetry written today, in whatever style, genre, or approach.

About the National Endowment for the Arts

The National Endowment for the Arts is a public agency dedicated to supporting excellence in the arts- both new and established – bringing the arts to all Americans, and providing leadership in arts education. Established by Congress in 1965 as an independent agency of the federal government, the Endowment is the nation’s largest annual funder of the arts, bringing great art to all 50 states, including rural areas, inner cities, and military bases.

About the Pennsylvania Council on the Arts

The Pennsylvania Council on the Arts is a state agency under the Governor’s Office. Its mission is to foster the excellence, diversity and vitality of the arts in Pennsylvania, and to broaden the availability and appreciation of those arts throughout the state. In 2004, the agency was named among

government's top 50 "Best and Brightest" in the *Innovations in American Government Awards*, a national competition recognizing superior and unique programming initiatives within the public sector.

About the Bradford County Regional Arts Council

The Bradford County Regional Arts Council (BCRAC), established in 1976, is a regional non-profit organization committed to the promotion and support of the arts and culture. BCRAC provides Arts-in-Education programming to Bradford, Columbia, Lycoming, Montour, Sullivan, Tioga, and Wyoming counties striving to provide intensive, on-going arts experiences that: affirm the creative potential of each person; enhance technical knowledge and ability; inspire creativity; stimulate the expression of personal vision; and applaud achievement. BCRAC nurtures arts in education through collaborations among regional communities, schools and artists.

BCRAC believes that the arts are an essential form of communication and a powerful means of expression. Arts are integral to an individual's basic education. Partnerships between the arts community, schools and service agencies are critical for lifelong learning