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HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS TO PERFORM AT POETRY CONTEST

PIERRE, S.D. – Eight South Dakota high school students from across the state will share their talents and the works of great poets while competing for the state title at the Poetry Out Loud recitation contest Monday, March 16, in Sioux Falls.

Poetry Out Loud, a national arts education program, starts in the classroom and encourages the study of poetry by offering educational materials and a dynamic recitation competition to high schools across the country. South Dakota's program is administered by the South Dakota Arts Council with help from the Aberdeen Area Arts Council and South Dakota Public Broadcasting.

The state finalists were selected from a preliminary, video round. The finalists selected include: Julia Rankin, Belle Fourche; Georgiana Esther Shmagin, Brookings; Karissa Blum, Flandreau; Tucker Hammer, Sioux Falls Lincoln; Alex Schumacher, Sioux Falls Washington; Dustin Lehrke, Sisseton; Kate Struckman-Johnson, Vermillion; and Ashley Brage, Watertown.

Three students will also share their original poetry as part of a separate competition held in conjunction with Poetry Out Loud. Jimi Dawn Swallow, Little Wound High School, Kyle; Anna Koeppel, Rosholt; and Matthew Hopkins, Watertown, were awarded for their submitted pieces.

The contest will begin at 1 p.m., CDT, March 16, in the auditorium at Edison Middle School, 2101 S. West Ave., Sioux Falls. It is free to attend and open to the public. A live-stream of the event can be viewed at <http://www.sdpb.org/poetryoutloud/>.

Poetry Out Loud was created in partnership by the National Endowment for the Arts and the Poetry Foundation with the collaboration of state arts agencies. It is intended to foster the next generation of literary readers by building on the resurgence of poetry as an oral art form. Through Poetry Out Loud, students master public speaking skills, build self-confidence and learn about their literary heritage.

The South Dakota Arts Council, an office of the South Dakota Department of Tourism, is a state agency serving South Dakotans and their communities through the arts with funding from the National Endowment for the Arts and the State of South Dakota.

The South Dakota Department of Tourism is comprised of the Office of Tourism, the South Dakota Arts Council, and the South Dakota State Historical Society. The Department is led by Secretary James D. Hagen.