



For Immediate Release: March 11, 2017

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POETS WHO KNOW IT

THE SPRINGFIELD AREA ARTS COUNCIL ANNOUNCES ILLINOIS STATE WINNERS

For a poem to be recited to a living audience is its big break in show business. A poem in the air is not the same poem as it was on the page – the drama and charm of its unfolding is completely, particularly alive and intimate as it passes from one body into another. And the excitement of hearing a good poem in such a way is like a rollercoaster ride – I can't wait to see what is going to happen next.

These lines, from Tony Hoagland, were written in the program for the Illinois State Contest of the Poetry Out Loud: National Recitation Contest. The competition was held on Friday, March 10, 2017, at the Hoogland Center for the Arts in Springfield. **Mariah Brooks** from **Southeast High School** (Springfield) was declared the winner. She will advance to the national competition in Washington, D.C., in early May.

To win the competition, Brooks recited "The Song of the Feet" by Nikki Giovanni and "Mourning Poem for the Queen of Sunday" by Robert Hayden and "On Virtue" by Phillis Wheatley.

Amber Price, Maine East High School (Park Ridge), was named runner-up.

The Illinois State Contest featured recitations by two students from each of eight *Poetry Out Loud* regional contests in the state: Belleville, Carbondale, Champaign, Chicago-City, Chicago-Metro, Rockford, Rock Island, and Springfield.

Other students participating from around the state:

Tamoor Baig, Taft High School (Chicago)

Nicole Bulmer, Agape Christian School (Marion)

Isabella Cooper, Danville High School (Danville)

Samantha DePauw, Annawan High School (Annawan)

Leah Draper, Clay City High School (Clay City)

Wynton Gage, Southeast High School (Springfield)

Maeve Heumann, Edwardsville High School (Edwardsville)

Gina Kostovetsky, Niles West High School (Skokie)

Jayde Lickenbrock, Freeburg Community High School (Freeburg)
Mayson Rogoway, Metropolitan Schoolhouse (Chicago)
Nathan Weimerskirk, Thomas Jefferson High School (Rockford)

Contest staff for the 2017 Illinois State Contest included
Recitation Judges:

Judith MK Kaufman, Highland Park – poet and editor

Mark McKnight, Urbana – musician and poet

Kevin Stein, Peoria – professor and Illinois' poet laureate

Accuracy judge: Théa Chesley, Springfield – poet and retired librarian

Prompter: Maurine Magliocco

Scorekeeper: Bob Jessup

M. C.: Jim Leach

Special guests at the contest were Willard Bunn, III, of Lake Forest, a Poetry Foundation trustee, and Susan Dickson from the Illinois Arts Council Agency.

Poetry Out Loud in Illinois is a collaborative project of the Illinois Arts Council Agency and seven arts agencies, each of which hosts a regional contest. The *Poetry Out Loud: National Recitation Contest* is a national program that encourages high school students to learn about great poetry through analysis, memorization, performance, and competition. The National Endowment for the Arts and The Poetry Foundation, in conjunction with state arts agencies, support this nation-wide program with participants from all fifty states plus Washington, D.C., the U.S. Virgin Islands, and Puerto Rico.

In Illinois this year, 48 high schools were part of Poetry Out Loud. 164 teachers. 7,640 students.

“Among the benefits of the *Poetry Out Loud* program is that it helps young women and men find something they’re good at. These students are so talented and insightful,” said Sheila Walk, contest organizer, during the post-contest reception.

More information is available at www.poetryoutloud.org or from the Springfield Area Arts Council (programs@springfieldartsco.org).

Attachments: Photograph of Mariah Brooks - taken by William Richards
Logos - Poetry Foundation and National Endowment for the Arts