

P O E T R Y



F O U N D A T I O N

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The Poetry Foundation Conducts \$1,000 National Poetry Recitation Contest

CHICAGO — To help mark National Poetry Month, The Poetry Foundation, publisher of *Poetry* magazine, and After School Matters, in partnership with the National Endowment for the Arts, will hold the Chicago finals of the National Poetry Recitation Contest on Monday, April 11. The final round of the competition will begin at 6:00 pm at the Chicago Shakespeare Theater on Navy Pier. The Grand Prize is \$1,000. The Chicago-area finals are part of a pilot program that the Foundation plans to implement nationally in 2006.

Celebrating the arts of memorization and recitation, the contest gives area high school students the chance to learn and deliver some of the greatest poems ever written. The competition is open to all Chicago high school students in grades 9–12. Teachers who are interested in participating in the project should visit www.poetrymagazine.org/recitation.html or call The Poetry Foundation at (312) 799.8013.

Twenty students in the After School Matters program at Collins High School will apprentice as program coordinators, responsible for organizing and publicizing the contest. Maggie Daley, Chair of After School Matters, noted, “After School Matters is delighted to partner with The Poetry Foundation and the National Endowment for the Arts on this exciting poetry project. Our teens have tremendous talents and they are terrific poets themselves. This program provides an opportunity for teens to showcase their many wonderful skills—taking the lead in planning the event, recruiting other teens, and reciting classic poetry. After School Matters is proud of the many accomplishments of our high school teens and their work with The Poetry Foundation.”

“By performing great works of literature, students can master public-speaking, build self-confidence, and learn more about their literary heritage,” said Dana Gioia, Chairman of the National Endowment for the Arts.

A panel of judges comprised of civic and arts leaders will choose the Chicago Region Recitation Champion. The winner will receive a cash prize of \$1,000 and a \$2,000 stipend for his or her school library. Two runners-up will each receive \$500 with \$1,000 going to their schools.

“The National Poetry Recitation Contest brings new energy to an ancient art by returning it to the classrooms of America,” John Barr, president of The Poetry Foundation, said. “The public recitation of great poetry is a way to honor the speaker, the poem, and the audience all at once.”

As part of the pilot program, over 100 Chicago high schools recently received the National Poetry Recitation Contest Kit. The kit, designed to assist teachers and coaches in implementing the contest, includes two volumes of classic poetry, a teacher guidebook, and a CD featuring poets and well-known actors reading favorite poems.

In addition to the Chicago pilot, the National Endowment for the Arts will manage a similar pilot program and regional competition among high schools in and around Washington, D.C., to culminate with an April 19th recitation event at the Folger Shakespeare Library.

The Foundation and the Endowment will evaluate the pilot programs from Chicago and Washington, D.C., later this year. There are plans for the resulting standards-based curriculum to be made available to high school students nationwide.

The Chicago finals are free and open to the public, but seating is limited and reservations are required. For reservations, please call (312) 787.7070.

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After School Matters (ASM) is a non-profit organization that partners with the City of Chicago, the Chicago Public Schools, the Chicago Park District, and the Chicago Public Library to expand out-of-school opportunities for Chicago teens. Working together, these institutions help to revitalize Chicago neighborhoods and enrich the lives of teens around the city.

Through ASM programs, Chicago teens can safely take part in activities that offer positive relationships, skills that translate to the workplace, and exposure to career and educational opportunities both in their neighborhoods and throughout the city. Current programs focus on the arts, sports, technology, and communications. Further information is available at www.afterschoolmatters.org.

Chicago Shakespeare Theater (CST) is one of the fastest-growing producing and presenting organizations in America today. Under the leadership of Artistic Director Barbara Gaines and Executive Director Criss Henderson, CST has achieved its reputation for consistently high production values and artistic standards. In addition to its acclaimed productions of William Shakespeare’s canon, CST presents work of the highest quality by some of the most distinguished American and international playwrights and directors. Reaching out to young audiences has been integral to the mission of CST since its inception. Team Shakespeare, CST’s arts-in-education program, reached 500,000 students in its first decade of serving nearly 50,000 students and teachers annually. On-line at www.chicagoshakes.com.

The National Endowment for the Arts (NEA) 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. For further information visit www.arts.gov.

The Poetry Foundation, publisher of *Poetry* magazine, is an independent literary organization committed to a vigorous presence for poetry in our culture. It has embarked on an ambitious plan to bring the best poetry before the largest possible audiences. In the coming year, the Foundation will sponsor a major new poetry website, several prizes, and 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 1 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. The magazine established its reputation early by publishing the first important poems of T.S. Eliot, Ezra Pound, Marianne Moore, Wallace Stevens, H.D., William Carlos Williams, Carl Sandburg, and other now-classic authors. In succeeding decades it has presented—often for the first time—works by virtually every significant poet of the 20th century.

Poetry has always been independent, unaffiliated with any institution or university—or with any single poetic or critical movement or aesthetic school. It continues to print the major English-speaking poets, while presenting emerging talents, in all their variety. In recent years, more than a third of the authors published in the magazine have been young writers appearing for the first time. On average, the magazine receives over 90,000 submissions per year, from around the world. Visit www.poetrymagazine.org.