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**PENNSYLVANIA COUNCIL ON THE ARTS
ANNOUNCES *POETRY OUT LOUD* STATE CHAMPION**

HARRISBURG – A West Scranton High School student has been named Pennsylvania state champion in the *Poetry Out Loud: National Recitation Contest*.

As the state champion, Chris Estevez will receive \$200 from The Poetry Foundation and an all-expenses-paid trip to Washington, D.C., to compete for the national championship on May 16. The state winner's school will receive a \$500 stipend for the purchase of poetry books.

Estevez competed against nine other regional finalists in a day-long competition in the State Room of the Governor's Residence.

Maximillian C. Esmus of the Towanda Area School District won second place and will receive \$100, with \$200 for his or her school library. Helen Zuckerman of the Philadelphia School District won third place.

"The competitive spirit and dedication to excellence demonstrated by each of today's contestants is a powerful example of the abilities that Pennsylvania students possess and the way that participation in the arts can develop public speaking skills, self-confidence, emotional intelligence and competencies for the future," said Pennsylvania Council on the Arts Executive Director Philip Horn. "Seeing Chris and other regional winners compete was a thrill for the judges, special guests, educators, family members and friends. Pennsylvania can be proud of these students and optimistic for a future that includes their talents and ambitions."

Schools participated in regional competitions hosted by the PCA's "Arts in Education Partners" and the Pennsylvania Parent Teacher Association. The regional winners were:

- **Maximillian C. Esmus**, Towanda Area School District – winner for the Northern Tier Partnership for Arts in Education/ Bradford County Regional Arts Council;
- **Chris Estevez**, Scranton School District – winner for the Northeastern Educational Intermediate Unit 19;
- **Stephanie Fortson**, Lehighon School District – winner for Allentown Art Museum;
- **Ashley R. Kent**, Union City School District – winner for the Arts Council of Erie;
- **Lilianna Meldrum**, Homeschool – winner for the Perry County Council of the Arts;
- **Kaleb Shissler**, State College Area School District – winner for Galaxy: The Arts in Education Partnership of Central Intermediate Unit 10;
- **Jason Smith**, Carlisle Area School District – winner for Pennsylvania Parent Teacher Association;
- **William Wellock**, Wyomissing Area School District – winner for South Central PaARTners: Millersville University;
- **Lora I. Werkmeister**, South Fayette Township School District – winner for Pittsburgh Center for the Arts;
- **Helen Zuckerman**, Philadelphia School District – winner for Philadelphia Arts in Education Partnership.

For the state finals, each competitor memorized and prepared to perform three poems selected from print and online poetry anthologies. Evaluation criteria included volume, speed, voice inflection, posture and presence, evidence of understanding, pronunciation, gestures, eye contact, level of difficulty, overall performance and accuracy.

The National Endowment for the Arts and The Poetry Foundation created the *Poetry Out Loud: National Recitation Contest* to encourage high school students to learn about great poetry through memorization, performance and competition. The new competition 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 and the immense popularity of rap music among youth.

Poetry Out Loud will award a total of \$50,000 in scholarships and school stipends at the National Finals, with at least one \$20,000 college scholarship for the *Poetry Out Loud* national champion. The classroom teacher of each winner at the regional competitions receive

Commonwealth, a book of Pennsylvania poetry by Pennsylvania poets, published by Penn State Press. For further information on *Poetry Out Loud*, visit www.poetryoutloud.org.

The Pennsylvania Council on the Arts started the Pennsylvania Arts in Education Partnership in 1995. The partnership enhances the PCA's efforts to foster educational excellence through participation in the creative process in schools and community settings. Partners recruit, select, train, place and evaluate artists for residencies in educational environments.

PCA partners include Allentown Art Museum, Arts Council of Erie, ArtsPath at Indiana University of Pennsylvania, Cultural Alliance of York County, Galaxy: The Arts in Education Program of Central Intermediate Unit 10, Northeastern Educational Intermediate Unit 19, Northern Tier Partnership for Arts in Education/Bradford County Regional Arts Council, Perry County Council of the Arts, Philadelphia Arts in Education Partnership, Pittsburgh Center for the Arts, South Central PaARTners at Millersville University, and Southern Alleghenies Museum of Art.

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.

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