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**PENNSYLVANIA COUNCIL ON THE ARTS  
ANNOUNCES 2008 *POETRY OUT LOUD* STATE CHAMPION**

**HARRISBURG** – Francesca Fiore, a West Chester Area School District student from Chester County, has been selected the winner of the Pennsylvania state finals of the 2008 *Poetry Out Loud: National Recitation Contest*.

As the state champion, Fiore will receive \$200 from The Poetry Foundation and an expense-paid trip to Washington, D.C., to compete for the national championship during the final week of April. *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.

“This year, Pennsylvania was second only to California in the number of school districts that competed in Poetry Out Loud. That means that today’s 13 state finalists rose to the top of more than 7,000 of Pennsylvania’s best and brightest students to be here,” said Pennsylvania Council on the Arts Executive Director Philip Horn. “At this remarkable level of competition, all of the finalists are talented, motivated, poised and compelling performers. It makes us very proud of Pennsylvania’s students and I am especially pleased to congratulate our state winner, Francesca Fiore, for an outstanding achievement.”

As one of 13 regional finalists, Fiore was selected as the winner by a panel of judges in a day-long competition at the Governor’s Residence in Harrisburg. Second place went to Emily

Núñez of Carlisle Area School District, Cumberland County, and Paige Arthur of Penns Valley Area School District, Centre County, won third place.

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. Schools from more than 90 school districts across the state participated in regional competitions hosted by the PCA's Arts in Education Partners and the Pennsylvania Parent Teacher Association.

The 13 regional winners were:

- **Paige Arthur**, Grade 12, Penns Valley Area School District – winner for Galaxy: The Arts in Education Partnership of Central Intermediate Unit 10;
- **Francesca Fiore**, Grade 12, West Chester Area School District – winner for Philadelphia Arts in Education Partnership;
- **Luka Glinsky**, Grade 11, homeschool – winner for the Arts Council of Erie;
- **Mickaela Hornberger**, Grade 10, Bellwood-Antis School District – winner for Southern Alleghenies Museum of Art;
- **Rebecca Martinelli**, Grade 11, South Fayette Township School District – winner for Pittsburgh Center for the Arts;
- **Morgan McNeal**, Grade 11, Athens Area School District– winner for the Northern Tier Partnership for Arts in Education/ Bradford County Regional Arts Council;
- **Olivia Meldrum**, Grade 11, Juniata County Christian Homeschoolers – winner for the Perry County Council of the Arts;
- **Jayson Willard Myers**, Grade 12, Central York School District – winner for Cultural Alliance of York County;
- **Emily Núñez**, Grade 12, Carlisle Area School District – winner for Pennsylvania Parent Teacher Association; and
- **Jamie Raver**, Grade 12, Reading School District – winner for South Central PaARTners: Millersville University;
- **Benjamin Rivera**, Grade 12, Bethlehem Area School District – winner for Allentown Art Museum;
- **Cody Taylor**, Grade 12, North Pocono School District – winner for the Northeastern Educational Intermediate Unit 19;
- **Burkely Twiest**, Grade 11, Merion Center Area School District - winner for ArtsPath: Indiana University of Pennsylvania.

For the state finals, each competitor memorized and prepared to perform three poems selected from print and online poetry anthologies. Evaluation criteria included voice and

articulation, physical presence, appropriateness of dramatization, evidence of understanding, level of difficulty, overall performance, and accuracy.

The panel of judges for the event included Pennsylvania cultural leaders, writers and poets: Charles Dumas, Sascha Feinstein, Susan H. Goldberg, Barry Kornhauser, and Dr. Vernell A. Lillie. Becky McHugh and Jamie Kasper of the Department of Education served as accuracy judges.

The Pennsylvania Council on the Arts started the Pennsylvania Arts in Education Partnership in 1995 to enhance 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.

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.

For more information on the Pennsylvania Council on the Arts, visit [www.pacouncilonthearts.org](http://www.pacouncilonthearts.org). For further information on *Poetry Out Loud*, visit [www.poetryoutloud.org](http://www.poetryoutloud.org).

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