

## **RUSSELL HEITMANN OF HEBRON IS 2013 NEBRASKA POETRY OUT LOUD STATE CHAMPION**

(*Omaha, NE*) -- A high school senior from Hebron, Russell Heitmann, won the Nebraska Poetry Out Loud state championship on Saturday, March 9th at the Sheldon Museum of Art in Lincoln. Russell is a two-time Poetry Out Loud State Champion, having won state finals in 2012. He also had the honor of placing among nine finalists in the national championship last year. Overall, students from eleven high schools competed in the poetry recitation event after advancing from regional semi-final competitions held in Kearney, Norfolk and Omaha during February.

The Nebraska Arts Council coordinates Poetry Out Loud for the state. It is part of a national program, presented in partnership with the National Endowment for the Arts and the Poetry Foundation, that encourages high school students to learn about great poetry through memorization, performance, and competition.

Russell Heitmann, a senior at Thayer Central Community Schools in Hebron, won the state championship. His recitations of "The Universe as Primal Scream" by Tracy K. Smith, "Poem with One Fact" by Donald Hall and "England in 1819" by Percy Bysshe Shelley earned him the first place title this year.

Russell will receive a \$200 cash award, as well as an all-expenses-paid trip to Washington, D.C. There, he will compete in the national Poetry Out Loud competition to be held April 29-30, 2013, for prizes and awards totaling \$50,000. His school will also receive \$500 to be used toward the purchase of poetry books for its library. English teachers Karen Boatright and Anne Roesner Heitmann coordinate Poetry Out for Thayer Central Community Schools.

Carleigh Schuman, a senior at Parkview Christian School in Lincoln, was first runner-up in the competition for a second consecutive year. She wins a \$100 cash award, as well as \$200 for her school's library to be used toward the purchase of poetry books. Carleigh's English teacher, Dottie Lamson, coordinates the program for her school.

Junior Cate Elliott from Skutt Catholic High School in Omaha placed third in the competition. Her school's program is coordinated by English teacher Sherri Hoye.

The top three contestants each received an original hand-blown glass trophy, and all eleven students received poetry books courtesy of the Backwaters Press and Barnes and Noble gift certificates courtesy of Nebraskans for the Arts.

Judges for the event include Jim Fritzler, Professor of Theatre at Hastings College, poet Twyla Hansen of Lincoln, Tricia Parker, Director of Language Arts for the Nebraska Department of Education in Lincoln and actor D. Kevin Williams of Omaha. Nicole Van Zante, Grants Manager of the Nebraska Arts Council, served as accuracy judge. The event was emceed by poet Matt Mason of Omaha.

For more information on Nebraska's Poetry Out Loud program, contact Anne Alston, Education and Communities manager at the Nebraska Arts Council. Call 402/595-2122 or email [anne.alston@nebraska.gov](mailto:anne.alston@nebraska.gov).