



## **HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS GIVE STRONG PERFORMANCE DURING PLACER COUNTY POETRY OUT LOUD FINALS DEL ORO, ROSEVILLE, COLFAX AND PLACER HIGH SCHOOLS REPRESENTED**

On January 24, the Arts Council of Placer County hosted the 2016 Poetry Out Loud County Finals for the tenth year. Anna Clayton, a Placer High freshman, was selected as the winner. Clayton will now go on to the California Poetry Out Loud State Finals in Sacramento sponsored by the California Arts Council. The recitation competition, held at the General Gomez Arts and Events Center in Auburn, brought the literary arts to the stage as high school students competed in front of judges and spectators. After two rounds of competition and judges' tabulations, Clayton was announced as the county champion. Brenn Haydon, a Placer High sophomore, was the runner-up. The runner-up must be prepared to step in should the finalist not be able to make the competition in Sacramento.

Other students competing included Kaitlyn Ziarkowski also representing Placer High School; Kahlen Conn, Kristin Pischel and Nick Brown representing Colfax High School; and Haylie Ferreira representing Del Oro High School. Judging the Placer County Finals were Tricia Caspers-Ross, published poet and Auburn Journal reporter; Elizabeth Johnson, writer, poet, educator; Angela Schroeder, district librarian, Golden Sierra; Valerie Bowman, poet, editor; John Bowman, poet and editor; and D. Pierre Butler, artist, poet, activist.

Following a pyramid structure, classroom winners advance to a school-wide competition. Then each of the four participating Placer County Schools sent their champion and up to three additional competitors to compete at the county level. Now Clayton, as Placer County Champion, moves to an unforgettable two days at the California Poetry Out Loud State Finals in Sacramento on February 28 and 29, 2016. The State Finals competition will be held in the historic Senate Chamber and is webcast and televised via the California Channel. The county champions are honored with a dinner reception and each receives a certificate of recognition from their legislative representative. The State Champion will receive a \$200 cash prize and an all-expense paid trip to the national finals in Washington, D.C. plus \$500 for their school to purchase literary materials. The national competition will be held in Washington D.C. May 2-4, 2016. Since the first National competition in 2005, California has consistently been in the top five states with the highest number of participating students in the country.

A few fun facts about Poetry Out Loud:

- Poetry Out Loud participation 2005-2015: 2.7 million students and 9,500 schools nationally.
- 2014-2015 participation stats: 365,000 students, 9,000 teachers, 2,300 high schools.
- Top three most popular poems for 2014-15 season were: "Abandoned Farmhouse" by Ted Kooser, "Across the Bay" by Donald Davie and "Fire and Ice" by Robert Frost.
- Oldest poet represented in the 900+ poem anthology for students to select from is Queen Elizabeth I (b. 1533).

The National Endowment for the Arts and the Poetry Foundation support this innovative program which encourages high school students to learn about great poetry through memorization and performance. Poetry Out Loud participants compete for college scholarship funding as well as grants for their schools, and also foster the exploration of the literary arts and the amazing magic of poetry. A total of \$50,000 in awards and school stipends is awarded annually at the National Finals, with one winner taking home a college scholarship for \$20,000.

The PlacerArts Poetry Out Loud program is presented in cooperation with the National Endowment for the Arts, California Arts Council and National Poetry Foundation. The local program was presented with the sponsorship assistance of the Dwelle Family Foundation and the ARP Family Foundation.

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**ABOUT PlacerArts** Founded in 1983, PlacerArts is The Arts Council of Placer County, a nonprofit catalyst for the arts and humanities and the designated State-Local Partner of the California Arts Council. PlacerArts promotes the work of performing, visual and literary arts producers as well as cultural & heritage attractions countywide.