



**For Immediate Release
July 9, 2008**

**Contact: Dr. Rose Norman
(256) 824-6320**

**THE UNIVERSITY OF ALABAMA IN HUNTSVILLE'S
ENGLISH DEPARTMENT ANNOUNCES
POETRY OUT LOUD: NATIONAL RECITATION CONTEST
*Region 5, Northeast Alabama***

***High school students in Northeast Alabama invited to compete
in national poetry recitation contest***

Huntsville, AL — The National Endowment for the Arts (NEA) and the Poetry Foundation present *Poetry Out Loud: National Recitation Contest*, offering a \$20,000 scholarship to the national champion. High school students all over the country will be competing in classroom, school, regional, and state competitions in order to compete nationally. This year, students in Alabama's Poetry Out Loud Region 5 (ten northeast Alabama counties) will compete under the auspices of UAHuntsville's English Department.

Poetry Out Loud is a program that encourages high school students to learn about great poetry through memorization, performance, and competition. During the first half of the 2008-2009 school year, Alabama Region 5 schools are invited to participate in classroom and school wide contests, advancing to a Region 5 competition on Friday, December 5, 2008, at the UAHuntsville Chan Auditorium. Regional champions will compete at the State championship in Montgomery on Saturday, February 28, 2009, at Huntingdon College. The State champion will advance to the National Finals, to take place on April 26-28, 2009, in Washington, DC.

The ten counties in Alabama Region 5 are Blount, Cherokee, Cullman, DeKalb, Etowah, Jackson, Limestone, Marshall, Madison, and Morgan. There is no charge to participate, but schools must register by September 15, 2008. Registration details are online at www.uah.edu/english/poetryoutloud.php, or teachers can call 256-824-6320.

Alabama's state champion in 2008 was Rosanna Marie Smith, a senior at Montgomery's Taylor Road Academy, who won the competition with her dramatic presentations of "One Perfect Rose" by Dorothy Parker, "On Virtue" by Phillis Wheatley, and "Beauty" by Tony Hoagland. She represented Alabama at the national championship last April, where the winner was sixteen-year-old Shawntay Henry of the United States Virgin Islands.

Poetry Out Loud 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* invites the dynamic

aspects of slam poetry, spoken word, and theatre into the English class. Through *Poetry Out Loud*, students can master public speaking skills, build self-confidence, and learn about their literary heritage.

“Learning great poetry by heart develops the mind and imagination,” said Dana Gioia, Chairman of the National Endowment for the Arts. “It isn’t just an arts program. By immersing themselves in powerful language and ideas, the students will develop their ability to speak well, especially in public. This is a skill they will use in the workplace and the community for the rest of their lives.”

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

The NEA and the Poetry Foundation have partnered to provide administrative grants to state arts agencies, who use these funds to assist schools in state competitions and to award prizes. With this support, the UAHuntsville English Department will coordinate participation by public and private schools in ten counties in northeast Alabama. Co-sponsors for this region are being sought, and already include the Huntsville Literary Association, which for forty years has sponsored a Young Writers Contest. Alabama’s Poetry Out Loud competition includes a poetry writing requirement at the regional and state level.

Diana Green, arts in education program manager at the Alabama State Council on the Arts, states, “The Poetry Out Loud program, as a national initiative, does an incredible job of bringing an interest in classical and contemporary poetry back to the classroom. We wanted to take that one step further, and encourage Alabama students to follow the models they were discovering and to find their own voices through the recitation of their own poetry.”

On November 7, school winners and their teachers are invited to a free workshop at UAHuntsville for training in recitation, poetry analysis, and poetry writing.

The NEA and the Poetry Foundation provide State Arts Agencies with free, standards-based curriculum materials for use by participating schools. These materials include print and online poetry anthologies, a teacher’s guide with sample lesson plans to help instructors teach recitation and performance, and an audio CD featuring well-known actors and writers such as James Earl Jones, Anthony Hopkins, Alyssa Milano, and N. Scott Momaday. Program materials are available for download on the website, www.poetryoutloud.org, which offers additional resources.

How to get involved in *Poetry Out Loud*

High school teachers who are interested in participating in *Poetry Out Loud* should know that the program requires less than two or three weeks of class time. High schools that wish to be part of the official *Poetry Out Loud* program must contact Dr. Rose Norman, Chair of the English Department at UAHuntsville to participate. The University of Alabama in Huntsville will determine which schools are eligible to take part in the official *Poetry Out Loud* program. Schools that are not in the official program may conduct their own contests using the online resources. Contact Dr. Rose Norman at 256-824-6320 or visit www.uah.edu/english/poetryoutloud.php for more information.

***Poetry Out Loud* prizes**

Students who participate in the official *Poetry Out Loud* program may be eligible to compete in the state and National Finals in 2009. Each winner at the state level will receive \$200 and an all-expenses-paid trip to Washington, DC, to compete for the national championship. The state winner's school will receive a \$500 stipend for the purchase of poetry books. One runner-up in each state will receive \$100, with \$200 for his or her school library. *Poetry Out Loud* will award a total of \$50,000 in scholarships and school stipends at the National Finals, with a \$20,000 college scholarship for the *Poetry Out Loud* National Champion.

For further information on *Poetry Out Loud*, visit www.poetryoutloud.org.

