



For Immediate Release

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Tabarjah Neal of Klamath Falls named Oregon's Poetry Out Loud champion; Emma Fang of West Linn named runner up

Salem, Oregon –Tabarjah Neal of Klamath Falls, a senior at Oregon Charter Academy, is the 2021 Oregon Poetry Out Loud state champion. Neal was one of 12 statewide high school students who competed at Saturday's Virtual Poetry Out Loud State Contest. She advances to the national Poetry Out Loud competition, to be held virtually on May 2 (semifinals) and May 27 (finals).

Emma Fang, a sophomore at West Linn High School, was named runner up. If Neal is unable to participate in the national competition Fang would be invited to represent Oregon.

This is Neal's second year competing in Poetry Out Loud. She also qualified for the state contest in 2020, cancelled due to the pandemic. Neal plans to study biochemistry in college. Her hobbies include art, writing, music and longboarding. Also in the art and poetry club, Neal's favorite poet is Shel Silverstein.

"It's kind of surreal," said Neal. "The only reason I signed up for Poetry Out Loud in my junior year was that I had a fear of public speaking. The fact that I was able to do it, and then won, is a real honor. I would like to thank my teachers Stephanie Imig and Morgan Hubbard for their support and guidance," she added. "I'm very excited and happy that I am able to represent the state of Oregon at the national competition."

The poems Neal presented at the state contest were: ["Y2K"](#) by Therese Lloyd, ["Carnival"](#) by Rebecca Lindenberg and ["Bereavement"](#) by William Lisle Bowles.

"Tabarjah not only picked nuanced and emotionally varied poems, she poured a remarkable amount of power and subtlety in her performances," said Portland Creative Laureate Subashini Ganesan, who served as a judge for the state contest. "She edged out her fellow competitors by using her voice and heart to build a direct bridge

between the poets' intentions and us, the audience. Congratulations Tabarjah - wishing you the very best for nationals and all that you will accomplish in your life!"

"The resilience of students and teachers this year has been inspiring," said Deb Vaughn, Arts Commission arts education/Poetry Out Loud coordinator. "In a field of outstanding performances, Tabarjah's interpretation shone through the digital format. We are overjoyed to support her continued POL journey through nationals."

The other 10 students who competed, after winning their school competitions, are: Elsa Billingsley, Cascade Christian High School; Jourdan Dimoff, Grant High school; Trayshun Holmes-Gournaris, Oregon School For The Deaf; Sabina Lindner, St. Mary's Academy; Arman Manternach, Catlin Gabel; Hannah Oberman, Oakland High School; Austin Osborne, Redmond High School; Gabriella Shirtcliff, Summit High School; Tara Subramaniam, Lincoln High School; and Jinwon Yeo, Crater School of Business, Innovation and Science.

The entire 2021 Poetry Out Loud competition is being conducted virtually to ensure the safety and health of participating students and staff. The decision was based on guidance from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, the World Health Organization and General Counsel for the National Endowment for the Arts.

Poetry Out Loud is a national recitation contest for high school students, organized in Oregon by the Oregon Arts Commission in collaboration with the NEA and the Poetry Foundation. Participants memorize and present poems, practicing public speaking skills while exploring the complexity of poetry.

Editor's note: [Watch as Tabarjah Neal performs "Y2K" by Therese Lloyd and her reaction when she is named the 2021 Oregon Poetry Out Loud state champion.](#) Deb Vaughn, the Arts Commission's arts education/Poetry Out Loud coordinator, hosted the event and makes the announcement.

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The Oregon Arts Commission provides leadership, funding and arts programs through its grants, special initiatives and services. Nine commissioners, appointed by the Governor, determine arts needs and establish policies for public support of the arts. The Arts Commission became part of Business Oregon (formerly Oregon Economic and Community Development Department) in 1993, in recognition of the expanding role the arts play in the broader social, economic and educational arenas of Oregon communities. In 2003, the Oregon legislature moved the operations of the Oregon Cultural Trust to the Arts Commission, streamlining operations and making use of the

Commission's expertise in grantmaking, arts and cultural information and community cultural development.

The Arts Commission is supported with general funds appropriated by the Oregon legislature and with federal funds from the National Endowment for the Arts as well as funds from the Oregon Cultural Trust. More information about the Oregon Arts Commission is available online at: www.oregonartscommission.org.