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**For Immediate Release 4/8/19****Virginia Finals of “Poetry Out Loud” Competition to Air April 11 on Local PBS Stations**

*High school poetry recitation competition showcases talent from across the Commonwealth.*

**Richmond, Va.** - In mid-March, high school students from across Virginia gathered in Richmond to compete for the title of Poetry Out Loud state champion and the opportunity to represent Virginia at the national competition in May. The Community Idea Stations hosted and recorded the Virginia contest and is pleased to offer **“Poetry Out Loud: The Virginia Finals”** to viewers on April 11 at 9 p.m. on WCVE/WHTJ/WVPT PBS with an encore presentation on April 14 at 2 p.m.

Poetry Out Loud encourages high school students to learn about poetry through memorization and performance. Participants each select a poem to recite from an anthology of over 800 contemporary and classical works. The competition utilizes a pyramid structure that begins at the classroom level, expands to a school-wide competition, then to a regional and/or state contest, and finally to the National Finals.

“Poetry Out Loud attracts students of various backgrounds and interests,” explains Casey Polczynski, Arts in Education Coordinator at the Virginia Commission for the Arts. “The program immerses students into the poetry experience, mastering public speaking skills, building self-confidence, and learning about their literary heritage.”

This year’s Virginia state champion was Katherine Nguyen, a ninth grade student from Colonial Forge High School in Stafford, Virginia. Katherine competed in front of a live studio audience along with nine other regional winners chosen from an original field of 7,800 students from across Virginia.

“Viewers can expect to be inspired by the poise, intelligence, and authenticity of these student performers,” says the competition’s emcee Alexandra Wiles. “Though I’ve now hosted the Virginia finals for the past four years, I still find myself on the edge of my seat, holding my breath, heart pounding as these young people captivate the audience with their recitations.”

Competitors at the Virginia State Finals of Poetry Out Loud included:

Katherine Nguyen - State Champion  
Colonial Forge High School  
Stafford

Zoree Jones - First Runner-up  
Patriot High School  
Nokesville



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Sophia Skiavo - Second Runner-up  
Chantilly High School  
Chantilly

Collin Devlin  
Tallwood High School  
Virginia Beach

Gabriella Guirand  
Norfolk Collegiate  
Norfolk

Ivana Mensah-Agyekum  
Harrisonburg High School  
Harrisonburg

Mia Shenkman  
Washington-Lee High School  
Arlington

Joseph Whetzel  
Broadway High School  
Broadway

Marian Woodington  
Appomattox Regional Governor's School  
Petersburg

Allan Yoo  
St. Catherine's School  
Richmond

Poetry Out Loud in Virginia is supported by the Virginia Commission for the Arts in partnership with the National Endowment for the Arts and the Poetry Foundation. More information on Poetry Out Loud is available at [PoetryOutLoud.org](http://PoetryOutLoud.org) and [Arts.Virginia.Gov/Programs\\_POL.html](http://Arts.Virginia.Gov/Programs_POL.html).

Watch the local premiere of **"Poetry Out Loud: The Virginia Finals"** April 11 at 9 p.m. on WCVE/WHTJ/WVPT PBS with an encore presentation April 14 at 2 p.m. Complete listings are available at [IdeaStations.org/TV/Schedules](http://IdeaStations.org/TV/Schedules).

**About the Community Idea Stations:**

The Community Idea Stations, the largest locally owned and operated public media company in central Virginia, provides the best of PBS and NPR programming coupled with a strong set of community-based programs and services to make an important impact in the areas of arts, news, history, science, and education. Each week, the stations reach over 300,000 people throughout central Virginia and the Shenandoah Valley.



The stations offer television programming throughout the region on stations including WCVE/WHTJ PBS, WCVW/WVPY PBS, WVPT PBS, PBS Kids 24/7, lifestyle channel Create TV, and international program channel MHz Worldview.

In Richmond, the Community Ideas Stations also broadcasts on radio. WCVE News provides *Morning Edition*, *All Things Considered*, as well as NPR talk shows and BBC News on 88.9 FM (HD1). WCVE Music provides classical, jazz, blues, world music, and more on 93.1 FM and 107.3 FM (HD2).

More information can be found at [IdeaStations.org](http://IdeaStations.org).

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