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NEWSLETTER / NEWS RELEASE
From the Office of the Mayor

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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**THE POETRY OUT LOUD REGIONAL FINAL WAS
RECENTLY HELD AT THE GARY R. GAYDOS AUDITORIUM AT JJE**



Pictured are the contestants and their School Coordinators at the St. Louis County Poetry Out Loud Regional Contest that was held at the Gary R. Gaydos Auditorium

Mayor Thomas Schneider warmly welcomed eight extremely well-prepared ninth through twelfth-grade high school contestants to the St. Louis County Poetry Out Loud (POL) Regional Contest. It was the fourth consecutive year for the City of Florissant to host the St. Louis County Regional of Poetry Out Loud, a national poetry memorization and recitation contest held in the Gary R. Gaydos Auditorium of the James J. Eagan Community Center.

School Coordinators, family and friends-some with support signs-gathered to hear and cheer the eight young women who had won their school contests, which totally involved 96 teachers and 1,550 students in their respective schools in St. Louis County. Throughout Missouri, as well as the other 49 states, the District of Columbia, Puerto Rico and the Virgin Islands, students will be participating in Poetry Out Loud in the months of February for the regional finals, March for the state finals and April for the national finals in Washington, D. C. In the past decade Poetry Out Loud has reached more than 3.3 million students and 60,000 teachers from 12,000 schools nationwide. This county regional contest is sponsored by the City of Florissant in conjunction with state agencies: the Missouri Arts Council, the Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, and the Missouri Association of Community Arts Agencies; and the Poetry Out Loud founding national sponsors: The Poetry Foundation and the National Endowment for the Arts, which awards a total of \$50,000 in awards and school stipends, including \$20,000 for the POL National Champion, at the National Finals.

This year Ann Truka, a senior from Parkway West High School, won this regional competition under the tutelage of School Coordinator Andria Benmuvhar. Ann also participates in theatre and serves as Improv team captain and as an officer in the theatre department as well as being the co-president of the Feminist Club and an advocate of equality for all. Ann's expenses will be paid as she travels to Jefferson City on March 7, where she and the other regional winners will enjoy a legislative dinner with their state representative, spend the night, and then compete with other regional finalists on the morning of March 8 at the Harry S. Truman Building, the finals are free and open to the public. Ann's mentor Ms. Benmuvhar also accompanied Emily Bauer, the Parkway West St. Louis County Regional winner in 2017, from her school to this St. Louis County Regional to the Missouri state finals and on to the POL National Finals, where she did very well.

In 2016 the St. Louis County Regional POL winner Sarah Koo from Parkway North also won the state and well represented Missouri at the POL national finals. Each state winner receives \$200 and an all-expense-paid trip with an adult chaperone to compete in the National Finals.

The 2018 St. Louis County first runner-up was Pamela Petterchak from Affton High School, guided by her School Coordinator Troy Kozak, and the second runner-up was Adina Cazacu-De Luca from John Burroughs High School, with Jill Donovan as her School Coordinator. Others competing included Riley Schelp from Lutheran High School South-Carolanne Mickey School Coordinator, Brianna Chandler from Nerinx Hall-Jennifer Staed School Coordinator, Calysta Yalew-Melissa Lynn Pomerantz School Coordinator, Birch Fabregas from Parkway South High School, and Katie Donnelly from Villa Duchesne-Elizabeth Yee School Coordinator, all receiving ribbons and roses for their admirable participation.

The competent judges for this regional Pamela Geppert, Shug Goodlow, and Noelle Jones, all poetry lovers and educators at some time during their active careers, evaluated the contestants on each of three rounds of poetry recitation using the rigorous criteria of physical presence, voice and articulation, dramatic appropriateness and evidence of understanding. The score of Accuracy Judge Patricia Nelke was then added to each contestant's score to determine the overall winner of the contest. Prompter Doris Lucy-Goodlow was unused by the contestants. Scores were instantly tabulated by theatre manager Sean Robertson and Jeanie Robertson to determine the winner. Just before Regional Coordinator Nancy Crouse announced the winners, she said, "These outstanding regional performances tonight made me feel as if I were at the Missouri State Finals of Poetry Out Loud." Mayor Schneider congratulated all the competitors at the reception following the announcement of winners.

