

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: Humboldt County Finalists in Poetry Recitation Contest

Date: February 19, 2008

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**Jessica Knapp from NPA Named Winner in
Humboldt County “Poetry Out Loud” Contest**

Jessica Knapp wins local competition that emphasizes language skill and public speaking; advances to the state finals in Sacramento on March 14

Jessica Knapp, from North Coast Preparatory and Performing Arts Academy in Arcata took first place in the Humboldt County “Poetry Out Loud” competition on February 16th. Second place went to Micah Sokolsky from Eureka High School. Jessica and Micah were two of thousands of students across the state to participate in the national recitation contest, a program run by the Humboldt Arts Council in the county, the California Arts Council in the state and started by the National Endowment for the Arts (NEA) to engage high-school students in the presentation of poetry through memorization and performance. Jessica and Micah will advance to the California state finals in Sacramento on March 14, 2008. At stake are hundreds of dollars on the state competition level and thousands at the national finals of Poetry Out Loud.

“Young people interested in rap and slam contests can be surprisingly interested in classical poetry when it’s presented through the Poetry Out Loud competition,” said Muriel Johnson, Director of the California Arts Council. “We’ve seen students from all backgrounds and academic levels embrace this program wholeheartedly. It can change their lives.”

The Poetry out Loud program seeks to foster the next generation of literary readers by capitalizing on the latest trends in poetry: recitation and performance. Poetry Out Loud competitions start in the classroom, then at the school, region, state, and national finals, similar to the structure of the spelling bee. The national initiative is part of an attempt to bring literary arts to students, a critical need in U.S. schools, according to a 2004 NEA report *Reading at Risk* that found a dramatic decline in literary reading, especially among younger readers.

The Humboldt Arts Council would like to thank: Daryl Chinn, Dan Stone, Sanctuary Stage and the Eureka Theater, Northtown Books, Rookery Books, North Coast Preparatory and Performing Arts Academy, Eureka High School, and Zoe Barnum High School. Thank you to the panel of judges: Jennifer Savage – Scene Editor with the Arcata Eye, Lucy Quinby – Humboldt Arts Council Board Member, Leslie Buchanan – Channel 3 News, and Elena David – Vice Chair of the Arcata Fire District Board of Directors

For more information on Jessica Knapp or Micah Sokolsky, or to set up interviews, contact the Humboldt Arts Council’s Museum Programs Manager Rebecca Cacciari at (707) 442-0278 ext.201. General information can be found at www.cac.ca.gov and www.poetryoutloud.org.