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Phone (608) 266-0190

Fax (608) 267-0380

artsboard@wisconsin.gov

www.artsboard.wisconsin.gov

PRESS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

March 1st, 2025

Contact: Dr. Penny Parsons

penny.wipol@gmail.com

Riley Saenim is 2025's Wisconsin Poetry Out Loud Champion

Madison - On March 1st, **Riley Saenim** won the statewide Wisconsin Poetry Out Loud (POL) Competition held at the MYArts stage in Madison, WI. Saenim, a Junior at Racine's The Prairie School, advanced to the Finals from the WI Southeast Regional competition.

Riley's coach, Matt Peterson, says, "Prairie is at its best when students discover they are scholars, artists, athletes, and leaders." He maintains that "what is beautiful about Poetry Out Loud is that Riley's exploration of poetry has moved her to integrate her academic and artistic gifts in a way that benefits and inspires her wider community." In the winning recitations, Riley presented "Sanctuary" by Jean Valentine, "This Is the Honey" by Mahogany L. Browne, and "Invictus" by William Ernest Henley.

The Wisconsin Arts Board extends its congratulations to them and to State Runner-up **Maia Sternfeld-Dunn**, a sophomore at Eau Claire Memorial High School, who was coached by Sara Kallstrom.

Continuing with live contests this year, more than 800 Wisconsin high school students competed throughout our state in a process coordinated by State POL Coordinator Dr. Penny Parsons for the Wisconsin Arts Board. The 20 schools that encouraged these students stretched from Washington Island to Madison and from Racine to Eau Claire.

As Wisconsin's Champion, Saenim will advance to participate in the National Poetry Out Loud Finals in Washington, D. C., on May 5th through 7th, 2025.

A partnership of the National Endowment for the Arts, the Poetry Foundation, and the nation's state arts agencies (like the Wisconsin Arts Board), Poetry Out Loud (POL) is a national arts education program that encourages the study of great poetry by offering free educational materials and a dynamic recitation competition for high school students across the country. This program helps students master public speaking skills, build self-confidence, and learn about literary history and contemporary life.

The National Contest awards over \$50,000 in scholarship funds, including a \$20,000 award to the national champion. Each winner at the state level receives \$200 and the state winner's school library receives \$500 for the purchase of poetry materials. The first runner-up in each state receives \$100, with \$200 for their school library for poetry resources.

— more —

Since the POL program began in 2005, more than 4.3 million students and 60,000 teachers from 17,000 schools across the country have participated in Poetry Out Loud. For more information, go to <http://www.poetryoutloud.org>, or contact Dr. Penny Parsons.

The Wisconsin Arts Board is the state agency which nurtures creativity, cultivates expression, promotes the arts, supports the arts in education, stimulates community and economic development, and serves as a resource for people of every culture and heritage. Since 1973, the Arts Board has supported artists and art organizations with funds from the State of Wisconsin and the National Endowment for the Arts. For more information on the Wisconsin Arts Board, please visit <https://artsboard.wisconsin.gov>.

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