



NEBRASKA ARTS COUNCIL



From left to right: first runner-up Jayden Leonard, and Nebraska State Champion Juan De La Cruz, and second runner-up Lauren Hubert.

## Juan De La Cruz of Gordon-Rushville High School Named Poetry Out Loud State Champion

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(Omaha, Nebraska) – Juan De La Cruz, a senior at Gordon-Rushville High School in Gordon, was named the 2020 Poetry Out Loud Nebraska State Champion. This is the first time that Gordon-Rushville High School, and POL Coordinator and Teacher, Kinley Hadden have sent a student to the national finals since the program began 15 years ago. De La Cruz recited three poems, “Spanglish” by Tato Laviera, “Bent to the Earth” by Blas Manuel De Luna, and “The New Colossus” by Emma Lazarus.

De La Cruz, along with 13 other students from high schools across the state, competed for the title on Sunday, March 8, at the Sheldon Museum of Art in Lincoln. Jayden Leonard from Thayer Central Community Schools of Hebron was named first runner-up, and Lauren Hubert from Skutt Catholic High School of Omaha was named second runner-up.

De La Cruz will receive \$200 and an all-expense paid trip with an adult chaperone to compete for the national championship in Washington D.C. April 27-29, 2020. Gordon-Rushville High School will also receive a \$500 stipend for the purchase of poetry books. Leonard will receive \$100 and a \$200 stipend for her school library. The top three students each received original hand-blown glass trophies courtesy of Nebraskans for the Arts, and all state finalists received poetry books, donated by the University of Nebraska Press and the Nebraska Writers Collective.

Poetry Out Loud, in partnership with the National Endowment for the Arts and the Poetry Foundation, will award a total of \$50,000 in scholarships and school stipends at the national competition, including a \$20,000 scholarship for the national winner. Since 2005, Poetry Out Loud has reached more than 3.6 million students and 55,000 teachers from 14,000 schools nationwide.

Poetry Out Loud is a national arts education program that encourages the study of great poetry by offering educational materials and a dynamic recitation competition to high schools across the country. It is conducted in all fifty states, and the Nebraska Arts Council manages Nebraska’s statewide program. All Nebraska state finalists advanced through their school competitions and regional competitions to compete in Sunday’s event. At the state competition, finalists recited works selected from an anthology of more than 900 classic and contemporary poems, including Nathaniel Hawthorne, Sean O’Brien, Dante Gabriel Rossetti, Lord Byron, Thomas Hood, Emily Dickinson, and Maya Angelou. Winners were chosen based on a set of criteria including voice and articulation, evidence of understanding and accuracy.

For more information, visit [poetryoutloud.org](http://poetryoutloud.org).

### About Poetry Out Loud

Poetry Out Loud, a national poetry recitation program for high school students, is sponsored by the Poetry Foundation and the National Endowment for the Arts, and administered in partnership with State Arts Agencies in all 50 states, the District of Columbia, the U.S. Virgin Islands and Puerto Rico. The Nebraska Arts Council organizes Nebraska’s statewide program.

### About the Nebraska Arts Council

The Nebraska Arts Council (NAC), a state agency, provides numerous grants, services and special initiatives that help sustain and promote the arts throughout Nebraska. NAC is supported by the Nebraska Cultural Endowment, Nebraska Legislature and National Endowment for the Arts.

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