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Spotlight on Student Achievement in the Arts



Russell Heitmann
Photo Credit: Star City Photo

Nebraska Poetry Out Loud program celebrates national semi-finalist from Hebron, Neb., accepting school registrations through November 1

Omaha, NE – Nebraskans for the Arts proudly includes a student in its “Spotlight on Student Achievement in the Arts” program from Hebron who captured national semi-finalist status this past spring: **Russell Heitmann from Thayer Central Community Schools.**

Poetry Out Loud is a national poetry recitation program sponsored by the National Endowment of the Arts and the Poetry Foundation. Nebraska Arts Council manages the program statewide, and Nebraskans for the Arts is the regional partner. It is at the first level a school competition where the winner goes on to one of three regional events and then competes for a spot at state finals. The winner, in spring of 2012 this was Russell, goes on to compete at the national level in Washington, D.C. Russell, a senior this year, has competed as his school’s Poetry Out Loud champion and at the state finals each year since he was a freshman.

Coincidentally taught by his mother Anne Heitmann at Thayer Central, Russell has been in speech competitions since fourth grade with Modern Woodman’s speech contest and the Nebraska School Activities Association’s speech competitions. For NSAA, he has competed in persuasive speech since his freshman year, and he tried out the poetry category for his junior year. He says Poetry Out Loud’s recitation emphasis, “offered a change of pace and I thought I’d give it a try.”

He says he enjoys using his voice to perform. Russell commented, “getting up in front of people is something I enjoy doing.” Of his national Poetry Out Loud competition experience, he says, “it was awesome in every way possible. To be able to sight-see and be a tourist was great. I got to meet so many amazing kids doing the same thing. Also, being on the stage in that type of venue with that many people – I have no complaints.”

Russell, recently crowned Homecoming King for his school, also runs cross country, plays basket ball and golf, and is active with the school’s drama department.

Nebraska Arts Council is accepting registrations from schools and educators through November 1 for the coming Poetry Out Loud season. For more information, please visit www.nebraskaartscouncil.org. Additionally, there is a highlight and promotional [video](#) and a dedicated [Facebook](#) Page.

Nebraskans for the Arts regularly recognizes “Student Spotlight” recipients in their communities as well as with their state legislators, principals and school boards. The statewide organization, in its desire to underscore the importance of arts education, sincerely thanks each of these students’ arts educators for the crucial role they have played in helping young adults build upon their talents through careful training. Nominations for “Spotlight on Student Achievement in the Arts” are received through a survey found on the Nebraskans for the Arts website, www.nebraskansforthearts.org.

About Nebraskans for the Arts:

Nebraskans for the Arts is a non-profit membership organization. NFTA promotes the advancement of learning in and through the arts for all Nebraska residents and is committed to promoting the arts to federal, state and local policymakers. NFTA is a member of the Kennedy Center Alliance for Arts Education Network and an Americans for the Arts state affiliate.

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