

Poetry Out Loud declared a success

January 27, 2020



Students stood in front of the six judges, their voices shaking slightly, as they recited poems to their peers, teachers and guests at two different competitions last week.

Each winner will now perform on Feb. 5 for a chance to become the Del Norte County's 2020 Poetry Out Loud champion.

"I feel like the competition was incredibly successful. We are so proud of every student who participated and inspired by the incredible job they did today. We are giddy," said Kelly Troyne, English language arts teacher at Sunset High School.

The Del Norte Association for Cultural Awareness (DNACA) and the Del Norte Unified School District (DNUSD) partnered to bring Del Norte County its second annual Poetry Out Loud Competition.

The events commenced at Del Norte High School on Monday, Jan. 13, naming ninth-grader Europe Lor as the DNHS winner. Sunset High School held its competition shortly after on Thursday, Jan. 16 with senior Noah Kuntz taking the lead.

"For a lot of students being able to research the poems that they're reading has been really great. They've been able to engage with more than just the poem, but kind of try to get a sense of the emotion behind it," said Zach Knowlton, the 10th and 12th grade English teacher at DNHS.

Each of the students who participated in both events last week had to first compete in their classes, winning among their classmates to join the school-wide event.

“It feels kind of unreal because, I’ll be honest, it was really hard for me to do this since I kind of have trouble with public speaking,” Kuntz said.

Troyna, his teacher, added, “We are so proud of Noah for stepping up and doing an incredibly powerful job. His performance was so moving.”

Now the schools’ champions, Lor and Kuntz, await the next event in which they will compete to determine the county champion. The winner will receive a stipend to travel with a chaperone to the state finals in Sacramento on March 15 to 16. Whoever wins at the state event will compete in Washington D.C. on April 27 to 29.

Created by the National Endowment for the Arts and the Poetry Foundation, Poetry Out Loud is a national recitation competition held in all 50 states, the District of Columbia, the U.S. Virgin Islands, and Puerto Rico. The competition, administered with the help of State Arts Agencies, has been in existence for 15 years, though this is only Del Norte County’s second year participating.

Del Norte first held the competition last year after DNACA had applied for a grant. In order to receive the grant, DNACA had to administer Poetry Out Loud, so they teamed up with the school district to implement it in Crescent City.

“Now we’re just still kind of picking up steam on it. This is the second year, and I just think it’s such a great program,” said Stephanie La Torre, DNACA’s Executive Director.

However, before it came to the county, it already had a few fans in town, thanks to Troyna. She was already using Poetry Out Loud as part of her curriculum, so she was ecstatic when DNACA decided to bring it to the county.

“This is such a great opportunity for students to take healthy risks. It gives them a chance to step up and get out of their comfort zone and stretch and learn and grow, and again, what more could you ask for as a teacher,” Troyna said.

The county-wide competition will take place at 6 p.m. on Wednesday, Feb. 5 at College of the Redwoods, Del Norte Campus at 883 W. Washington Blvd. in room D34/36.