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**Arts Council for Monterey County Announces the Monterey County Poetry Out Loud Winners**

(Seaside, CA - February 8, 2022) The Arts Council for Monterey County is proud to announce the winners of the Monterey County 2022 Poetry Out Loud High School Competition. The first-place winner is Mahi Shah of Notre Dame High School, second place winner is Angela Liu of Pacific Grove High School, and the third-place winner is Vianey Aguirre-Villalobos of Alisal High School. Please join the Arts Council for Monterey County in congratulating our local high school students!

Poetry Out Loud, presented in partnership with the Arts Council for Monterey County, the California Arts Council, the National Endowment for the Arts and the Poetry Foundation, is part of a national program that encourages high school students to learn about great poetry -- both classic and contemporary -- through memorization, performance, and competition. Since the program began in 2005, more than 4.1 million students and 68,000 teachers from 17,000 schools across the country have participated in Poetry Out Loud. On February 5, students from seven participating high schools engaged in a dynamic recitation competition to determine the Monterey County Poetry Out Loud Winner at the CSUMB Alumni and Visitors Center.

Mahi Shah of Notre Dame High School will advance to the state Poetry Out Loud virtual contest on March 6-7th. The state winner will receive \$200 and will advance to the virtual national finals on April 25-27th where \$50,000 in awards and school/organizational stipends will be distributed. The representing school or organization of the state winner will receive \$500 for the purchase of poetry materials.

Guest judges presided over the competition, including: Eric Mora, Policy Analyst for Monterey County Supervisor Wendy Root Askew and Arts Council Board Member; Susan Breen, previous Chair and Honorary Chair for 3 years for the Arts Council Board of Directors; Ernesto Lizaola, Community Education Manager for the Salinas Public Libraries; and Ben Heinrich, real estate expert in Monterey County. Judges evaluated student performances on criteria including physical presence and evidence of understanding.

“All of the student competitors demonstrate their openness to the power of poetry and their commitment to developing skills that allow them to share that power with those around them,” said Michelle T. Boone, Poetry Foundation president. “The young people involved in Poetry Out Loud are remarkable, and we are honored to be a part of this program.”

Poetry Out Loud has a positive impact on schools, helps to build community, forges stronger connections between teachers and students, and brings together students who may not have otherwise formed connections.

For more information on Poetry Out Loud, visit [arts4mc.org/services/poetry-out-loud](https://arts4mc.org/services/poetry-out-loud)

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*The mission of the Arts Council for Monterey County (ACMC) is to improve the quality of life for everyone in our region through the arts. For more information, please email [info@arts4mc.org](mailto:info@arts4mc.org)*

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