



*Madison Heggins reciting in the 2016 national Poetry Out Loud competition.
Photo by James Kegley.*

Texas Poetry Out Loud Winner Named National Finalist Also Named Poetry Ourselves Competition Runner-up in Spoken Word

Madison Heggins, Texas' 2016 [Poetry Out Loud](#) winner, competed in the national contest in Washington, DC, on May 3 and 4. The national competition starts with a day of three semi-finals broken up by region. The top three competitors in each semi-final move on to the next day's event: the national finals. The Poetry Out Loud recitation contest is a national project of the National Endowment for the Arts (NEA) and the Poetry Foundation. High school students memorize poems and perform them in competition, mastering public speaking skills, building self-confidence, and learning about their literary heritage along the way. The Texas Commission on the Arts conducts the program at the state level.

Madison, who is about to graduate from Lewisville High School in Lewisville, was named among the top three in her semi-final due to her masterful and fresh recitations of "Richard Cory" by Edwin Arlington Robinson, "Self-Help" by Michael Ryan, and "Black Boys Play the Classics" by Toi Derricotte. A video of Madison reciting "Self-Help" is [here](#).



Madison Heggins with her Poetry Out Loud national finalist medal and her Poetry Ourselves award.

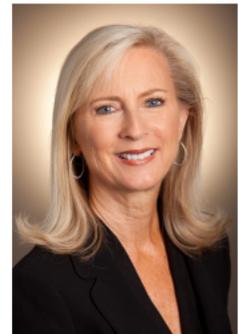
Madison's designation as a national finalist earned her \$1,000. Her school, along with those of the other eight students named national finalists, received \$500 for their library to purchase poetry books and materials. **This was the first year that Madison's high school participated in Poetry Out Loud, and the fourth year in a row that Texas' state winner--each year, a different student--has been named a national finalist.** Ultimately, **Virginia's Ahkei Togun** took the top prize of \$20,000 and bragging rights as the 2016 Poetry Out Loud national winner.

This year, to celebrate the NEA's 50th anniversary, state Poetry Out Loud winners were invited to submit original written or spoken-word poems in a contest called Poetry Ourselves. **Madison was named the runner-up in the spoken word category and**

received an award commemorating her achievement. Congratulations to Ahkei, Madison, and the other students who represented their states on the national stage.

Free Professional Development Webinar: Individual Giving

TCA's next live professional development webinar will be offered June 15 at 2 PM CST and will cover the topic of **individual giving** with [Cookie Ruiz, CFRE, Executive Director of Ballet Austin](#). Stay tuned for a specific email that gives information about registering for this webinar. If you haven't heard Cookie speak on any of the many facets of building support for your organization, you're in for a treat.



Cookie Ruiz

If you missed the **Getting Inside Artists' Heads: We've Got an App for That!** webinar offered on April 20, with Alecia Lawyer and Eric Skelly of the River Oaks Chamber Orchestra, there is good news! All of the professional development webinars are recorded and available on [TCA's professional development Vimeo channel](#) for free.

Cultural Districts in Texas

June 15 marks the deadline for applications for the Texas Cultural District Designation program, a process that started in January when interested areas submitted letters of

intent to apply for the program. While every cultural district is different, we thought it would be helpful to share this background information on the program.

The Texas Commission on the Arts administers the Texas Cultural District Designation program as authorized by H.B. 2208 of the 79th Legislature. Cultural districts represent contiguous areas in a community that include a mix of uses within their boundaries. The districts should be walkable and distinguished by physical, artistic, and cultural assets. In addition, the districts should be complemented by non-arts businesses such as restaurants, shops, lodging, and housing. Finally, cultural districts should have an active schedule of arts and cultural activities, such as art walks, festivals, concerts, and gathering places.

Goals for these cultural districts may include, but are not limited to:

- Attracting artists and cultural enterprises to the community
- Encouraging business and job development
- Addressing specific needs of the community
- Establishing tourism destinations
- Preserving and reusing historic buildings
- Enhancing property values where applicable
- Fostering local cultural development

Designation as a Texas Cultural District requires submitting a letter of intent to apply by January 30 and a thorough application by June 15. TCA has developed a series of [webinar training videos](#) that can assist communities intending to apply for Cultural District Designation. Currently, TCA has designated [29 cultural districts across the state](#).

As a result of the 84th Legislative Session in 2015, the Texas Commission on the Arts' appropriation was increased by \$5 million for the 2016-2017 biennium. The new funds are specifically for cultural tourism grants and allow TCA to offer a grant program for designated Cultural District organizations to support marketing, infrastructure, and events that take place in these districts. The guidelines for this new grant program are [here](#).

2016 Young Masters Honored

On April 25, the 2016 class of Young Masters gathered in Austin. The 15 high school students spent the afternoon in an orientation session that gave them information

about the Young Masters grant they will receive and how to report on it, as well as advice on choosing the next steps of their artistic careers. A representative from Texas Accountants and Lawyers for the Arts also graciously



2016 Young Masters at the Capitol

discussed topics to consider when negotiating contracts. During the afternoon, several Young Masters received flags that had flown over the Capitol from their state legislators, commemorating their achievements.

In the evening, the [Texas Cultural Trust](#) (TCT) honored the 2016 Young Masters at an awards ceremony and star-studded concert at Austin's ZACH Theatre with honorary chair First Lady Cecilia Abbott and special guest Holland Taylor. The evening, hosted by Ray Benson and Juliet Brandon, featured special performances by Tosca String Quartet, the Peterson Brothers, and the Blackshear Elementary Fine Arts Academy Chorus. Past Young Masters award recipients Jay Appaji ('14, music), Jared Brown ('14, dance), and Charles Yang ('04, music) also performed, showing the heights they have reached as artists (so far) since receiving the Young Master designation and grant. TCA sends grateful appreciation to the Texas Cultural Trust for their work on the program and the event.



Zane Unger receives his Young Master medal from Texas Cultural Trust Executive Director Jennifer Ransom Rice, TCA Executive Director Gary Gibbs, and Texas First Lady Cecilia Abbott.

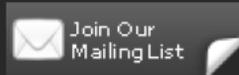
A partnership between the Texas Commission on the Arts and the Texas Cultural Trust, [Young Masters](#) is a grant program that provides exemplary art students in grades 8-11 with the financial help they need to pursue advanced study in the areas of visual arts, literary arts, music, theater, dance, musical theater, and media arts.



This year's promising young students come from 11 cities and together display a variety of artistic talents. Recognized as among the state's most talented young artists, they receive the title of "Young Master" and are awarded grants of \$5,000 per year to further their studies in their chosen arts disciplines. Students are eligible to receive the grant for two years, but they must submit a report and update application.

*Bhargavi Sarangapani
shows off her medal*

2016's gifted group of 15 students represents the eighth class of Young Masters. Since the program's inception in 2002, the Texas Cultural Trust and the Texas Commission on the Arts have given 278 grants to 139 Young Masters, awarding \$857,500 to aspiring artists from across the state.



Texas Commission on the Arts

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