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Speaking in Rhymes

By Susan Froyd

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When was the last time you memorized a poem? Right. Recitation is mostly a lost art of our forebears, but there's a new movement bring it back, and it's gaining steam. The national **Poetry Out Loud** competition, sponsored by the National Endowment for the Arts and the Poetry Foundation as a challenge to high-school students across the nation, is at least partially responsible for the renewed interest, a trend that will be evident when 23 kids from around Colorado compete today for a chance to go to Washington, D.C., for the



nationals (and a \$20,000 first-place prize) in April. "This is the fifth year we've participated in the contest, but it's the first year we've had to add an elimination round, because it's growing," says Sheila Sears of the Colorado Council on the Arts. "We've had more interest this year from places around the state. We have competitors coming from everywhere: Lakewood, Leadville, Eaton, Colorado Springs, Estes Park, Swink and Branson, a little town 55 miles southeast of Trinidad," for instance. The far-flung crew will present poems chosen from an online list of about 500 in a contest that's not as easy as it sounds for an age group known for its inherent sense of drama. "They have to be able to find the appropriate level of performance so as not to have the presentation overshadow the poem's language," Sears explains.

Cheer for Colorado's entrants when emcee Jake Adam York kicks things off at 6:30 p.m. at the Lakewood Cultural Center, 470 South Allison Parkway in Lakewood; admission is free. Visit www.coloarts.org for more information.

Tue., March 9, 6 p.m., 2010

