

## **Two Special Needs Students from Pennsylvania and Louisiana Earn Top Honors in 2017 National Handwriting Contest**

**Columbus**, Ohio (April 12, 2017) – Two students, one from Pennsylvania and one from Louisiana, have been selected as winners of the Nicholas Maxim Award, an annual award given to special needs students for their mastery of handwriting. The Nicholas Maxim Award is part of the 2017 National Handwriting Contest sponsored by [Zaner-Bloser](#), a company that produces educational resources to support teachers and inspire students.

Benjamin Myers, a third-grade student from Denver Elementary School in Denver, Pennsylvania, earned the Nicholas Maxim Award for Excellence in Manuscript Penmanship (printing). Benjamin, who has autism, likes school, wrestling and learning about planets. He participates in bowling and Irish dancing.

“Ben has made huge progress with his handwriting. He now writes beautifully,” said Brynn Gallagher, Benjamin’s teacher at Denver Elementary School. “Ben takes pride in his work and puts his heart into everything he does at school. We are so proud of him.”

Jakeya Duncan, a seventh-grade student from Jonesville Junior High School in Jonesville, Louisiana, won the Nicholas Maxim Special Award for Excellence in Cursive Penmanship. Jakeya, who has intellectual challenges, has excellent artistic skills and a natural talent for drawing. She excels at drawing pictures she sees in books or on the internet.

“I am extremely proud of Jakeya,” said Lanel Sharp, the principal at Jonesville Junior High School. “She is a very conscientious student.”

“We’re so happy to honor these two very special students for their excellence in penmanship,” said Lesa Scott, president of Zaner-Bloser. “Benjamin and Jakeya, as well as all of their peers who entered this contest category, must overcome personal challenges to achieve their academic goals. School can be challenging for children with special needs. That’s why we’re inspired to see these students excel at handwriting.”

To be eligible for the Nicholas Maxim Award, a student must have a cognitive delay, or an intellectual, physical or developmental disability. A team of occupational therapists judged all of the entries.

Zaner-Bloser announced the winners at the 2017 American Occupational Therapy Association (AOTA) Conference in Philadelphia. Benjamin and Jakeya will each receive \$1,000 and a trophy at upcoming assemblies at their schools. In addition, Zaner-Bloser representatives will present their schools with a framed certificate and a gift certificate to spend on print and digital resources for their teachers and students.

Zaner-Bloser created and named this award in January 2011 after receiving an entry from Nicholas Maxim, a fifth-grader from Readfield, Maine, who submitted an outstanding cursive entry despite the fact he had been born without his lower arms and hands. His achievement received international media attention and inspired students across the globe.

To learn more about the 2017 National Handwriting Contest and its 26-year history, visit the [contest page](#).



### **About the Zaner-Bloser National Handwriting Contest**

Now in its 26th year, the National Handwriting Contest is an annual competition sponsored by Zaner-Bloser to promote legible handwriting. The contest is free to enter and open to all students in kindergarten through eighth grade. The contest includes a special needs category, the Nicholas Maxim Award. Students can win many great prizes, including cash and trophies. Zaner-Bloser estimates that more than 4 million students have participated in the contest over its 26-year history.

### **About Zaner-Bloser**

Zaner-Bloser is an educational solutions company specializing in delivering explicit instruction and a solid academic foundation for preK–8 students in reading, writing, spelling, handwriting and other language arts. Our core digital and print resources include *Zaner-Bloser Handwriting*, [Superkids](#), [Spelling Connections](#) and [Strategies for Writers](#). As a member of the Highlights Family of Companies, we strive to always do what's right for children and make a significant contribution to their education. Visit [www.zaner-bloser.com](http://www.zaner-bloser.com) for more information.

Media Contact:

Celina Fabrizio

Cell: 614-745-9462

Email: [cfabrizio@paulwerth.com](mailto:cfabrizio@paulwerth.com)