

Two Special Needs Students from Arizona and Virginia Earn Top Honors in 2018 Zaner-Bloser National Handwriting Contest

COLUMBUS, Ohio (April 26, 2018) – Two elementary school students, one from Arizona and one from Virginia, 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 [2018 Zaner-Bloser National Handwriting Contest](#). Zaner-Bloser produces educational resources to support teachers and inspire students.

Emma Laird, a second-grade student from Pilgrim Lutheran School in Mesa, Arizona, earned the Nicholas Maxim Award for Excellence in Manuscript (printing). Emma, who was born with spina bifida, doesn't let her physical or visual challenges stand in the way of her academics, especially when it comes to handwriting.

"Emma's physical needs challenge her on a daily basis," said James Wade, principal at Pilgrim Lutheran School. "Emma always strives to use her God-given abilities to the fullest, which is why it has been so rewarding to work with her and see her rise to the challenges and grow academically. Best of all, she's a great kid and awesome classmate."

Anaya Ellick, a third-grade student at Greenbrier Christian Academy (GCA) in Chesapeake, Virginia, earned the Nicholas Maxim Award for Excellence in Cursive. According to Tracy Cox, a principal at GCA, Anaya was born without hands and does not use prosthetics. She has learned to hold a pencil between her two arms as she writes and draws.

Anaya won the Nicholas Maxim Award for Excellence in Manuscript in 2016, garnering national attention for her achievements. According to her teachers, Anaya was determined to learn and perfect her cursive writing so she could compete in the cursive category this year.

"Anaya does not let anything stand in her way of reaching her goals," Cox said. "She is a hard worker and has some of the best handwriting in her class. Her determination is inspiring and contagious to all of us at Greenbrier Christian Academy."

"We're thrilled about this opportunity to honor two very special students who put their hard work and dedication into handwriting," said Lisa Carmona, president of Zaner-Bloser. "It is so inspiring to see Emma and Anaya, as well as all of their peers who entered this contest category, demonstrate confidence and passion that handwriting will help them achieve their academic goals."

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 judge all of the entries.

Zaner-Bloser announced the winners at the 2018 American Occupational Therapy Association (AOTA) Conference in Salt Lake City earlier this month. Emma and Anaya will each receive \$500 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.

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 was born without his lower arms and hands. His achievement received international media attention and inspired students across the globe.

About the Zaner-Bloser National Handwriting Contest

Now in its 27th 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 27-year history.

About Zaner-Bloser

Zaner-Bloser is an educational-solutions company that specializes in delivering explicit instruction and a solid academic foundation for pre-K through eighth grade students in reading, writing, spelling, handwriting and other language arts. With more than 125 years of experience, our resources include *Superkids*, *Spelling Connections*, *Word Wisdom* and *Zaner-Bloser Handwriting*, as well as additional products and services. As a member of the Highlights Family of Companies, we strive to always do what's right for children and to make a significant contribution to their education today – and in the future. Visit www.zaner-bloser.com for more information.

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