

**Urbandale High School Senior Wins Barnes & Noble My Favorite Teacher Essay Contest**

*Of over 40 entries, Jacqueline Valladares' essay has been selected by Barnes & Noble as the local winner of the Barnes & Noble My Favorite Teacher Contest*

**URBANDALE, Iowa – March 30, 2015** – For the second consecutive year, an [Urbandale High School](#) student's essay has been selected by Barnes & Noble as the local winner of the [Barnes & Noble My Favorite Teacher Contest](#). Of over 40 entries received, the essay written by Jacqueline Valladares, senior at Urbandale High School, about her English Composition Teacher, Nikki Smith, was selected as the winning essay. An award ceremony will take place at the Jordan Creek Barnes & Noble store on Saturday, April 18, 2015, at 4:00 p.m. Smith will receive a special award acknowledging her achievement and Valladares will receive a certificate of recognition.



Urbandale High School English Teacher, Nikki Smith, with Urbandale High School Senior, Jacqueline Valladares. Barnes & Noble selected Valladares' essay nominating Mrs. Smith in the Barnes & Noble My Favorite Teacher Contest.

To enter the national contest, students were invited to nominate their favorite teacher by writing essays, poems, or thank you letters that explain how their teacher has influenced their life and reveal why they appreciate and admire him or her. Entries were judged on the compelling nature of the teacher's qualities, the sincerity of the student's appreciation and the quality of expression and writing. Valladares' essay was humble, profound and deeply engaging as she painted a picture with words describing the life-changing moment she experienced when Smith commented on her work stating that Valladares was a very talented writer and had written one of the best pieces she had ever graded in over four years of assigning the class activity. Smith's encouragement and belief in Valladares helped Valladares believe in herself, believe in her potential and believe in the power of words to change a life.

The Urbandale Community School District is focused on transforming education through the use of [Quality and Continual Improvement \(Q/CI\)](#). Q/CI is about the continual improvement of all learners in the system and redesigning learning environments to become more purposeful, relevant and inspiring. Urbandale staff, teachers and administrators believe in the inherent potential of all students and work together in order to help students identify, develop and embrace their full potential. One student embracing her or his potential has the unspoken power of helping others embrace and believe in their own. It is this type of contagious learning environment—an environment built on ‘I can’ and ‘you can’—that is at the core of Urbandale’s mission: to teach all and to reach all.

Smith will now be entered into the regional competition where five winners will be chosen. Each regional winner will receive a \$500 Barnes & Noble Gift Card. From the pool of five regional winners, Barnes & Noble will name one teacher the Barnes & Noble National Teacher of the Year. The winning teacher will receive \$5,000 and the title of Teacher of the Year. The winner will be recognized at a special community celebration at a local Barnes & Noble store. The winning teacher’s school will receive \$5,000.

#### **About Barnes & Noble, Inc.**

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#### **About Urbandale Community School District**

The Urbandale Community School District includes portions of Des Moines and Urbandale, Iowa. The district serves over 3,900 students in six elementary schools, one middle school and one comprehensive high school. The Urbandale district supports an increasingly diverse student population where 50 languages are spoken. Building on the existing foundation of excellence in education, Urbandale is transforming education throughout the district. By implementing innovative [Quality/Continual Improvement](#) strategies that create learning environments that more fully engage, challenge and motivate students, Urbandale is taking transformation from theory into practice. Urbandale prepares students for becoming lifelong learners and is a school district that brings learning to life for everyone. To learn more, visit: [UrbandaleSchools.com](http://UrbandaleSchools.com)

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