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***Rand McNally and USA TODAY announce the Kick Off of  
“America the Beautiful” Essay Contest for Students\****  
*Scholarships, NOOK Tablets™ and trips are part of the inaugural program*

**SKOKIE, Ill., March 22, 2012** – Focused on the best of America, Rand McNally has launched a short essay contest to discover what places across the country inspire young people. Students who enter the contest have the opportunity to win a \$10,000 college scholarship and earn a trip to Washington, D.C.

Barnes & Noble is one of the primary sponsors of the contest. Student winners from each state will win an award-winning Barnes & Noble NOOK Tablet and have their essays published in an “America the Beautiful” eBook available exclusively on NOOK.com. In addition, the first 1,000 teachers who register will receive a Barnes & Noble gift card.

“America the Beautiful” asks this simple question of kids: What’s the one place in the U.S. that truly inspires you? Maybe it’s captured in the hometown they love, or the special memories about a place they visited, or even a landmark that is meaningful to them.

“Rand McNally has been selling educational products to schools for more than a century. We have seen social studies de-prioritized in classrooms in recent years due to budget constraints, while technology has made the world smaller and geographic awareness a more critical skill for the 21<sup>st</sup> century,” explained Dave Muscatel, CEO of Rand McNally. “By encouraging kids to write about a ‘place’, our goal with this program is to weave social studies content back into core curriculum, as well as to get kids feeling good about their country. With this goal in mind, the ‘America the Beautiful’ contest is the first of many digital programs we have planned for 2012.”

For the past year, through their Best of the Road® initiative, Rand McNally and USA TODAY have been working together to find the best of America – the best small towns, most patriotic places, friendliest folks. Since both companies also have spent decades committed to the Education sector, it was natural to next reach out to classrooms to find out what young people find inspiring about America.

“The country has been going through a difficult period during the past several years,” said David L. Hunke, President and Publisher of USA TODAY, “and we at USA TODAY want to spur optimism in the country about the country. We are looking for young people to share their stories and hopefully inspire all of us to appreciate what is great about our nation and the communities we live in.”

“America the Beautiful” is open to 7<sup>th</sup> through 12<sup>th</sup> graders and its details can be found on a dedicated micro site at [bestoftheroad.com/education](http://bestoftheroad.com/education). In addition to contest guidelines, the site also features lesson plans for educators, activity guides to assist student writers, and correlations to the Common Core State Standards.

Teachers whose classrooms participate in the program have the opportunity to win \$5,000 worth of products for their schools.

“Barnes & Noble is committed to teachers and providing them with the tools they need to be successful in the classroom,” said Jim Hilt, Vice President of eBooks for Barnes & Noble. “We are very supportive of the mission of “America the Beautiful” and are excited to be the “Official Tablet” of this program. We can’t wait to publish the ‘America the Beautiful’ NOOK Book™ at the end of the contest with all of the students’ stories.”

More detailed information and complete contest rules are available at [bestoftheroad.com/education](http://bestoftheroad.com/education).

**\*NO PURCHASE NECESSARY. LEGAL RESIDENTS OF THE 50 UNITED STATES (D.C.) WHO ARE STUDENTS 13 – 20 YEARS OF AGE ENROLLED IN GRADES 7-12 OR A TEACHER OF GRADES 7-12 AND 21 YEARS OF AGE AND OLDER. VOID WHERE PROHIBITED. Enter Contest by 5/14/12. For Official Rules and prize descriptions, visit [www.bestoftheroad.com/education](http://www.bestoftheroad.com/education). Sponsor: RM Acquisition, LLC d/b/a Rand McNally, 9855 Woods Drive, Skokie, IL 60077.**

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