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Varsity Brands Honors Schools, Groups and Individuals Promoting Outstanding Student Engagement and Community Spirit with School Spirit Awards

Entries open at varsitybrands.com through March 1, 2016

MEMPHIS, Tenn. – February 11, 2016 – Varsity Brands, the recognized leader in team athletic gear, the driving force in cheerleading and dance, and the most trusted name in celebrating student milestones, continues to highlight the connection between school spirit, involvement, achievement and self-confidence with the launch of the Varsity Brands School Spirit Awards. The awards will recognize schools, school groups and individuals who go the extra mile to build school pride, student engagement and community spirit. Each winner will be honored with up to \$1,500 in prize money, totaling \$25,000 in awards from Varsity Brands.

The Varsity Brands School Spirit Awards consist of sixteen separate awards in three distinct categories; sport, spirit, and achievement (click [HERE](#) to learn more about the categories). Nominees must be nominated by a student, colleague or community member, and all submissions must include: a 500-word essay outlining why the nominee is deserving of this award, one letter of recommendation, photo and other supporting materials demonstrating the nominee's work.

"We're proud to introduce the Varsity Brands School Spirit Awards, which celebrate all the leaders in schools around the country who go above and beyond to inspire school spirit in their students and peers," said Varsity Brands CEO Jeff Webb. "From dedicated principals to outstanding coaches and inspiring athletes, we're excited to see how these nominees are embracing school spirit across the country."

"We applaud Varsity Brands for creating a way to recognize the amazing leaders in our schools," says Bob Gardner, Executive Director of the National Federation of State High School Associations (NFHS). "Creating a strong supportive school environment depends on everyone working together. In this very special way, Varsity Brands promotes this collaboration of school administrators, coaches, teachers and students to build a positive school culture."

Varsity Brands was inspired to introduce the Varsity Brands School Spirit Awards after receiving an onslaught of exceptional entries for its America's Most Spirited High School Contest in the fall of 2015. This search went beyond spirit teams and sporting events and included the important roles that academics, community involvement and overall engagement play in driving school spirit. Last year's entries demonstrated such inspiring environments of inclusion and achievement that Varsity Brands wanted to create a program to recognize even more of the individuals, teams and schools that are championing these efforts.

Varsity Brands has conducted extensive research which illustrates a direct correlation between school spirit, community and school involvement, academic achievement and self-confidence. According to a Harris Poll and subsequent [white paper](#) published in 2014, 92 percent of principals agree that high school spirit is tied to high academic achievement, and

90 percent of students with high levels of school spirit are more likely to be leaders. This search for individuals who exemplify school spirit goes beyond cheerleaders and sporting events and includes the important roles academics, community involvement and overall engagement play in driving school spirit.

The deadline for entries is March 1, 2016. A panel of judges will review the entries based on their submission essays, the strength of their contributions to their school and community, entrants' demonstrated enthusiasm for their school, their letter of recommendation and school spirit photographs. Finalists will be announced on March 14th, and winners will be announced on April 30th via varsitybrands.com.

About Varsity Brands

With a mission to inspire achievement and create memorable experiences for young people, Varsity Brands elevates the student experience, promotes participation and celebrates achievement through three unique but interrelated businesses: **Herff Jones**, A Varsity Achievement Brand; **BSN SPORTS**, a Varsity Sport Brand; and **Varsity Spirit**. Together, these assets promote personal, school and community pride through their customizable products and programs to elementary and middle schools, high schools, and colleges and universities, as well as church organizations, professional and collegiate sports teams and corporations. Through its 4,200 dedicated employees and independent representatives, Varsity Brands reaches its individual and institutional customers each year via catalog, telesales, e-commerce sites and direct sales channels.

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