



Mullica Hill teen becomes book reviewer on blog she created

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By **Kelly Roncace/Gloucester County Times**



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Photos provided

Mullica Hill resident Briana Ozalas, 15, a sophomore at Clearview Regional High School, has her own blog where she reviews books. In October 2009, Briana stated her website, booknerdblog.com, and has since reviewed more than 100 books.

Mullica Hill resident Briana Ozalas was just a baby when "Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone" first hit the bookshelves in 1997.

Having been read to every night by her mother, Cheryl or father, Mark, Briana — who likes to go by Bri (pronounced Bree) — had developed a love of reading and so took on the challenge of the 300-plus page fantasy novel when she grew older.

"Ever since, I just kept reading the Harry Potter series," Briana said. "Then I realized, there were plenty of other books out there that I could read."

During the summer of 2009, Bri was rarely seen without a book in her hand and by fall, had completed 15 books.

Her father — a director of information systems who is passionate about technology — suggested Bri share her love of reading with the world by way of an online blog.

"It was my dad's idea," she said. "He said since I was spending so much time reading, I should make it my own. So I started doing reviews."

In October 2009, Bri started her website, booknerdblog.com, and has since reviewed more than 100 books.

"I thought having her own website and blog would be a great way for her to express herself, develop her writing skills and learn about technology," Ozalas said. "She was apprehensive at first, but once she started, she fell in love with giving her opinion about what she reads."

The blog is set up so that visitors can leave comments on her reviews, connect to her Facebook page or follow her on Twitter. She also tags authors in each review, which has gotten attention from some of the writers.

"She has had contact with many of the authors whose books she has reviewed," Ozalas said. "She has influenced some of her friends to read and has developed online relationships with other book nerds. I really wasn't sure how the website would develop, but Bri has developed it with her own vision and creativeness."

Bri, now 15, said she was contacted by Katie Alender, author of the "Bad Girls Don't Die" series.

"Katie Alender emailed me and thanked me for the review," Bri said. "We've actually emailed back and forth a few times."

This interaction may also help Bri in her future career.

"I want to be a writer," she said. "I love to write."

Bri recently published her first short story, "The Pink Sweater," as an e-book which is available on **amazon.com** and **barnesandnoble.com**.

"I actually wrote it for a school project," she said. "I took journalism my freshman year. It was October, around Halloween and my teacher wanted us to write a mystery or a thriller. I knew in the end I wanted the main character killed off."

"The Pink Sweater" begins as a story of young love that ends in tragedy.

Enter the unknowing antagonist, and the story unravels to reveal a surprise and fateful ending.

Bri has many other ideas for short stories and novels, and has started several, but hasn't completed any yet.

And even though she is only entering her sophomore year at Clearview Regional High School, she already believes she wants to major in English and journalism in college.

But for now, Bri is planning the rest of her summer vacation which includes spending time with her friends at the beach, working on summer school assignments and, of course, reading.

"My wife and I, along with our youngest daughter Megan, are extremely proud of Bri," Ozalas said. "I love the



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A screen capture of Ozalas' website, booknerdblog.com, is shown. The 15-year-old also recently published her first short story, "The Pink Sweater," as an e-book which is available on amazon.com and barnesandnoble.com.

passion she has for reading and the way she expresses her feelings about what she reads."

Currently, Bri is reading "Fight Club" by Chuck Palahniuk.

Just last month, Bri reviewed "Invisible Monsters" by the same author, which she described as "very interesting."

"'Invisible Monsters' will always be one of my favorite novels," she said in her review.

No matter what the future holds, Bri said she will definitely be reading a lot.

"Our family and friends are always complementing Bri on her website as well as the short story that she published," Ozalas said. "We are sure that this is just the beginning of her journey into writing."

For more information and to purchase "The Pink Sweater," visit www.booknerdblog.com.

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