

# Feature Writing

Invitational A Meet • 2016



You are a reporter for the Leaguetown **Press**, the student newspaper of Leaguetown High School.

From the given information, write a **feature story** as you would for the high school newspaper. You may use statements attributed to individuals as **direct or indirect quotes**. You may not change the meaning of a statement. You have **one hour**.

Do not write your name or the name of your school on this sheet or your entry. **Put your number on your paper.**

Leaguetown High School, located in Texas, has an enrollment of 1,800 students in grades 9-12. Over the summer, junior Lisa Muñoz was selected to attend a week-long dance camp hosted by the New York City Rockettes in New York City. More than 2,500 girls auditioned for the 75 spots in the summer camp. At the camp, Lisa studied tap, jazz, musical theater and the legendary Rockettes kickline.

Lisa, the captain of the school's dance team, started taking dance classes when she was 3 years old. She's been a fan of the Rockettes since she first saw them at Radio City Music Hall when she was in first grade. She always dreamed of meeting them.

During the dance camp, the Rockettes announced that all girls who attended the camp were eligible to win a spot in the Rockettes' New York City Spring Spectacular Show. For the contest, dancers had to choreograph and video an original dance to Frank Sinatra's song "New York, New York." Entries were due Oct. 1.

Lisa participated in the contest and was named a finalist in November. This week, she received the call that told her she won the contest and would be participating with the Rockettes in their spring show on March 15 and 17 at Radio City Music Hall. Lisa will go to New York City for two weekends, one in February and one in March to practice with the team.

You are writing for the issue of the *Press* to be distributed Monday, Feb. 8.

## ■ LISA MUÑOZ, junior

"When I entered the contest, I didn't think I had much of a chance at winning. The girls I met at camp were amazing. I felt so far behind at the camp all week. I have taken dance classes for more than 10 years, but none of them have been from anyone famous. Some of the girls there trained under pretty famous people. One girl had even worked with Jennifer Lopez's dance instructor.

"My mom pushed me to do the contest. She always said I was super creative in creating dances, and maybe I am. It took me about three weeks to design the dance and then another three to perfect the moves and get an almost-perfect video.

"When I found out I won, my screams woke up our neighbors. The call came at 6 a.m. on Saturday, and I couldn't contain myself. I was in the backyard screaming and jumping and dancing. My neighbor thought our house was on fire. Luckily, he wasn't mad when I explained what had happened.

"I've loved the Rockettes for so long. Just going to the camp — well, I thought that was the best thing that would ever happen to me. And now, this — I am going to dance with the New York City Rockettes. I don't even believe it when I say it. It's crazy. Wonderful, amazing, crazy.

"Luckily, the whole trip is paid for by the contest. The camp was expensive, and I spent all of my savings on it."

**■ CINDI PAUL, school dance teacher**

“We are thrilled that she won the contest. But I wasn’t surprised. Lisa is an incredibly talented dancer. I wasn’t even mad when she called me at 6:30 a.m. on that Saturday to tell me. And I hate being woken up early on Saturdays. Lisa has been the creative force for our dance team for the past three years. When other dance teachers see us perform, they are astounded by the level of talent and choreography. I can’t take most of the credit for it. It’s Lisa. We do work together to create routines, but she is the one who brings all the creativity. If she wants it, Lisa will have a long and illustrious career in the dance field.”

**■ LORENA MUÑOZ, Lisa’s mother**

“This is Lisa’s dream — to dance with the Rockettes. When she started dance lessons so many years ago, I never thought we would get to this point. Lisa is always dancing. She dances to the kitchen in the morning. She dances out the door to go to school. She dances down the street to get the mail. She dances everywhere. It’s her life, and I am so happy she was rewarded for all of her hard work.”

**■ ADDITIONAL INFORMATION**

The flier for the Spring Spectacular describes the show as “a dazzling musical celebration about the energy, places, people, passion and promise that make this city spectacular.”

The Rockettes are a precision dance company founded in 1925 in St. Louis, Missouri, and since 1932 have performed out of Radio City Music Hall in Manhattan, New York City. During the Christmas season, the Rockettes present five shows a day, seven days a week. Perhaps their best-known routine is an eye-high leg kick in perfect unison in a chorus line, which they include at the end of every performance.

**DO NOT DISTRIBUTE TO STUDENTS BEFORE OR DURING THE CONTEST!**

## INVITATIONAL A • 2016

### FEATURE WRITING CONTEST TIPS AND SAMPLE STORY

*Contest Director: Give one copy to each judge to use during critique/judging. Also, staple one copy of the contest and one copy of the contest tips to each student's returned entry. The purpose of the tips is to provide immediate feedback to students. However, it is not meant to replace written comments from the judge.*

1. Figure out what the story is about and its theme or focus. This story is about a girl who wins a contest to dance with the Rockettes.

2. The lead of a feature story must grab the reader's attention. It does not have to be a certain length or include the 5Ws and H. It should set a scene and get the reader into the story. Although you have freedom to describe the scene as you think it might have existed, try to stay as close to the copy as you can. Some judges will not want you to wander off the subject too much.

Junior Lisa Muñoz has been dancing almost her entire life.

“She dances to the kitchen in the morning,” her mother Lorena Muñoz said. “She dances out the door to go to school. She dances down the street to get the mail. She dances everywhere.”

3. Once you get past the lead, make sure you include a nut graph. It tells the reader what the story is going to be about. Follow the nut graph with a direct quote and then go into the transition/quote formula.

#### **nut graph**

And now, Lisa, who started taking dance lessons when she was 3 years old, has won the opportunity to dance on the same stage as her idols, the New York City Rockettes. Last week Lisa learned she had won the sole spot to dance with the famous Rockettes in their Spring Spectacular Show in New York City on March 15 and 17.

#### **direct quote**

“When I found out I won, my screams woke up our neighbors,” Lisa said. “The call came at 6 a.m. on Saturday, and I couldn't contain myself. I was in the backyard screaming and jumping and dancing.”

4. After you get past the nut graph, the rest of the story can tell itself through the use of transition/quote formula.

Be sure you attribute after the quote or at least after the first sentence. An attribution should be: subject of attribution followed by the verb of attribution (“Lisa said,” not “said Lisa”). Avoid stacking quotes. Try to avoid putting two or more quotes together without placing some kind of transition between them. Also, make sure transitions provide information to help the action of the story and that the quote does not repeat information in the transition.

#### **transition/story-telling**

The Rockettes are world-renowned, precision dancers known especially for their high-kick routine. Lisa attended the a Rockette dance camp this summer where she earned the opportunity to participate in the contest.

**direct quote**

“When I entered the contest, I didn’t think I had much of a chance at winning,” Lisa said. “I felt so far behind at the camp all week. Some of the girls there trained under pretty famous people. I have taken dance classes for more than 10 years, but none of them have been from anyone famous.”

**transition/story-telling**

Lisa, the captain of the school’s dance team, has loved the Rockettes since she saw them for the first time in first grade.

**direct quote**

“Just going to the camp — well, I thought that was the best thing that would ever happen to me,” Lisa said. “And now, this — I am going to dance on stage with the New York City Rockettes. I don’t even believe it when I say it. It’s crazy.”

5. Always use third person. Don’t say “our student” or “our own Lisa.” Also, do not editorialize. For instance, you should not say “She is so amazing.” These statements are personal opinions and should not be made in a feature story.

6. Always use the verb “said” as the verb of attribution. Don’t say “says,” “stated,” “feels” or any other synonym for “said.”

7. Finally, look for a strong quote to use as a closing statement or a statement that will bring the reader back to the beginning of the story. It should give the reader a sense of satisfaction or resolution.

“This is Lisa’s dream— to dance with the Rockettes,” Lorena said. “When she started dance lessons so many years ago, I never thought we would get to this point. It’s her life, and I am so happy she was rewarded for all of her hard work.”

**SAMPLE STORY**

Junior Lisa Muñoz has been dancing almost her entire life.

“She dances to the kitchen in the morning,” her mother Lorena Muñoz said. “She dances out the door to go to school. She dances down the street to get the mail. She dances everywhere.”

And now, Lisa, who started taking dance lessons when she was 3 years old, has won the opportunity to dance on the same stage as her idols, the New York City Rockettes. Last week Lisa learned she had won the sole spot to dance with the famous Rockettes in their Spring Spectacular Show in New York City on March 15 and 17.

“When I found out I won, my screams woke up our neighbors,” Lisa said. “The call came at 6 a.m. on Saturday, and I couldn’t contain myself. I was in the backyard screaming and jumping and dancing.”

The Rockettes are world-renowned, precision dancers known especially for their high-kick routine. Lisa attended a Rockette dance camp this summer where she earned the opportunity to participate in the contest.

“When I entered the contest, I didn’t think I had much of a chance at winning,” Lisa said. “I felt so far behind at the camp all week. Some of the girls there trained under pretty famous people. I have taken dance classes for more than 10 years, but none of them have been from anyone famous.”

Lisa, the captain of the school’s dance team, has loved the Rockettes since she first saw them in first grade.

“Just going to the camp — well, I thought that was the best thing that would ever happen to me,” Lisa said. “And now, this — I am going to dance on stage with the New York City Rockettes. I don’t even believe it when I say it. It’s crazy.”

For the contest, Lisa had to choreograph and video an original dance to Frank Sinatra’s song “New York, New York.”

“It took me about three weeks to design the dance and then another three to perfect the moves and get an almost-perfect video,” she said.

While Lisa was shocked she won the contest, dance teacher Cindi Paul said wasn’t surprised by the news.

“Lisa has been the creative force for our dance team for the past three years,” Paul said. “When other dance teachers see us perform, they are astounded by the level of talent and choreography. I can’t take most of the credit for it. It’s Lisa.”

Lisa will travel, all expenses paid, to New York City for two weekends in February and March to practice with the Rockettes.

“This is Lisa’s dream — to dance with the Rockettes,” her mother said. “When she started dance lessons so many years ago, I never thought we would get to this point. It’s her life, and I am so happy she was rewarded for all of her hard work.”

# Feature Writing

Invitational B Meet • 2016



You are a reporter for the Leaguetown **Press**, the student newspaper of Leaguetown High School.

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Leaguetown High School, located in Texas, has an enrollment of 800 students in grades 9-12. Last year, photojournalism student James Tang, who is a junior, started his own photography business, Zoomed In. He primarily takes senior portraits, but he also does some family photography. For one of his clients, freshman Monica Mason, he photographed headshots of her for a modeling agency. After seeing his photos, the modeling agency connected James with a marketing agency in Dallas. In July the company, A&D, hired James to shoot photos of some of the company's top clients. So far James has taken photos of several famous Texans, including millionaire Ross Perot, Cowboy owner Jerry Jones and singer Kelly Clarkson.

Tang, only 16 years old, is now the youngest contractor working for A&D, one of the largest marketing companies in Texas. He does most of his photo shoots on the weekend so he does not miss any school time.

Over spring break, Tang will photograph his most famous Texan yet — George W. Bush. The former president is the spokesperson for a Dallas charity, and A&D wants photos of Bush in his new Dallas home for the marketing campaign.

You are writing for the issue of the *Press* to be distributed Monday, Feb. 29.

## ■ JAMES TANG, junior

"When I was in junior high, my parents bought me my first decent camera. I was going to Italy with my grandparents, and they wanted me to take good pictures. One week with that camera and the sites in Italy, and I was hooked. I fell in love with photography. I started reading everything I could about lighting and portrait photography. It's amazing what you can find on the Internet. By my freshman year, I was pretty good. I talked my way onto the yearbook staff and started shooting candid photos, too.

"I started my photo business to earn money for college. My parents both work, but neither makes much money. College was going to be a strain. I was shocked at how quickly my business grew. Social media was a huge help. Several of the seniors who I photographed posted their photos, and my business took off.

"When A&D first contacted me, I thought it was a scam until I googled the company. The first couple of photo shoots that I did for the company were regular clients — just hospital directors and small company presidents. I think they wanted to make sure I really had talent. Then, in December they asked me to photograph Jerry Jones in his office at the stadium. I am a huge Dallas Cowboys fan — always have been, always will be. I've never even been to a game, and now this company sent me to the owner's office. At first, I was so star-struck that I couldn't even speak. I kind of just stood there looking stupid. Finally, Jerry slapped me on the back, and said 'Well, let's get this thing going. I ain't gettin' any prettier.' That

broke the ice. I laughed and started working.

“This latest assignment also has me on edge — the former president of the United States of America. It’s crazy. I’m this 16-year-old kid, and I am going to tell George W. Bush where to stand and how to turn his head. I just hope I can speak when I get there.

“The money from A&D is definitely going to make college more manageable. The company wants me to continue working for them, so I am considering applying for Texas Christian University in Fort Worth or the University of Dallas. Both are fantastic schools and close to A&D.”

■ **CALISTA LOCKHART, A&D marketing director**

“James has an extraordinary talent. A decent portrait is not hard to get. Almost anyone can do that, but a portrait that we take notice of — that’s a bit harder. And almost every portrait in James’s portfolio is striking and unique. He is one of the most creative photographers I’ve ever worked with, and he’s only 16. I would call him a prodigy. I’ve shown his work to photographers who have been in this business for 20 years, and they love his work. They are shocked when I tell them he’s only 16. I sincerely hope we have a long relationship.”

■ **KARI SIMMONS, yearbook adviser and photography teacher**

“James never took photography with me because he didn’t need it. When he showed me his portfolio before entering ninth grade, I knew I had little to teach him. He’s brilliant with a camera. Every one of his photos is striking. For my Christmas present this year, James took photos of my 6-month-old daughter. He set the shoot up with my husband. When I opened the framed photo on Christmas morning, I cried. It was the most beautiful photo I’d ever seen. James is going to be famous someday. And I predict that day is coming soon.”

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## INVITATIONAL B • 2016

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1. Figure out what the story is about and its theme or focus. This story is about a junior who was hired by a company to photograph famous individuals.
2. The lead of a feature story must grab the reader's attention. It does not have to be a certain length or include the 5Ws and H. It should set a scene and get the reader into the story. Although you have freedom to describe the scene as you think it might have existed, try to stay as close to the copy as you can. Some judges will not want you to wander off the subject too much.

It was a day of firsts for junior James Tang.  
 First time in the Dallas Cowboys stadium.  
 First time in the owner's office.  
 And, first time meeting and photographing Jerry Jones.  
 It's no surprise that James was at a loss for words. So when he stood there speechless, Jones slapped him on the back and said, "Well, let's get this thing going, I ain't gettin' any prettier."

3. Once you get past the lead, make sure you include a nut graph. It tells the reader what the story is going to be about. Follow the nut graph with a direct quote, and then go into the transition/quote formula.

#### **nut graph**

James shared a laugh with Jones and then got to work. At 16 years old, James is the youngest photographer working for A&D, a Dallas marketing company.

#### **direct quote**

"When A&D first contacted me, I thought it was a scam until I googled the company," James said. "The first couple of photo shoots I did for the company were regular clients—just hospital directors and small company presidents. I think they wanted to make sure I really had talent. Then, in December they asked me to photograph Jerry Jones in his office at the stadium."

4. After you get past the nut graph, the rest of the story can tell itself through the use of transition/quote formula. Be sure you attribute after the quote or at least after the first sentence. An attribution should be: subject of attribution followed by the verb of attribution ("James said," not "said James"). Avoid stacking quotes. Try to avoid putting two or more quotes together without placing some kind of transition between them. Also, make sure transitions provide information to help the action of the story and that the quote does not repeat information in the transition.

#### **transition/story-telling**

In his six months of working for A&D, one of the largest marketing companies in Texas, James has shot portraits of Jones, Ross Perot and Kelly Clarkson. Over spring break James will shoot his most famous client so far — former President George W. Bush.

#### **direct quote**

"It's crazy. I'm this 16-year-old kid, and I am going to tell George W. Bush where to stand



and how to turn his head,” James said. “I just hope I can speak when I get there.”

**transition/story-telling**

Last year, James started his own photography business, Zoomed In, shooting senior portraits and family photography.

**direct quote**

“I started my photo business to earn money for college,” James said. “My parents both work, but neither makes much money. College was going to be a strain.”

5. Always use third person. Don’t say “our student” or “our own James.” Also, do not editorialize. For instance, you should not say “He is so amazing.” These statements are personal opinions and should not be made in a feature story.

6. Always use the verb “said” as the verb of attribution. Don’t say “says,” “stated,” “feels” or any other synonym for “said.”

7. Finally, look for a strong quote to use as a closing statement or a statement that will bring the reader back to the beginning of the story. It should give the reader a sense of satisfaction or resolution.

“I sincerely hope we have a long relationship,” Lockhart said. “I’ve shown his work to photographers who have successfully been in this business for 20 years, and they love his work. They are shocked when I tell them he’s only 16.”

**SAMPLE STORY**

It was a day of firsts for junior James Tang.

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First time in the owner's office.

And, first time meeting and photographing Jerry Jones.

It's no surprise that James was at a loss for words. So when he stood there speechless, Jones slapped him on the back and said, "Well, let's get this thing going, I ain't gettin' any prettier."

James shared a laugh with Jones and then got to work. At 16 years old, James is the youngest photographer working for A&D, a Dallas marketing company.

"When A&D first contacted me, I thought it was a scam until I googled the company," James said. "The first couple of photo shoots I did for the company were regular clients – just hospital directors and small company presidents. I think they wanted to make sure I really had talent. Then, in December they asked me to photograph Jerry Jones in his office at the stadium."

In his six months of working for A&D, one of the largest marketing companies in Texas, James has shot portraits of Jones, Ross Perot and Kelly Clarkson. Over spring break James will shoot his most famous client so far – former President George W. Bush.

"It's crazy. I'm this 16-year-old kid, and I am going to tell George W. Bush where to stand and how to turn his head," James said. "I just hope I can speak when I get there."

Last year, James started his own photography business, Zoomed In, shooting senior portraits and family photography.

"I started my photo business to earn money for college," James said. "My parents both work, but neither makes much money. College was going to be a strain."

James fell in love with photography on a junior high trip to Italy with his grandparents.

"One week with that camera and the sites in Italy, and I was hooked," he said. "I fell in love with photography. I started reading everything I could about lighting and portrait photography."

Before his freshman year hoping to get on the yearbook staff, James met with yearbook adviser Kari Simmons and shared his portfolio with her.

"He's brilliant with a camera," Simmons said. "Every one of his photos is striking."

A&D marketing director Calista Lockhart says James is "one of the most creative photographers" she's ever worked with.

"James has an extraordinary talent," she said. "A decent portrait is not hard to get. Almost anyone can do that, but a portrait that we take notice of – that's a bit harder. And almost every portrait in James's portfolio is striking and unique. I would call him a prodigy."

A&D hopes to continue working with James after high school. It may be possible. James plans to apply to Texas Christian University or the University of Dallas which are both close to the company.

"I sincerely hope we have a long relationship," Lockhart said. "I've shown his work to photographers who have successfully been in this business for 20 years, and they love his work. They are shocked when I tell them he's only 16."

# Feature Writing

District 1 Meet • 2016



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Do not write your name or the name of your school on this sheet or your entry. **Put your number on your paper.**

Leaguetown High School, located in Central Texas, has an enrollment of 2,200 students in grades 9-12. This spring the school district partnered with the police department to create a cadet program for seniors who are interested in pursuing careers in law enforcement. The cadet program allows seniors to become acquainted with police and law enforcement work through a two-week shadowing program. The seniors shadow officers for two hours, four evenings a week. The program includes two ride-alongs with officers.

Over Spring Break, senior Kellee Gates, who started her shadowing in early March, did a ride-along with Officer Jolie Towns, a 22-year veteran of the force. The evening started out relatively slow until Officer Towns responded to a possible robbery at Al's Liquor Store. Towns was the first police officer to arrive on the scene. She instructed Kellee to remain in the car while she checked out the situation.

As Officer Towns exited the police car, a gunman shot her in the right thigh and ran from the liquor store. Immediately, Kellee grabbed the police radio and told dispatch about the situation. Then, she jumped out of the car to help Officer Towns. Kellee pulled off her belt to create a tourniquet around the officer's leg. She took off her police-issued navy sweatshirt and used it to put pressure on the wound to slow the bleeding.

Because of the description and directions Kellee gave to the police dispatcher, police apprehended the gunman within minutes of the shooting. The emergency medical staff also said Kellee probably saved Officer Towns' life with her swift medical attention. Next Saturday, April 2, Kellee will receive a Medal of Valor from the police department for her bravery and action. You are writing for the issue of the Press to be distributed on Wednesday, March 30.

## ■ KELLEE GATES, senior

"Before the ride-along, I wasn't 100 percent sure I wanted to go into law enforcement. Honestly, a lot of police work is pretty boring — paperwork and more paperwork. Then, Officer Towns took me on my first ride-along. Before the shooting at the liquor store, she pulled over three people for speeding and even that gave me an adrenaline high. I was pumped. Then, we got the call about the possible robbery. Officer Towns was under the impression that the suspect had left the premises, but he had not. As soon as she shut the door to the police car, I heard a loud pop and watched her fall to the ground. I can't believe I didn't panic. But I didn't. I went on total autopilot. When I saw the gunman running to the street, I grabbed the radio and called the situation into dispatch. I said, 'Officer down. Officer down.' I gave our address and then described the suspect to dispatch. The gunman was wearing a lime green hoodie, not the best outfit for

### ■ **KELLEE GATES (continued)**

a night robbery, and was about six feet tall and 200 pounds. Then I jumped out of the car to help Officer Towns. She was in a lot of pain, but she was yelling at me to stay in the car. She didn't want to put me in danger. I ignored her and tightened my belt around her upper thigh. I saw some actor do this on a cop show, and I was worried the bullet hit her femoral artery. Then, I used my sweatshirt to try to stop the bleeding. The ambulance was there within minutes.

"After this experience, I have no doubt that I will go into law enforcement. I want to get my criminal justice degree and then join the police force. I am so grateful the district started this partnership for seniors. The whole Medal of Valor thing is a little weird. I don't think I was particularly brave. I just did what Officer Towns had been teaching me. It felt natural. I know my dad is super-proud, though. He's retired military, and my grandfather was a police officer. My dad said, 'This work is in your blood.' Maybe it is."

### ■ **JOLIE TOWNS, police officer**

"I am glad Kellee didn't listen to me when I told her to stay in the car. The bullet hit the artery in my thigh, and the doctor said I could have easily bled to death without her intervention. She saved my life. She never panicked. Heck, she didn't even ask me what she should do. She just did it. If I am still around when Kellee joins the force permanently, I would be proud to have her as my partner."

### ■ **ORVILLE CARLTON, police chief**

"We don't give this medal to many civilians — and I don't think we've ever given it to a teenager, but Kellee deserves it. She acted like a trained officer, and we are all grateful for her response. She's going to make a fine officer one day."

### ■ **BEN GATES, Kellee's dad**

"My wife wasn't thrilled about Kellee doing a ride-along, but I knew she would be OK. Kellee never panics in tough situations. When Kellee was 5 years old, my wife had a seizure and passed out. Kellee called 911 and then performed CPR. I didn't even know she knew what CPR was. When the ambulance arrived, the medical technician said Kellee was giving them instructions on what to do. They couldn't believe she was only 5."

### **ADDITIONAL INFORMATION:**

Kellee plans to attend Texas State University and hopes to intern with the university police department. Officer Towns nominated Kellee for the Medal of Valor award.

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## **DISTRICT 1 • 2016**

### **FEATURE WRITING CONTEST TIPS AND SAMPLE STORY**

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1. Figure out what the story is about and its theme or focus. This story is about a senior who saved a police officer's life and will be awarded the Medal of Valor.
2. The lead of a feature story must grab the reader's attention. It does not have to be a certain length or include the 5Ws and H. It should set a scene and get the reader into the story. Although you have freedom to describe the scene as you think it might have existed, try to stay as close to the copy as you can. Some judges will not want you to wander off the subject too much.

As the car door slammed shut, senior Kellee Gates heard a loud pop and watched as Officer Jolie Towns fell to the ground. With no time to think, Kellee went "on autopilot." Grabbing the police radio, she shouted, "Officer down. Officer down."

Then she jumped out of the car to assist the wounded officer.

"I don't think I was particularly brave," Kellee said. "I just did what Officer Towns had been teaching me."

*The lead possibilities are endless.*

3. Once you get past the lead, make sure you include a nut graph. It tells the reader what the story is going to be about. Follow the nut graph with a direct quote and then go into the transition/quote formula.

#### **nut graph**

But Officer Towns, who is Kellee's mentor officer in the school's new two-week police cadet program, disagrees. She credits Kellee with saving her life and nominated the senior for the Medal of Valor award, which Kellee will receive Saturday.

4. After you get past the nut graph, the rest of the story can tell itself through the use of transition/quote formula.

Be sure you attribute after the quote, or at least after the first sentence. An attribution should be: subject of attribution followed by the verb of attribution ("Kellee said," not "said Kellee"). Avoid stacking quotes. Try to avoid putting two or more quotes together without placing some kind of transition between them. Also, make sure transitions tell information to help the action of the story and that the quote does not repeat information told in the transition.

#### **transition/story-telling**

Kellee was shadowing Towns in a ride-along for the cadet program when the officer was called to a robbery at Al's Liquor Store. Towns believed the suspect had left the store by the time she had arrived. He had not, and Towns was shot as she stepped out of her vehicle.

**direct quote**

“The bullet hit the artery in my thigh, and the doctor said I could have easily bled to death without her intervention,” Towns, a 22-year veteran of the force, said.

**transition/story-telling**

When Kellee called in to dispatch she also gave a description of the robber and said what direction he was running. Police apprehended the gunman within minutes of the shooting.

**direct quote**

“The gunman was wearing a lime green hoodie, not the best outfit for a night robbery, and was about six feet tall and 200 pounds,” Kellee said. “I gave our address and then described the suspect to dispatch. Then I jumped out of the car to help Officer Towns.”

5. Always use third person. Don’t say “our student” or “our own Kellee Gates.” Also, do not editorialize. For instance, you should not say “She is an amazing student.” These statements are personal opinion and should not be made in a feature story.

6. Always use the verb “said” as the verb of attribution. Don’t say “says,” “stated,” “feels” or any other synonym for “said.”

7. Finally, look for a strong quote to use as a closing statement or a statement that will bring the reader back to the beginning of the story. It should give the reader a sense of satisfaction or resolution.

Receiving the Medal of Valor seems “a little weird,” Kellee said, but she knows her dad is proud.

“He’s retired military, and my grandfather was a police officer,” she said. “My dad said, ‘This work is in your blood.’ Maybe it is.”

**SAMPLE STORY**

As the car door slammed shut, senior Kellee Gates heard a loud pop and watched as Officer Jolie Towns fell to the ground. With no time to think, Kellee went “on autopilot.” Grabbing the police radio, she shouted, “Officer down. Officer down.”

Then she jumped out of the car to assist the wounded officer.

“I don’t think I was particularly brave,” Kellee said. “I just did what Officer Towns had been teaching me.”

But Officer Towns, who is Kellee’s mentor officer in the school’s new two-week police cadet program, disagrees. She credits Kellee with saving her life and nominated the senior for the Medal of Valor award, which Kellee will receive Saturday.

“We don’t give this medal to many civilians — and I don’t think we’ve ever given it to a teenager, but Kellee deserves it,” police chief Orville Carlton said. “She acted like a trained officer, and we are all grateful for her response.”

Kellee was shadowing Towns in a ride-along for the cadet program when the officer was called to a robbery at Al’s Liquor Store. Towns believed the suspect had left the store by the time she had arrived. He had not, and Towns was shot as she stepped out of her vehicle.

“The bullet hit the artery in my thigh, and the doctor said I could have easily bled to death without her intervention,” Towns, a 22-year veteran of the force, said.

When Kellee called in to dispatch, she also gave a description of the robber and said what direction he was running. Police apprehended the gunman within minutes of the shooting.

“The gunman was wearing a lime green hoodie, not the best outfit for a night robbery, and was about six feet tall and 200 pounds,” Kellee said. “I gave our address and then described the suspect to dispatch. Then I jumped out of the car to help Officer Towns.”

Kellee’s dad said he wasn’t surprised by his daughter’s actions.

“Kellee never panics in a tough situation,” Ben Gates said. “When Kellee was 5 years old, my wife had a seizure and passed out. Kellee called 911, and then started performing CPR. When the ambulance came, the medical technician said Kellee was giving them instructions on what to do and a detailed description of what happened. They couldn’t believe she was only 5.”

Before the ride-along, Kellee wasn’t 100 percent sure she wanted to go into law enforcement,

“After this experience, I have no doubt that I will go into law enforcement,” she said. “I want to get my criminal justice degree and then join the police force. I am so grateful the district started this partnership for seniors.”

Towns said Kellee will make a “fine officer.”

“If I am still around when Kellee joins the force permanently, I definitely would be proud to have her as my partner,” she said.

Receiving the Medal of Valor seems “a little weird,” Kellee said, but she knows her dad is proud.

“He’s retired military, and my grandfather was a police officer,” she said. “My dad said, ‘This work is in your blood.’ Maybe it is.”

# Feature Writing

District 2 Meet • 2016



You are a reporter for the Leaguetown **Press**, the student newspaper of Leaguetown High School.

From the given information, write a **feature story** as you would for the high school newspaper. You may use statements attributed to individuals as **direct or indirect quotes**. You may not change the meaning of a statement. You have **one hour**.

Do not write your name or the name of your school on this sheet or your entry. **Put your number on your paper.**

Leaguetown High School, located in Southeast Texas, has an enrollment of 500 students in grades 9-12. Last week sophomore Lamont Bishop's neighbor's house caught on fire in the late afternoon. Lamont saw smoke and flames and called 911 before running over to the house. When he arrived at the house, the college freshman, who baby-sits the 7-year-old twin boys – Gus and Gage, was screaming hysterically. She couldn't find one of the twins. By then, the fire was ravishing the house. Lamont started shouting the missing child's name, and after a few seconds he heard the boy call back from the second story of the house. Lamont ran to the garage, grabbed a ladder and climbed to the second floor window where he heard the child. As soon as he got to the window, he saw the boy lying in the middle of the bedroom floor. Lamont climbed through the window, grabbed the child and carried him down the ladder. As Lamont was descending the ladder, the fire department arrived. Firefighters took the child and attached an oxygen mask to his face. Then they led Lamont away from the house and started containing the fire.

The boy, Gus, was fine after a few minutes of oxygen, but the fire destroyed the house. After the firefighters checked out Lamont, he went home. The fire chief nominated Lamont for the city's annual Young Hero Award. Lamont will receive the award Friday, April 8, at the City Council meeting. You are writing for the issue of the Press to be distributed on Wednesday, April 6.

## ■ LAMONT BISHOP, sophomore

"It feels weird to be called a 'hero.' I am not sure I would call myself that. I did what anyone would have done. Nothing special. I love those little boys, and I would do anything for them. Apparently the sitter and Gage were in the kitchen when the fire started. The sitter hustled Gage outside where she thought Gus was playing. But Gus had gone back inside to get a toy from his room. By the time she realized Gus was inside, the lower floor was consumed by fire. Luckily Gus was upstairs, and the fire started downstairs. I was starting to freak out a little when I first shouted Gus's name, and he didn't answer. Then I heard him – barely. I am so glad the upstairs window was open. Otherwise, I might not have heard him. As soon as I heard him, I went into action. I don't remember running to the garage to grab the ladder and, honestly, I don't know how I carried it to the window so fast. It is a really heavy ladder, but I guess adrenaline kicked in. I am glad it did. When I got to the window, I didn't think. I jumped in, grabbed Gus and climbed out. It felt like I was in slow motion when I went into his room, but it took no longer than a minute or two. It's so strange to think about it now.

"The firefighters said it was brave of me to climb that ladder, but the fire wasn't on the second floor, so I didn't panic. The bedroom was filled with smoke, and Gus was passed out when I got to him, but I could tell he was breathing. I was



### ■ LAMONT BISHOP (continued)

scared, but I was sure if I could get him out, he would be fine.

“The Bakers showed up at my house that evening to thank me. They were so grateful. They kept thanking me over and over again. Mrs. Baker cried almost the entire time, and Gus and Gage wouldn’t let go of my legs. They are super sweet kids. I play with them sometimes — you know, like football, tag and stuff. I don’t have any little brothers or sisters, so it’s nice to get to be a ‘big brother’ to them.”

### ■ JOE RICHARDS, fire chief

“I was on the scene for this fire. It was a big one, and we are very lucky that no lives were lost. The fire spread quickly, and if Lamont hadn’t acted so quickly, we might be attending a funeral. Without a doubt, he’s a hero. He lugged a 90-pound ladder and entered a burning house to save a child. If that doesn’t make him a hero, I don’t know what does. He did exactly what any firefighter would do in that situation. The only difference is, we are trained. He acted purely on instinct, and he was 100 percent correct.

“I told Lamont if he’s ever interested in becoming a firefighter, he should call me. We need smart individuals like him on our force.”

### ■ BETTY BAKER, the twins’ mom

“You bet we will be at the city council meeting. I wouldn’t miss it for the world. Lamont is our hero and always will be. I don’t want to think about what would have happened had Lamont not acted so quickly. He saved our little boy’s life. I know it. How do you repay someone for that?

“The boys have always adored Lamont. He’s always been great with them. He’s the one who got Gus interested in baseball and soccer. In fact, when Gus went back inside before the fire started, he was going to get his soccer ball so he could practice. He wanted to perfect his shot so Lamont would be proud the next time they played together.

“Lamont is such a great role model. If my boys grow up and are anything like him, I will be thrilled.”

### ADDITIONAL INFORMATION:

Lamont is quarterback on the junior varsity football team and first baseman on the varsity baseball team. He is on the honor roll and is vice president of the Spanish Club.

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## **DISTRICT 2 • 2016**

### **FEATURE WRITING CONTEST TIPS AND SAMPLE STORY**

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1. Figure out what the story is about and its theme or focus. This story is about a sophomore who saved a little boy from a burning house.

2. The lead of a feature story must grab the reader's attention. It does not have to be a certain length or include the 5Ws and H. It should set a scene and get the reader into the story. Although you have freedom to describe the scene as you think it might have existed, try to stay as close to the copy as you can. Some judges will not want you to wander off the subject too much.

Sophomore Lamont Bishop shouted the 7-year-old boy's name over the roar of the flames engulfing the house.

"Gus! Gus!"

Hearing a faint cry from the second floor window, Lamont ran to the garage, grabbed the ladder and climbed into a smoke-filled room.

"Gus was passed out when I got to him, but I could tell he was breathing," Lamont said. "I was scared, but I was sure if I could get him out, he would be fine."

And he was — thanks to Lamont's swift actions.

*The lead possibilities are endless.*

3. Once you get past the lead, make sure you include a nut graph. It tells the reader what the story is going to be about. Follow the nut graph with a direct quote and then go into the transition/quote formula.

#### **nut graph**

Last week when Lamont saw smoke and flames bellowing from his neighbor's house, he called 911 and ran over. Once there, Lamont rescued 7-year-old Gus. For his bravery and quick action, Lamont will receive the Young Hero Award at the City Council meeting Friday.

4. After you get past the nut graph, the rest of the story can tell itself through the use of transition/quote formula.

Be sure you attribute after the quote, or at least after the first sentence. An attribution should be: subject of attribution followed by the verb of attribution ("Lamont said," not "said Lamont"). Avoid stacking quotes. Try to avoid putting two or more quotes together without placing some kind of transition between them. Also, make sure transitions tell information to help the action of the story and that the quote does not repeat information told in the transition.

#### **transition/story-telling**

On the day of the fire, a babysitter was watching the twin boys, Gus and Gage, and couldn't locate Gus after evacuating the house.

#### **direct quote**

"The sitter got Gage outside where she thought Gus was playing," Lamont said. "But Gus

had gone back inside to get a toy from his room. By the time she realized Gus was inside, the lower floor was consumed by fire. ”

**transition/story-telling**

That’s when Lamont showed up. He heard Gus’ faint cry from the upstairs window and went into action.

**direct quote**

“When I got to the window, I didn’t think,” he said. “I jumped in, grabbed Gus and climbed out.”

5. Always use third person. Don’t say “our student” or “our own Lamont Bishop.” Also, do not editorialize. For instance, you should not say “He is an amazing guy.” These statements are personal opinion and should not be made in a feature story.

6. Always use the verb “said” as the verb of attribution. Don’t say “says,” “stated,” “feels” or any other synonym for “said.”

7. Finally, look for a strong quote to use as a closing statement or a statement that will bring the reader back to the beginning of the story. It should give the reader a sense of satisfaction or resolution.

“He did exactly what any firefighter would do in that situation,” Richards said. “The only difference is, we are trained. He acted purely on instinct, and he was 100 percent correct. We need smart individuals like him on our force.”

## SAMPLE STORY

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Last week when Lamont saw smoke and flames bellowing from his neighbor's house, he called 911 and ran over. Once there, Lamont rescued 7-year-old Gus. For his bravery and quick action, Lamont will receive the Young Hero Award at the City Council meeting Friday.

"Without a doubt, he's a hero," said fire chief Joe Richards, who nominated Lamont. "He lugged a 90-pound ladder and went into a burning house to save a child. If that doesn't make him a hero, I don't know what does."

On the day of the fire, a babysitter was watching the twin boys, Gus and Gage, and couldn't locate Gus after evacuating the house.

"The sitter got Gage outside where she thought Gus was playing," Lamont said. "But Gus had gone back inside to get a toy from his room. By the time she realized Gus was inside, the lower floor was consumed by fire. "

That's when Lamont showed up. He heard Gus' faint cry from the upstairs window and went into action.

"When I got to the window, I didn't think," he said. "I jumped in, grabbed Gus and climbed out."

As he descended the ladder with the 7-year-old, firefighters arrived and immediately attached an oxygen mask to Gus' face.

"I did what anyone would have done," Lamont said. "Nothing special. I love those little boys, and I would do anything for them."

But Betty Baker, the twins' mother, said she doesn't want to think about what would have happened had Lamont not acted so quickly.

"He saved our little boy's life. I know it," she said. "How do you repay someone for that?"

Lamont, who has no younger siblings of his own, says he loves playing with the twins and being a "big brother" to them.

"They are super sweet kids," he said. "The Bakers showed up at my house that evening to thank me. Mrs. Baker cried almost the entire time, and Gus and Gage wouldn't let go of my legs."

The fire chief said Lamont would make a great firefighter one day.

"He did exactly what any firefighter would do in that situation," Richards said. "The only difference is, we are trained. He acted purely on instinct, and he was 100 percent correct. I told Lamont if he's ever interested in becoming a firefighter, he should call me. We need smart individuals like him on our force."

# Feature Writing

Regional • 2016



You are a reporter for the Leaguetown **Press**, the student newspaper of Leaguetown High School.

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Leaguetown High School has an enrollment of 1,700 students in grades 9-12. Sophomore Shehnaz Khan, who is Muslim, moved to Leaguetown this year after living in Oklahoma for most of her life. In the fall, Shehnaz performed a monologue in her Theater I class about how she was bullied at her former school. Both teachers and students bullied her for being Muslim and wearing a hijab. After watching her monologue, theater teacher Edmund Brown encouraged Shehnaz to write a play about her experience, and she did. Brown loved the play, “Eyes Up,” and suggested to Principal Neil Young that the theater class perform it at class assemblies.

Young agreed, and Brown cast his Theater I students in the play.

In March, Shehnaz’s play debuted and was well received by the students and faculty. “Eyes Up” mirrors Shehnaz’s experience at her former school and seeks to educate the audience on the Muslim religion and culture.

After seeing the play, Mayor Rita Williams asked Shehnaz and Brown if they could perform the play at the Leaguetown City Theater May 4-7, and they agreed to do it. The city theater seats 1,000, and the first night is already sold out. Proceeds for the play will be donated to the high school theater department and to the Islamic Education Center, a national non-profit organization that offers schools and businesses free trainings and programs to educate people about the Muslim culture. You are writing for the issue of the Press to be distributed on Wednesday, April 27.

## ■ SHEHNAZ KHAN, sophomore

“I am excited and nervous about the play being performed at the city theater. When Mr. Brown challenged me to write a play, I never dreamed anyone would ever perform it. The play is based on my own experiences, but it’s not only about bullying. I wanted to teach people about my religion and culture. Too many people have misconceptions because of how the media portrays Muslims and because of what a few radicals have done. The focus of the Muslim religion is about peace and love, not killing and hate. I want to help stop the fear and hatred.

“For me, the bullying didn’t start until ninth grade. That’s when I started wearing my hijab. I guess that’s when people at my school figured out I was Muslim. At first, it was just snickers and whispers about terrorism. Then, students got meaner. Lunch was always the worst. Students, boys mostly, would come up and ask me what I was going to bomb that day or where my ISIS patch was or how many people my parents killed. I always tried to look away, look down. I didn’t want to make eye contact with the boys. I didn’t want them to see my tears. I even had a teacher tell me that Muslims didn’t belong in America. I hated going to school, but I didn’t want to tell my parents. I was embarrassed. Finally, my mom

### ■ SHEHNAZ KHAN (continued)

found me crying one night in my room, and I told her everything. I was so ashamed. My mom met with the principal and all of my teachers, but little changed. Luckily my dad got transferred to Texas in May. That was the happiest day of my life.

“Leaguetown is the complete opposite of my old school. From the very first day of school, everyone has been so accepting and respectful. I have had several students ask me questions but not in a disrespectful kind of way. They were wondering about my hijab. One girl even tried one on. After we performed the first show of ‘Eyes Up’ for the freshman class, several students thanked me for sharing my story. They said they learned a lot. That was my goal.”

### ■ EDMUND BROWN, theater teacher

“Shehnaz’s monologue blew me away. It blew the whole class away. Most of the kids cried, and not a single student said a word during the entire monologue. Her play is just as good, if not better. It tells the story of her being bullied, but it also tells the story of why she loves being a Muslim. In the play she shares her culture through interaction with non-Muslim characters. It’s quite beautiful.

“The students loved the play when we performed it for the classes. I knew they would. This is an amazing community, and our students do a great job embracing differences. I was so proud of the reaction from the play. I know the community will love it, too.”

### ■ REHMAT KHAN, Shehnaz’s mother

“It broke my heart when Shehnaz told me how students had treated her. My husband and I have gotten used to the whispers and looks, but I thought my children would be safe at school from such prejudice. I was living in denial. Leaguetown has been wonderful for our family. From the very first day of school, both of my children have been happy.

“I have seen the play four times now. I went to each class showing, and I cried every time. My tears are both for joy and sadness. We are so proud of Shehnaz. Words cannot express it. She is making an impact on the world, and she is only 15.”

### ■ RITA WILLIAMS, mayor

“My daughter is a freshman and after she saw the play, she insisted I attend the next performance. I did and was speechless. It is such an emotional and educational performance. I couldn’t believe a 15-year-old girl wrote the play. It’s better than some plays I’ve seen on Broadway.

“The community is going to embrace Shehnaz and the play. I am sure of it. I’ve invited the mayors of three nearby towns. I want Shehnaz and our theater department to perform this play all across our state. Our country needs healing, and this play can help to do that.”

### ADDITIONAL INFORMATION:

Shehnaz plays herself in the play. Tickets for the performance at the city theater are \$7 for adults and \$3 for children, 12 and under.

A hijab is a head scarf worn by Muslims to show modesty.

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## **REGIONAL • 2016**

### **FEATURE WRITING CONTEST TIPS AND SAMPLE STORY**

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1. Figure out what the story is about and its theme or focus. This story is about a sophomore who is Muslim and wrote a play about being bullied.

2. The lead of a feature story must grab the reader's attention. It does not have to be a certain length or include the 5Ws and H. It should set a scene and get the reader into the story. Although you have freedom to describe the scene as you think it might have existed, try to stay as close to the copy as you can. Some judges will not want you to wander off the subject too much.

The delicate garment framing her face couldn't hide her tears. Shehnaz Khan kept her eyes down so the boys who were taunting her couldn't see her face.

"Students, boys mostly, would come up and ask me what I was going to bomb that day or where my ISIS patch was or how many people my parents killed," the sophomore said.

Shehnaz, who is Muslim and started wearing a hijab in high school, endured bullying from students and even some teachers when she attended school in Oklahoma last year.

But things have changed.

*The lead possibilities are endless.*

3. Once you get past the lead, make sure you include a nut graph. It tells the reader what the story is going to be about. Follow the nut graph with a direct quote and then go into the transition/quote formula.

#### **nut graph**

In fact, after Shehnaz shared her bullying experience with her theater class, the teacher, Edmund Brown, encouraged her to write a play about her experience. She did. Brown was so impressed with the play, titled "Eyes Up," that the theater class performed it for class assemblies, and in May the city will get a chance to see it.

4. After you get past the nut graph, the rest of the story can tell itself through the use of transition/quote formula.

Be sure you attribute after the quote, or at least after the first sentence. An attribution should be: subject of attribution followed by the verb of attribution ("Shehnaz said," not "said Shehnaz"). Avoid stacking quotes. Try to avoid putting two or more quotes together without placing some kind of transition between them. Also, make sure transitions tell information to help the action of the story and that the quote does not repeat information told in the transition.

#### **transition/story-telling**

At the encouragement of her daughter who saw the play at school, Mayor Rita Williams attended a performance at the school assemblies and then asked Shehnaz and Brown if they could perform the play at the Leaguetown City Theater May 4-7.

**direct quote**

“The community is going to embrace Shehnaz and the play,” Williams said. “It is such an emotional and educational performance. It’s better than some plays I’ve seen on Broadway.”

**transition/story-telling**

Shehnaz began wearing her hijab, a head scarf, in ninth grade. That’s when the bullying started.

**direct quote**

“I even had a teacher tell me that Muslims didn’t belong in America,” she said. “I hated going to school, but I didn’t want to tell my parents. I was embarrassed.”

5. Always use third person. Don’t say “our student” or “our own Shehnaz Khan.” Also, do not editorialize. For instance, you should not say “She is a brave girl.” These statements are personal opinion and should not be made in a feature story.

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“I’ve invited the mayors of three nearby towns,” Williams said. “I want Shehnaz and our theater department to perform this play all across our state. Our country needs healing, and this play can help to do that.”



**SAMPLE STORY**

The delicate garment framing her face couldn't hide her tears. Shehnaz Khan kept her eyes down so the boys who were taunting her couldn't see her face.

"Students, boys mostly, would come up and ask me what I was going to bomb that day or where my ISIS patch was or how many people my parents killed," the sophomore said.

Shehnaz, who is Muslim and started wearing a hijab in high school, endured bullying from students and even some teachers when she attended school in Oklahoma last year.

But things have changed.

Since moving to Leaguetown, Shehnaz Khan no longer walks with her eyes cast down.

"Leaguetown is the complete opposite of my old school," Shehnaz said. "From the very first day of school, everyone has been so accepting and respectful."

In fact, after Shehnaz shared her bullying experience with her theater class, the teacher, Edmund Brown, encouraged her to write a play about her experience. She did. Brown was so impressed with the play titled, "Eyes Up," that the theater class performed it for class assemblies, and in May the city will get a chance to see it.

"When Mr. Brown challenged me to write a play, I never dreamed anyone would ever perform it," Shehnaz said. "The play is based on my own experiences, but it's not only about bullying. I wanted to teach people about my religion and culture."

At the encouragement of her daughter who saw the play at school, Mayor Rita Williams attended a performance at the school assemblies and then asked Shehnaz and Brown if they could perform the play at the Leaguetown City Theater May 4-7.

"The community is going to embrace Shehnaz and the play," Williams said. "It is such an emotional and educational performance. It's better than some plays I've seen on Broadway."

Shehnaz began wearing her hijab, a head scarf, in ninth grade. That's when the bullying started.

"I even had a teacher tell me that Muslims didn't belong in America," she said. "I hated going to school, but I didn't want to tell my parents. I was embarrassed."

When her mother found her crying in her bedroom one night, Shehnaz couldn't hide the bullying from her parents any longer.

"It broke my heart when Shehnaz told me how students had treated her," Shehnaz's mother, Rehmat Khan, said. "My husband and I have gotten used to the whispers and looks, but I thought my children would be safe at school from such prejudice."

In May of her freshman year, Shehnaz's father was transferred to Texas, and that was the "happiest day of my life," she said. Here, the school has embraced Shehnaz and her play.

"In the play, she shares her culture through interaction with non-Muslim characters," Brown said. "It's quite beautiful. This is an amazing community, and our students do a great job embracing differences."

The first night of the play, in which Shehnaz plays herself, is already sold out.

"I've invited the mayors of three nearby towns," Williams said. "I want Shehnaz and our theater department to perform this play all across our state. Our country needs healing, and this play can help to do that."

# Feature Writing

State • 2016



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Leaguetown High School has an enrollment of 2,500 students in grades 9-12. Daniel Karast is a senior at Leaguetown High. He is the adopted son of Bill and Jana Karast, who adopted him when he was only a year old. Daniel's birth parents died after an automobile accident when he was 13 months old. Neither birth parent had a living relative. As far as Daniel knew, he was an only child.

At the UIL Regional Track Meet in April, Daniel learned he might have a sibling. While warming up to compete in the 100-meter dash, he was approached by a teammate who said to him, "There's a guy here who looks exactly like you." Daniel thought the teammate was pulling his leg and didn't think much of it until he kneeled down to get set in the starting blocks. When Daniel looked to his left, he saw an almost mirror image of himself. Shaken by the sight, Daniel was slower than normal out of the starting blocks. Daniel placed second, only a fraction of a second behind the young man who looked almost exactly like him.

After the race, Daniel approached the young man and introduced himself. Immediately, the competitor embraced Daniel and said, "I always knew I would find you one day." Confused, Daniel asked what he meant. The young man introduced himself as Donald Stephens, a junior at Southside High School. Donald explained to Daniel that he thought they were brothers. Donald said his birth mother was nine months pregnant with him when she died after injuries she suffered from a car accident.

After the track meet, doctors confirmed that Daniel and Donald are brothers. Both teens have spent a considerable amount of time together getting to know each other over the past month. They are similar in more than just looks. Both boys excel in track, math, art and baseball. Both hope to be engineers and attend Texas A&M University. While they are becoming close friends, the brothers will compete against each other one more time this school year at the regional playoff baseball games starting Friday, May 27. Both are starting pitchers for their varsity teams. You are writing for the issue of the Press to be distributed on Thursday, May 26.

## ■ DANIEL KARAST, senior

"My parents had no idea that I had a brother. Apparently, there was a mix-up at the hospital, and the doctors failed to tell child services that I had a brother. I was already adopted by the time child services realized what had happened.

"Meeting Donald was kind of surreal. When I was at that starting line, I had only one thing on my mind – win the race. Then, I looked to my left, and there I was. I mean, we look exactly alike. Same curly brown hair. Same wide brown eyes. Same build. We even have the same crooked front tooth. I kind of freaked out until I heard the starting pistol. Winning second was great, but finding Donald

### ■ DANIEL KARAST (continued)

was incredible. It was the best day of my life.

“Getting to know Donald has been awesome. I never liked being an only child. I always wanted a sibling, but my parents couldn’t have children of their own. Seriously, it’s almost like I have a twin. We are only 10 months apart. He’s 16 and I’m 17 and, so far, we like the same things. We even share the same favorite food — cheese enchiladas. Both of our parents get along really well, too. We’ve basically become one big family. During the past few weekends, we’ve spent a lot of time with them.

“Competing against Donald at state was a little strange. I wanted to win, but I also wanted him to win. We agreed before the meet to run our fastest and support each other no matter what the outcome. I only beat him by two-tenths of a second.

“We’ve practiced baseball together a few times, so we know each other’s pitches. He has a better curve ball, but my fast ball is faster and a bit more accurate. I am excited about the games. It’s going to be an even match up this weekend. The great thing is, both of us will go to the UIL State Baseball Tournament. One will be a player, and the other a fan.”

### ■ DONALD STEPHENS, junior at Southside HS

“I always knew one day I would find my brother, but I had no idea he was only 30 miles away this whole time. When I saw him at the track meet, I knew instantly it was him. I just knew. I think that’s why I ran so fast at that meet. It was my best time ever. I was so happy. I wanted to finish so we could really meet.

“At first, my baseball coach was a little worried about me playing against him. He wasn’t sure I would pitch my best, but then he saw the improvements I’ve made by practicing with Daniel. He knows now that we both push each other to be better. I’m not going to lie. I want to win the games this weekend, but I am not going to be devastated if we don’t win. Win or lose, I still win.”

### ■ JANA KARAST, Daniel’s mother

“When Daniel called us from the track meet and started babbling over the phone that he had a brother, we didn’t know what to think. My husband and I had no idea that Daniel’s birth mother was pregnant at the time of the car accident. Apparently, the boys’ birth mother was still alive after the car accident, but she had sustained life-threatening injuries. The doctors performed a C-section to save the baby, and the mother died a few hours later. If we had known, we would have adopted both babies.

“We are so happy for Daniel. He’s always been such a happy child, but now he’s on cloud nine. He’s so proud to have a brother, and the Stephens are lovely people. It’s been such a fascinating month — almost like a dream. We will all sit together at the playoff games. We are going to cheer for both teams, both boys. We will support whoever advances to state.”

### ADDITIONAL INFORMATION:

At the 2016 UIL State Track Tournament, Daniel took third in the 100-meter and Donald took fourth.

The Leaguetown varsity baseball team is undefeated for the season. Daniel has a .420 batting average, which is well above average. The Southside varsity baseball team goes into the playoff games with only two losses. Donald has a .333 batting average. Southside is 30 miles west of Leaguetown.

For the regional playoff, Leaguetown and Southside will play the best two out of three, starting at 7 p.m. Friday at Texas State University in San Marcos. The second game will be played at 10 a.m. on Saturday, and the third will be at 4 p.m. on Saturday, if needed.

**DO NOT DISTRIBUTE TO STUDENTS BEFORE OR DURING CONTEST!**

## **STATE • 2016**

### **FEATURE WRITING CONTEST TIPS AND SAMPLE STORY**

*Contest Director: Give one copy to each judge to use during critique/judging. Also, staple one copy of the contest and one copy of the contest tips to each student's returned entry. The purpose of the tips is to provide immediate feedback to students. However, it is not meant to replace written comments from the judge.*

1. Figure out what the story is about and its theme or focus. This story is about two brothers who are meeting for the first time.

2. The lead of a feature story must grab the reader's attention. It does not have to be a certain length or include the 5Ws and H. It should set a scene and get the reader into the story. Although you have freedom to describe the scene as you think it might have existed, try to stay as close to the copy as you can. Some judges will not want you to wander off the subject too much.

The track stretched out in front of him, 100 meters of well-worn rubber. Senior Daniel Karast was focused on a win.

He looked to his left. A mirror image of himself stared back.

Same curly brown hair.

Same brown eyes.

Same build.

"There I was," Daniel said. "I kind of freaked out until I heard the starting pistol."

The sound brought Daniel back to the race where he finished second to his look-alike just one lane over. But it wasn't the second place medal that made Daniel's day. It was finding his brother.

"It was the best day of my life," he said.

*The lead possibilities are endless.*

3. Once you get past the lead, make sure you include a nut graph. It tells the reader what the story is going to be about. Follow the nut graph with a direct quote and then go into the transition/quote formula.

#### **nut graph**

Daniel was adopted when he was a year old after his birth parents died from injuries sustained in a car accident. He grew up knowing he was adopted and believing he was an only child. At the regional track meet last month, all of that changed.

4. After you get past the nut graph, the rest of the story can tell itself through the use of transition/quote formula.

Be sure you attribute after the quote, or at least after the first sentence. An attribution should be: subject of attribution followed by the verb of attribution ("Daniel said," not "said Daniel"). Avoid stacking quotes. Try to avoid putting two or more quotes together without placing some kind of transition between them. Also, make sure transitions tell information to help the action of the story and that the quote does not repeat information told in the transition.

#### **transition/story-telling**

Donald Stephens, a junior at Southside High, which is 30 miles west of Leaguetown, introduced himself.

#### **direct quote**

“Meeting Donald was kind of surreal,” Daniel said. “I always wanted siblings, but my parents couldn’t have children of their own.”

**transition/story-telling**

After the track meet, doctors confirmed the two boys were brothers. Apparently, the boys’ birth mother was still alive after the car accident, but she had sustained life-threatening injuries. The doctors performed a C-section to save Donald, and the mother died a few hours later. Although Donald knew he had a brother somewhere, Daniel didn’t.

**direct quote**

“My parents had no idea that I had a brother,” Daniel said. “There was a mix-up at the hospital, and the doctors failed to tell child services that I had a brother.”

5. Always use third person. Don’t say “our student” or “our own Daniel Karast.” Also, do not editorialize. For instance, you should not say “He is a talented guy.” These statements are personal opinion and should not be made in a feature story.

6. Always use the verb “said” as the verb of attribution. Don’t say “says,” “stated,” “feels” or any other synonym for “said.”

7. Finally, look for a strong quote to use as a closing statement or a statement that will bring the reader back to the beginning of the story. It should give the reader a sense of satisfaction or resolution.

“The great thing is, both of us will go to the UIL State Baseball Tournament,” he said. “One will be a player, and the other a fan.”

**SAMPLE STORY**

The track stretched out in front of him, 100 meters of well-worn rubber. Senior Daniel Karast was focused on a win.

He looked to his left. A mirror image of himself stared back.

Same curly brown hair.

Same brown eyes.

Same build.

“There I was,” Daniel said. “I kind of freaked out until I heard the starting pistol.”

The sound brought Daniel back to the race where he finished second to his look-alike just one lane over. But it wasn’t the second place medal that made Daniel’s day. It was finding his brother.

“It was the best day of my life,” he said.

Daniel was adopted when he was a year old after his birth parents died from injuries sustained in a car accident. He grew up knowing that he was adopted and believing he was an only child. At the regional track meet last month, all of that changed.

Donald Stephens, a junior at Southside High, which is 30 miles west of Leaguetown, introduced himself.

“Meeting Donald was kind of surreal,” Daniel said. “I always wanted siblings, but my parents couldn’t have children of their own.”

After the track meet, doctors confirmed the two boys were brothers. Apparently, the boys’ birth mother was still alive after the car accident, but she had sustained life-threatening injuries. The doctors performed a C-section to save Donald, and the mother died a few hours later. Although Donald knew he had a brother somewhere, Daniel didn’t.

“My parents had no idea that I had a brother,” Daniel said. “There was a mix-up at the hospital, and the doctors failed to tell child services that I had a brother.”

Donald grew up knowing he had a brother, and he said when he saw Daniel at the track meet he knew Daniel was his sibling.

“I just knew,” he said. “I think that’s why I ran so fast at that meet. I was so happy. I wanted to finish so we could really meet.”

The brothers have more in common than just looks. Both excel in math, art, baseball and, of course, track. Since they both advanced at the regional meet, the brothers competed against each other at the UIL State Track Meet.

“Competing against Donald at state was a little strange,” Daniel said. “I wanted to win, but I also wanted him to win. We agreed before the meet to run our fastest and support each other no matter what the outcome. I beat him by only two-tenths of a second.”

Both families also have come together the past few weekends, and according to Daniel, are “one big family.”

“We are so happy for Daniel,” Daniel’s mother, Jana Karast, said. “He’s so proud to have a brother, and the Stephens are lovely people. It’s been such a fascinating month – almost like a dream.”

The brothers will compete against each other one last time this weekend at the regional playoff baseball games where both sets of parents will sit together and cheer for both teams.

“At first my baseball coach was a little worried about me playing against him,” Donald said. “He wasn’t sure I would pitch my best, but then he saw the improvements I’ve made practicing with Daniel. He knows now we both push each other to be better.”

Daniel, who has a .420 batting average and is a starting pitcher for the team, said it will be an even match-up for his undefeated varsity team. The first game will be at 7 p.m. Friday at Texas State University.

“The great thing is, both of us will go to the UIL State Baseball Tournament,” he said. “One will be a player, and the other a fan.”

# 2016 Feature State Champions

## **1A FEATURE**    *Grace Goode, Cross Plains HS*

His heart is pounding profusely. The gunman has already said for the runners to get on their marks. This is his race. He casually glances to the left and is completely stunned to see an almost exact image of himself. The gun fires.

Senior Daniel Karast was adopted as a baby and always thought he was an only child, until recently. Karast met his brother Donald Stephens while at a track meet and was informed that before his mother died, she gave birth to Stephens. The brothers will compete against each other one more time this school year at the regional playoff baseball games starting Friday, May 27.

"My parents had no idea that I had a brother," Karast said. "Apparently, there was a mix-up at the hospital, and the doctors failed to tell child services that I had a brother."

Karast was already adopted by the time child services realized what had happened, so Karast has grown up believing that he was an only child.

"When I was at the starting line, I had only one thing on my mind—win the race," Karast said. "Then, I looked to my left, and there I was. I mean, we look exactly alike."

Stephens had always known that he had an older brother, but finding him seemed to be the complicated part.

"I always knew one day I would find my brother, but I had no idea he was only 30 miles away this whole time," Stephens said. "When I saw him at the track meet, I knew instantly it was him. I just knew."

After the track meet, doctors confirmed that Karast and Stephens were brothers, and every since then, they have been almost inseparable.

"Getting to know Donald has been awesome," Karast said. "Seriously, it's almost like I have a twin."

Both of the brothers' families have come together to help support them and their new relationship.

"We've basically become one big family," Karast said. "During the past few weekends, we've spent a lot of time with them."

The brothers enjoy playing baseball together, as they both play the pitching position.

"At first, my baseball coach was a little worried about me playing against him," Stephens said. "He wasn't sure I would pitch my best, but then he saw the improvements I've made by practicing with Daniel."

Even though the brothers will be competing against each other, they are both supportive of the other's team.

"The great thing is, both of us will go to the UIL State Baseball Tournament," Karast said. "One will be a player, and the other a fan."

Karast's mother, Jana Karast, knows that Karast is proud to have a brother, and is beyond willing to support Karast, along with Stephens.

"We will all sit together at the playoff games," Mrs. Karast said. "We are going to cheer for both teams, both boys. We will support whoever advances to state."

Even if Stephen's team loses during the tournament, he has already said that he will be happy to have the opportunity to watch his brother.

"I'm not going to lie," Stephens said. "I want to win the games this weekend, but I am not going to be devastated if we don't win. Win or lose, I still win."

## **2A FEATURE** *Alyssa Kramer, Thrall HS*

Senior Daniel Karast inhaled a breath as he positioned himself on the starting block. He looked down the track as his heart beat in anticipation, his mind focused on winning. A figure squatted on the block left of Daniel, catching his attention. When he glanced over he did not expect to see himself staring back.

"I kind of freaked out until I heard the starting pistol," he said. "I mean, we look exactly alike. Same curly brown hair. Same wide brown eyes. Same build. We even have the same crooked front tooth."

Daniel, who ended up placing second in the 100-meter dash at the UIL Regional Track Meet, was beaten by his look alike. After the race, he introduced himself to his competitor, who, to Daniel's surprise, hugged him and said, "I always knew I would find you one day." The young man introduced himself as Donald Stephens, a junior at Southside High School, and told Daniel that he thought they might be brothers, which doctors confirmed after the meet.

"When I saw him at the track meet, I knew instantly it was him. I just knew. I think that's why I ran so fast at that meet," Donald said. "It was my best time ever. I was so happy. I wanted to finish so we could really meet."

When Daniel was 13 months old, his father and pregnant mother were killed in an automobile accident, and he was adopted by Bill and Jana Karast. All his life Daniel believed he was an only child.

"My parents had no idea that I had a brother," he said. "Apparently, there was a mix-up at the hospital, and the doctors failed to tell child services that I had a brother. I was already adopted by the time child services realized what had happened."

After meeting Donald at the track meet, Daniel called his parents to tell them what had happened. They were just as shocked as Daniel.

"My husband and I had no idea that Daniel's birth mother was pregnant at the time of the car accident. Apparently, the boys' birth mother was still alive after the car accident, but she had sustained life-threatening injuries," Mrs. Karast said. "The doctors performed a C-section to save the baby, and the mother died a few hours later. If we had known, we would have adopted both babies."

Daniel said that he had always wanted a sibling, and that it is almost like he and Donald are twins. Both boys excel in track, math, art, and baseball, and they also both hope to study engineering at Texas A&M University.

"We are only 10 months apart. He's 16 and I'm 17, and so far, we like the same things," Daniel said. "We even share the same favorite food—cheese enchiladas."

Both boys said that they have enjoyed getting to know each other and spending time together. They are each the starting pitchers for their schools' baseball teams and have practiced together for their upcoming regional playoff games against each other.

"At first, my baseball coach was a little worried about me playing against him," Donald, whose batting average is a .333 compared to Daniel's .420, said. "He



wasn't sure I would pitch my best, but then he saw the improvements I've made by practicing with Daniel. He knows now that we both push each other to be better."

Both families have gotten to know each other and plan to sit together at the playoff game.

"We are so happy for Daniel. He's always been such a happy child, but now he's on cloud nine. He's so proud to have a brother, and the Stephens are lovely people," Mrs. Karast said. "It's been a fascinating month—almost like a dream. We are going to cheer for both teams, both boys. We will support whoever advances to state."

Daniel is excited about the game and said it is going to be an even match up.

"The great thing is both of us will go to the UIL State Baseball Tournament," he said. "One will be a player and the other a fan."

### **3A FEATURE** *Laurel Emerson, Redwater HS*

A surprise was in store for senior Daniel Karast as he knelt down at the starting blocks, set on winning the race. The finish line vanished from view as his gaze fell upon the runner on his left, and his focus shifted to the shocking mirror image he found. Daniel, an adopted only child, discovered he had a brother: Southside junior Donald Stephens.

After meeting at the UIL Regional Track Meet, the brothers spent a considerable amount of time getting to know each other and found the resemblance goes beyond appearance. As starting pitchers for their respective varsity baseball teams, they face off at the regional playoffs Friday and Saturday at Texas State University in San Marcos.

"We've practiced together a few times, so we know each other's pitches," Daniel said. "I am excited about the games. Getting to know Donald has been awesome."

The families have spent a lot of time together, and the boys have improved by practicing baseball together.

"At first, my baseball coach was a little worried about me playing against him; he knows now that we push each other to be better," Donald said. "I want to win the games this weekend, but I am not going to be devastated if we don't win. Win or lose, I still win."

Daniel described the day he met Donald as the best day of his life, and Donald said that seeing Daniel made him run faster.

"I wanted to finish so we could really meet: I always knew one day I would find my brother, but I had no idea he was only 30 miles away this whole time," Donald said. "When I saw him at the track meet, I knew instantly it was him. I just knew."

The boys' mother was nine months pregnant with Donald when she and his father died in a car accident. Daniel, only 13 months old at the time, was adopted before child services knew Donald was alive.

"The doctors performed a C-section to save the baby, and the mother died a few hours later," Jana Karast, Daniel's adopted mother, said. "If we had known, we would've adopted both babies. We are so happy for Daniel."

The families intend upon sitting together through the playoff games, and they support both boys.

"It's going to be an even match-up this weekend," Daniel said. "The great thing is, both of us will go to the UIL State Baseball Tournament. One will be a player, and the other a fan."

#### **4A FEATURE** *Emma Rhyne, Bullard HS*

Daniel Karast blinks the sweat out of his eyes, his stomach churning with more than just the aftermath of placing second in the 100-meter dash. His wide brown eyes search the crowd, the competitors, searching for eyes like his—eyes that belong to the regional champion who had beaten him by a hairbreadth of time. The two boys are suddenly face to face, and it's like looking into a mirror. Daniel stares at the boy, his mind reaching the only conclusion he can find—he has a brother, and everything is about to change.

At the April UIL Regional Track Meet, senior Daniel Karast raced against his biological brother junior Donald Stephens from Southside High School, and the two boys met each other for the first time. They will compete against each other again tomorrow at regional baseball playoff, where both boys are starting pitchers for the varsity teams.

"When I was at the starting line, I had only one thing on my mind—winning the race," Karast said. "Then, I looked to my left, and there I was."

Karast and Stephens lost their biological parents in a car accident when Karast was 13 months old. Stephens was still in the womb, but doctors performed an emergency C-section and he was born hours before his mother passed away. There was a misunderstanding in the hospital, and when Karast was adopted, his new parents had no idea his brother existed.

"When Daniel called us from the track meet and started babbling over the phone that he had a brother, we didn't know what to think," Karast's mother Jana Karast said. "If we had known, we would have adopted both babies."

The two brothers are look-alikes in more than one respect. Not only do they both run track and pitch in baseball, but they both aspire to graduate from Texas A&M University as engineers.

"We even share the same favorite food—cheese enchiladas," Karast said. "Both of our parents get along really well, too. We've basically become one big family."

The Karast and Stephens family will be sitting in the stands together tomorrow, cheering for both boys' teams.

"The great thing is, both of us will go to the UIL State Baseball Tournament," Karast said. "One will be a player, and the other a fan."

#### **5A FEATURE** *Samantha Johnson, Vista Ridge HS*

Kneeling down at the starting line, senior Daniel Karast only had one thing on his mind—winning. At least, that was all he was thinking about until he peered to his left and saw himself looking back at him. The same curly brown hair, the same wide brown eyes, the same build, and even the same crooked front tooth. Karast

didn't know what to do. Shaken by the sight, Karast couldn't help but stare until the starting pistol sounded, sprinting behind a mirror image of himself.

At the UIL Regional Track Meet in April, Karast discovered that he had a sibling he had never known about. Now, Karast and his brother, junior Donald Stephens, will compete against one another at the regional playoff baseball games starting on Friday, May 27, in a best two out of three competition.

"I am excited about the games," Karast said. "It's going to be an even match up this weekend. The great thing is, both of us will go to the UIL State Baseball Tournament. One will be a player, and the other a fan."

When Karast was 13 months old, both of his parents died in an automobile accident. Without any relatives, he was soon adopted by Bill and Jana Karast, and to his knowledge he was an only child. However, his mother was nine months pregnant with Stephens at the time of the accident, and while she was in the hospital with life-threatening injuries the doctors performed an emergency C-section to save the baby.

"We are so happy for Daniel," Daniel's mother Jana Karast said. "He's always been such a happy child, but now he's on cloud nine. He's so proud to have a brother, and the Stephens are lovely people."

Due to a mix-up at the hospital, the doctors failed to tell child services that Karast had a brother. However, the two crossed path when they both competed in the 100-meter-dash at the UIL Regional Track Meet. Seeing his brother startled Karast, and he was slower than normal out of the starting blocks, placing second to his brother by only a fraction of a second.

"Meeting Donald was kind of surreal," Karast said. "Winning second was great, but finding Donald was incredible. It was the best day of my life."

After the race, Karast approached Stephens, who embraced him and said, "I always knew I would find you one day." The two then proceeded to introduce themselves, only to find out that they may be brothers. After the track meet, doctors confirmed that Karast and Stephens were brothers.

"I always knew I would find my brother, but I had no idea he was only 30 miles away this whole time," Stephens said. "When I saw him at the track meet, I instantly knew it was him. I just knew. I think that's why I ran so fast at that meet. It was my best time ever. I wanted to finish so we could really meet."

The two began to spend a lot of time together and found that they had more in common than just looks. Both boys excel in track, math, art and baseball, and both hope to attend Texas A&M University to become engineers. Both boys also competed at the UIL State Track Tournament, where Karast took third in the 100-meter-dash and Stephens took fourth, beating his brother by only two-tenths of a second.

"Competing against Donald at state was a little strange," Karast said. "I wanted to win, but I also wanted him to win. We agreed before the meet to run our fastest and support each other no matter what the outcome."

Both boys are also starting pitchers for their varsity teams, and for the regional playoffs the brothers will play the best two out of three, starting at 7 p.m. tomorrow at Texas State University in San Marcos. The second game will be played at 10 a.m. on Saturday, and if a third game is needed, it will take place at 4 p.m. on

Saturday. The Leaguettown varsity baseball team is undefeated, and the Southside team will go into playoffs with only two losses.

"I'm not going to lie," Stephens said. "I want to win the games this weekend, but I am not going to be devastated if we don't win. Win or lose, I still win."

**6A FEATURE** *Ann Morris, Hastings HS*

As the runners took their stances on the starting blocks, senior Daniel Karast turned to face another competitor.

Instead, he saw himself.

The same curls in his hair. The same big, brown eyes. Even the same twisted front tooth.

Trying to figure out why there was a near-clone of him on the racetrack, Daniel missed the sound of gunfire and the first steps of every other athlete sprinting towards the finish line. He eventually caught up, but only achieved second. The other him placed first.

It was right after the race when the two athletes discovered they were brothers.

Daniel and his younger brother, junior Donald Stephens, were put up for adoption after their parents died in a car accident. Along with making up for lost time, the brothers are preparing to go toe-to-toe for the last time at the regional playoff baseball games beginning May 27.

"We've practiced baseball together a few times, so we know each other's pitches," Daniel said. "It's going to be an even match up this weekend. The great thing is, both of us will go to the UIL State Baseball Tournament. One will be a player and the other a fan."

From positions in baseball and track to ambitions in engineering and attending Texas A&M University, Daniel and Donald have found striking similarities in the short time they've been together.

"Meeting Donald was kind of surreal," Daniel said. "I never liked being an only child. I always wanted a sibling, but my parents couldn't have children of their own. Seriously, it's almost like I have a twin."

"We are only ten months apart . . . so far, we like the same things," Daniel said. "We even share the same food—cheese enchiladas. Both of our parents get along really well, too. We've basically become one big family."

After the first meeting, Daniel learned that his biological mother was still pregnant with his younger brother at the time of the car accident and her death. He immediately called his adopted parents to tell them the news. They were more than a little surprised.

"My parents had no idea that I had a brother," Daniel said. "Apparently, there was a mix-up at the hospital, and the doctors failed to tell child services that I had a brother. I was already adopted by the time child services realized what had happened."

Though the brothers have practiced for tough innings at the upcoming baseball regional playoffs, both Daniel and Donald are prioritizing their reunion over any state award.

“I always knew one day I would find my brother, but I had no idea he was only 30 miles away this whole time,” Donald said. “I’m not going to lie. I want to win the games this weekend, but I am not going to be devastated if we don’t win. Win or lose, I win.”