

Feature Writing

Region Meet • 2021



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 has 1,100 students in grades 9-12. When the pandemic started last March, junior Titus Montgomery started to have bouts of depression. His parents encouraged him to remain active, so he started walking. Every evening, he started taking 3-mile walks around his neighborhood, and he found he felt better with each walk. Titus knew several of his friends also were starting to slip into depression because of the pandemic, so he encouraged them to start walking. By the middle of May, six of his friends were walking each night.

In June, Titus increased his walks to 6 miles a day. He also noticed his shorts were starting to sag. He wasn't alone. Several of friends shared that they needed new clothes, too. In August, Titus finally decided to jump on the scale. He had lost 24 pounds, and his six friends also had lost weight. Collectively, the group lost 103 pounds.

When school resumed in September, Titus was worried that he wouldn't be able to get his walks in every day, so he and his friends started walking to and from school each day. It is a 3-mile trek each way.

Next Saturday (April 25), Titus and his friends are sponsoring a "Walk In and Out" event at the school track. The event is a 10-mile walk where teens "walk out" negative feelings and "walk in" positive ones. Titus and his friends came up with the idea after talking to students who struggle with depression and anxiety. At the end of each mile, the students will write one positive thing on a huge poster that Titus and his friends are constructing. So far, 110 students have signed up for the free event. Students can sign up in the band hall until Friday, April 24. You are writing for the issue of the Press to be distributed Monday, April 19.

■ TITUS MONTGOMERY, junior

"The pandemic hit me pretty hard. I am extremely social, and all of a sudden I was cut off from all of my friends and even most of my family. It was just me and my parents at my house. My parents are great, but they are introverts and work long hours. I am an extrovert and need more human interaction. My mother noticed me slipping into depression and said I needed to get some exercise. When she first suggested that I walk, I laughed. My longest walk at that time was from my bedroom to the refrigerator. I was overweight and mushy. My motto was: I exercise my mouth by talking, and that is all the exercise I need. But I decided to listen to my mom and started walking in the neighborhood. I figured I could be a little social and wave to my neighbors as I walked by.

"After a week or so of walking, I realized I actually enjoyed the walks. I started taking photos of things I saw — deer on the trail, birds in the trees, dusk settling in. Then, I shared the photos with friends. Soon, several of them were walking, and we were all sharing our experiences. Often, my friends and I would walk at the same time and call and text throughout the walk. Walking turned into my

■ TITUS MONTGOMERY (cont.)

social activity. I was moving my mouth and my feet.

“In June, I noticed my shorts were slipping down when I walked. Then, in August I hopped on the scale. I couldn’t believe the numbers. I probably weighed myself 15 times. I was under 200 pounds. I don’t think I have been under 200 pounds since sixth grade. I didn’t start walking to lose weight. Honestly, I always figured I’d be big. In middle school, I got used to the nickname ‘Tubby Titus.’ I was the funny, fat kid, and I was OK with that.

“Coming back to school was weird. Some people didn’t recognize me because I am so much thinner. I’ve lost 35 pounds now, and I feel great. I am happy on the inside and outside. That’s where the idea for the ‘Walk In and Out’ came from. We want other students to walk out the negative stuff and walk in the positive. We hope the Saturday event is the beginning for many students. After the event, we will move the poster to the front of the school so everyone can see the positive notes and feel the vibe even if they didn’t walk.

“I never imagined I would lose so much weight just by walking. That wasn’t my goal when I started. I love how I feel, and I love walking. I want to share this with everyone.”

■ DAMIEN BROWN, junior

“I am in the walking crew with Titus. So far, I’ve lost 22 pounds, and I feel great. My parents and all of my siblings are big-time athletes. I never got that bug. I like books, video games and band. Basically, I am the typical band geek. When Titus said he had started walking, I thought he was a little crazy. Walking is exercise, and I wasn’t that guy. Then, Titus started sending us photos and calling us during his walks. It piqued my interest, so I started walking. I mean, what else was I going to do? We were in the middle of a pandemic. It turns out that I like walking almost as much as playing video games.”

■ ALI COOPER, sophomore

“I signed up for the ‘Walk In and Out’ event. It sounds like fun. I’ve never walked 10 miles before, so it will be a challenge. I know Titus through band. I didn’t recognize him in September, and it wasn’t the mask. He looks completely different. He seems happier, too. Titus has always been funny, but a lot of his humor was self-deprecating. I don’t think it made him feel good about himself. If walking can make Titus happier, maybe it can make me happier, too.”

■ DON CHIRO, band director

“The entire fine arts team of teachers will participate in the walking event on Saturday. Not only do we want to show our support, but it’s a healthy way to spend the day. Titus has inspired several of us to start walking. I am up to 2 miles a night with my wife and daughter. It’s my favorite part of the day now. Walking allows us to reconnect and refocus after long days at school.”

■ ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Merrell’s Groceries is donating bagels, fruit and bottled water for the event. Participants are encouraged to bring their own water bottles and snacks. The event begins at 9 a.m. and is expected to end around 12:30 p.m.

DO NOT DISTRIBUTE TO STUDENTS BEFORE OR DURING THE CONTEST!

REGION • 2021 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 student who lost weight walking during the pandemic and has planned an event for the school.

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 prompt as you can. Some judges will not want you to wander off the subject too much.

Before the pandemic, junior Titus Montgomery was definitely not a fitness fanatic.

“My motto was: I exercise my mouth by talking, and that is all the exercise I need,” he said.

Over the past year, his motto has changed. On the advice of his mother, Titus began taking long walks during the pandemic to fend off depression and loneliness.

“When she first suggested that I walk, I laughed,” he said. “My longest walk at that time was from my bedroom to the refrigerator.”

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

Now, almost a year later, Titus is 35 pounds lighter and walks 6 miles daily. He feels great and wants to share it. Next Saturday, Titus and his walking crew are sponsoring a “Walk In and Out” event at the school track. The event is a 10-mile walk where teens “walk out” negative feelings and “walk in” positive ones.

direct quote

“We hope the Saturday event is the beginning for many students,” he said.

4. After you get past the nut graph, the rest of the story can tell itself through the use of the 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 (“Titus said,” not “said Titus”). 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

So far 110 students have signed up for the event, and students who are interested can sign up in the band hall until Friday.

direct quote

“The entire fine arts team of teachers will participate in the walking event on Saturday,” band director Don Chiro said. “Not only do we want to show our support, but it’s a healthy way to spend the day.”

transition/story-telling

When Titus first started his walking regimen, he never thought he would lose so much weight.

direct quote

“That wasn’t my goal at all when I started,” he said.

5. Always use third person. Don’t say “our student” or “our own Titus.” Also, do not editorialize. For instance, you should not say “Titus is so lucky.” 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.

In middle school, Titus said he got used to being called “Tubby Titus.”

“I was the funny, fat kid, and I was OK with that,” he said.

But not anymore. Titus is fit and feels great.

“I love how I feel, and I love walking,” he said. “I want to share this with everyone.”

SAMPLE STORY

Before the pandemic, junior Titus Montgomery was definitely not a fitness fanatic.

“My motto was: I exercise my mouth by talking, and that is all the exercise I need,” he said.

Over the past year, his motto has changed. On the advice of his mother, Titus began taking long walks during the pandemic to fend off depression and loneliness.

“When she first suggested that I walk, I laughed,” he said. “My longest walk at that time was from my bedroom to the refrigerator.”

Now, almost a year later, Titus is 35 pounds lighter and walks 6 miles daily. He feels great and wants to share his experience. Next Saturday, Titus and his walking crew are sponsoring a “Walk In and Out” event at the school track. The event is a 10-mile walk where teens “walk out” negative feelings and “walk in” positive ones.

“We hope the Saturday event is the beginning for many students,” he said.

So far, 110 students have signed up for the event, and students who are interested can sign up in the band hall until Friday.

“The entire fine arts team of teachers will participate in the walking event on Saturday,” band director Don Chiro said. “Not only do we want to show our support, but it’s a healthy way to spend the day.”

When Titus first started his walking regimen, he never thought he would lose so much weight.

“That wasn’t my goal at all when I started,” he said.

His goal was to feel better. A self-described extrovert, Titus said the isolation of the pandemic started to throw him into a depression.

“The pandemic hit me pretty hard,” he said. “I am extremely social, and all of the sudden I was cut off from all of my friends and even most of my family. It was just me and my parents at my house. My parents are great, but they are introverts and work long hours.”

After realizing he liked his walks, Titus began sharing his experiences with some of his friends, who also started walking.

“Often, my friends and I would walk at the same time and call and text throughout the walk,” he said. “Walking turned into my social activity. I was moving my mouth and my feet.”

Junior Damien Brown, who is in the walking crew and has lost 22 pounds, said he thought Titus was a “little crazy” when he started walking.

“Walking is exercise, and I wasn’t that guy,” he said. “Then, Titus started sending us photos and calling us during his walks. It piqued my interest, so I started walking. I mean, what else was I going to do? It turns out that I like walking almost as much as playing video games.”

In June, Titus started to notice his shorts were getting saggy, but it wasn’t until August that he got on the scale.

“I couldn’t believe the numbers,” he said. “I probably weighed myself 15 times. I was under 200 pounds. I don’t think I have been under 200 pounds since sixth grade.”

When school resumed in September, Titus and his friends started walking the 3-mile trek to and from school each day.

“Coming back to school was weird,” he said. “Some people didn’t even recognize me because I was so much thinner.”

In middle school, Titus said he got used to being called “Tubby Titus.”

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