

Feature Writing

Invitational A Meet • 2023



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 East Texas, has 1,800 students in grades 9-12. On the morning of Wednesday, Dec. 21, senior Trayvon Parker was driving in his pickup truck with two football teammates, sophomore Antwon Adams and junior Cesar Hernandez, when they saw a vehicle collision while exiting the highway to go to school. One of the two SUVs involved in the crash spun off the road and sustained major damage to the doors. Trayvon pulled over and Antwon called 911. As they were speaking with the emergency response team on the phone, they noticed a woman trapped in her car. All three jumped out of the truck and headed toward the vehicle to try and free the woman. Another football player, sophomore James Moore, pulled up behind them in a car with his mother and jumped out to help with the rescue.

The woman, 66-year-old Tracy Blaylock, was trapped in her SUV as all four doors were damaged in the wreck and would not open. Tracy was wearing her seatbelt and sustained minor injuries, a cut on her face and a concussion from the deployed airbags. Working together, the football players managed to open the driver-side door and remove Blaylock from the car and pull her away from the wreck.

At the city council meeting Monday, Jan. 9, the mayor will honor all four students with the Hometown Hero Award. You are writing for the issue of the Press to be distributed Friday, Jan. 6.

■ TRAYVON PARKER, senior offensive lineman

The whole thing was over in about a minute. I was trying to get to my physics exam on time, but we saw the crash about three or four cars in front of us on the service road as we were coming off the ramp to get to school. We saw one car that looked OK, but the other one spun off the road and had lots of smoke coming up out of the hood. So we called 911, and that was when we noticed the lady was trapped in her car. We could tell she was in pain and she was crying for help. I saw some blood on her face. So we all just looked at each other and hustled to get that woman out of the car.

“The door was jammed in place, but there were two little openings around the windows where we could squeeze our hands in and try to pull it off. We’re all pretty big dudes, since we have to work out for football, but it took all three of us – me, Cesar and Antwon – to open this door. We saw James pull up and he ran over to check on the other driver. Luckily that guy wasn’t injured or anything. Then the ambulance and police came and took over from there. I’m just glad we were pulling up to the school at that time because it took all three of us big dudes using all our muscles to get her out. We were late to our semester exams, but it was worth it to be able to help someone like that.”

■ **TRACY BLAYLOCK, crash victim**

“I was so scared after the crash, I didn’t know what to do. I was just driving, and then I felt a jolt like I got punched in the face. I could feel the car spinning around, and then I felt blood dripping down my face. I tried to open the door to get away, but it was jammed. I was so scared my car might blow up like in the movies. Then Trayvon, Antwon and Cesar came to the rescue.

“I volunteered at the Leaguetown Chamber of Commerce Gala last year, so I know the mayor pretty well. I called her and told her my rescue story, and she immediately wanted to honor the boys with the Hometown Hero Award. I know they’re big football guys, but these boys are absolutely my guardian angels. They even came to visit me after I got home from the hospital that evening with their football coach and brought me cookies. That’s just the kind of guys they are, and I guess that’s the kind of football team Leaguetown has.”

■ **ANTWON ADAMS, sophomore offensive lineman**

“Coach Watson always told us that as members of the football team, we’re leaders in the school and in the community. But even if we weren’t on the football team, I still think all four of us would have stopped to help that lady out. That’s what human beings are supposed to do. Still, it feels good to get so much love from different places. The school even put a thing on Twitter with our picture that says ‘Proud of our Team.’ We appreciate the recognition, but it just feels like we did the right thing.”

■ **SCOTT WATSON, head football coach and athletic coordinator**

“These four young men are some of the finest athletes and students I’ve had the privilege to coach. So it was no surprise to me that they did something like this. Everything about this story, from start to finish, just exemplifies what it means to be on this football team. It’s the teamwork. Taking risks. It’s working together to overcome a challenge, and these are the types of things these boys do every day during practice and during football season when we’re on the field. Big credit to their parents for raising these kids to be excellent citizens, willing to stop what they’re doing and help their fellow humans. We’re so proud of these boys.”

■ **CHRISTY EHRMENTRAUT, mayor of Leaguetown**

“We are proud of these four students and their heroic efforts. They are examples of what it means to be a Leaguetowner, and they are my personal hometown heroes. It’s an honor to be able to give them the Hometown Hero Award.”

■ **ADDITIONAL INFORMATION**

The driver of the other car did not sustain injuries. The students received a free tardy pass when they arrived at school late on Dec. 21 and were able to complete their semester exams.

DO NOT DISTRIBUTE TO STUDENTS BEFORE OR DURING THE CONTEST!

Invitational A • 2023 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 four students helping a woman after a car accident.

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.

After spinning off the road, Tracy Blaylock was terrified when she realized she was stuck in her car. Tears rolling down her face, she tried to escape. Then six helping hands pulled open the door and rescued her from her smoking car.

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

Football players Trayvon Parker, Antwon Adams, Cesar Hernandez and James Moore will receive a Hometown Hero Award from the mayor at the Jan. 9 city council meeting for calling 911 and rushing to help after witnessing a car crash on their way to school.

direct quote

"The whole thing was over in about a minute," senior offensive lineman Trayvon Parkersaid. "We saw one SUV that looked OK, but the other car had spun off the road and had lots of smoke coming out of the hood. So we called 911, and that was when we noticed the lady was trapped in her car."

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 ("Blaylock said," not "said Blaylock"). 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

Together, the three boys pulled Blaylock out of her car, and paramedics took over from there. She sustained minor injuries, a cut on her face and a concussion from the deployed airbags.

direct quote

“We could tell she was in pain and she was crying for help,” Trayvon said. “I saw some blood on her face. So we all just looked at each other and hustled to get that woman out of the car.”

transition/story-telling

After the crash, the boys continued on their way to school and received free tardy passes so they could take their semester exams. They also visited Blaylock later that day to check on her and bring her cookies.

direct quote

“I know they’re big football guys, but these boys are absolutely my guardian angels,” Blaylock said. “That’s just the kind of guys they are, and I guess that’s the kind of football team Leaguetown has.”

5. Always use third person. Don’t say “our student” or “our own football team.” Also, do not editorialize. For instance, you should not say “They are amazing heroes.” 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.

Blaylock, who has worked with the mayor before, told Mayor Christy Ehrmentraut about her crash and how the boys helped her.

“We are proud of these four students and their heroic efforts,” Mayor Ehrmentraut said. “They are examples of what it means to be a Leaguetowner, and they are my personal hometown heroes. It’s an honor to be able to give them the Hometown Hero Award.”

But according to sophomore Antwon Adams, the teammates were just doing what any good person would do.

“Coach Watson always told us that as members of the football team, we’re leaders in the school and in the community,” he said. “But even if we weren’t on the football team, I still think all four of us would have stopped to help that lady out. That’s what human beings are supposed to do. We appreciate the recognition, but it just feels like we did the right thing.”

SAMPLE STORY

After spinning off the road, Tracy Blaylock was terrified when she realized she was stuck in her car. Tears rolling down her face, she tried to escape. Then six helping hands pulled open the door and rescued her from her smoking car.

Football players Trayvon Parker, Antwon Adams, Cesar Hernandez and James Moore will receive a Hometown Hero Award from the mayor at the Jan. 9 city council meeting for calling 911 and rushing to help after witnessing a car crash on their way to school.

“The whole thing was over in about a minute,” senior offensive lineman Trayvon Parker said. “We saw one car that looked OK, but the other car had spun off the road and had lots of smoke coming out of the hood. So we called 911, and that was when we noticed the lady was trapped in her car.”

While Trayvon, Antwon and Cesar witnessed the crash and ran to Blaylock in her car, sophomore James Moore pulled up to the scene and made sure the person in the other car was safe.

“I was so scared after the crash, I didn’t know what to do,” Blaylock said. “I tried to open the door to get away, but it was jammed. I was so scared my car might blow up like in the movies. Then Trayvon, Antwon and Cesar came to the rescue.”

Together, the three boys pulled Blaylock out of her car, and paramedics took over from there. She sustained minor injuries, a cut on her face and a concussion from the deployed airbags.

“We could tell she was in pain, and she was crying for help,” Trayvon said. “I saw some blood on her face. So we all just looked at each other and hustled to get that woman out of the car.”

After the crash, the boys continued on their way to school and received free tardy passes so they could take their semester exams. They also visited Blaylock later that day to check on her and bring her cookies.

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Since the crash, the school’s Twitter account posted a picture of the boys with the caption, “Proud of our Team.”

“These four young men are some of the finest athletes and students I’ve had the privilege to coach,” head football coach Scott Watson said. “So it was no surprise to me that they did something like this. Everything about this story, from start to finish, just exemplifies what it means to be on this football team.”

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