

# Feature Writing

## Invitational B 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 has 4,100 students in grades 9-12. On Thursday, Feb. 9, senior Esmeralda Sosa was on duty as a lifeguard at the Leaguetown Community Indoor Pool and Recreation Center. It was a slow afternoon with only six people in the pool. One couple, Lauren and Jacob Frazier, were swimming in the main pool. Lauren was pregnant and resting on a pool float with her eyes closed while Jacob swam laps.

After about 20 minutes in the pool, Lauren rolled off her float and waded toward the steps, calling for Jacob and telling him it was time to go. She made it out of the water and onto her hands and knees and let out a scream. That's when Esmeralda realized Lauren was in labor. As Jacob gathered the couple's belongings to go to the hospital, Esmeralda hopped down from her lifeguard chair to check on them. They told Esmeralda they would not make it to the hospital and would have the baby on the floor next to the pool.

Esmeralda rushed for her emergency medical bags and a stack of towels and asked another swimmer to call 911. After about seven minutes, the couple delivered a safe and healthy baby at the pool, with the help of Esmeralda, before paramedics arrived to transport the family to the nearest hospital.

The school board will honor Esmeralda and tell her story at its monthly meeting on Monday, Feb. 27. You are writing for the issue of the Press to be distributed Friday, Feb. 24.

### ■ **ESMERALDA SOSA, senior and lifeguard**

"I've always seen women giving birth on TV, but it was nothing like this. It was amazing to see something so wonderful happening to this family, bringing a new human being into the world. But it was also kind of crazy and a little scary.

"This woman was peacefully floating in the pool when she rolled off her float and started crawling up the pool steps. I wondered if she was OK, but I figured maybe she was too uncomfortable being so pregnant. She was just a couple feet from the rail when she got on all fours and started screaming. When I heard that scream, my adrenaline kicked in. I rushed for my medical bags and towels after I made sure another swimmer was calling 911.

"During the delivery, I was trying to help any way I could, trying to support the mother and make sure she was comfortable while the dad was on the phone with the 911 dispatcher. I gave her some of the towels to try and support her head. I was talking to both the parents as calmly as I could. I wanted them to feel relaxed. They were both extremely calm, but I was shaking the entire time. But I knew I needed to be there and help them because that's what I'm there to do. I'm the lifesaver on duty.

"After the baby was born, the dad handed me the phone to talk to the

### ■ **ESMERALDA SOSA, continued**

dispatcher so he could take care of the baby. They talked me through how to make sure the baby was breathing, so I had to watch for his chest going up and down. I had to clean out the baby's mouth with my finger to make sure his airway wasn't blocked. When the paramedics showed up, they cut the umbilical cord and took mom and baby to the hospital. The whole thing was over in about 20 minutes, so I cleaned myself up and got back up in my chair and finished my afternoon shift. Normally as I lifeguard, I sit in the chair and don't do much other than watch people swim or remind kids not to run around the pool. But we always have to be prepared. It was such an amazing day. My teammates on the swim team didn't believe it when I told them."

### ■ **LAUREN FRAZIER, mother who gave birth at the pool**

"The baby was positioned in a really uncomfortable place in my tummy, putting a lot of pressure on my hips. Even laying in bed was incredibly painful. The pool was honestly the only place I've been able to relax for the past month or so. I had also been feeling contractions every once in a while for the past few weeks, so I didn't think anything of it when I felt contractions on that day, but that last one that made me get out of the pool was something different. It was a contraction with painful pressure. By then, I think I knew the baby was coming and coming fast. I'm so grateful Esmeralda was there to help get us through this. There's something so caring and nurturing about the way she stepped in. Now, we have a baby son, Anthony, and we owe so much to her. I'll keep Esmeralda in my heart forever."

### ■ **JACOB FRAZIER, father**

"I was in shock, but Esmeralda's quick thinking was just the motivation I needed to help deliver my son and take care of him. She took care of Lauren while I took care of Anthony. She had the most comforting voice and kept us focused the entire time."

### ■ **AMANDA GAVIN, head swim coach**

"I knew Esmeralda when she was in elementary school and her parents would bring her to the rec center for swimming lessons. She's always been a fast swimmer and a great teammate, but I didn't know she had it in her to help people like this. It's good to know there's someone like her on our team."

### ■ **MICHAEL GUTIERREZ, superintendent**

"We are proud of Esmeralda for stepping in to help this couple in their time of need. In Leaguetown ISD, we emphasize citizenship and character among our core values. We are excited to honor her at the school board meeting and hold her up as an example to other students."

### ■ **ADDITIONAL INFORMATION**

Esmeralda hopes to swim competitively in college. Last year her team won a bronze medal at State in the 200 medley relay, where she swam the breast stroke.

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

## Invitational B • 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 a student lifeguard helping a couple give birth at the pool.

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.

In the span of 20 minutes, senior Esmeralda Sosa went from a normal day of lifeguarding to delivering a baby on the floor by the pool.

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**

On Feb. 9, she helped deliver the son of Lauren and Jacob Frazier, who were at the Leaguetown Community Indoor Pool the day Esmeralda was working. The school board will honor Esmeralda and tell her story at its monthly meeting on Monday, Feb. 27.

### **direct quote**

"This woman was peacefully floating in the pool when she rolled off her float and started crawling up the pool steps," Esmeralda said. "She was just a couple feet from the rail when she got on all fours and started screaming."

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 ("Sosa said," not "said Sosa"). 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**

Esmeralda's adrenaline kicked in immediately when she realized Lauren was in labor and wouldn't make it to the hospital.

**direct quote**

“I was talking to both the parents as calmly as I could,” Esmeralda said. “I wanted them to feel relaxed. They were both extremely calm, but I was shaking the entire time. But I knew I needed to be there and help them because that’s what I’m there to do. I’m the lifesaver on duty.”

**transition/story-telling**

Esmeralda grabbed a medical bag and a stack of towels while directing another swimmer at the pool to dial 911.

**direct quote**

“I was in shock, but Esmeralda’s quick thinking was just the motivation I needed to help deliver my son and take care of him,” Jacob Frazier said. “She had the most comforting voice and kept us focused the entire time.”

5. Always use third person. Don’t say “our student” or “our school board.” Also, do not editorialize. For instance, you should not say “She is a hero.” 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.

Anthony Frazier was welcomed into the world that afternoon by two loving parents – and one lifeguard.

“I’m so grateful Esmeralda was there to help get us through this,” Lauren Fraizer said. “There’s something so caring and nurturing about the way she stepped in. Now, we have a baby son, Anthony, and we owe so much to her. I’ll keep Esmeralda in my heart forever.”

## SAMPLE STORY

In the span of 20 minutes, senior Esmeralda Sosa went from a normal day of lifeguarding to delivering a baby on the floor by the pool.

On Feb. 9, she helped deliver the son of Lauren and Jacob Frazier, who were at the Leaguetown Community Indoor Pool the day Esmeralda was working. The school board will honor Esmeralda and tell her story at its monthly meeting on Monday, Feb. 27.

“This woman was peacefully floating in the pool when she rolled off her float and started crawling up the pool steps,” Esmeralda said. “She was just a couple feet from the rail when she got on all fours and started screaming.”

Esmeralda’s adrenaline kicked in immediately when she realized Lauren was in labor and wouldn’t make it to the hospital.

“I was talking to both the parents as calmly as I could,” Esmeralda said. “I wanted them to feel relaxed. They were both extremely calm, but I was shaking the entire time. But I knew I needed to be there and help them because that’s what I’m there to do. I’m the lifesaver on duty.”

Esmeralda grabbed a medical bag and a stack of towels while directing another swimmer at the pool to dial 911.

“I was in shock, but Esmeralda’s quick thinking was just the motivation I needed to help deliver my son and take care of him,” Jacob Frazier said. “She had the most comforting voice and kept us focused the entire time.”

With the help of Esmeralda, the couple delivered a healthy baby boy, and she did a quick health check on the baby while talking to paramedics over the phone. Paramedics arrived shortly after the birth and transported the family to the hospital, and Esmeralda completed her afternoon shift at the recreation center.

“Normally as a lifeguard, I sit in the chair and don’t do much other than watch people swim or remind kids not to run around the pool,” Esmeralda said. “But we always have to be prepared. It was such an amazing day. My teammates on the swim team didn’t believe it when I told them.”

Esmeralda is a competitive swimmer for the high school and hopes to continue her passion through college as well.

“We are proud of Esmeralda for stepping in to help this couple in their time of need,” Superintendent Michael Gutierrez said. “In Leaguetown ISD, we emphasize citizenship and character among our core values.”

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“I’m so grateful Esmeralda was there to help get us through this, “ Lauren Frazier said. “There’s something so caring and nurturing about the way she stepped in. Now, we have a baby son, Anthony, and we owe so much to her. I’ll keep Esmeralda in my heart forever.”