

Feature Writing

State Meet • 2018



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 (NOT YOUR NAME) on your paper.**

Leaguetown High School has an enrollment of 1,100 students in grades 9-12. When senior Patrick Manubay was 10 years old, his mother was diagnosed with Stage 4 pancreatic cancer. She died four months after the initial diagnosis, leaving behind her husband and three young children. For several years, Patrick didn't talk about his mother's death. He was a quiet and withdrawn child who helped his father raise his two younger sisters. When Patrick was a sophomore, five years after his mother's death, his aunt gave him a letter his mother wrote to him before her death. In the letter, she wrote how proud she was of him and how she knew he would change the world for the better one day. Motivated by the letter, Patrick designed a website for a fundraiser project — Five for Life. Patrick thought if he got 5,000 people to donate \$5 each, then he could raise \$25,000 for the Pancreatic Cancer Research Fund (PCRF).

Patrick's fundraiser started slow. The first year, he raised a little more than \$1,000. Frustrated by his progress, Patrick reached out to his school counselor for ideas and suggestions. She suggested Patrick make a video to promote the fundraiser and upload it to YouTube.

Patrick spent the summer before his senior year making the video — using old videos of his mother and interviewing his sisters and dad. He uploaded the video in September and promoted it on his social media. His friends and family members also promoted it. The video went viral with more than 1 million views. Donations poured in.

Next weekend at the town's Spring Fling Festival, Patrick will present a check for \$500,000 to the director of PCRF, and he hopes the donations will continue. You are writing for the issue of the Press to be distributed this Wednesday, May 9.

■ PATRICK MANUBAY, senior

"After my mom died, I pretty much withdrew from the world. I helped my dad with my sisters who were 7 and 8 years old, but that's about the only people I spoke to other than teachers when I had to. I was sad. I was angry. I was jealous of my peers who had moms. My dad was worried about me being withdrawn, and he tried sending me to a counselor. I protested and said I was OK. I told him I was shy — that's why I didn't have friends. I think he was too tired to argue.

"When I read the letter my mom wrote, everything changed. Her words woke me up. I knew I was wasting my life, and that she would have been disappointed in me. I couldn't stand the thought of that. She was the best person I ever knew. She was always so happy, even after she was diagnosed with cancer. Her smile never left her face. Everything she did was for us — her children. My childhood until I was 10 was like a storybook — a really good storybook. Then she died. She left us. She left me, and I was lost. That letter found me. I found me, too. I wasn't happy with who I had become.

■ **PATRICK MANUBAY (continued)**

“The idea to start a fundraiser for PCRF was my dad’s. When I showed him the letter and told him I was not changing the world, he suggested this. Never in my wildest dreams did I think I would raise half a million dollars. Never. And I’m not done yet.

“It was the video that changed everything, so I owe Ms. Wilcox a huge thank you. The video starts with clips of my mom and us. In every clip she’s laughing and so full of life. Then, I interviewed my sisters and dad about their memories of my mom. It was tough listening to their stories and editing those videos of my mom. I still miss her so much. But I wanted the world to see who pancreatic cancer took. I wanted the world to know how much her loss hurt our family. No other family should have to go through this. I end the video with a plea — a simple plea for \$5. Five dollars and you make a difference.

“The PCRF is working hard on early detection of pancreatic cancer, which is the key right now. Early detection means a long life — a life where cancer doesn’t win.”

■ **JOHN MANUBAY, Patrick’s father**

“When Patrick first showed me the letter my wife had written to him, my heart melted. Seeing her handwriting and hearing her words, it was like she was still with us. I knew before she died she had written letters to the kids, but I didn’t realize she had written this one specifically for Patrick. But that’s how she was. She knew, somehow, he would need to hear her words when he was a teen.

“Patrick has exceeded all of my expectations. His dedication to this project and his devotion to his mother makes me beyond proud. And I know my wife is proud, too.”

■ **ASHLYNN WILCOX, school counselor**

“Patrick’s video of his mother is heart-wrenching. It is so beautifully done that I doubt anyone can watch it with dry eyes. I wasn’t surprised that the video went viral, and I am thrilled the donations rolled in so quickly. Patrick is a model for all of our students. He is proof that one teen can make a huge difference in the world.”

■ **CASPIA ROPPA, Patrick’s aunt**

“My sister gave me that letter days before she died. She said to wait to give it to Patrick until he was older. My sister knew her son would struggle with her death. Patrick was so close to his mother. He adored her, and she adored him. It was a closeness that is so unique and special. I knew the letter would impact Patrick, but I had no idea how much. My sister is smiling now. I know she is.”

■ **XENIA ENDER, director of PCRF**

“When Patrick first contacted me about his idea for Five for Life, I was touched and thought it was a wonderful idea. I doubted, though, he could raise \$25,000. Pancreatic cancer is not in the media like breast cancer. It’s not as well-known. Then Patrick sent me his video. He blew me away and about a million other viewers. The donation is incredible. It will enable us to continue our research. We are so close to new early detection methods. This donation gets us closer to our goal — eradicating pancreatic cancer.”

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION:

Pancreatic cancer is one of the most deadly forms of cancer. The American Cancer Society reports about 85 percent of people with pancreatic cancer die from it. It’s so lethal because during the early stages, when the tumor would be most treatable, there are usually no symptoms. It tends to be discovered at advanced stages when abdominal pain or jaundice may result — which is what happened to Patrick’s mother.

DO NOT DISTRIBUTE TO STUDENTS BEFORE OR DURING CONTEST!

STATE • 2018 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 senior who raised half a million dollars for a cancer research fund.

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.

After his mother's death from pancreatic cancer, senior Patrick Manubay said he was lost.

"I was sad," he said. "I was angry. I was jealous of my peers who had moms." So he lived his life withdrawn, speaking only when he had to.

Then, when he was 15, his aunt gave him a letter from his mother, and "everything changed."

"Her words woke me up," he said. "I knew I was wasting my life, and that she would have been disappointed in 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

Disappointing his mother was the last thing Patrick wanted to do, so after talking with this father, he jumped into action. Patrick created a website and started a fundraiser project — Five for Life- — with a goal that 5,000 people donate \$5 each to the Pancreatic Cancer Research Fund (PCRF).

direct quote

"The PCRF is working hard on early detection of pancreatic cancer, which is the key right now," Patrick said. "Early detection means a long life — a life where cancer doesn't win."

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 (“Patrick said,” not “said Patrick”). Don’t stack quotes. You need a transition sentence between direct quotes, and that transition sentence should provide facts or data. Also, make sure transitions do not repeat information told in a direct quote.

transition/story-telling

The fundraising was slow the first year, raising a little more than \$1,000. Patrick shared his frustrations with school counselor Ashlynn Wilcox, who suggested he make a video and post it on YouTube to promote the fundraiser. Patrick did. The video went viral, and the donations poured in.

direct quote

“Never in my wildest dreams did I think I would raise half a million dollars,” he said. “Never. And I’m not done yet.”

transition/story-telling

Next weekend at the town’s Spring Fling Festival, Patrick will present a check for \$500,000 to Xenia Ender, the PCRF director.

direct quote

“When Patrick first contacted me about his idea for Five for Life, I was touched and thought it was a wonderful idea,” Ender said. “I doubted, though, he could raise \$25,000. Pancreatic cancer is not in the media like breast cancer. It’s not as well-known.”

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

6. Use the verb “said” as the verb of attribution unless you have a very good reason not to. For example, if someone asks something, use the verb “asked.” If someone added something, you could use “added.” Otherwise, use “said.”

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

Mr. Manubay said his son has exceeded all of his expectations and knows his wife is proud of their son. And that is all Patrick has ever wanted.

“She was the best person I ever knew,” he said. “She was always so happy, even after she was diagnosed with cancer.

“That letter found me. I found me, too.”

SAMPLE STORY

After his mother's death from pancreatic cancer, senior Patrick Manubay said he was lost.

"I was sad," he said. "I was angry. I was jealous of my peers who had moms."

So he lived his life withdrawn, speaking only when he had to.

Then, when he was 15, his aunt gave him a letter from his mother, and "everything changed."

"Her words woke me up," he said. "I knew I was wasting my life, and that she would have been disappointed in me."

Disappointing his mother was the last thing Patrick ever wanted to do, so after talking with this father, he jumped into action. Patrick created a website and started a fundraiser project — Five for Life — with a goal that 5,000 people donate \$5 each to the Pancreatic Cancer Research Fund (PCRF).

"The PCRF is working hard on early detection of pancreatic cancer, which is the key right now," Patrick said. "Early detection means a long life — a life where cancer doesn't win."

The fundraising was slow the first year, raising a little more than \$1,000. Patrick shared his frustrations with school counselor Ashlynn Wilcox, who suggested he make a video on YouTube to promote the fundraiser. Patrick did. The video went viral, and the donations poured in.

"Never in my wildest dreams did I think I would raise half a million dollars," he said. "Never. And I'm not done yet."

Next weekend at the town's Spring Fling Festival, Patrick will give a check for \$500,000 to Xenia Ender, the PCRF director.

"When Patrick first contacted me about his idea for Five for Life, I was touched and thought it was a wonderful idea," Ender said. "I doubted, though, he could raise \$25,000. Pancreatic cancer is not in the media like breast cancer. It's not as well-known."

Then Patrick created his video and sent Ender the link.

"He blew me away and about a million other viewers," she said.

Patrick admits it was hard making the video, which includes interviews with his dad and sisters and short videos of his mom.

"In every clip, she's laughing and so full of life," Patrick said. "I wanted the world to see who pancreatic cancer took. I wanted the world to know how much her loss hurt our family.

"No other family should have to go through this. I end the video with a plea — a simple plea for \$5. Five dollars and you make a difference."

Pancreatic cancer is one of the most deadly forms of cancer. During the early stages of the disease, when the tumor is most treatable, there are usually no symptoms. The cancer tends to be discovered at advanced stages when the tumor and cancer have caused extensive damage.

Patrick's mother was not diagnosed in the early stages. Four months after she was initially diagnosed with the cancer, she died.

"My sister knew her son would struggle with her death," Caspia Roppa, Patrick's aunt, said. "Patrick was so close to his mother. He adored her, and she adored him. I knew the letter would impact Patrick, but I had no idea how much."

Patrick's father, John Manubay, said he didn't know his wife had written a letter specifically to Patrick.

"But that's how she was," his father said. "She knew, somehow, he would need to hear her words when he was a teen."

Mr. Manubay said his son has exceeded all of his expectations and knows his wife is proud of their son. And that is all Patrick has ever wanted.

"She was the best person I ever knew," Patrick said. "She was always so happy, even after she was diagnosed with cancer.

"That letter found me. I found me, too."