

# Feature Writing

District 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 2,100 students in grades 9-12. During the pandemic, many families in Leaguetown adopted new dogs and cats. In fact, the local animal shelter said at one point it had only four dogs and six cats available for adoption. Usually the shelter has around 15 to 20 dogs and the same number of cats. Junior Kamela Gopalan volunteers at the shelter and has always wanted a dog or cat, but her parents both suffer from cat hair and dog hair allergies. Kamela has never had a pet other than a goldfish she won at the school carnival in elementary school. During the pandemic, Kamela tried to talk her parents into adopting a poodle, a dog breed that doesn't shed, but her parents refused.

While working at the animal shelter in January, a man dropped off two baby female pigs that he found on his parents' property near Corpus Christi. The man said he lived in an apartment and couldn't keep the pigs. The shelter manager also wasn't sure what to do with the pigs. On a whim, Kamela took the pigs home. Her parents fell in love with them, and the family adopted them. Kamela named the pigs Marge and Maggie after her favorite cartoon show, "The Simpsons."

Since bringing the pigs home, Kamela has house-trained them, taught them how to walk on a leash and taught them several tricks, including how to sit and put a small ball in a basket. The pigs sleep on dog beds in her bedroom.

A month ago, Kamela started making daily TikTok videos of the pigs doing tricks and interacting with her and her family. Now, Kamela has 20,000 followers. Last week, two pet food companies reached out to her because they are interested in sponsoring her videos.

You are writing for the issue of the Press to be distributed Tuesday, March 30.

## ■ KAMELA GOPALAN, junior

"Ever since I was little, I dreamed of having my own pet, but my parents are too allergic to dogs and cats. Volunteering at the Leaguetown Animal Shelter made me want a pet even more. I don't have siblings, so life was pretty lonely during much of the pandemic. I saw so many of my friends getting pets. Then, one day that changed. When the pigs were dropped off, the manager was freaking out a little. She had no idea what to do with them. I offered to take them home just for the night. We have a super-big backyard.

"I didn't think my parents would let me keep the pigs, but they fell in love immediately. I mean, it would be kind of hard not to fall in love with them. They are the sweetest little girls. They are all pink and fuzzy. They snuggle — just like a puppy — and squeal in delight when you rub their bellies. The first night my mom let them inside after I went to bed and slept with them in the living room. By the time I woke up the next morning, my parents had already researched how to house train them. Every day the girls amaze me. They are so smart. They never have accidents in the house. When they need to go outside, they ring the

### ■ **KAMELA GOPALAN (cont.)**

bells we have hanging by our backyard door. I started teaching them little tricks like sit, roll over and play dead. They caught on immediately. They will do anything for their treats.

“They love going on walks and exploring the neighborhood. It’s funny. When people see us for the first time, they are always a little apprehensive, but the girls are super friendly and will wiggle up to anyone. My friends suggested I make a video of them doing some of their tricks. I never thought so many people would watch the videos, nor did I ever dream a company would want to sponsor them. It’s surreal. My dad is checking on the legal stuff with sponsorship. It would be great to make money, though. I want to go to college in Colorado, but it’s expensive. This could help offset those costs.

“I am worried about when I go back to school. I am still attending school virtually. Marge and Maggie follow me all day long. They are super attached to me and my parents. When we watch movies, they whine until we put them on the couch with us. They love to snuggle. I swear, they watch the movie with us, but I know pigs can’t see that well. It was funny the other night when we were watching ‘Babe.’ The girls heard the pig snorting and both popped their heads and started making little noises. We laughed so hard that I almost fell off the couch. The girls are a part of everything we do now. They complete our family.”

### ■ **SHIRI GOPALAN, Kamela’s mom**

“Who knew that pigs were so lovable? Marge and Maggie are the most popular pets in the neighborhood. Every time Kamela walks them, more neighbors fall in love with them. They have such wonderful personalities. When Kamela brought the pigs home, I thought my husband was going to have a heart attack. Instead, his heart melted. And the best part is, the pigs don’t affect our allergies.

“Kamela’s videos are so sweet. I am not surprised that so many people watch them. They show off the girls’ personalities. At first, I was hesitant for her to post videos, but Kamela talked me into it. It would be amazing if the sponsorships came through, and Kamela is able to save some money for college.”

### ■ **FARRAH SWEENEY, junior**

“Marge and Maggie are incredible. When Kamela said her parents let her keep the two pigs, I thought she was crazy. Pigs for pets? Then I got to meet the girls, and I understood. They are the cutest little things, and they follow Kamela around like she’s their mother. I suggested Kamela create the TikTok videos. I knew they would be a big hit.”

### ■ **ADDITIONAL INFORMATION**

Marge and Maggie are micro-pot-bellied pigs. They each weigh about 20 pounds and will be about 40 to 50 pounds when fully grown. They are both pink and look very similar, but Marge has two small black dots on her back. That is how Kamela tells them apart.

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

## DISTRICT • 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 adopted two pigs and started making TikTok videos about them.

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.

Marge and Maggie will do anything for their treats. Sit. Roll over. Play dead. Not too unusual for dogs, but Marge and Maggie are micro-pot-bellied pigs. And those tricks may just help junior Kamela Gopalan pay for her college tuition. "Every day the girls amaze me," Kamela said. "They are so smart."

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**

After adopting the "girls" in January, Kamela started making daily TikTok videos of the pigs doing tricks and interacting with her and her family. Now, Kamela has 20,000 followers, and last week, two pet food companies said they are interested in sponsoring her videos.

### **direct quote**

"It's surreal," she said. "I never thought so many people would watch the videos, nor did I ever dream a company would want to sponsor them. My dad is checking on the legal stuff with sponsorship. It would be great to make money, though. I want to go to college in Colorado, but it's expensive."

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

Marge and Maggie joined Kamela’s family after a man dropped the pigs off at the local animal shelter where Kamela volunteers.

**direct quote**

“When the pigs were dropped off, the manager was freaking out a little,” she said. “She had no idea what to do with them. I offered to take them home just for the night.”

**transition/story-telling**

Kamela didn’t think her parents, who have dog and cat allergies, would let her keep the pigs, but it was instant love.

**direct quote**

“I mean, it would be kind of hard not to fall in love with them,” she said. “They are the sweetest little girls. They are all pink and fuzzy. They snuggle — just like a puppy — and squeal in delight when you rub their bellies.”

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

The girls are “super attached” to the family, Kamela said.

“When we watch movies, they whine until we put them on the couch with us,” she said. “They love to snuggle. I swear, they watch the movie with us, but I know pigs can’t see that well. It was funny the other night when we were watching ‘Babe.’ The girls heard the pig snorting and both popped their heads and started making little noises. We laughed so hard that I almost fell off the couch.

“The girls are a part of everything we do, now. They complete our family.”

**SAMPLE STORY**

Marge and Maggie will do anything for their treats. Sit. Roll over. Play dead. Not too unusual for dogs, but Marge and Maggie are micro-pot-bellied pigs. And those tricks may just help junior Kamela Gopalan pay for her college tuition. “Every day the girls amaze me,” Kamela said. “They are so smart.”

After adopting the “girls” in January, Kamela started making daily TikTok videos of the pigs doing tricks and interacting with her and her family. Now, Kamela has 20,000 followers, and last week, two pet food companies said they are interested in sponsoring her videos.

“It’s surreal,” she said. “I never thought so many people would watch the videos, nor did I ever dream a company would want to sponsor them. My dad is checking on the legal stuff with sponsorship. It would be great to make money, though. I want to go to college in Colorado, but it’s expensive.”

Marge and Maggie joined Kamela’s family after a man dropped the pigs off at the local animal shelter where Kamela volunteers.

“When the pigs were dropped off, the manager was freaking out a little,” she said. “She had no idea what to do with them. I offered to take them home just for the night.”

Kamela didn’t think her parents, who have dog and cat allergies, would let her keep the pigs, but it was instant love.

“I mean, it would be kind of hard not to fall in love with them,” she said. “They are the sweetest little girls. They are all pink and fuzzy. They snuggle — just like a puppy — and squeal in delight when you rub their bellies.”

On the first night with the pigs, Kamela’s mother let the pigs into the house and slept with them in the living room.

“By the time I woke up the next morning, my parents had already researched how to house train them,” she said. “They never have accidents in the house. When they need to go outside, they ring the bells we have hanging by our backyard door.”

The pigs are a dream come true for Kamela. She has wanted a pet since she was little, but her only companion before the pigs was a goldfish she won at an elementary school carnival.

“Volunteering at the Leaguetown Animal Shelter made me want a pet even more,” she said. “I don’t have siblings, so life was pretty lonely during much of the pandemic. I saw so many of my friends getting pets. Then, one day that changed.”

Marge and Maggie, who both weigh about 20 pounds now, are the most popular pets in the neighborhood, said Kamela’s mother Shiri Gopalan.

“Every time Kamela walks them, more neighbors fall in love with them,” her mother said. “They have such wonderful personalities. When Kamela brought the pigs home, I thought my husband was going to have a heart attack. Instead, his heart melted.”

Junior Farrah Sweeney, who said the pigs follow Kamela around like she’s their mother, encouraged her friend to make the TikTok videos.

“I knew they would be a big hit,” she said.

The girls are “super attached” to the family, Kamela said.

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