

# Feature Writing

District 1 Meet • 2013



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 West Texas, has an enrollment of 500 students in grades 9-12. This fall junior Clara Brown was diagnosed with severe aplastic anemia, a rare bone marrow disorder. Since her diagnosis, Clara visits the hospital almost daily for blood checks. She receives platelets and red blood cell transfusions about once a week. The disease leaves Clara fatigued and prone to illnesses and infections. She also has prolonged bleeding even from the smallest of cuts.

On April 26, Clara will undergo a bone marrow transplant. She will receive bone marrow from her 5-year-old sister Ellie who is a perfect match. The transplant will give Clara a new immune system. But before she gets the transplant, she must endure four weeks of chemotherapy to destroy her own bone marrow.

Ellie has a twin named Eve, who is not a perfect match for Clara. Although Eve couldn't give Clara her bone marrow, she is donating her long, curly blond hair for a wig for Clara after the chemo causes her hair to fall out. Clara's first chemotherapy appointment is Thursday, March 28.

You are writing for the issue of the *Press* to be distributed on Monday, March 25.

## ■ CLARA BROWN, junior

"When doctors told us what I had, we were silent. We had never heard of the disease, but we knew what anemia was and didn't think it was that big of a deal. Then the doctors dropped the bomb. I had the most severe type of the disease, and it would likely take my life if I couldn't find a bone marrow transplant. I was stunned. My parents peppered the doctor with questions, but I couldn't say anything. I am 16 years old. I can't imagine dying.

"By the time we left the doctor, my parents were already putting together a list of potential bone marrow donors. Family members are often a match, so my parents and two aunts were tested first. No matches. Then the doctors looked on the national bone marrow list and, again, no match. Each time we got another 'no,' my mom cried. I tried to be strong, but it was hard watching how devastated she was with each phone call.

"Then, my sisters volunteered their 'bow and arrow' to make me better. At first, I refused to have them tested. I didn't want to put them through any pain. But things kept getting worse for me. I was at the hospital every day, and each day my prognosis seemed to get worse.

"When we told the twins that Ellie was a perfect match, Eve cried. She wanted to give me something. She wanted to make me better, too. That is when my mom suggested she give me her hair for a wig. Eve got the scissors right then and told my mom to cut it off. Eve had beautiful long, curly hair. Now, she has a cute, curly bob.

### ■ CLARA BROWN (continued)

“I start my chemotherapy in a few days. I am scared, but it has to be done. My doctor said it would take two doses – two weeks in my case – for my hair to start falling out. I am not going to wait. After the first dose, I am going to shave my head and show off my beautiful blond wig. I was always envious of her hair.

“During chemo and for a few months after the transplant, I will be homebound. I can’t afford to be around anyone who might be sick. My immune system is already so weak, but it is going to get much weaker before it gets stronger.

“I am scared about everything, but I can’t show it. I have these two little, adoring angels watching my every move. I am brave for them. I am brave for my mom. I am brave for me. If I can survive the chemo and transplant, I have a good chance at a normal life. It’s really my only chance.

“I miss being at school, and I miss my friends. With a little luck and a few prayers, I may be able to return for my senior year. That is my goal – a normal, uneventful, healthy senior year.”

### ■ ELLIE BROWN, Clara’s 5-year-old sister

“My bow and arrow will make Clara better. The doctors are going to take it out of my body and put it in hers. It will make her happy and healthy again. She used to always play with us, but now she is so tired. We want her happy.”

### ■ GINGER BROWN, Clara’s mom

“I am so proud of my girls – all three. What brave girls they are. Ellie doesn’t quite understand what will happen, but she knows her sister will get better. And that is all that matters. Ellie and Eve adore their big sister, and they miss her. Clara spends so much time at the hospital and in bed that the twins hardly see her anymore.

“I would give anything to switch places with Clara or Ellie, but I can’t and that hurts. I have to watch as my girls go through this painful process. It’s hard, but their strength and resolve has fueled me.”

### ADDITIONAL INFORMATION:

Before being diagnosed with aplastic anemia, Clara was an A honor roll student, a starter on the girls’ varsity basketball team and a member of the varsity track team. She also played trumpet in the marching band.