



Find the Story

WRITING TRENDS

Mark Newton, Mje • Mountain Vista High School, Highlands Ranch, Colorado



NSPA: best journalism writing



- ❖ The strongest books spent as much time on copy as they did on theme.
- ❖ Put the opinion in quotes. Base copy on observations.
- ❖ Dig for meaningful quotes. Good copy plays on emotions.
- ❖ Cite sources.

NSPA: best journalism writing



- ❖ The strongest books had leads that grabbed your attention without utilizing clichés.
- ❖ Vary caption openers.
- ❖ Adhere to a style guide, such as Associated Press.

NSPA: theme writing

RAMPAGES • Casa Roble H.S. (Orangevale, Calif.)



Welcome to our house... Home has the welcome mat out. Home is eager for its family of 1,500 to crowd the halls again. Home is ready for the only concern of the term to be whether to settle in to the comfort of T's darkroom or dwell with Mr. Grove and the bunsen burners. Home is excited to hear the electrifying, navy mass under the lights. Home knows it's where everyone wants to be. Casa is more than just a school. It's home. And what's ours is yours, but leave your shoes at the door por favor... Mi casa es su casa.

NSPA: feature profile

WINGS • Arrowhead Christian Academy (Modesto, Calif.)



“My cat, Blubberball, was okay with it.”

His nonsensical comment was met with laughter.

“Why was that funny?” he asked softly.

Ferdinand Bellermand shrugged his shoulders and smiled.

Alternating between deep statements and humorous ones, he announced, “I don’t like my name. It’s awful. I’d like something like ‘Bob Joe.’ And I want to be an air traffic controller. Originally I wanted to be a bag man.

NSPA: feature profile

WINGS • Arrowhead Christian Academy (Modesto, Calif.)



bag man. But my mom asked, ‘Why do I send you to private schools if you just want to be a bag man?’”

More laughter. He blinked quizzically.

He was willing to talk about anything, including his recent fight with cancer. His expression sobered as he told his story. His already quiet voice got even lower.

“They had to remove my leg. I had osteosarcoma – bone cancer. The doctor said there was a chance they could

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they could save it, but he told us not to get our hopes up.”

“No one believes me, but it all went really smoothly, amazingly. It usually doesn’t go very well. People get really sick and throw up a lot.”

Ferdinand’s surgery kept him out of school until January. He struggled to make his way up the stairs and through the long walks between classes. P.E. was a challenge of its own.

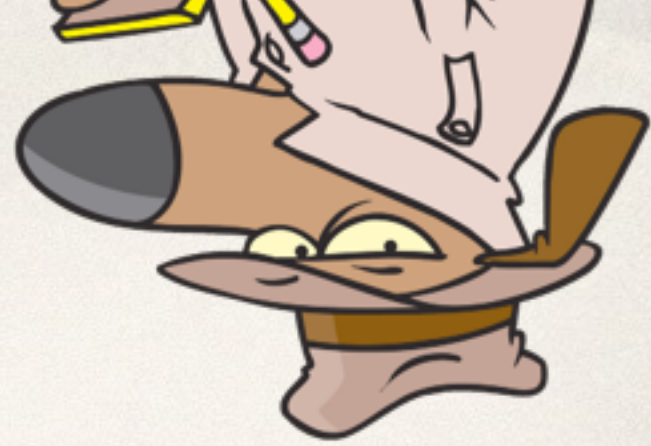
NSPA: feature profile

WINGS • Arrowhead Christian Academy (Modesto, Calif.)



“When [Lori] Breckley says that the other kids are going to run the mile, I just stand there. I don’t run. I can’t run really fast. Or run at all, for that matter.”

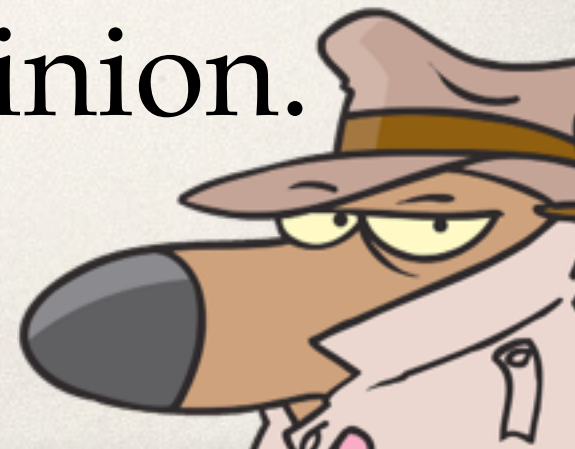
Good journalism copy



- ❖ Doesn't include personal opinion.
- ❖ Includes quotations from real people.
- ❖ Tells readers something beyond the obvious, something they do not know.
- ❖ Provides an interesting angle (approach) to the story.
- ❖ Tells all sides of the story.

Good journalism copy

- ❖ Paints accurate picture with precise words.
- ❖ Uses vivid, descriptive language.
- ❖ Uses clear, concise language.
- ❖ Uses short paragraphs.
- ❖ Uses quotes that deliver strong opinion.
- ❖ Past tense, active voice.



GREAT! journalism copy



- ❖ *Broad copy is bad copy.* Copy should **rekindle the memories** of the reader through **details and specificity**. Avoid general statements like “Prom was fun!”
- ❖ *Ask questions that illicit detailed statements.* Instead of asking, “What was the best part of prom?” say, “Describe the most magical moment of the night in detail.”

HIGH SCHOOL

Unsinkable Mary Beck

Health problems can't slow this national-record holder

MARY BECK had never swum across a 25-yard pool, but the prize was too hard to ignore. She was four years old, and as she sat on the steps to the shallow end at the local pool, one of the summer lifeguards put a Reese's peanut butter cup, her favorite treat, on the other side. "I just remember seeing this orange wrapper at the end of the pool," Beck says. "I couldn't stop."

These days her performances get rewarded with medals—although a Reese still inspires her. Beck, a sophomore at Westlake High in Austin, trains with Randy Reese of Longhorn Aquatics, who has coached 60 Olympians, and with his help she set the national high school record in the 200 individual medley (1:57.41) and won six of her eight races this season. "Mary reminds me of Tracy Caulkins," says Reese, referring to a swimmer of his who was a triple gold medalist at the 1984 Olympics and won national titles in all four strokes. "A lot of people are good for three strokes. Very few have all four to the level Mary does. She can be one of the best."

She is already one of the most remarkable. Beck's success has come despite several physical challenges: She has scoliosis, a 16-degree spinal curvature (for which swimming is a recommended exercise).



CALMING EFFECT Beck found relief from a sensory disorder in the quiet of the water.

function, in which sensory information such as noises or physical touches can feel exaggerated, causing discomfort or confusion. Mary's skin was so sensitive she didn't wear goggles until age 10. "She liked the water because it was quiet," says Martha, a former University of Minnesota swimmer. "It was her own private arena."

Still, Beck is like all other serious swimmers

WESTLAKE HIGH
Austin

THE LIST

NO. 3 IS NO. 1

Two of the top five teams in the nation met in the Texas girls' 5A basketball final on Saturday, and third-ranked **Rockwall** broke through for its first championship, with a 59-54 overtime win against fifth-ranked **Cypress-Fairbanks** (Houston). The SMU-bound **Haley Day** (above) was the game MVP, scoring 15 points, including five of her team's 11 in the extra period. Rockwall, which lost in the state finals last year, finished the season 40-0.



STOPPED COLD

Stone Bridge (Ashburn) had been undefeated and averaging 7.5 goals per game, but in the Northern Virginia Scholastic Hockey League final the Bulldogs were shut down by goaltender **Dylan Barber** of **Osborn Park** (Manassas). The senior had 57 saves in a 3-1 win for the championship.

NO BOYNTON? NO PROBLEM

Even though standout shooting guard **Kenny Boynton** (left) couldn't be there at the end—he fouled out with less than a minute remaining in the fourth quarter—**Blanche Ely** (Pompano Beach) rallied to win the Florida 6A boys' state championship with an 80-77 overtime victory over **Dr. Phillips**



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She is already one of the most remarkable. Beck's success has come despite several physical challenges: She has scoliosis, a 16-degree spinal curvature (for which swimming is a recommended exercise), and last summer she was diagnosed with hypothyroidism, an autoimmune disorder that often leaves her fatigued. (Before Beck began taking medication, "she'd get tired pumping a lotion bottle," says her mother, Martha.) Beck also suffers from Sensory Integration Dys-

WESTLAKE HIGH Austin



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Still, Beck is like all other serious swimmers in the schedule she keeps. On many mornings her alarm sounds at 4:24; she is at the pool by 5. "I hate getting up that early," says Beck, who aims to swim at the 2008 Olympics. "But if that's what it takes. . . ." Just like when she was four, she still won't stop. —Brian Cazeneuve

WHAT HIS VIDEOS MEANT TO OTHERS



Seniors Ben Breedlove, Meredith Trank and Parker Medford

“I had never been moved like that before. I was literally moved to tears because of his faith that I had never seen expressed in him before. Ben never talked about his beliefs, and to see them expressed in such a real way — it just made me so happy to know he believed and was from that moment he left this earth inspiring others to believe as well.”

meredith trank, 12

“When I first saw them, I was still in denial that this was actually happening. I watched them Christmas night at my grandparents’ and didn’t watch them again until I got home the next day, and that’s when I broke down the most. However, I realized that he was sending a message to the world and was comforting all of us by letting us know he was blessed to be in Heaven.”

parker medford, 12

“I am so sad about Ben Breedlove. I watched the video he left for the world to see, and him seeing me in detail, in his vision really warmed my heart. I broke down, I am to tears because I hate how life is so unfair. This has really touched my heart in a way I can’t describe, this is why I do what I do. Why I write my life, and why I love you all so much ... I know Ben is at Peace, and I hope he gets a chance to sit and talk with my Dad. We love you Ben. Forever. Thank you for loving me. To Ben’s family, you raised a real hero, he’s definitely mine. You have my love.”

scott mescudi (kid cudi)

editors’ note: This post is printed as it appeared on Kid Cudi’s blog without changes to spelling or mechanics. As dictated by our editorial policy, the staff removed a section containing an obscenity.

TO HONOR AND SERVE

1 During a meeting on Dec. 14, the EISD Board of Trustees recognizes nurse Holly Hubbell for her help in reviving senior Ben Breedlove after he collapsed at school on Dec. 6. School nurse Merissa Garcia, security officers Gayle Morris and Aaron St. Clair and seniors Taylor Martin and Fallyn Leahey were also honored for their services. “Even though I didn’t feel like we needed to be recognized,” Hubbell said, “it was a very meaningful time for us, and even more so now looking back.” **2** Senior Ben Breedlove greets board members Rob Hargett, Ronna Martin and Beau Ross. **3** Security officer Gayle Morris, senior Ben Breedlove, school nurse Holly Hubbell and first responders Michael Kittok and Eric Gordon pose for a photo after being recognized at the board meeting.



courtesy of Austin-Travis County EMS



1 Seniors Caroline Furst, Steven Wilbanks and Mehul Mehta are interviewed by the *Picayune* and *KXAN*. “I thought it was very special that our student body came together through Facebook and other social media over the holiday to spread the word to wear white for Ben on the first day back,” Furst said. **2** During fifth lunch, Student Council members juniors Emily Sweet and Sruthi Reddy sell “RIP Ben Breedlove” bracelets. All donations went to the Hypertrophic Cardiomyopathy Association. **3** Students wear white to honor Breedlove on Jan. 4. “Our goal was to show how Ben’s death united people around the world,” senior Lucy Ellis said. **4** Sophomores Chloe Cheek, Brittany Pearson and Erica Holley sell “Mr. Rager” shirts at Mozart’s. “We felt like we were helping out his family and keeping his spirit alive by selling T-shirts and remembering him,” Pearson said.



1. bril flint 2. casey simmons 3-4. david oliver

THIS IS HIS STORY

Senior leaves behind a message that speaks to the world

Christmas night, Twitter and Facebook exploded with shocking news. Senior Ben Breedlove had died of a heart attack that evening after suffering from a chronic heart condition throughout his life. Through social media, news quickly reached the entire Westlake community and, ultimately, the entire world.

Many of the tweets and status updates remembering Ben shared links to two YouTube videos Ben had made titled *This is my story (Part 1)* and *This is my story (Part 2)*. After a life-threatening experience at school where he passed out in the Commons earlier in December, Ben felt compelled to share his story with the rest of the world. He created these two videos in which the song *Mad World* played in the background while he silently held up note cards sharing how he lived with his condition, and he posted them on an alternate YouTube account.

“He didn’t tell any of his friends about those videos,” said senior Jamie Buchsbaum, close friend to Ben. “I believe that God brought him back to make those videos and deliver the message that Heaven exists and the overwhelming peace he felt is coming for all of us just like the Bible says.”

In the videos he made just a week before his death, Ben described a vision he had while unconscious in the Commons where he stood in an all-white room with a mirror. His favorite music artist, Kid Cudi, was also there, and Ben said he felt complete peace.

“I then looked at myself in the mirror, I was proud of MYSELF, of my entire life, everything I have done,” Ben said in the videos. “It was the BEST feeling.”

Ben didn’t tell anyone he made the videos. It wasn’t until after his death that those closest to him saw them.

“We had always known about all of his videos on his YouTube channels as he was making them, but these last two videos were not disclosed to us,” Ben’s mom, Deanne Breedlove, said. “We are so thankful he chose to share his story through these videos. We are so proud of him for choosing to be vulnerable with his fears and disappointments in life, but we are so grateful that he chose to remain joyful and positive even through his challenges.”

“We believe he made the videos for a variety of reasons; one of which is to encourage others. Ben has always been a very compassionate person who desires to help and inspire others, which is one of the reasons I think he made these two videos.”

Many said they felt sad, then comforted, after watching the videos. “I first saw the videos after his sister found them on YouTube,” senior Grant Hamill said. “She didn’t know he was making them either and wanted me to see it. This was pretty shortly after his death. When I saw the videos, I broke down with sadness. Seeing him again was so hard, but I can now watch them with a smile on my face.”

Through social media sharing, the videos reached thousands of views overnight, and within two days his story had spread around the world, first appearing in Australia’s Nine Network’s *9news* website. From there, his story went on, being reported in many major news outlets, such as *People Magazine*, *The Wall Street Journal*, *The Washington Post*, *The Los Angeles Times* and more. The videos reached Kid Cudi, who responded in his blog. (See sidebar).



youtube.com

“When his story spread, I couldn’t help but be overjoyed,” Hamill said. “I wish I could tell him that he made it because his one major goal was to have a video of his ‘go viral,’ and it finally happened. He has inspired so many people here at Westlake, and to know that his story has affected people all over the world is nothing less than amazing.”

Ben’s funeral service was held on Dec. 29 at the Gateway Church in Austin. More than 1,400 people attended, and another 11,000 watched the memorial service online through a live stream via *KXAN.com*. At the service, his sister, Ally Breedlove, gave a moving speech about his life.

“Unfortunately, I was out of town so I couldn’t attend it, but I watched it online when it was released, and within the first two minutes of Ally’s speech I was in tears,” Buchsbaum said. “It was a beautiful service — the turnout was incredible. There wasn’t a single person I knew that disliked Ben, and the love that the whole community showed him was just amazing. I really loved when Ally said, ‘Our life is eternal, and that is God’s gift to us. And this life is our gift to God,’ because it’s so true, and Ben was blessed with an incredible life; he was all about just living.”

The support for Ben’s family continued throughout the winter break as students planned to wear white on the first day of school after the break. The Student Council also communicated with the Hypertrophic Cardiomyopathy Association (HCMA) to make wristbands with “RIP Ben Breedlove” on them, mirroring the trending hashtag that swept across Twitter, “#RIPBenBreedlove,” and donating the money raised to the HCMA.

“After hearing about his passing, my mind just started going, trying to think of a fitting way to memorialize him,” student body vice president senior Mehul Mehta said. “The bracelets stuck out to me because not only would they give students a concrete way to remind themselves of him and his message, but they would also provide a way for students to donate in his honor.”

The video Breedlove made touched the hearts of many, both in the Westlake community and all over the world. His message left people feeling differently than they had before. One thing Breedlove made clear through his videos was that he didn’t want anyone to be sad about his death.

“He understood that leaving earthly desires behind to live peacefully in paradise was going to be okay,” Buchsbaum said. “So even though we’re all still hurting and missing him, the last thing we should do is worry, because I would bet anything he’s probably up there wakeboarding and having the time of his life, just waiting until he gets to see all of us again.”

GOING VIRAL



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News lead

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Additional information

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Key Club's nursing home visits reveal some of

Life's most surprising lessons...

"Alone in the shredded back seat of the old yellow school bus, senior Nicole Moore cries, her tears trickling down her cheeks, dripping onto her brick red Jansport backpack. She holds a white lace handkerchief. It had belonged to her grandmother, who died two years ago.

"Visiting the nursing home is always so difficult because it reminds me of my grandmother," Nicole says. She and 12 other Key Club members spend at least one afternoon per month at the Hillsdale Retirement Center where for two or three hours they serve refreshments, chat, sometimes play checkers or dominos. Nicole works the room like a pro, pouring tea, serving cookies and making small talk with the old folks.

But she reserves most of her time for one special friend.

"I met Mrs. (Anna) Segretti on my first visit to the center, and we had an immediate connection," Nicole says. "Her husband died in World War II, and she raised four children alone, working as a nurse. She put her children through college and then went to college herself. She's lived the most amazing life."

Nicole often brushes her friend's hair, which has gone gray now but retains enough hint of auburn to suggest that years ago, she must have been striking. Today, Mrs. Segretti resembles a very old Holly Hunter.

"She likes to tell me about her children, how proud she is of them," Nicole says. "And she listens to me, lets me tell her about my problems. I talk to her about my parents, about boys. I tell her things I can't tell anyone else. She reminds me so much of my grandmother." With that, her eyes swell and glisten, and she turns away."



~~Weeding plants in 100-degree weather has never looked so fun for the Loggers.~~

710
711AD

From the Farmers Market to the annual Harvest Dance, Abraham High School students have participated in a fruitful, year-long hoedown. The Future Farmers of America chapter, which sponsored the spectrum of activities, had what Chapter President Stephanie Personette deemed to be a "successful" year.

"Our Farmers Market was one of the best we've ever had," said Personette. "We had such a great crop."

Ever since Peachtree Farm Implement Co. generously donated a John Deere tractor, students have learned a spectrum of agricultural skills. This included hands-on lessons on learning basic farming mechanics and tending the 4-acre farm land adjacent to AHS.

"I was really glad we could help out with the donation," said Henry Oberstein, owner of PFIC. "FFA trains these kids for so many things they'll need in the real world."

In October, the annual Farmer's Market held in the AHS parking lot was quite the delicious affair. FFA members sold an array of homemade breads, jams, jellies, and even the crops they grew on the school farm such as corn and squash. *EARNED 100 much \$.*

Great description

"I feel as if we are leaving the chapter in good hands financially," Personette said.

-nice quote

The national FFA convention allowed the chapter members to showcase their skills in contests like public speaking and dairy judging. This year, Freshman Siena Watson took sixth in dairy judging, Sophomore Mike Springer third in meat judging and Personette first in public speaking.

Nice quote

"I think it is so great that two of the kids who placed at nationals have several more years with us," said Adviser John McGrath. "It makes me excited for FFA's future."

Principal April Morgansmier's favorite part of the year was Halloween, when the FFA adorned the school with decorations.

"[The decoration] really showcases the kids' creativity," said Morgansmier. "I have been so impressed with this year's group."

The FFA chapter mission—to spread love and interest in farming among the Loggers—was well accomplished. As for the weed-pulling?

"No one likes to weed in 100-degree heat," said Personette. "But we made it fun and it paid off."



—LEAD—

first one or two paragraphs

—NUTGRAPH—

paragraph describing the news (the why)

—PARAGRAPH BEFORE BEST QUOTE—

introducing the key insight (opinion)

—BEST QUOTE—

direct quote of insight

—LAST PARAGRAPH—

circle back to lead or tie-up story in nice way

Our final words of advice

- ❖ Make it authentic, specific.
- ❖ Don't cover just to cover. Be a journalist and deliver what really happened.
- ❖ Put a face with every story. Topics are cold, distant. People connect with the audience. Personalize.
- ❖ Don't write one word of your story until all the interviews are complete.

My final words of advice

Be epic!