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**DISTRICT CREATIVE WRITING TOURNAMENT RETURNS  
TO IN-PERSON FORMAT JANUARY 21 AT COLUMBIA MIDDLE SCHOOL**

**Approximately 140 students will participate in the competition**

NORTH CANTON, OH — January 11, 2023 — The first round of Northern Region 7<sup>th</sup>- and 8<sup>th</sup>-grade creative writing tournaments organized by North Canton educational nonprofit Power of the Pen will begin on Saturday, January 21, with a district tournament hosted by Columbia Middle School in Columbia Station. The tournament is sponsored by the Columbia Community Foundation.

The district tournament is returning to an in-person format for the first time since spring 2020. District and regional tournaments had been moved online for the past two seasons due to the pandemic.

Approximately 140 students from 16 area schools will compete in the Columbia Middle School tournament. The top students from the district tournament will be invited to the regional tournament on March 11, hosted by Baldwin Wallace University.

Power of the Pen, one of Ohio's largest educational enhancement programs, seeks to positively impact the state's middle schoolers by helping young people find and develop their own unique creative voice.

"In Power of the Pen, middle school students have a platform to share their own stories, build confidence in their writing, and develop leadership abilities," says Executive Director Barb Tschantz. "These crucial life skills not only lead to success in college and a wide range of careers, but also will enable these young writers to help their communities thrive."

Throughout the state, qualifying writers from 18 district tournaments (usually the top 50 percent) advance to the nine regional events. At least 20 percent of students participating in the regional tournament move on to the state tournament. Competitions consist of three timed, extemporaneous rounds of creative writing tasks per grade level, each in response to an open-ended prompt. Judges evaluate the students' work to identify the winners who will be recognized in an awards ceremony.

By the time the tournaments begin, these young authors have spent months polishing their creative writing skills under the guidance of a Power of the Pen coach, and the competition is their chance to shine.

The Northern Region of Power of the Pen includes Crawford, Erie, Huron, Lorain, Richland, and Cuyahoga Counties.

*Power of the Pen is Ohio's original interscholastic creative writing program for middle schools. 7<sup>th</sup>- and 8<sup>th</sup>-grade students in Ohio compete in a series of district, regional and state competitions by writing creative responses using provided prompts. The 501(c)(3) organization was founded in 1986 by the late Lorraine B. Merrill and has since become one of the state's largest educational enhancement programs. Nearly 3,000 students participate in tournaments each year, while in-class supporting materials are provided for nearly 300 middle schools in Ohio. For more information, visit [powerofthepen.org](http://powerofthepen.org).*

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