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**DISTRICT CREATIVE WRITING TOURNAMENT RETURNS
TO IN-PERSON FORMAT FEBRUARY 11 AT LICKING HEIGHTS MIDDLE SCHOOL**

Approximately 120 students will participate in the competition

NORTH CANTON, OH — January 31, 2023 — The second district creative writing tournament in Power of the Pen’s new Southeast Region will be held on Saturday, February 11, at Licking Heights Middle School in Pataskala. The tournament has been made possible by funding from the Haman Family Foundation, Reeves Foundation, and the Foundation for Appalachian Ohio.

Power of the Pen district tournaments are returning to an in-person format for the first time since March 2020. District and regional tournaments had been moved online for the past two seasons due to the pandemic.

About 120 7th- and 8th-grade writers from 13 schools will participate in the competition. The top students from the district tournament will be invited to the regional tournament on March 11, hosted by Ohio University Zanesville.

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 Southeast Region of Power of the Pen includes Athens, Belmont, Coshocton, Fairfield, Gallia, Guernsey, Hocking, Holmes, Jackson, Knox, Lawrence, Licking, Meigs, Monroe, Morgan, Muskingum, Noble, Perry, Tuscarawas, Vinton, and Washington Counties.

Power of the Pen is Ohio’s original interscholastic creative writing program for middle schools. 7th- and 8th-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.

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