

How to Write a Feature Story

Description:

Feature stories are stories about people, places and events. These stories highlight feelings, and moods, rather than basic facts. Feature stories are often biographical stories of compelling personalities, such as public figures and community leaders.

A feature story is a good way to tell others about diabetes. You can write stories about how to prevent it, ways people are reducing risks, and living with diabetes. You can tell stories about community people who are making a difference in helping others. You can tell stories about the *SUGAR Helpers* in your community. Local people enjoy learning about the lives of others and feature stories are good ways to share information.

A few rules govern the writing of feature stories. Pretend you are telling a story. Use word pictures to describe sights, smells, sounds, and comparisons. If you are telling a story about an individual, it is good to write an inspiring story. This is one that leaves the reader feeling positive. It is also beneficial to share two sides of the story; this helps the reader understand that things are seldom simple.

Instructions:

1. Contact the person who will be the main character of the story.
2. Arrange to interview the person.
3. Have open-ended questions prepared before the interview. Be willing to have other questions emerge during the interview.
4. Ask if it is okay to tape the interview. If you write notes this might distract the person being interviewed. By having a recorder, you can maintain eye contact and really engage your interviewee.
5. Review the answers after the interview and identify the main focus of the story you will write.
6. You may want to write an outline first.
7. Write the story.
8. Always start the story with something interesting. This might be a word picture to catch the readers' interest. It can also be an anecdote, an interesting quote or fact about the person. Describe the setting. Draw the reader into the story.
9. Give descriptions about the person or event. Include direct quotes from your interview.

10. Present your information in an interesting way to keep your audience reading.
11. Your conclusion should make an impact on your reader. It can be a powerful quote, a fact about the personality or summary of the event. Some stories have morals or important messages that can apply to others.
12. Determine the right outlet for the article. Some newspapers have a feature story section in the newspaper. Determine who would be the right person/reporter to send the article; this will ensure that the process is smooth. You can always call the paper to determine who this person might be. Identify the correct format for sending the article.

Example of Feature Stories

Place Logo here

Agency: -----
Address: -----
Website: -----
Phone – ###-###-####
Fax – ###-###-####
Email: -----@-----

PRESS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
Contact Person:
Office: ###-###-####
Cell phone: ###-###-####

Title of Feature Story: -----

A Survivor's Story: Beating Diabetes One Day at a Time

"These are my crown jewels!" Annie Bridges declared, as she proudly showed off her beloved red roses. She is a native of Gahanna and the owner of the *Sweet Tooth Bakery*. This mother of two, wife of 20 years has been living with diabetes for the past 10 years. "My life has been like these roses," she said, "beautiful, but with some thorns." Before giving a tour of her flower garden, Annie talked about her triumph, she insists, over diabetes.

"I always had a sweet tooth," she laughed. "I still do!" Comfortably seated on plush oversized orange cushions on her porch, this 49 year old reflected on her life. "When I was young, nobody talked about diabetes. I knew my mother, and grandmother had what was called, 'sugar,' but I honestly thought that it was a natural part of life. I didn't know that it could have been prevented," she smiled wryly.

Annie has type 2 diabetes, the most common form of diabetes. When someone has type 2 diabetes the body does not produce enough insulin or the cells in the body just ignore the insulin. Insulin helps the body use sugar. Cells need sugar as fuel and insulin takes the sugar from the blood into the cells. So, if there is an excess of sugar or glucose in the blood, two problems arise. First, – your cells are starved for energy, and second- over time, the high sugar in the blood can begin to affect your eyes, kidneys, nerves and heart.

"I knew something was really wrong when I started having trouble reading at my workplace," she said as she looked into the sky with her deep blue eyes. "The first time it happened, I did not think much about it. But the next time, things seemed really blurry and I just did not feel good. I went to see my doctor." Sighing loudly, she remembered the doctor's announcement.

"The thing is, well, diabetes doesn't really warn you that it's coming" she said, looking directly at me this time. "As I talked with the doctor, I began to recognize the symptoms – I used drink a lot of water and always needed to go to the bathroom." She smiled. "A few warning signs were there, but I didn't know what they meant."

Annie had watched both her mother and grandmother lose their eyesight to diabetes. She decided that would not happen to her. With the help of her local doctor and her husband, Annie began to make some drastic changes in the way she lived. "Oh my!" she shouted, "It was hard. I had to watch what I ate. Gone were the days of dinking three bottles of soda pop in a day. Now, I had to think about ways to include more vegetables and fish in my diet." Her daily routines began to include exercise. "At least 30 minutes of walking," she informed me. My husband and one of my children often go with me," she said. Brittany, her 18 year-old daughter, often joins her for the walks. "I remember being told I would have to eat more broccoli," said Brittany, with a disgusted look on her face. "But, I also remember Mom and Dad saying that many people in our family have sugar diabetes and that we all need to change some of our ways."

Annie agreed that even though the disease was her own, the battle could only be won with her family by her side. "You have to do this with your family. We can't afford to cook two meals," Annie said. "My husband has been so supportive! Even though he is a meat and potatoes man, he has tried to eat more vegetables and fruit. It's turned out all right, but truth is every day is a battle." Pumping her arms in the air, she shouts, "But I won't be beat by diabetes!" With the help of her family, Annie Bridges continues to beat diabetes.

All in the Family: A United Front against Diabetes

It was noisy. About 20 children were playing tag on the wide lawns in front of the house. They shrieked playfully as they dodged each other and moved in between trees, shrubs and parked cars. As I headed toward the back of the house, up the slate pathway, around the corner of the two-storied red-brick house, my destination was clear, two picnic tables almost covered with food. The smell of grilled chicken was in the air. My taste buds began to water as I surveyed the sumptuous sight in front of me.

“Hello there!” exclaimed 80 year-old Ruthie Shirley, the warm grandmother of the family. “I’m glad you found the house all right. So, this is the Shirley family reunion,” she said with a wave of her right hand. “I’ve already told them to try to behave, but who knows what will happen as the day goes by.” Within a few minutes, the older members of the family were introduced. They were an array of personalities, from bright and bubbly, Joann who immediately placed a glass of water in my hand, to quiet and confident Uncle Bob who is credited with championing the family’s mission to fight diabetes.

“We have no intention to allow our children follow this path,” said Uncle Bob. “Plus, we want to live long lives, even with diabetes.” Seven adult family members had already been diagnosed with type 2 diabetes. “A few years ago we realized that we had a serious problem. We weren’t watching what we ate.”

Type 2 diabetes occurs when the body does not produce enough insulin or the cells in the body just ignore the insulin. Cells need sugar as fuel and insulin takes the sugar from the blood into the cells. So, if there is a build up of sugar (glucose) in the blood, two problems arise – your cells are starved for energy, and over time, the high sugar in the blood can begin to affect your eyes, kidneys, nerves and heart.

“I almost lost my life to diabetes,” said Uncle Bob’s son, Stephen. “It was at this time that my Dad and Aunt Jenny pushed us to take better care of ourselves.”

The Shirley’s have a unique way of dealing with diabetes. Each year, in mid-August, they congregate at Ruthie’s home in Morehead, Kentucky for one weekend. Their schedule includes activities for the children, an update from the adults and an outing. It’s the picnic on the last day that brings about the big bonding experience.

“We have scavenger hunts where we look for vegetables and fruits,” 11 year-old, Jeannie exclaimed. “I think its fun! And we have carrot cakes and all kinds of desserts still. I think my family is very normal, even though we eat a little different from others.”

And what of those who marry into the family? “I think family health is a great vision,” said, Beth. She married Uncle Bob’s son, Dave, 5 years ago. “In my family, whatever was available we ate – good or bad,” she reflected. “The Shirley family is teaching me to eat better and be healthier.”

Traditionally, the reunions have focused on swapping recipes. Increasingly, the Shirley’s have been coming up with innovative games, such as a revised version of “charades” that also incorporates diabetic symptoms, prevention and treatments.

“Last year we had a mini-walkathon around the neighborhood,” said Ruthie. We even hired a physical trainer, and did yoga and Tai chi. Can you believe that?” She laughed. “The whole family, even the smallest ones, were outside, stretching.” The reunion’s focus even goes beyond the family. “I have neighbors calling and I shared information with them,” Ruthie said, with a twinkle in her eyes. The Shirley’s are intent on creating not only a healthy family, but also

a healthy legacy. Since the reunions started, no other member has been diagnosed with diabetes.

Making a Difference: Volunteer in the Fight against Diabetes

It all started when his best friend lost his mother to diabetes and when that friend's father was also diagnosed with the disease. After learning about his friend's diagnosis, this young man was told that he had two beloved aunts who were also diagnosed with diabetes. "Something had to be done and I couldn't wait around for another person I love to be diagnosed," he said with great passion.

As he straddled his red Honda motorbike in front of his family's ranch home in a small suburb outside of Huntington, West Virginia, Jake Summers looks like any other young adult in the region. But there is something extra special about this young man who recently graduated from Marshall University. He started organizing local fund raising activities for research in the fight against diabetes. "I just wanted to help at first," he said. "I didn't start off thinking that I wanted to be a volunteer."

This 22 year-old young man has helped indeed. Over the past three years, Jake has raised over \$50,000 for the American Diabetes Association based in West Virginia. He is quick to note, "I did not do it alone!" With the help of several friends and family members, Jake has persuaded local businesses and community volunteers to sponsor fashion shows, art exhibits, and community bikathons. He has even succeeded in raising funds from ticket sales for a concert of local artists, all in the name of diabetes.

"This young man has done more than any other young person his age for diabetes in West Virginia," said local director, Jenna Scott. "It is remarkable that he has been so dedicated to the cause. I wish other young people would take a page out of his book," she continued. We are so pleased to have him as a volunteer *SUGAR Helper* in our *Diabetes: A Family Matter* program.

It all started out as a small memorial to honor his friend's mother after her death. "She was an artist and we wanted to show some of her work," reflected Jake. "And then we decided to ask for contributions for diabetes research. We were overwhelmed by the number of people who came and then, by the amount of money people gave. It was awesome," he exclaimed. This was the start, and soon Jake and his friends began to have other ideas.

"Diabetes is a lifestyle disease," he said. "It can be prevented. So we thought we needed to start telling people." Mini-marathons, art exhibits, and more concerts were organized. For each event, local diabetes educators were always present to give additional information on diabetes. "So, we entertain and give people information at the same time," he said.

Jake's next event will focus on families. *Health Matters Funday* which will be held on March 27 at the Huntington Fair Ground. It is intended to reach out to local families who want help maintain healthy lifestyles. "This time we want to show how families can work together and encourage each other to be healthy," he told us.

Although he is still intent on building a career in psychology, Jake is also thinking of establishing a non-profit organization in the near future. "Right now, I think we'll still focus on diabetes. It has been really close to our hearts, but we might look at health in general too."

Finally, Jake offered some advice for other young persons uncertain of volunteering in the fight against diabetes. "Just think of it as an opportunity to help someone else. If it seems too much, just start with your own family, after all, the fight against diabetes has to start at home first." Jake is proud of what he and others have accomplished as local volunteer *SUGAR Helpers*.