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**7TH, 8TH GRADERS COMPETE IN DISTRICT CREATIVE WRITING
TOURNAMENT HOSTED VIRTUALLY BY ST. VINCENT-ST. MARY HIGH SCHOOL**

Nearly 200 students will participate in the competition

NORTH CANTON, OH — January 3, 2022 — The first round of Northeast Region 7th- and 8th-grade creative writing tournaments organized by North Canton educational nonprofit Power of the Pen will begin on Saturday, January 8, with a district tournament virtually hosted by St. Vincent-St. Mary High School in Akron. The tournament is sponsored by Breha Orthodontics.

Normally held in person, this year's district and regional tournaments are being held online due to the ongoing pandemic. Nearly 200 students from 18 area schools will compete in the St. Vincent-St. Mary High School tournament. The top students from the district tournament will be invited to the regional tournament on February 26, virtually hosted by Kent State University.

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

"Writing helps students become better prepared for any future endeavor," explains Power of the Pen Executive Director Barb Tschantz. "It doesn't have to be a career that's creative by nature. Though we concentrate on creative writing, students learn communications and leadership skills that can apply to everything from professional services to tech."

Each year, qualifying writers from 16 district tournaments (usually the top 50 percent) advance to the eight 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 Northeast Region of Power of the Pen includes Ashland, Medina, Portage, Trumbull, Wayne, and Southern Summit 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. About 3,000 students participate in tournaments each year, while in-class supporting materials are provided for nearly 300 middle schools in Ohio. Support for the 2021-2022 academic year has been provided by Ohio Humanities, the National Endowment for the Humanities, and the federal American Rescue Plan Act of 2021. For more information, visit powerofthepen.org.

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