

AWAI Writing Challenge Winning Entry:

Copywriter Slays Fire-Breathing

Dragon *By Laurie Cauthen*

I moved to the country for a slower pace of life.

I fell in love with the crisp, clean, fresh air ... the pine tree scent everywhere ... and the wildlife, like deer and wild turkey ... that often come to visit us in our backyard.

As a former native Miami girl ... this was a new kind of paradise to savor with all five senses.

And just when I thought I had found my little piece of country heaven ...

My neighbor installed a wood-burning furnace in his backyard. He did it in the fall to save money on natural gas for heating his home and water supply during winter and all year round.

At first, we thought it quite "neighborly" of him to explain how it would work ... he made it sound like there wouldn't be any problems for us.

But we never anticipated the vast amount of black smoke and fumes we'd be subjected to 24/7 – 365. Plus, the most toxic part of it was, he was illegally burning chemically treated wood inside his furnace, too!

As a former firefighter, I knew what a dangerous respiratory health risk that posed – especially for people who already had respiratory problems, like my son did ... with his asthma.

Our neighbor obviously didn't consider the impact his furnace would have on his neighbor's health or quality of life. Nor ... the potential health risks he was creating for us ... and the surrounding community.

Just the simple act of stepping outside would cause our clothes and hair to reek of smoke! And our once cherished activity of barbequing outdoors was now impossible to enjoy.

We pleaded with our neighbor to correct the situation, but his response was simply "live with it – or move!"

I knew I had to do something about that "fire-breathing dragon" to protect my family and restore our fresh-air quality of life. So I filed a nuisance complaint with the city and called the Environmental Protection Department (EPD).

In addition to filing both complaints ...

I wrote and presented a compelling persuasive documented case in city court, of how the toxic smoke affected our lives on a daily basis, and the lives of our adjacent neighbors.

With my words, I painted a very vivid picture "to put them in our shoes," and utilized a survey plat map of our properties to show how far this smoke encroached upon neighboring lands.

Using visuals can be very persuasive too – (picture).

The properties impacted included a head-start pre-school – directly to the west of my home – where children played outdoors in their playground every day, and my husband's aunt – two homes east of us – who was recovering from brain cancer – (picture).

I specifically emphasized details on how the children at the pre-school were negatively being affected, by showing an exact number of students: 40 – (picture).

I also showed that some of those students were handicapped and had pre-existing respiratory conditions. By interviewing the teachers, I got all my facts, and was able to get them on the bandwagon with me to fix this problem. This was my promise to them – "to slay that fire-breathing dragon!" – (picture – promise).

I also took pictures of the expansive and evasive smoke from a window inside my home – this was my additional visual proof. I then had all my family members seen by a doctor and written documentation by him showing how this kind of smoke was affecting their existing respiratory conditions – (again, more proof).

I also obtained a handwritten letter by my husband's aunt stating how the smoke from her neighbor was not allowing her to recover fully from her cancer, by her need to breathe clean, fresh air. We also had a statement from her doctor showing how smoke would be impeding her recovery – (additional proof).

As a requirement of filing a city nuisance complaint, I had to obtain five signatures from city residents who were impacted by the nuisance. I had three signatures from my household, and my husband's aunt and uncle were the remaining two.

But because I wanted to show the pre-school was also being affected, I had six more signatures from the teachers of the school – (final proof).

Long story short, our neighbor was cited by the Environmental Protection Department (EPD) for illegally burning toxic wood, causing air pollution within city limits, and creating a nuisance for his neighbors and community. He was ordered to shut down that fire-breathing dragon furnace once and for all – (proof – push).

The mayor and city council members were so impressed with my copywriting skills that some of them asked if I was a lawyer. I proudly told them I was a [copywriter](#) and handed them my business cards.

Now that this copywriter's words have finally slayed that nasty, fire-breathing dragon, our community is breathing clean country air again. My neighbor is doing well, in spite of having to shut down his furnace ... and since then, we've installed a privacy fence.

We're all much better neighbors now, too.

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9 Responses to "AWAI Writing Challenge Winning Entry: Copywriter Slays Fire-Breathing Dragon"

Good for you Laurie!

Jacqueline Palmer – over a year ago

Congratulations, Laurie. I was tickled to see your name in Katie's email and even happier once I saw your excellent work here.

Best wishes (as always),

Will Newman

Will Newman – over a year ago

Congratulations, Laurie! It's great that you could change the world (at least your corner of it!) with your writing.

-Paula

Paula Williams – over a year ago

Laurie - what a fantastic story. Enjoyed reading it from start to finish. Would it be possible to post the actual letter so we may learn more from your copywriting success. Thank you.

Larry Mekus

LarryM – over a year ago

Hi everyone,

Thanks so much for rating my article and commenting so positively on it...

This article was written as a final closure to something that was a very stressful and difficult time in my life.

However Larry, if my experience can be of use as a copywriting learning tool...of course I'd be willing to offer the document for review...

Again - thanks to all of you for your kind comments!

Warmly,

Laurie Cauthen

Southern Belle – over a year ago

Way to go Laurie! You proved that writers are powerful people--we have the skills to make things happen.

Pat McCord – over a year ago

Laurie - Using your copywriting skills to help your community had to feel great! Nice work!

Toni Rockis – over a year ago

What a great way to deal with a nightmare situation. You did a great job getting testimonials not only from your own family but other people in the community to show the huge impact he was having on everyone.

Your writing was very persuasive and you painted a very clear picture of exactly how your community was affected. Great example for the rest of us.

Laura McNeil – over a year ago

Great Job Laurie, it just goes to show that your copywriting skills come into play more than we ever think. The vivid picture, the great testimonials, the pictures, and most important the persuasive copy. Congratulations! It reminds us all...there is so much we can do with our copywriting skills...change the world...or at least our little our little corner of it!!! You never know what you can do until you do it. So we all need to take a lesson from you and just GO FOR IT!!! Thanks Laurie!!!

Tonimarie Marrese – over a year ago

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