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News Release

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IU Kokomo freshman writes third novel during “National Novel Writing Month”

KOKOMO, Ind. — Faryal Sharif sets a daunting task for herself this month. She adds one more activity to her already busy schedule of college classes and a job, by writing a novel in 30 days.



Sharif, an Indiana University Kokomo freshman, participates in National Novel Writing Month, for the fifth year in a row. She’s successfully completed the program, also known as NaNoWriMo, twice.

“The idea is that everyone is always saying ‘I’m going to write a novel someday,’ but very few people actually sit down and do it,’ she said. “It forces you to make the time to just do

it.”

To accomplish the task, she tries to write approximately 1,700 words daily, though she admits she’s a little behind this year.

“Now I’m balancing being a college freshman, working at the AMC theater in Marion, and writing my novel,” she said. “If I can get this done, and keep up with my school work, and possibly sleep a little, I will feel like I can do anything. It will really boost my confidence that I can handle college.”

National Novel Writing Month is coordinated by a not-for-profit organization of the same name, which has the mission of encouraging people to write. In 2012, nearly 350,000 people worldwide participated. More than 250 novels written during the event have been published, including Sara Gruen's *Water for Elephants*. That book was made into a movie starring Reese Witherspoon and Robert Pattinson in 2011.

Writers may choose any genre, and Sharif, 18, usually writes a young adult mainstream book, "because I relate to that." Her current work in progress is mainstream fiction, telling the story of a teenage boy who is displaced from his home to live with a mysterious man who has links to his family's past.

To participate, Sharif created an account on the organization's website, nanowrimo.org, and then updates her word count regularly, working towards a goal of writing a first draft of at least 50,000 words by midnight November 30.

She's happy to have made some friends on campus because of NaNoWriMo, connecting with other participants, including Maria Ahmad, coordinator of student life and campus diversity; and Brian Arwood, student body president. Sharif, who is from Marion, hopes to recruit others to participate next year, so there is a writing community to support each other.

Ahmad is proud IU Kokomo is represented in the program.

"How cool would it be to hear an author say that he or she began a novel as a student on our campus?" Ahmad said. "It is a good experience for students to participate in something happening nationwide, because you feel like you are part of something bigger. Faryal's participation may inspire others to commit some time to writing their own novel, or beginning to explore that skill. This could also be a great start to forming a writing club or network."

Sharif said the greatest reward for finishing is personal satisfaction.

"There is no huge reward, other than knowing you set a big goal and achieved it," she said. "It's more of a personal reward. Other than that, you get a certificate and an authorization to buy the official T-shirt."

This year, she may take advantage of another perk — an access code to get a free proof copy of her completed novel from Amazon Create Space.

Sharif, who has not decided her major, hopes to be a published novelist in the future. She sees improvement in her writing each year she's participated in NaNoWriMo.

"It's fun to keep what I've written, and to see how much better I write compared to my first attempt, from when I was 13," she said. "It's also helping me keep up with

my work at school. I'm motivated to finish, so I can get some more work done on my novel."

Indiana University Kokomo serves north central Indiana.

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