

Ambitious Beginnings and Final Thoughts

By Cathy Dilts

A sea of laptops identifies the NaNoWriMo Write-In at Panera Bread on Powers. It's November 1, the first day of National Novel Writing Month, and enthusiasm rules the day.

Municipal Liaison Kelly asks me, "Do you need an outlet?"

Writers laugh, chat, and share word counts. 1,700 for Diane. Jen started at noon and already has 1,900 words. A phenomenal few have written over 4,000 words.

Helen has had an idea for a Civil War era novel since the 80s. NaNoWriMo inspires her to write it down.

Kristine has written 2,000 words of her novel, and has no name for her main character yet. She's integrating the subject lines of spam e-mails into her story.

Josh could be in the Young Writers Program, but chose to tackle the adult goal of 50,000 words by November 30th. "It's going to be crazy," he says.

Municipal Liaison Sara has participated in NaNoWriMo for six years. Sara says that being in a group of people who are writing novels is motivating.

NaNoWriMo, day one. Everyone seems energetic and confident. We shall see how this grand experiment plays out.

Final statistics for NaNoWriMo 2009:

The Colorado Springs NaNoWriMo region included 225 writers who wrote 7,377,838 words for an average of 32,645 per writer. The number of writers for the entire state of Colorado was 1539. The collective word count for the entire worldwide NaNoWriMo event was an astonishing 2,427,190,537 words.

I encouraged two teens to sign up for the Young Writers Program. Each achieved her goal. Nicole used the NaNoWriMo YWP to complete a creative writing project for school. Christine wrote the first 50,000 words of her first novel.

For those of us with several years of writing experience under our belts, the goals were about more than mere word count. One writer I know used NaNo to successfully jump start his ambition to write a publishable novel. He completed over 68,000 words. I used the month to slam out a rough draft of a murder mystery, instead of taking my usual year or two to draft a novel. Another writer friend worked on finishing her first draft of an in-progress paranormal romance.

Will the next best seller result from all this frantic expenditure of energy? Only time, and a lot of revision, will tell.

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