Writing not a chore for budding novelists

Several students flex their fingers and try to reach a 50,000-word count as National Novel Writing Month begins this Saturday

By Kristin Kerns
Contributing Writer

It is a common misconception that being a typical Tech student makes a person incapable of performing any liberal arts-related activities—especially writing.

However, several Tech students are proving that they enjoy and excel at such endeavors as they participate in the annual National Novel Writing Month.

National Novel Writing Month, abbreviated NaNoWriMo (and pronounced NAM-no-WRY-Mo) by its participants, is a mostly online writing competition that started in 1999 and is currently in its fifth year.

Its purpose is to encourage people of all ages and levels of talent to create a 50,000-word, or 175-page, novel between 12:00 a.m. on Nov. 1 and midnight on Nov. 30.

It’s a writing competition—but with a twist. According to the official website, “the only thing that matters in NaNoWriMo is output. It’s all about quantity, not quality.”

The website continues, “The ka- mikaze approach forces you to lower your expectations, take risks and write on the fly. Make no mistake: You will be writing a lot of crap. And that’s a good thing. By forcing yourself to write so intensely, you are giving yourself permission to make mistakes. To forget the endless tweaking and editing and just create.”

Several Tech students are taking this philosophy to heart and participating in this year’s NaNoWriMo.

True to the Tech spirit, most of them heard about NaNoWriMo through friends online.

One of these students is Casey Fiesler, a recent Tech graduate who wrote a novel last November, which consisted of a series of loosely plotted vignettes...involving the changes in the lives of a group of 20-somethings. She has not yet decided what to write this year.

Emily Colvin, a freshman Nuclear and Radiological Engineering major, is also writing for reasons similar to Fiesler’s. “It’s just something that I do, a way to express myself,” she said. “I can’t imagine not writing.”

The novel she is planning on writing is a fantasy set in a world that she created herself—but that is all she has set right now.

“This is my first NaNoWriMo, so I’m still learning the ropes,” she said.

Fantasy and science fiction seem to be common themes for Tech students. Smitha Prasadh, a fifth-year Science Technology and Culture major, plans to write a “short story anthology with a fantasy twist” about the predictions of a magic council affecting all the lives one particular child’s violin will touch, stretched across different times and places.

Though Prasadh enjoys writing as well, she has other reasons for participating in NaNoWriMo.

“It just struck me as a really interesting idea,” she said. “I’d finished a [novel] that had taken a year to write, so why not jump-start my love for it again.”

By Viji Sundaram
Contributing Writer

Playing with LEGOs not just for kids

Whether we willingly admit it or not, as children, most Tech students were nerdy enough to spend endless hours of fun playing with LEGOs.

The School of Electrical and Computer Engineering, however, is taking advantage of Tech students’ love of these building blocks to sponsor a LEGO tournament for elementary and middle school students. The statewide tournament, officially known as Georgia’s “FIRST LEGO League,” was first held two years ago, and has gained momentum ever since.

This year’s tournament will be held at SciTrek, a science discovery museum downtown, from Nov. 22, from 8 a.m. to 4 p.m. Thirty teams from all over the state will compete. The Center for Education Integrating Science, Mathematics, and Computing (CEiSMC) is also co-hosting the event this year.

The LEGO company and the international organization FIRST (For Inspiration and Recognition of Science and Technology) created the FIRST LEGO League, a competition for children between the ages of nine and 14.

Dean Kamen, the founder of FIRST, says on the website, “kids learn just how much they can accomplish with science and technology. It shows them they can design and create a video game, not just play it.”

FIRST sponsors the LEGO tournament for elementary and middle school children while providing high school children with a national Robotics competition. The latter event today boasts more than 800 participants and a championship event.

However, the Georgia tournament is a smaller-scale competition, part of a general initiative within the School of ECE to promote science and technology in surrounding communities.

Several Tech sponsors a robotics team that is sponsored by the Center for Education Integrating Science, Mathematics, and Computing. The team is currently preparing for the state tournament, which will be held at SciTrek on Nov. 22.
Novels
from page 11
and a half to write, so the idea of writing with the emphasis on quantity instead of quality... seemed like a nice change.”

To be a winner during NaNoWriMo, all you have
to do is reach the 50,000-word goal by the deadline. Don’t be fooled, however—this is not necessarily as simple as it sounds.

Though she won in 2001, Prasadh said that she “didn’t have as much time or external pressure on [herself] to do it last year and only barely crossed 15,000 words before giving up.”

Still, the participants agree that it definitely feels good to finish an entire novel. Although she good-naturedly partook in her novel last year as “complete rubbish,” Fiesler said, “I still had quite a feeling of accomplishment upon its completion.”

Hopefully, NaNoWriMo will also lead writers to better things. A few NaNoWriMo participants have actually had their novels published.

“The theory... is that once you’ve written a novel, even if it’s completely awful, the act of doing so will make it easier to write something good,” Fiesler explained. Another aspect of NaNoWriMo is that the Wrimos—as the participants like to call themselves—can get together to celebrate and/or commiserate throughout the entire process.

“Writing is all ages and nationalities, and NaNoWriMo brings them together. For example, there is a Atlanta-area kickoff party planned for this weekend to provide some last minute encouragement to participants,” said Prasadh.

NaNoWriMo is a great opportunity for everyone that has ever wished for a novel of his own, and many Tech students can proudly say that they have one or more to their names.

NaNoWriMo gives everyone who has ever thought of writing a novel the chance to actually achieve his or her dreams—without the stress that comes with trying to write the “Great American Novel.”

For more information or to sign up for National Novel Writing Month, visit www.nanowrimo.org.

Priority
from page 11
registered students have one or more classes in the two-hour block required for tours.

However, despite its necessity, priority registration is still a perk for many Tech students can proudly say that they have one or more to their names.

NaNoWriMo gives everyone who has ever thought of writing a novel the chance to actually achieve his or her dreams—without the stress that comes with trying to write the “Great American Novel.”

For more information or to sign up for National Novel Writing Month, visit www.nanowrimo.org.

Priority
from page 11
registered students have one or more classes in the two-hour block required for tours.

However, despite its necessity, priority registration is still a perk for many Tech students can proudly say that they have one or more to their names.

NaNoWriMo gives everyone who has ever thought of writing a novel the chance to actually achieve his or her dreams—without the stress that comes with trying to write the “Great American Novel.”

For more information or to sign up for National Novel Writing Month, visit www.nanowrimo.org.

Priority
from page 11
registered students have one or more classes in the two-hour block required for tours.

However, despite its necessity, priority registration is still a perk for many Tech students can proudly say that they have one or more to their names.

NaNoWriMo gives everyone who has ever thought of writing a novel the chance to actually achieve his or her dreams—without the stress that comes with trying to write the “Great American Novel.”

For more information or to sign up for National Novel Writing Month, visit www.nanowrimo.org.

Priority
from page 11
registered students have one or more classes in the two-hour block required for tours.

However, despite its necessity, priority registration is still a perk for many Tech students can proudly say that they have one or more to their names.

NaNoWriMo gives everyone who has ever thought of writing a novel the chance to actually achieve his or her dreams—without the stress that comes with trying to write the “Great American Novel.”

For more information or to sign up for National Novel Writing Month, visit www.nanowrimo.org.

Priority
from page 11
registered students have one or more classes in the two-hour block required for tours.

However, despite its necessity, priority registration is still a perk for many Tech students can proudly say that they have one or more to their names.

NaNoWriMo gives everyone who has ever thought of writing a novel the chance to actually achieve his or her dreams—without the stress that comes with trying to write the “Great American Novel.”

For more information or to sign up for National Novel Writing Month, visit www.nanowrimo.org.
GT SMART copes with misconceptions, publicity

By Joshua Cuneo
Senior Staff Writer

There’s one thing that Marsha Brinkley, Project Director of the Georgia Tech Students Managing Alcohol Risk at Tech (GT SMART) Program, wants to make perfectly clear.

“We’re not trying to push for a dry campus,” she said. “When I first came here…there were a lot of misconceptions about GT SMART that we were trying to get a dry campus. We were trying to get bars closed around the campus. We were trying to get Atlanta to be alcohol free…We’re just looking at the high risk of overindulgence in anything, but in our case, it’s alcohol.”

GT SMART is a four-year-old campus initiative to reduce excess drinking at Tech and within the surrounding community. Supported by the administration and operated with the help of students and other volunteers, the program works to influence alcohol policy, distribute information on excessive drinking and initiate new programs that discourage overconsumption of alcohol.

The program is actually part of a national project started by the American Medical Association in the late 1990s in response to a statistical increase in alcohol-related incidences in the U.S. Tech is serving as one of 10 chosen research sites in the country and the only one in an urban setting. GT SMART is the local chapter carrying out that research under a five-year grant.

The grant has proven worthwhile, for while being one of the lesser-known organizations at Tech, GT SMART has demonstrated considerable success. The organization is credited with reducing the amount of time permitted for tailgating parties during football season, for instance, and they initiated the parent notification letter that’s sent home when a student’s intoxication results in police intervention. They also have a collection of brochures and other information related to excess drinking at students’ disposal. One pamphlet, for instance, teaches students how to recognize the signs of alcohol poisoning, and another is a wallet-sized card withcab and emergency phone numbers for drunken or stranded students.

Last year, the scope of the program increased as GT SMART shifted its attention from the campus exclusively to the surrounding communities. It continues to assist the surrounding neighborhoods and commercial districts in examining alcohol ordinances and licenses. To that end, the program formed a committee last year that pinpointed the 18 points most often associated with difficulty in issuing alcohol licenses, and it has also worked to inform new communities about such ordinances.

“The challenge is to help find ways so that all of the developers and all of the neighborhoods that have been here so long that they remember when it was a quieter place can find ways to coexist, and development can continue to come in,” said Brinkley. “It can be residential or commercial development.”

But two of the program’s most popular successes are the commercials released earlier this year to Regal Cinemas, as well as, a variety of television stations and football stadiums. In the first, already seen by many students at the Tech home football games, a guy meeting his date at the door goes so overboard in complimenting her that he’s jumped on the spot.

In the second, a woman applies so many layers of makeup to her face that she ends up looking like a clown. The tagline on both: Too much of anything makes you look like an idiot. Don’t drink like one.

The commercials are a far cry from the more traditional ones that attempt to shock viewers with images of drunk driving accidents and body bags.

“We wanted to use humor,” Brinkley explained. “We’re not trying to scare somebody.”

In another major endeavor, GT SMART recently received a grant from the state to license an online training site on responsible alcohol consumption. The training program, she said, helps employers and their employees develop the skills to handle drunken consumers or any other alcohol-related complications that may arise.

Given the program’s myriad accomplishments, it seems odd that few students know about it, and those that do mistake the program for having a zero-tolerance anti-alcohol agenda.

“The measure of that success can be secondhand effects issues…That means somebody didn’t get hurt, or somebody didn’t die in a car accident.”

Marsha Brinkley
Project Director, GT SMART

Looking to get involved on campus?

Join the Technique staff.

Technique • Friday, October 31, 2003 • 13
Enthusiasm for Halloween events cover whole spectrum

By Sanjana Mammen
Contributing Writer

For many students, the opportunity for Halloween hijinks offers a welcome break from the seriousness of Tech. Many student organizations are also using Halloween as an opportunity to encourage students to get out and have a little bit of fun.

Each year, the Georgia Tech Panhellenic Council and Interfraternity Council and the Office of the Dean of Students organizes “Run N’ Hide,” an event created for safe trick-or-treating with a student as the guide for a group of elementary-aged children.

Each group of college students that represent a campus organization sets up activity booths on Pe- ter’s Parking Deck. Children then come to Georgia Tech to experience such activities as a cake walk, gak-making, fortune telling, mad scientists, a fishing pond, a football toss and many other kid-friendly activities.

Tech Rec is sponsoring “Nervous Rec,” where students can receive a free game of bowling if they show up in a costume.

In addition, many groups are showing scary movies: movie view- ings of old favorites are being shown on Friday night in the School of Literature, Culture and Communication, and the Student Center Pro- grams Council is showing Piratas of the Caribbean. There are various pumpkin-carving contests between organizations as well.

One of the growing traditions at Tech, the Towers Haunted House, is also open Friday and Saturday night.

Students and housing staff have been working for the past four weeks, updating tunnels and constructing rooms for the haunted house.

“It has so many rooms, mazes that are pitch black with moving walls and people grabbing you on the way through,” said Stacy Ham- mond, the SA for Towers-Harri- son dorm.

One of the rooms has a “Disney gone away” theme, with “Disney characters from the past that are morbidly al- tered,” said Ham- mond.

Kai Ouyang, the president of the Towers-Harri- son Hall Coun- cil, added, “Barney is a sur- prise guest char- acter that will be at this year’s haunted house.”

In conjunc- tion with the haunted house, neighboring Har- rison dorm is also promoting Hal- loween spirit offering door-to-door—or rather, room-to-room—trick-or-treating.

However, Tech students proba- bly have a harder time than most finding time to celebrate Halloweens. This was evident this week with the haunted house, as residents and staff rushed to finish its construc- tion.

“This week hasn’t been a good week… a lot of people are busy with schoolwork,” Ouyang said.

Many students just haven’t had a chance to make plans yet, and may prefer to do their own thing Hal- loween night.

“I don’t think I’m really going to be doing anything for Halloween. I haven’t really made up my mind,” said fourth-year Computer Engi- neering major Ryan Lemberg.

Other students, though their plans are equally uncertain, remain opti- mistic about having a fun night.

“I don’t know what I’m doing for Halloween yet,” said Aerospace Engineering freshman Bhakti Chav- da, “but it’s a good excuse to go get candy… as long as you dress up for it.”

Social gatherings prove to be a popular form of celebration at Tech, and some are even using the opportunity to visit distant friends.

“A friend and I are going as the two girls from Chicago,” said Missy Durham, a sec- ond-year Inter- national Affairs and Spanish major.

For many students, Hal- loween is just an excuse to have a little extra fun—and maybe some unexpected revelry.

“I am going to the Death Cab for Cutie concert and throwing a party,” said Larry Lindsay, a third- year Electrical Engineering major.

“I’m going to a party… with a bunch of Indian people,” said Ran- dy Hays, a Chemical Engineering sophomore. “I’m either going to be a bum or some sort of alcoholic character… Sam Adams, Jack Daniels, Johnny Walker.”

But perhaps the most popular way to spend Halloween at Tech is just to stay in.

“That have no particular plans,” said Scott Camp, a fourth-year CS ma- jor.

By Scott Meuleners / STUDENT PUBLICATIONS

Brett Vogt carves a GT pumpkin outside the Student Success Center Wednesday, as part of a contest between Psych 1000 sections where Juniors’ Tommy Klemis was one of the judges. Pumpkin carving is just one of the things Tech students are doing to celebrate Halloween; other common activities include parties and haunted houses.
**LEGOs**

From page 11 in **Elementary and middle schools.** The first pilot competition was held at a Technology Student Association conference in Perry, GA.

ECE Professor Jeff Davis, who is the faculty sponsor for the competition, described his past experiences with FIRST LEGO League as “extremely inspiring.”

“I was amazed at how enthusiastic the kids were, holding up their LEGO trophy and parading around the warehouse,” he said. “They went wild.”

With the successful conclusion of the pilot project at Perry, Davis and a group of undergraduate students moved the venue to TechEd, the tournament’s current venue.

The tournament found financial support from the National Science Foundations and the Netherlands American Trust.

Participating teams are given a particular theme each year, and students create and program their own robots in three months’ time. These robots are built using LEGO Mindstorm Robotics Invention System kits, which provide a programmable central robot body, as well as motors and other mechanical moving parts.

In addition, teams who could not afford the rather expensive Mindstorm kits were lent one.

“We provided them each with the $50 LEGO set,” said Vaibhav Jain, an Electrical Engineering senior who is fundraising coordinator of this year’s competition.

The Mindstorm kit allows teams to write a program for the robot with prior knowledge of the obstacle course and the tasks that the robot must perform, and the program can be downloaded to the robot body to allow the robot to perform its obstacle course run autonomously.

Each team is given two minutes to make their robot accomplish as many tasks as possible, and each properly-executed task earns the team points.

Teams also earn points for a research presentation and a presentation demonstrating their understanding of the mechanical components to constructing their robot.

For example, last year’s theme, “City Sights,” required teams to construct a robot that would solve urban problems, such as transporting construction equipment or cleaning air pollution.

Specific challenges included placing a stack of blocks a certain distance and then returning back to the starting point and picking up “trash” (both in the form of blocks on the ground and a row of rings suspended in the air).

This year, the League has introduced its 2003 Challenge: “Mars Mission.” The theme allows students to identify with the jobs of NASA engineers, as they use their creativity and problem-solving skills to “explore the Martian landscape” for signs of colonization.

Preparation is well underway as well. Last year’s success has enabled Davis and his volunteers to offer more pre-tournament support for coaches and their teams. In contrast, in last year’s tournament, Davis offered a one-day workshop to teachers who were sponsoring teams, this year funding was secured for a LEGO lab, located on the third floor of the College of Computing.

The lab, staffed by undergraduate students, is open Tuesdays, Wednesdays and Thursdays for three hours to help overcome LEGO building and programming challenges.

In addition, undergraduate volunteers also get to play with LEGO by building the official courses that are used during the competition, constructing demos, and making individual trophies out of LEGO bricks, each of the winning categories: robot design, performance, research presentation, teamwork, spirit and more.

Last year’s “City Sights” volunteer John Nickerson remembers waking up early on Saturday morning wondering if the tournament would be worth his time.

However, he found the experience rewarding. “Some of the kids had such advanced robots and ideas that many of the volunteers were blown away,” he said.

“The creativity accomplished were incredible,” Jain agreed.

Many of the student volunteers decide to help out because of their childhood affinity for LEGO.

“The always liked doing stuff like that when I was young,” said Sanjay Deshmukh, a third-year Computer Science major, “so I thought it’d be fun to help run the tournament for the kids.”

In addition, many volunteers enjoyed observing what may very well be the future generation of Tech students.

“I think kids enjoy the opportunity to solve nontrivial problems like what they had to do for the competition,” Deshmukh said.

However, additional volunteers are welcome, and are needed to fill several positions the day of the tournament.

---

**Sliver Box**

Sliver box

Sliver box in all over the bathroom floor.

LoLly smells like poot poot!

SCREAM DRACULA SCREAM!

DADDY WOULD YOU LIKE SOME SAUSAGE?

I could really use a good message right about now.

DAMN sometimes people need to stop the don’t ‘round here.

damn why you have to be so cute with your adorable self?

Do birds know Physics? How can they aim for your head so accurately every damn time?

What is wrong with calling my graduate student, professor wannabe by his first name? Usually my teachers’ “first names” are Professor or Dr. and he isn’t either one.

I thought the name “sliver box” made no sense, and now I realize it actually says “sliver box,” it makes less sense. Damn me for realizing my dyslexia.

Well I’ll be... I discovered negative mass (and why I might fail Physics).

Why do I even watch “Dr. Phil?”

need a job can’t afford both food and all the concerts I want to see

Why do I even watch “Dr. Phil?”

need a job can’t afford both food and all the concerts I want to see

Why do I even watch “Dr. Phil?”

need a job can’t afford both food and all the concerts I want to see

Why do I even watch “Dr. Phil?”

need a job can’t afford both food and all the concerts I want to see

Why do I even watch “Dr. Phil?”

need a job can’t afford both food and all the concerts I want to see

Why do I even watch “Dr. Phil?”

need a job can’t afford both food and all the concerts I want to see

Why do I even watch “Dr. Phil?”

need a job can’t afford both food and all the concerts I want to see

Why do I even watch “Dr. Phil?”

need a job can’t afford both food and all the concerts I want to see

Why do I even watch “Dr. Phil?”

need a job can’t afford both food and all the concerts I want to see

Why do I even watch “Dr. Phil?”

need a job can’t afford both food and all the concerts I want to see

Why do I even watch “Dr. Phil?”

need a job can’t afford both food and all the concerts I want to see

Why do I even watch “Dr. Phil?”

need a job can’t afford both food and all the concerts I want to see

Why do I even watch “Dr. Phil?”

need a job can’t afford both food and all the concerts I want to see

Why do I even watch “Dr. Phil?”

need a job can’t afford both food and all the concerts I want to see

Why do I even watch “Dr. Phil?”

need a job can’t afford both food and all the concerts I want to see

Why do I even watch “Dr. Phil?”

need a job can’t afford both food and all the concerts I want to see

Why do I even watch “Dr. Phil?”

need a job can’t afford both food and all the concerts I want to see

Why do I even watch “Dr. Phil?”

need a job can’t afford both food and all the concerts I want to see

Why do I even watch “Dr. Phil?”

need a job can’t afford both food and all the concerts I want to see

Why do I even watch “Dr. Phil?”

need a job can’t afford both food and all the concerts I want to see

Why do I even watch “Dr. Phil?”

need a job can’t afford both food and all the concerts I want to see

Why do I even watch “Dr. Phil?”

need a job can’t afford both food and all the concerts I want to see

Why do I even watch “Dr. Phil?”

need a job can’t afford both food and all the concerts I want to see

Why do I even watch “Dr. Phil?”

need a job can’t afford both food and all the concerts I want to see

Why do I even watch “Dr. Phil?”

need a job can’t afford both food and all the concerts I want to see
Tech Up Close

Last week’s Tech Up Close:
Phi Tau Sigma plaque
outside the MRDC

Last week’s winner:
Andrew Martinez

Winner receives a free Technique T-shirt

email: focus@technique.gatech.edu