

About the Fresh Writers Program

Every high school has aspiring writers. You remember them from your own high school - the kids who were constantly writing fantasy fiction in a spiral notebook when they should have been paying attention in class.

Bill Jelen of Holy Macro! Books was a Junior Achievement volunteer at Lake High School. He enjoyed telling the students about the ins and outs of publishing, having successfully published several computer books. While telling the students about Small Press Month in March, he realized that the average kid was going to be spending the summer working at Pizza Hut for \$5 an hour. After pitching the idea of having a contest where the student with the best book proposal would be given a grant to spend the summer writing the novel, he joined up with Journalism teacher Rick Friedline, and the contest was on. Four weeks later, Jelen and the English department were reviewing eight book proposals from high school students.

When he realized that the proposals were so good that he couldn't narrow it down, Jelen signed four young authors to a brand new publishing imprint. The authors spent the summer trying to meet ten weekly 15-page deadlines. They all met once a week at the local coffee house to learn about some aspect of the publishing world. They scoped out competitive titles at Border's to help them narrow down their

cover design choices. They met with authors to learn about the frustrations and difficulties of editing. They met with newspaper writers to learn about publicity. They weighed the costs of bookstore co-ops vs. guerrilla marketing. By the end of the summer, they had not just a completed book under their belt, but a firm knowledge of the publishing industry.

Local student artists submitted art for cover designs, and these covers were pitted head-to-head against those of professional cover illustrators. Two of the four titles have cover illustrations designed by students. After having books written by high school students for high school students, Jelen again tapped the high school, this time turning to Suzanne Arnold and the vocational marketing department. Jelen gave them an \$8,000 grant to figure out how best to market four titles on a shoestring. The results may just turn the traditional publishing model on its ear. Jelen sees this as a community service project. "We've been wildly successful with the computer titles. This project is a chance to give some of that revenue back to the community.

Even if the students barely sell enough books to earn their advance, it has already been a win. Can you imagine hitting your freshman year of college with a published novel on your college application? The next time one of these students is assigned an 8-page term paper, they will scoff at the simplicity of such a task."

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Order from Independent Publishers Group

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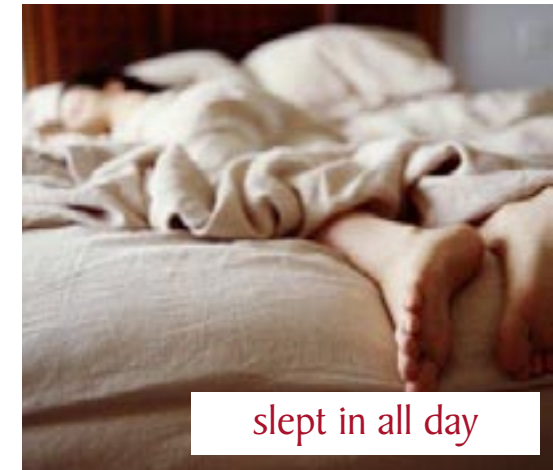
What did you do last summer?



played video games



delivered pizza



slept in all day



We wrote our first novel!