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UNIVERSITY YOUNG WOMEN PUBLISH "WRITER’S BLOCK" AND SUPPORT CHILDREN’S MENTAL HEALTH

Kitchener, ON: Sana Abuleil and Aliza Jafri met when they were in Grade 7 and have been best friends for the past 10 years. The two girls shared a dream. Sana, the poet, and Aliza, the illustrator, imagined creating a book of healing that would allow them to share both their creativity and provide an avenue for young people to help them cope with the challenges of youth and isolation.

It wasn’t an easy task, particularly, when in Grade 11, Aliza moved to Virginia Beach, and Sana experienced writer's block in first year University and took a hiatus from writing. But both Sana and Aliza persevered, and through Skype, refueled their ambition and after re-writing and re-designing, completed their task. They received an offer to publish, but when reading the contract, were concerned about their loss of creative control, and made the decision to self-publish. “It was a hard decision,” says Sana, “as they were going to distribute 30,000 copies in book stores.” Sana and Aliza purchased the copyright and an ISBN number and found a printer. Daunted by the cost of formatting, Aliza decided to use her design experience to format the book as well.

In December 2015, with both girls in 3rd year University, “Writer’s Block” was published and is currently being sold worldwide. This illustrated book of poems can be purchased through Instagram, their website, Facebook and through Amazon. Sana and Aliza are currently arranging for its distribution through Chapters as well. They have also sold copies of their book at events such as the “Being Me” conference in Toronto, an organization designed to give Muslim women a voice. “The response has been crazy;” says Sana, “we’ve sold books across the globe, in America (several in California and Texas), England, Germany, Russia and Malaysia.”

It wasn’t enough, however, for the girls to feel that they were having an impact on the well-being of youth through the publication of this book. They wanted to contribute proceeds from the sale of this book to support children’s mental health. They chose Carizon Family and Community Services. Sana wants to be a teacher and heard about Pathways to Education, a program that is offered in Kitchener through Carizon. “I thought I would try volunteering as a tutor in the Pathways program for a year to see if teaching was the direction I truly wanted to pursue,” says Sana, “and I loved it and have been volunteering their for three years now.” During her time at Pathways, Sana discovered the wide-ranging services of Carizon and all the programs they have to help children and youth dealing with mental health challenges. So, Sana and Aliza agreed they wanted to support Carizon by donating a portion of the sale of their books.

These two young women are grateful for the support they have received along their journey from their family and teachers. Teachers from Sir John A. MacDonald helped with the editing of the book. Sana also speaks about the support she received for her writing from her family who have traditionally been steeped in a world of mathematics and science. Her father was a mathematics professor in Jordan, and even though Sana’s older siblings all studied engineering, dentistry and vision sciences, her father was himself a closet writer and understood Sana’s need to follow her creative aspirations.

Sana and Aliza have already begun creating their second book of poems, while continuing their studies at their respective Universities – Sana at the University of Waterloo in Rhetoric and Professional Writing, and Aliza at the Art Institute of Washington.
SAMPLE POEM FROM WRITER’S BLOCK

You fell in love so easily
With everything around you,
But couldn’t seem to
Fall in love with anything
Inside you.
And you wonder why
You’re so alone.
~Sana Abuleil

WRITER’S BLOCK CAN BE PURCHASED THROUGH:

https://www.instagram.com/sabuleilpoetry/
https://www.amazon.ca/books-used-books-textbooks/b?node=916520
www.sabuleilpoetry.com

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If you would like more information, please contact Jennifer Berry, Director of Communications at jberry@carizon.ca.