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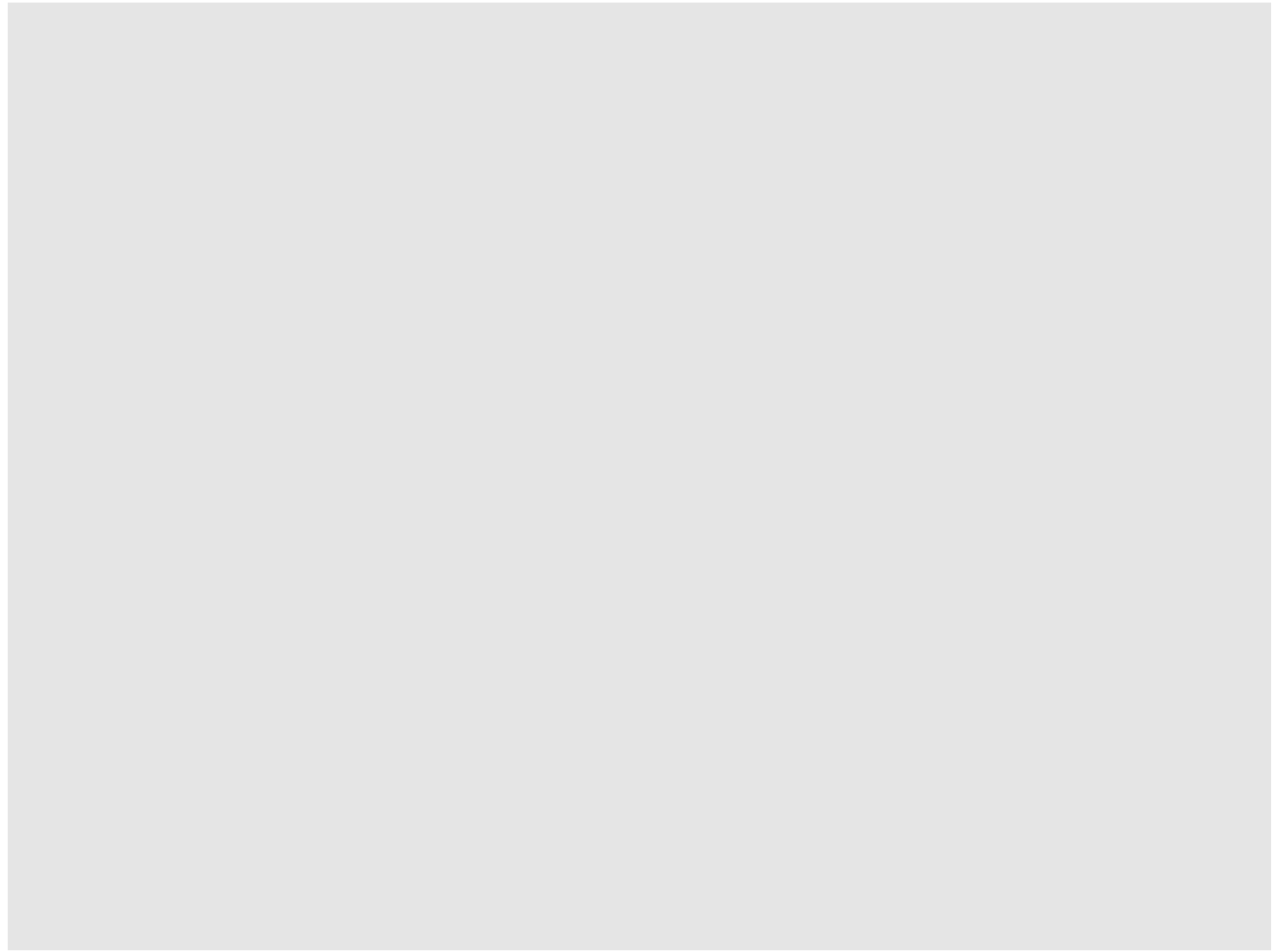
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# WKU to welcome debut novelist with annual writing celebration this weekend



Katy Yocom

Photo courtesy of Terry Price

When Katy Yocom set out to pen her first novel, she didn't anticipate the journey leading her to India – where she would observe tigers in the wild, seek out pastoral villages and take in the sunrise at the Taj Mahal.

Her path wasn't always easy, but after years of work her experiences found their way into the pages of her book “Three Ways to Disappear,” which was published in July. Set partly at a tiger preserve in India and

partly in Louisville, the book chronicles a family's struggle to confront its painful past.

Yocom first got the idea for her book in 2005 and persevered for years to complete the project.

“Simply keep writing,” said Yocom, a Louisville-based author. “It requires a lot of courage to keep at it.”

This weekend, Yocom will share lessons she's learned at the 23rd annual Mary Ellen and Jim Wayne Miller Celebration of Writing at Western Kentucky University. The celebration is free and open to the public and begins at 2 p.m. Sunday in WKU's Kentucky Museum.

The event, which takes its name from two treasured poets and literary professors at WKU, features a writing contest that allows students to vie for the opportunity to work with the visiting writer through a workshop. Three students out of the total 10 participating in the workshop are then selected to receive monetary prizes based on their submissions.

During the celebration, Yocom will present a lecture with opening remarks from Rob Hale, a professor and English Department head. A reception and book-signing will also be provided.

Ahead of the celebration this weekend, Yocom said she's already seen some students' work, and was struck by what she's read. Some students seem “like they've been writing for decades,” Yocom said, adding “They have some really mature things to say.”

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For David Bell, a local author and English Department professor, the annual celebration is an opportunity for students to get a fresh perspective on their work and shine in the spotlight.

The event also keeps the legacy of Mary Ellen and Jim Wayne Miller alive, Bell said.

Mary Ellen Miller, whose teaching career spanned 50 years at WKU, died last year.

She, along with her late husband Jim Wayne Miller – who taught German language and literature at WKU for more than 30 years – became an eminent writer and poet. Mary Ellen Miller started the annual writing celebration to honor her husband after his death in 1996.

“We’re doing this all in her honor,” Bell said.

– Follow education reporter Aaron Mudd on Twitter @BGDN\_edbeat or visit [bgdailynews.com](http://bgdailynews.com).

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## Aaron Mudd

Education reporter. Covers education and related issues, focusing primarily on the Bowling Green and Warren County public school districts and Western Kentucky University.

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