

Plot Twist

This Accounting alumna and award-winning author is changing how children with hearing loss see themselves in stories.

Data has shown just 3.4% of children’s books feature a main character with a disability. As author of the award-winning *Mighty Mila* children’s book series, Kathryn (Moran) Petruzzello ’03 VSB is on a mission to change that.

A veteran accountant who has been at PwC for 21 years, Petruzzello can recall the exact night her unexpected journey to becoming a children’s book author and disability advocate began. It was Spring 2020, and her then-three-year-old daughter, Mila, had recently undergone cochlear implant surgery. Mila was picking a bedtime story, and her frustration was mounting with each book she added to the discard pile.

“How come no one has these?” Mila asked, pointing to her cochlear implants. Her mother suggested some educational children’s books they had, but Mila was looking for a “fun book.” And so the idea for *Mighty Mila* was born. “Children with hearing loss deserve to see themselves represented in stories as regular kids where hearing loss is not the focus of their story, and it’s important for children with typical hearing to read these stories too,” Petruzzello says. “Since these books didn’t exist, I knew I needed to write one.”

A director in PwC’s U.S. Deals practice, Petruzzello has spent years helping clients navigate major changes in their businesses like mergers, acquisitions, divestitures and capital markets transactions. And so, she met this major period of transition in her own family head on.



Kathryn (Moran) Petruzzello ’03 VSB and her husband, Fabio Petruzzello ’03 VSB, met in Public Speaking class at Villanova. They have three kids Luca, Mila and Sofia; both Mila and Sofia have sensorineural hearing loss.

In October 2021, Petruzzello self-published *Mighty Mila*. “I never explored traditional publishing because I was on a tight timeline to get this book out while Mila was still reading children’s books,” she says. Inspired by her spunky daughter, the story is about a character who wants to prove to her family that she’s a big kid—and she happens to have cochlear implants.

The heartwarming tale immediately took off. Over 90% of self-published books sell under 100 copies during their lifetime.

Mighty Mila has sold more than 10,000 copies in less than three years, winning multiple book awards.

An Amazon best-selling author, Petruzzello received a prestigious award from the Center for Hearing and Communication, has visited dozens of schools to educate children about deafness and the importance of celebrating differences, has delivered keynote addresses, has been featured on several news outlets and podcasts, and just recently published her second book, *Mighty Mila: Dream Job*—all in addition to her role at PwC, which has been extremely supportive of her efforts.

“I can honestly say the Villanova School of Business; my experience at PwC; and the support of my husband, Fabio, and family have prepared me for all of it,” Petruzzello says. “They’ve instilled in me this ability to push outside my comfort zone, to innovate and to be agile.”

Through her book donation program, Petruzzello has provided more than 700 books to children with hearing loss and educators via local children’s hospitals, schools and hearing loss organizations. And now many children go home with a “fun book” after their cochlear implant surgery.

“I’m often asked, ‘Did you always want to be a writer?’” Petruzzello says. “The truth is I never even considered it before that night after Mila’s surgery. Writing is simply the vehicle for the change I want to ignite.”

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So many families have shared that their children feel inspired knowing there is a real-life Mila and they connect with her story.”

–Kathryn (Moran) Petruzzello ’03 VSB



Mighty Mila and *Mighty Mila: Dream Job*, available on Amazon.

To learn more or donate a book, visit www.mightymila.com