

# A New Children's Book Titled 'The Capables' Celebrates Young Heroes With Disabilities

Producer-turned-author Danny Jordan talks about his new inclusive children's book series.



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20 percent of people identify with having some form of disability; but many say they don't see themselves represented enough in the world we live in. While the people behind today's television shows, movies and books are doing a better job of focusing on authentic representation, television producer Danny Jordan realized there was a lot more work to do when he and his wife learned their daughter would be born with a limb difference. [Jessica Abo](#) sat down with the first-time author and with disability advocate Nicole Kelly to learn more about Jordan's book series, *The Capables*, and how we all can be more inclusive and empathetic.

**Jessica Abo:** Take us back to when you and your wife were expecting your first child. Can you tell us about the promise you made when your wife was pregnant?

**Danny Jordan:** Nearly three years ago now, my wife was pregnant with our first daughter, Emerson. At about the 22-week mark we went to see a perinatologist and it was confirmed that our daughter would be born with a limb difference. I made a promise in that moment to our unborn daughter to do whatever I could to put something out into the world that made the world that our daughter would grow up in more inclusive, more empowering, more educated. And that's when this idea hit me for this group of kid superheroes, *The Capables*, all of whom have a difference or disability and their powers are activated through empowerment.

**What made you want to use Kickstarter to bring this book to life?**

**Jordan:** In April of 2020, just like so many other people, my industry shut down. So I was left with this project that I was very passionate about and was so personal to me. I went back and forth on deciding whether or not to go with a crowdsource funding approach, because it just felt so weird to me to ask people for money in the middle of a global pandemic. But through conversations with trusted colleagues, friends, family, they really helped me to understand that this was an opportunity to include other people in our process. **Children** who are living with disabilities, their parents, people who are living with disabilities themselves, to get behind our project and to help bring this story, this series of inclusion to the world. So we decided to move forward with it. In September of 2020, we launched the campaign, and in three days we were fully funded.

**That's an amazing story. Where can people buy the book now?**

**Jordan:** Currently, you can order a hardcover copy on our website, [thecapables.com](http://thecapables.com), or you can get it in ebook form and paperback over on Amazon.

**You have a long list of T.V. producing credits behind you. How has being a producer on shows like *Extreme Makeover: Home Edition* or *The Biggest Loser* helped you in this process?**

**Jordan:** To be completely honest with you, when I first started writing the book, there were days where I would question myself, thinking, "Who am I to write a children's book? This isn't what I do. It's not my profession." But then I realized that for the last 12 years, my job has been to write stories and to bring stories to television.

So I really broke it down in simple terms of beginning, middle, end. There needs to be a conflict and we need to have a resolution. As a producer, learning how to craft a great story was vital. But also, in terms of people that I connected with over the years, whether they were other production colleagues or talent on shows that I produced, I reached out to those people. And then when we got ready to promote, the amount of people from shows that I worked on in the past from *Extreme Makeover: Home Edition* to *Storage Wars*, the talent they got behind us and they started sharing news of our Kickstarter campaign out to their followers. And in a matter of three days, because of their support, our campaign became fully funded.

**And once you were fully funded, what was your next step?**

**Jordan:** I had known from early days that I wanted to align with individuals who had the lived experience that was being represented in this first book. When we became funded, I started reaching out to individuals on social media, and Nicole Kelly was one of those individuals. I popped her an email and she got back to me almost immediately. It really started this process of us working together to start to mold and shape the language in this first book.

**Nicole, you're amazing for a million reasons. Many people know you from participating in Miss America. You are one of a few contestants to participate with a disability. What does it mean to you to be on the board of The Capables?**

**Nicole Kelly:** Coming out of my Miss America experience, what I learned was that the news and the media, when they told my story, almost all the time told it incorrectly. That really made me stop and take stock of my life and the way that I had either been presented with stories about myself, disability, or not been presented stories about disability in my life. Coming out of my Miss America journey I've really made it my mission to connect with people in projects who are working on disability specific stories. So when Danny initially reached out to me, I was really, really excited to connect with him because the journey of a parent is very different from the journey of actually living with a disability, and Danny knew that.

Danny wanted to connect with people who had the lived experience. Danny wanted people on his side to come alongside him and say, "As a person who has lived this way, this interaction might have gone a different way." He was really willing to take stock of our voices as an advisory board. He was really willing to go back and rewrite pieces of the book that didn't work. Really how it changes things is this is another story going out into the world that officially we can say kids of the future are now getting stories that are accurately represented and that are talking about their disability identity with pride.

**This book is for everybody. What do you want people to walk away knowing?**

**Kelly:** I think a big problem in today's society is that disability is looked at as our trained behavior is that it should be hush, hush. Almost that disability is something to be ashamed of, so don't ask questions about it. And what's so amazing about *The Capables* is that this is going to be a starter conversation for families across the world. Whether your child has a disability or not, this book is opening up that conversation about what it means to have a disability.

**Jordan:** We want to have these conversations, but I think so many people are afraid of saying the wrong things, and one of our objectives with the way that we went about writing this book was to provide the tools, educational tools for parents where disability has never intersected their lives, and their kids are curious and their kids are asking questions. We wanted to give them language they could use to take away the fear.

It's not as challenging as you think it is. Just be honest with your kids. Kids want to ask questions. We want our kids to be curious. So why would we limit that?

**How did you involve Emmy in this process?**

**Jordan:** There's a moment that will always stick in my mind, and it was the first time I got Rae in a scene, and I had it on my phone and I showed it to my daughter. There was something about her seeing Rae, the character that really looks so much like her and has a limb difference like her. Her reaction, she giggled, she screamed. And I asked her, "Did we do it? Did we nail it?" And she said, "Yeah." That was the only confirmation I ever needed that the way that we were telling the story and the way that the imagery was coming together was exactly the way that it was meant to be.

**Getting the seal of approval from a two-year-old, that's everything.**

**Jordan:** Oh my gosh, to just show it to my daughter and get that immediate, unfiltered response from her was all I needed in that moment, and that really served as a catalyst for us moving forward full-speed with the project.

**Nicole, what do you want to say to people out there who feel different? I think everyone feels imposter syndrome from time to time, but for people who are really struggling, what do you want to say to them?**

**Kelly:** My journey into my disability identity truly was going off to Miss America and the entire world using the word disability to describe me. Nobody growing up had taught me that that was a good word to be identified with. In fact, I was taught it was a bad word to be identified with. So it really took a lot of time and energy to find the right books to read, to find the right mentors who could talk to me about the ways that my disability identity was important and beautiful, and how I deserve to have a seat at the table because I could take on that identity.

I'm proud of the journey I've taken. It's led me to people and places like Danny and *The Capables*. It's given me a fiery passion to talk about disability, but the greatest gift I can think of to give the next generation of people like me is truly to just give them that understanding and complete pride.