

# Children's book "*Taylor the Construction Worker*" helps raise awareness on dwarfism and kindness while featuring former Wayne graduate

by Jen Reed

No two people are alike in this world and we each have our own special qualities and appearances that set us apart from others. Throughout our lives, we are fortunate to meet new people every step of the way, which often times can prove to be a learning experience when we notice our differences and what makes each of us unique and special.

Whether a person is a man or a woman, someone that wears glasses or has perfect vision and even whether someone has light or dark skin, these are only appearances that set us apart from one another with looks, but in no way determines what we can accomplish in our lives. The same is true of someone that is born with a medical condition, a handicap or a disability. While outside appearances may be different and some things in life may be more challenging, each person still has feelings and outside appearances in no way define what a person is capable of doing.

Former Wayne CSD graduate Taylor Foster was born with Achondroplasia, the most common type of Dwarfism. Achondroplasia accounts for nearly 70 percent of dwarfism cases and is the mutation of the FGFR3 gene.

"The parts in your brain that has that gene that is not mutated, is telling your body that your limbs are not done growing," said Taylor's wife Mady. "Taylor's gene is mutated and pretty much told his body that his long bones were fully developed when they actually weren't. His biceps, his femur, fibula, tibia are shorter bones and not full length because of that mutation."

With Taylor attending the smaller rural school and in a time before social media was in existence like that of today, he knew he was unable to relate experiences with others around him.

"Growing up the closest little person I knew was in Pella and she was older than me so growing up we never had a connection," said Taylor. "By the time I could talk, she was already out of high school so we weren't able to relate stories."

Even Mady admitted when she first met her husband Taylor, he was the first little person she had met and knew very little about dwarfism. After their first date, she took it upon herself to learn more about dwarfism to make herself more aware of Taylor's condition.

As a third grade teacher at Tiffin Elementary for Clear Creek Amana, Mady has always had a giant love for education and the use of children's books and the way they can help those at a young age understand and process situations they may be unfamiliar with. It was with this mindset that inspired Mady to write her first-ever published children's book.

"I've always wanted to write a book and I think it's really important to start education at a young age," said Mady. "Last year I began doing a disabilities unit with my class talking

about different kinds of disabilities. I talked about autism and Down syndrome and threw in even some not so common issues like stuttering, tourettes, spina bifida or things that kids don't know a lot about and dwarfism happened to be one of them. When I was trying to teach the students, searching online for books and videos, there were no books on dwarfism so I thought it was a good starting point for my book."

Along with the lack of books to be found on dwarfism, the Foster's were inspired as well when following their wedding nearly two and a half years ago, they began following families on Instagram with children with dwarfism. They knew their chances were much higher of having their own child with dwarfism and wanted to learn more.

"While online last year we came across a boy in Texas named Louie," Taylor began. "His mother posted a photo of him on his first day of two-year old preschool with a back-to-school board where it stated his name, how old he was and what he wanted to be when he grew up."

"He wanted to be a construction worker and there was an adult online that decided to comment on this social media post some awful things about Louie," Mady continued. "This woman said he could never be a construction worker as a little person and she used some derogatory words about little people that we don't use in our house and here is Taylor that is living proof that anyone can do anything and a little person can absolutely be a construction worker."

Taylor's own interest into the construction world and equipment began at a young age when his father, David Foster owned Holmes Tiling locally allowing him the up-close and personal aspect.

"It really made us mad that someone would try telling a two-year old that they can't do something," Taylor added.

Mady then got to work writing her book, *"Taylor the Construction Worker"* featuring her husband himself on the job where he works for River Products Company out of Iowa City. She first put together a few books for Christmas gifts to share with other families with little boys that were also little people.

"We sent one to Louie and we got a really great response on them," said Mady. "When the moms posted on social media because of them having such a big following, people were asking where they could get a copy of the book."

Mady worked on rewriting the story of Taylor, having the new version through two editors with input from several others, which is now featured in the paperback version that is being sold. She decided while many children's books feature illustrations, using real photographs of Taylor would be more impactful to readers for this particular book.

"I thought it may be difficult to accurately represent a person with dwarfism in illustrations so I decided to take photos of Taylor at his worksite instead to use," Mady stated. "The pictures feature Taylor being with the construction equipment, getting into the construction equipment and there's even a few throwback pictures of him as kid, with his dad and with his family too."

When choosing a name for her new business venture as a children's book author, Mady decided to factor in their two dogs for inspiration for the name Kind Dog Books.

"We have two dogs, Millie and Mabel and they are like my children," Mady laughed. "I spend all day every summer with them and they are my best friends on the entire planet. I also wanted to do something involving kindness because moving forward; every book I write will have a message about kindness. It's one thing I really preach to my kids in the

classroom and if you ask my kids, which word does Mrs. Foster 10,000 times a day and they would reply kindness.”

Mady wanted to combine the things that matter most to her and after running it by Taylor, they both thought it was a catchy name.

With the main objective for this book being about education, Mady and Taylor are thrilled with the success they are seeing with it already. While books have been sold and donated to libraries, businesses and public schools as well as other individuals purchasing for their own personal use, some sales have even reached outside the U.S. making it to Australia, Canada and Scotland.

“I honestly have been a little shocked,” said Mady. “I wanted the book to reach a lot of people and tried to make it as affordable as we could. The point of it was education because that is what is near and dear to my heart and I am really glad I get to share something that is so important to me. Anything I can do to make Taylor more known or my future children more known, I’m going to do it.”

“It’s really pretty crazy but also weird when I see a photo of a kid looking at the book and it’s me and just knowing I am an inspiration,” Taylor added.

“Taylor is really coming out of his shell and realizing the importance of him being an adult and paving the way for how little people are perceived,” said Mady. “When these kids get older and realize Taylor is living proof that l.p.’s can live a very typical, normal, successful life will be a good example for those kids to have when they come across difficult times.”

While Mady stays busy teaching and has plans to write additional books down the road, Taylor continues to work with construction equipment at River Products Company, working alongside his father the past six years. He also stays busy with his side business of Empty Pockets Rebuilds where he creates scaled down toy versions of construction equipment.

Anyone interested in ordering a *“Taylor the Construction Worker”* book can visit [www.kinddogbooks.com](http://www.kinddogbooks.com) or Mady’s Facebook page Kind Dog Books. Along with having the book for sale, she also has sticker options available which also help promote awareness and kindness.

“There is a green ribbon for dwarfism awareness sticker along with my own slogan quote of Spread Kindness Change the World.” said Mady. “I also have another sticker that states through kindness and understanding anything is ‘paw’sible which is a quote my brother came up with last October when Taylor was doing 31 days of dwarfism facts. My brother commented that on a video I did and I really liked it and felt it holds true so I made that for him.”

While the book is labeled as a children’s book with wordage for third and fourth graders, the content is informative for all ages.