

# Children's book promotes the value of self-acceptance

By B.C. Manion

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Chances are you've never heard of Ivan, a giraffe who teaches children the importance of self-acceptance.

If Wesley Chapel author Linda Rossetti Brocato has it her way, though, copies of her book, "Ivan Becomes a Hero," will one day be in the hands of children around the globe.

"I want to get it wherever there is a child whose heart can be touched by Ivan," Brocato said.

She thinks the book delivers an important message.

"In this day and time, when there is so much bullying and unkindness, I want children to know that they are fearfully and wonderfully made, even if they're different," said Brocato, who based the book's central theme on Psalm 139, Verse 14.

The verse reads in part: "I am wonderful and fearfully made."

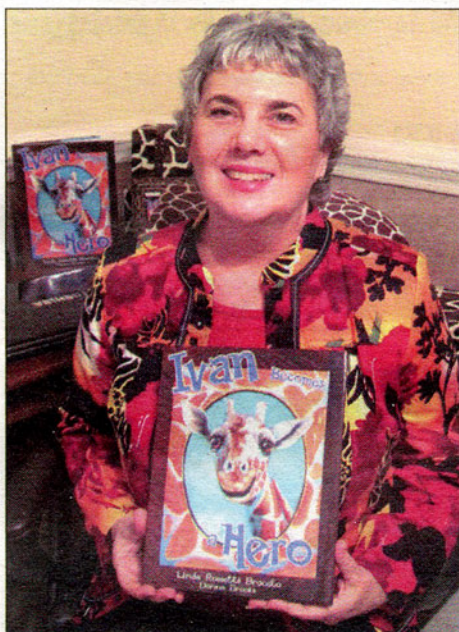
"I want them (children) to see that they are a treasure. It's not an accident the way they are made," said Brocato, a former Sanders Memorial Elementary school teacher, who just completed a recent book tour in Mississippi.

Brocato said she came up with the idea for her book 12 years ago, while visiting a wildlife refuge in California. When she saw a baby giraffe at the refuge, she jotted down the first words of her book onto a napkin.

She didn't give the scribbled note any more thought until after being forced away from the classroom by multiple myeloma, a cancer of the bone marrow.

Brocato went through chemotherapy and stem cell transplants in her battle against the disease at the Centers of Excellence in Little Rock, Ark.

"I had a lot of time alone. I couldn't teach," Brocato said. Nor could she continue the ministry that she had her husband, Frank, had done for more than two decades.



Linda Rossetti Brocato poses with a copy of her first book, "Ivan Becomes a Hero" (Photo by B.C. Manion)

During that solitary time, she said: "I heard in my heart, 'But what about Ivan?'"

That's when she realized that Ivan's story was divinely inspired, Brocato said.

Besides being a potential source of encouragement for children, the book also helped Brocato as she coped with the dark days of her illness.

"Ivan was my beacon of light," she said.

The book tells the tale of a little giraffe who is mocked and scorned and treated unkindly, but who ultimately succeeds in his journey of self-acceptance.

The book was written for children ages 3 to 12, but has appeal for all ages, she said.

"Everybody has been wounded and everyone has been rejected, so they can identify," she said.

Going from a mere idea for a story to a completed manuscript to a published book

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has been an adventure, Brocato said.

She was shepherded through the process by Linda J. Hawkins, her publisher from Heart to Heart Christian Books, who served as a consultant and helped Brocato to find the book's illustrator, copy editors and designer. "She mentored me throughout the process."

"My biggest prayer was for the illustrator not to be ordinary," Brocato said.

The project's original illustrator quit, but then another highly respected illustrator became available to do the job.

"The timing was perfect," Brocato said, praising the skill of the illustrator, Donna Brooks. "She helped make Ivan come alive."

Brocato decided to pay to publish the book rather than shopping it to various publishers. She said she wanted to retain control

over the book's design and content, as well as to own the copyright.

The author said everybody in her family supported her efforts, especially her husband. "I feel like he's Ivan's daddy," she said.

She sees the market for her book as "anyone who wants a good book with a life message for children."

If the book succeeds, she plans to use the proceeds to pursue publication of four additional books, including one about her mother and a sequel about Ivan.

Brocato has done some book signings, but welcomes the opportunity to speak at local bookstores, at club meetings and will even do author signings in private homes.

For more information about the author, her book, or her availability, go to [www.lindarossettibrocato.com](http://www.lindarossettibrocato.com) or call (813) 973-3039.