

Introduction: [00:00](#) Welcome to the Wrighter's Way Podcast where we celebrate writers who have completed their books and inspire writers who haven't. Join Laurie and her guests as they talk about writing, books, and life in-between chapters.

Laurie: [00:17](#) Hi everybody. Thank you for tuning in again to the Wrighter's Way Podcast. I'm Laurie and I'm here today with author April Cox. Welcome.

April: [00:27](#) Hi everyone. It's really great to have - to be on the show. Thank you so much.

Laurie: [00:31](#) Thank you for doing it with that. So there's lots to talk about because you've got lots going on. And so let's jump right into it. Just share with people a bit about you and your background in that kind of stuff and about your book.

April: [00:45](#) Sure. I am a grandmother to four beautiful grand-kids who have really inspired me on this journey of writing a book. My background is in I.T. and program management with large corporations so my day job for the longest time 30 years in corporate America turned into now a full time gig at writing and doing the things that I absolutely love which is spending time with kids and thinking about all the events that we're wanting to plan with libraries in the community and other authors so really excited to have you know to start this journey. And it's a big change.

Laurie: [01:34](#) I was going to say that's a big shift from corporate America to self-publishing. Did the I.T. background help you, like was it a little bit easier do you think?

April: [01:45](#) Well it's an I.T. consulting background and so you know I was kind of a parachute jumper. You just go into new areas where clients were having trouble and you need to very quickly pick up all of the information about that industry in that business and the challenges that they're having and move them through these challenges, make things better, and improve them. So when you think about how does that apply to the world of publishing. Wow I really I think all of all of the background that I have on being able to jump into a brand new industry learned very quickly and then the passion that I have for helping others and breaking through complex things and making them more simple that just come a very long way in helping me to move forward efficiently.

- Laurie: [02:36](#) And you seem very flexible so like when plan A didn't quite work out, you know, you were quick to, you know ,that's fine we're going to steer the other way. That sounds like that was part of the job that you had.
- April: [02:50](#) Yeah in program management you when you're rolling out large systems or you are rolling out a new product you're always looking at contingency planning. You put a plan together but everybody knows that it never goes perfectly. Something's always gonna... Know move things and derail you and you just have to have that contingency planning and be able to just say OK now what what can I do now? And quite often it's you know beginners errors or you just don't know as much. So today maybe I wouldn't make some of the same mistakes that I made at the beginning but it's all a learning process and we shouldn't be afraid of that. You know. So taking that from my 30 years in corporate America and program management and rolling out these large systems I think that it really helped me to to be able to just take everything in stride make sure I'm planning well. But able to you know just keep pressing forward and not get too discouraged.
- Laurie: [03:56](#) I love that. Good for you. Some people I think would give up right.
- April: [04:00](#) Oh yeah.
- Laurie: [04:01](#) One thing That doesn't go right and that's it. Obviously I'm horrible and I'm not meant to do this. And down it goes and you can't do that. It's all a learning experience. I love that. Don't be afraid of the learning process. So why did you want to write this book. Puppy Pick Up Day book.
- April: [04:19](#) Yes so I started with a Puppy Pickup Day just as a passion project. It was me you know reading to my grandchildren. It's it's something that I just fell in love with. Picture books all over again. About five years ago when my little when my first grandchild was born. And when when a little child just climbs up on your lap and melts into your arms and just releases all the stress of the day and they're ready to read with you one of their favorite stories it's just so much fun. And when I would babysit the little ones one of the things I always tried to do is get them using their imaginations away from the iPad, the television, the video games. And we would we would tell stories we would imagine and we would act them out. And it became a fun game. We would play and when we were reading together and they climb up on my lap my little Labradoodle would climb up with me on that side. And so we started like focusing our stories

around this little Labradoodle and the adventures we would have with him. And so I thought you know someday I'm not going to be here. And I would love to leave some of these stories behind for the kids. And so I started putting them in writing. It was a great passion project because I was kind of getting a little burned out with corporate America. And I wanted to be able to just do something fun in my free time. So it started as a hobby a hobby and we would make up the stories and I just said self publishing is easy. You know let me just try to play with that and see if I can get this out there and then it just turned into much more. When when the corporate position went away I thought I can make this. I think I can make this work and I want to I want to try it. I want to give it a chance to see if I can actually do this for myself for a living.

Laurie: [06:18](#) I love that. And so far how's it going? When was that? Was did a job end ... OK let me back up. So your job ended when?

April: [06:27](#) My job ended at the end of July. So as of August 1st I was full time just working on the book.

Laurie: [06:36](#) OK so that's been about two and a half months. And how long did it take you to write the book?

April: [06:41](#) I would say at the time I was working full time in the corporate America world which meant for my job about 80 hours a week. It was horrible. So so slow going at the beginning. And I think it took me probably about six months to get through that process and work with editors and and get it to a good place. By the time I actually finished the corporate job ended. I think it was we were about halfway through illustrations at that point. And now we are. We went live with the book in October. We had the paperback. We just received a copy. We just received our stock for the hardcovers. We have the the little Labradoodle and I'm gonna show a little Labradoodle stuffed animal...

Laurie: [07:36](#) That you're selling or is that just your one...?

April: [07:38](#) Yes. Now it's part of them.

Laurie: [07:41](#) Oh what are those?!

April: [07:42](#) They're tattoos. So I just started putting you know we put all this work into this beautiful book. And I wanted to do something to start building a gift set. So we we we're just finishing up on a coloring book that should be available at the beginning of next month. And so it's a companion coloring book.

And the goal is for the holidays to have a little canvas bag with a hard cover a soft little Labradoodle. And these are these are so soft and lovable kids love them and they're just perfect size possible kind of little Labradoodles. But we're putting your know tattoos in there and we'll have the companion coloring book along with it in a little you know a little canvas bag. So it'll be it'll be fun to you know start pulling those things together. And right now we're selling the gift sets of the Labradoodle and the book on our web site at www.thelittlelabradoodle.com/shop so until I can figure out how to do how to sell those bundles on Amazon which I'm trying to figure out now I'm directing people that want to buy the packages for gift packages over to the Web site and we're able to discount it more because we don't have the same Amazon fees so. So right now you can get everything I just mentioned for 30 percent off. So it's like 20 bucks you can get a nice little gift set.

- Laurie: [09:13](#) Wow. Holy crow really?
- April: [09:16](#) Yeah.
- Laurie: [09:16](#) That's amazing you've done time in two and a half months!
- April: [09:22](#) Well when you're used to working 80 hours a week and then you start working for yourself and you get that passion and fire. So. So I have kind of you know you backed off on the number of hours and added some really wonderful trusted people that helped me through a lot of things. You know graphic design Nicole Lavoy has done an amazing job with some of the things it has helped me produce a lot of this stuff very quickly. So I really appreciate all of her time and effort and other wonderful people that have helped me get where I am and that's why I've started you know blocking off time in my calendar now to start giving back so that I can do the same for others as well.
- Laurie: [10:07](#) That's wonderful. OK so I know that people are going to want to know. So can you share a bit about the process of creating the stuffy? Because I know there's a lot of others that think I want to make a stuffy with my book.
- April: [10:22](#) So I did do some research I started it by just going on to Google and looking for places that actually created the plush but actually the other thing I did is I ordered a bunch of Labradoodle plushes and you know different sizes and shapes because I wanted to know you know what feels right with the size of my book? I want to feel the quality I want to touch them. And I did find maybe half a dozen different plushy companies where you could order a custom plush. Some of them would create it

based on a character you send to them. Others would they even go as far as saying they'll fulfill the orders for you. You could send them their book your books they'll package them along with the animals and ship them. I'll try to I'll try to compile the research that I did around that and then I threw it all away when I found Douglas. I found a adorable Labradoodle puppy soft soft soft and he looks just like my dog. The character is based on my dog and it's so sweet and lovable. So I contacted Douglas Plush and told them this would be the perfect one for my for my my book to pair with my book and they do offer customizations that you can do with any of their plush and then I just order them in bulk directly from Douglas.

Laurie: [11:49](#)

And is that in the states?

April: [11:51](#)

Yes actually it is. Well originally I thought you know find something and then you know draw out cuz normally if you're going to have it built somewhere you want to have like a rendering a drawing of what you want to build and then send it to a company in China that's going to send you something back that will be a sample. But I just when I found Douglas. And you know the China Chinese plush that I've seen and ordered you know of samples of I just wasn't happy with quality Douglas is amazing quality it's so soft. And this is safe for the kids yeah. I just feel like they're going to love it so I didn't I just decided you know what. I'm not going to do China. I could probably make more money. Having one produced there but I love the quality and to meet quality comes before money.

Laurie: [12:47](#)

I love that and the safety standards you know will be up to par.

April: [12:52](#)

Exactly.

Laurie: [12:54](#)

I'm just writing that down. Quality that comes before money. Can you share about the tattoos because I know people are gonna be like me taking notes like this. How do you find that where did you... was that Google as well? You just started...

April: [13:08](#)

I did... I just I mean. And the name I did just answer it in a forum I think it's called... It was temporarytattoo.com. And the gentleman there are really very wonderful to work with. They sent me samples of this. This is the tattoo sheet that they sent me and they gave me 25 of them to start with. Because I wanted to see what kind of quality would these tattoos be I didn't want to order 5000 of something and then I said send me just a small little little bit. And I tried them on on my grandchildren and they would be perfect like absolute ...

Laurie: [13:48](#) Very colorful.

April: [13:48](#) Bright colors. So then he contacted me shortly afterwards and said I think we asked you know the guy that did the processing on this accidentally made them bigger because I said they just seem awful big. They seemed bigger than I expected. And he said he said he wanted to fill up a full 18 1/2 by 11 sheet. So he made them bigger. So I said oh that's not what I wanted. So he's redoing the order for me at no charge and sending it to me in two different sizes he's sending me a two inch one and sending me a one and a half inch square one. And he said look at them both. See which one you like and then we'll order books or whichever one you like the best.

Laurie: [14:25](#) Wow that is great sir. Great customer service.

April: [14:30](#) Yes great customer service.

Laurie: [14:30](#) It's nice to hear because you know most of the stories these days are not positive in general. It seems to be something that's really gone downhill. That's amazing. You are so inspiring. I still I'm like she's only been working for two two and a bit months. So that's that's incredible you've come so far. And your book is published right? On Amazon.

April: [14:54](#) Yes it is on and like I said when we have it on paperback and hardcover right now the audio book is also has been produced and we have a wonderful narrator who has an amazing voice and that audio book is just waiting QA for approval from Amazon which they said can take six to eight weeks. I never realized it was going to take that long but so it seems as that's approved it'll be out there. And I also worked with a translation service and we had the book translated in Spanish. So the Spanish version will be available in hard - in softcover on Amazon next month as well.

Laurie: [15:35](#) Wow. Lady that's impressive. I can't wait to see what you do next year.

April: [15:42](#) Well it's time for me probably to start writing some more and getting getting I mean I have many stories that are ready to go for... The challenge is just having the money to illustrate them all because we have ... I didn't talk about our amazing illustrator. But Len Smith is amazing. I mean he's a former Disney illustrator. And the pages inside the book you can see I mean I wanted something that looked very much like Disney. You know and you can definitely see the Disneyesque. And

again this is one of those things. I interviewed a number of illustrators over a period of probably a month and we had people offering up from fifteen dollars a page for illustrations and to I mean you can get 250 500 dollars a page and then was way on the high side. And again I just said I want it it's got to be quality over money because I wanted this to be something that kids would love and again you know at first even just thinking about it as a legacy project. I didn't want a legacy project that I couldn't be proud of. Just when I saw how he translated these characters and the emotion in the book and translated so well to the emotion in the characters that he created it was a perfect fit.

Laurie: [17:09](#)

So how do you find him? People will be wondering.

April: [17:13](#)

The forum through through... you know the author illustrator and marketing forum. I had just been posting like asking people what do you think about this cover that cover? The different options because what I do recommend people do is reach out to a few different illustrators get them to give you a sample. Pay them you know don't ask for everything to be free but if one guy is asking for 40 dollars an illustration I would rather pay that times three each. Have each one individual translate my character my idea for a page and then decide which one of them I want to move forward with. So that's what I was doing and I was you know posting different you know what do you guys think? Vote you know help me vote into some of these Facebook forums. And then after a while ago I saw Len's posting and he did he had a video showing how the drawing process worked. And I was just so drawn to that and I messaged him and I was in a in a messaging discussion with him telling him about the character and what I liked and gave him a picture of my dog. And then in a matter of like five minutes in the message he had the character there for me. And I said this is like you've got exactly this my character in my head just came out on the paper and we've been we've been together for five minutes online. Yes. When you get that kind of relationship and somebody that just gets you that's very rare. And so I was willing to pay more for that to get quality and relationship that I have with Len.

Laurie: [18:59](#)

That's wonderful. Wow. Not everybody has that.

April: [19:03](#)

Yeah. Not easy. And that's why I say you know do definitely you know search for more than one and make a decision and most of the time illustrators are more than happy to give you a sample and they won't charge you. But you know they are making a living. So I prefer to say hey I'm willing to pay you for your 15 dollars per page of 30 or 40 or 80. But I will I need to

see a sample. It doesn't have to be too detailed but what do you charge me just to put a sample together that makes. Because you want them to know you want to know that they're going to translate your characters and your heart and your your story is part of you. I mean it was for me it's not my kids in it it's not me and my husband in it. And I think we make pretty good cartoon characters actually.

Laurie: [19:52](#)

Yeah your skin is flawless.

April: [19:57](#)

He actually made me - I had to tell him not to make me so curvy. He had to straighten me out a little bit. His granddaughter oh Nanna you look so hot! I said No I don't want to be so curvy.

Laurie: [20:10](#)

I don't wanna be the hot grandma.

April: [20:10](#)

I was like I want I want to be like a little more like myself.

Laurie: [20:18](#)

Oh that's funny. Ok that was a great piece of advice. Is there any advice at the top of your head to share with people?

April: [20:24](#)

Well I have been spending time with people on the phone just offering to listen to to you know authors who are just overwhelmed. There is a lot that goes into self publishing a book and I've spent probably a few hours just this week with different individuals and my number one go to with them is just take it one step at a time. It doesn't don't feel like you have to know every single thing the whole way. I've got people you know who are just writing their stories and they haven't got them edited yet or they haven't gotten them critiqued yet and they're already worried about how are they going to get illustrations and how are they going to get you know? Where are they going to get them printed? You know get a get a forum and what I'm trying to do is hold these pull a little community together where we can have discussions like this and actually looking to schedule some time where we pull these authors together and just run through the whole process from a to z on publishing. So there's going to be a forum out there that people can take advantage of. We'll do like a web session like this where we'll have a topic for that day. And we'll start at the beginning and we'll just keep working through things. And again it's going to be my way of trying to get back to the community that helped me get where i am. But you know don't get ahead of yourself. Take it one step at a time because it can be so overwhelming that it can easily paralyze you and you don't want that to happen. One step at a time. And there are going to be a lot of other people to root you on and I'll grab my pompoms

and cheer people along as well. And you can do it you can absolutely do this. And it doesn't have to cost a fortune. You can do the high quality and sometimes you may have to save a little longer and make sure you get that money that you need to do it. But better to do it that way then cut corners.

Laurie: [22:31](#) Yeah. That is so generous of you. So if anybody is watching this and wants to find you know your address where can they find you?

April: [22:42](#) It's [www.thelittle labradoodle.com](http://www.thelittlelabradoodle.com).

Laurie: [22:45](#) OK. Same one.

April: [22:46](#) And I will. I am going to add a page that will have other services that they'll be able to get all the information about the forum. Right now I do have the ability for people to go ahead and schedule time on my calendar for one on one conversations which is what I've been doing. I blocked a couple of hours a day of my time just for anybody who just wants a little pep talk or just is stuck and wants to just get a little encouragement. So that's available now as well. And I'm thinking we'll probably start the forum over the next week or two.

Laurie: [23:24](#) OK. Very generous of you. Thank you. That's lovely. OK so our time is about done so let's jump to... Well I asked this of everybody it's a super personal question but just share everybody knows your books have only been out for a couple of weeks but how many dollar signs would you say that you've earned? And then the fun part of the question in my mind is do you have a plan for what you're going to spend your you know your money on when it starts rolling in?

April: [23:54](#) Right at this point it's so new that. I'm not I can't even count any dollar signs with Amazon. It takes two months to really see any payments. I think I've had maybe a dozen orders on my web site which you know which I'm driving people there for some of the gift sets. So things are just starting to take off for me so far nothing in the dollar signs I can really count. But when it does start rolling in for me I'm just hoping to continue to put it into the next book so that I can start getting the illustrations moving forward on that as well.

Laurie: [24:31](#) OK. So just planning to reinvest.

April: [24:33](#) So much the little Labradoodle... This is the first book in a series and I'm thinking the little Labradoodle will be probably a book

of at least five books a series of at least five books and a little Labradoodle publishing... You know I'm...trying to give back to the author community but the real the core thing for me there is wanting to to create programs not just for to help authors but also to help kids and help them learn about storytelling and learn about books and book

- Laurie: [25:04](#) Book creation of...
- April: [25:05](#) publishing and stuff. Yeah put together some programs that can really help within the community. So I just you know that's where a lot of the money I would say would probably go to and that's where a lot of my time will go to as I'm waiting waiting and sitting. While. While illustrations are happening and I know there's nothing more that I can can do. I tend to not be one to stand still for too long.
- Laurie: [25:32](#) I'm getting that.
- April: [25:34](#) I'm desperately trying to schedule as many visits author visits as possible and start getting into the community and reading books. And you know being able to build the relationships in the community. So that's kind of you know my next this coming year.
- Laurie: [25:53](#) Yeah. OK.
- April: [25:54](#) A lot of that.
- Laurie: [25:55](#) Wow you are very impressive. I have enjoyed this talk immensely. Thank you so much.
- April: [26:01](#) Thank you.
- Laurie: [26:02](#) I'm sure Yyou will see a lot of people try to track you down and take you up on your offer for help to join your forum.
- April: [26:07](#) I love it. And I I absolutely love it and I learn as much from them as they learn from me. And the funny thing is I originally started by saying you know maybe I don't know enough yet but sometimes all people really need is an ear and somebody to tell them it's ok you can breathe. It's not as overwhelming as you think it's going to be. Take one step at a time we'll be there when you get to the next step and we'll help guide you through the one after that too. So you know

Laurie: [26:38](#) So generous. That's wonderful. OK well I'm sure you'll you can anticipate the stampede of people to your website. So we'll say goodbye and thank you again April.

April: [26:48](#) Thank you. Have a great day.

Laurie: [26:50](#) Thank you you too. Bye.

April: [26:51](#) Bye.

Outro: [26:53](#) You've been listening to the Wrighter's Way Podcast. For show notes, links to guests information, and to learn more about the Wrighter's Way check out Lauriewrighter.com. Until next week. Enjoy this chapter of your life.