

Busy alumna authors pair of books, creates smartphone app

Katy Koontz ('81 Journ) has been busy as ever this past year.

She has written a family travel guide book, written a children's picture book, co-authored a memoir and created a smartphone app for travelers who visit the Great Smoky Mountains.

The family travel guide book, titled "Family Fun in the Smokies," focuses on the most-visited national park in the United States, Great Smoky Mountain National Park.

"Researching and writing 'Family Fun in the Smokies' was an incredibly fun year. I checked out every single place I wrote about in the book, including taking every step of every hike and nature walk profiled, often with my daughter Sam," said Koontz. "The book covers every family-friendly activity the park offers, so I did a lot of hiking and explored all over. I love sharing my favorite places, like a waterfall you can walk behind."

Koontz lives only about an hour from the Great Smoky Mountains and can even see the mountains from her neighborhood. "Family Fun in the Smokies" is available in the park and at www.familyfuninthesmokies.com online.

Along with "Family Fun in the Smokies," Koontz stepped into the smartphone age with her new app called Smoky Mountain Travel Guide. With the app travelers get an insider's scoop on what to see and do in the Smokies, including accommodations, activities, attractions, restaurants and shopping. Users may sort entries they want to read by category, by geographic area or by price.

The app includes more than 2,400 images, along with hours of operation, prices and rates for every entry. It also links to each entry's webpage and provides turn-by-turn directions as well as maps.

The smartphone app is available for the iPhone and Android-powered devices.

Koontz's children's picture book, "The Banana Police," is about a little town in a jungle that finds their elephants to be too obnoxious to live with anymore. As a result, the mayor calls on the elephant police to get rid of the elephants.

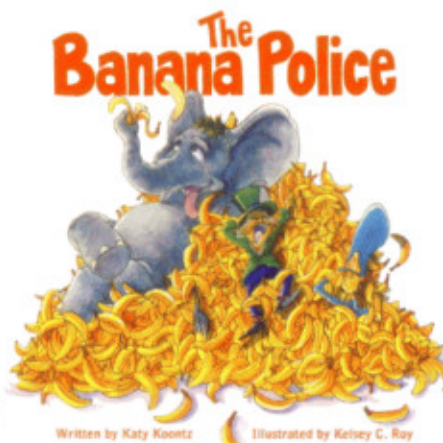
Not long after, another problem arises—a surplus of bananas—and residents realized they do need the pesky pachyderms.

"I wrote 'The Banana Police' for my daughter Sam when she was a newborn, just for fun," said Koontz. "I honestly didn't set out to write a book with any sort of message at all. I was just trying to come up with a fun story."

Even without the intention of conveying a message for



Katy Koontz has enjoyed a productive year, completing several projects. (Photo by Colby McLemore/Colby's Photography)



children, the book does teach them cooperation with people who are different. It also helps readers realize that everything has a purpose, whether

or not you notice it right away. "The Banana Police" is available at <http://thebananapolice.com/> and Amazon.com online.

Another project for Koontz during the year was co-authoring a memoir titled "Yes, the Bee Can Fly" about Sid Mittra, Ph.D., a former professor of finance at Oakland University in Michigan.

"He's a fascinating man and he contacted me several years ago asking me to help him with his memoir," she said. "It was the story of how a man from India overcame seemingly insurmountable odds to come to this country and how he eventually succeeded once he got here."

"His story fascinated me, not only because of the hope it promised to give readers, but also because Sid has a terrific sense of humor." The book is self-published by Mittra.

Koontz, an award-winning freelance writer who specializes in health, lifestyles and travel, lives in Knoxville, Tenn. She has been published in a wide variety of publications, including *Reader's Digest*, *Child*, *Family Fun*, *Glamour*, *Health*, *Men's Journal*, *National Geographic Traveler*, *Natural Health*, *Parenting*, *Redbook*, *Self*, *Travel & Leisure*, *Vacations* and *Woman's Day*, among others.