

Meet Upcoming Valley Author, Kristin Smith

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We sat down with upcoming author, the Valley's own Kristin Smith, to talk about her new kid-friendly, anti-bullying book. "Kona and the Dog Park Bully" follows the story of an adorable pup, Kona, as she goes through the ups and downs of making new friends.

Let's meet Kristin Smith!

AFM: Yay for an Arizona State alum--go Sun Devils! What was your major in college? What sparked your interest in writing?

KS: "I received a Bachelor of Arts in Communications from ASU (Class of 2005) and then later went on to get a Master of Science in Human Resources from Loyola University Chicago. I've always loved writing, and it's actually what I do for a living now. Writing a children's book was always something I had wanted to do, but I wanted it to also bring to life an important message and an opportunity for parents, teachers and caregivers to have an open dialogue with children about an important topic, which in the case of my book is bullying."

AFM: What made you choose bullying as the topic to write your book about? Where did the name and inspiration come from?

KS: "I chose to write about the topic of bullying for two reasons. First, I had experienced bullying as a kid just as so many of us do, but the word 'bullying' wasn't really around back then. In the last five to 10 years, we have really seen growth in terms of recognizing the act of bullying and coming up with ways to try and combat it. I wanted to try and make an impact in this effort to stop bullying by doing what I could to try and help children learn about it and talk about it from as early an age as possible which brings me to the second reason. I wanted to put the message across in a way that was easy for young children to grasp, so I decided to use a pack of puppies to tell the story. Each dog in the book is bullied for reasons that school children can relate to like imperfect teeth, height, weight, mixed race, and name. The book helps children talk about these common bullying reasons with a caring adult, and they learn that we are all unique, important, and even learn about how insecurity can bring out bullying behavior."

AFM: Besides the fact that they are man's most adorable furry friend, what was the idea behind using dogs to tell this story? Do you have an adorable pup?

KS: "Using my own dog, Kona, as the inspiration for the character development was easy for me. She is the gentlest and most loving dog. She loves making new friends (human and canine) and children love to meet her. It's also fun for me to do readings for children and answer their funny questions about her."

AFM: What do you hope is the message that people will take away from this book?

KS: "The message I hope people take away from the book is that everyone is unique and when we take the time to get to know someone, we find that we are always stronger together (like a pack of puppies) than alone."

KS: "The book can be purchased [here](#)."