

April 29, 2013

I would like to thank the students of Pennsylvania for selecting Belly Up as this year's Young Reader's Choice Award winner. This is a truly wonderful honor.

I'm not sure how many of the students who voted for me know this, but I was born in Philadelphia. I moved away when I was five, but I loved the city so much that I returned there for college and had an absolutely wonderful time. During those years, I ended up working at the Philadelphia Zoo -- and my desire to write Belly Up was a direct result of that experience. (Though I promise, no animals escaped or were murdered during my time there. I made all that up. The Philly Zoo was far better run than FunJungle.)

Therefore, it means a great deal to me that my home state -- and a state that was so influential to my life and career -- has given me this honor. I am very, very thankful to you all.

Sincerely,

Stuart Gibbs