

# Betty G. Birney

March 15, 2007

Dear Young Readers of Iowa,

I am thrilled to hear that *THE WORLD ACCORDING TO HUMPHREY* has won the Iowa Children's Choice Award and I accept with great pleasure. Although I have lived in Los Angeles for many years, I grew up in Missouri – and so my heart is in the Midwest.

I started writing when I was seven. As soon as I could read books, I knew I wanted to write them. I wrote a book called *TEDDY BEAR IN THE WOODS* and announced to my parents, "I am going to be a writer." I've been writing ever since and I've made my living writing in advertising, children's television and children's books.

*THE WORLD ACCORDING TO HUMPHREY* was my first middle grade novel. It was inspired when I was in my son's science classroom where the walls were lined with cages and tanks for all kinds of animals. They even had a boa constrictor! I remember thinking, "I wonder what these animals see and hear in the classroom?" That's how Humphrey was born.

The best part of being a writer is the chance to see the world through other people's eyes, or, in Humphrey's case, through the eyes of a hamster! We may be different species, but Humphrey is quite a bit like me: easily excitable, longing to be helpful, (though I'm nearly as successful at it as he is), and VERY-VERY-VERY curious!

There are three books now, *FRIENDSHIP ACCORDING TO HUMPHREY*, and *TROUBLE ACCORDING TO HUMPHREY*. Next year, *SURPRISES ACCORDING TO HUMPHREY* will be published. The books are also published in the United Kingdom, the Netherlands and will be coming out in Japan.

I sit alone in my office most of the time. There, I created a furry little guy who squeaks his mind and loves adventure. But not until children like you began reading and enjoying the books did Humphrey truly come alive. That's the real reward of writing.

I know my tiny, furry friend would like to thank you VERY-VERY-VERY much for reading – and enjoying - his story, and I join him.

Best wishes,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Betty G. Birney". The signature is written in black ink and is positioned below the "Best wishes," text.

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