

COAL CRACKER

Youth-led News for PA's Anthracite Coal Region

Coal Region Creativity

Drawn to Succeed Cartoonist Jimmy Gownley

By Serena Bennett

GIRARDVILLE—*Coal Cracker* recently spoke with Jimmy Gownley, a *New York Times* bestselling author and illustrator originally from Girardville, PA. Gownley is well known for his award-winning comic book "Amelia Rules," which earned 13 Eisner nominations and 6 Harvey nominations. It was named a Junior Library Guild selection four times, has been translated into several languages, and won the 2007 Cybil award for best graphic novel.

Gownley began writing comic books at the age of 15, selling his self-published "Shades of Gray" out of his locker at Cardinal Brennan High School. His latest book, "The Dumbest Idea Ever!" is a memoir about his experiences as a teenage cartoonist.

Gownley now resides in Harrisburg with his wife and daughters. They often visit family in Girardville.

During a phone interview, he gave us some insight on his upcoming books and even some advice for future writers!

Coal Cracker: Are you currently working on any new books?

Jimmy Gownley: Yes, I'm working on a book called "Seven Good Reasons Not to Grow Up." It isn't going to be out until October of 2017 because publishing moves reeeaaaally slowly. That's good though because I'll have more time to make it the



Photo by Serena Bennett

best it can be. I think it's the funniest thing I've done so far.

Cartoonist Jimmy Gownley recently visited Mahanoy Area High School to talk with students about creativity. He identified five places any creative person can go to get ideas that they can turn into art, then the group spontaneously created a comic book superhero named Rock Testosterone, the wimplest football player ever.

CC: What was your most successful book?

JG: "Dumbest Idea" probably, but it's hard to judge that because there are some "Amelia" books that have made *The New York Times* Best Seller list and won a Children's Choice Book of the Year

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Mine Fires Inspire Author Natalie S. Harnett

By Joseph Peters

CARBONDALE—Recently, I was given a pretty amazing opportunity to interview Natalie S. Harnett, author of "The Hollow Ground," her debut work of literary fiction inspired by real-life events in a Pennsylvania coal town where an underground mine fire still terrorizes what's left of the small town today.

After delving into "The Hollow Ground" (which is a great read that I highly recommend) I asked Harnett some questions about the story, history, characters, and her life in general—such as her experience with the mines and life in Pennsylvania.

Coal Cracker: What was your inspiration for writing a book about Pennsylvania coal mine

fires and the experiences of those who lived around them and had to endure them?



Natalie S. Harnett

Natalie S. Harnett: During the 1970s, while I was a young child, my grandfather lived in the Pocono area of Pennsylvania and

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James Harden chats with *Coal Cracker*.

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