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VALENTINE'S  
DAY GIFT IDEAS  
AND DINING  
DESTINATIONS  
P13-16



## INSIDE

- YORKTOWN VETS GET TAX BREAK.....P3
- 'ART PARK' IN PEEKSKILL?.....P5
- 500 BAGS OF HEROIN IN MONTROSE.....P7
- SOMERS ADMIN GO BACK TO SCHOOL....P18
- FORMER YORKTOWN FIRE CHIEF DIES.....P19

MAHOPAC  
WRESTLING  
WINS  
SUPER 16  
PS4



V44, N05

NCNLocal.com

Feb. 3, 2010

# LIFESTYLES

Feb. 3, 2010 | NorthCountyNews

NCNLocal.com | 23



## Lights, camera and action for North County kids

*At Random Farms Kids' Theater, actors make up their own story*

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TARRYTOWN — To have the opportunity to perform in front of people on stage is a special thing. Thanks to the Random Farms Kids' Theater, which was created in 1995, a number of local kids are taking part in the production of "Beauty and The Beast, Jr." at Tarrytown Music Hall.

Performances this weekend will be 10 a.m. and 7 p.m. Friday, Feb. 5; 1 p.m. Saturday, Feb. 6; and 1 p.m. Sunday, Feb. 7.

The group has its rehearsals at the Random Farms Performing Arts Center in Elmsford. Dress rehearsals and performances are held at the Tarrytown Music Hall.

Performances last weekend were by elementary and middle school-age performers. This weekend's shows feature those in middle school and high school.

"I think it's really exciting for a lot of these kids to participate in "Beauty and the Beast, Jr.," said Anya Wallach, theater director and founder. "The cast members come from throughout the tri-state area, so they're meeting so many new friends of all different ages."

"While they might be one of a few in their school who likes to perform, here at Random Farms, they're

with a group of people who share their interest and passion. We've had a lot parents tell us that their kids feel like they've found their home here."

One of those kids is Cortlandt Manor resident Katy Kenny, a fifth-grader who attends Furnace Woods Elementary School.

Katy's mom, Nancy Kenny, credits the Random Farms Kids' Theater staff for enabling her daughter to be in position to be able to perform on stage.

"The director (Anya Wallach), producer (Marc Tuminelli) and staff do a wonderful job in instilling confidence in the kids," Nancy Kenny said. "They make sure everyone has a speaking role in the workshops and that really prepares the actors for being on stage."

Katy played the egg seller/creamier, which is part of the village chorus.

"The thing I enjoy most about my role is you are able to choose your own back-story," Katy said. "That means you can be whoever you want to be. You're not given your own story; you can make one up. If you would like to pretend you are an old performer as part of the village chorus, you can. That is what makes it so much fun."

Katy said she likes to perform on stage because she loves to sing, dance and act.

"It is my favorite thing to do," Katy said. "Also, in my opinion, it is so cool to see everyone in the crowd clapping for you after a number."

What Katy said she likes most about performing at the Tarrytown Music Hall are the many different lights that make the stage glow. She also loves how,

in plays, they use microphones. In most shows, most people get a microphone for part of the show.

Other local performers in the show are Emily Aurand, Charlotte Athanassidy and Lexi Steinman of Cortlandt; Noah Ruff of Croton; Sydney Parra and Marissa Galetti of Yorktown; Sofia France, Antonia Hoyos and Madison Hoyos of Putnam Valley; Erica Melhorn of Somers; Ashley Peleg and Shannon Peleg of Purdys; Kenzie Kyle of Ossining; and Erin Geary and Lindsey Weiss of Mahopac.

"I think kids perform well when they are prepared, uninhibited and feeling confident," Wallach said. "At Random Farms, we work hard to make sure that each child is given the tools that he/she needs to perform to the best of his/her abilities."

Wallach said that being part of an elaborate production, such as "Beauty and the Beast, Jr.," teaches kids not only about musical theater but about life.

"Working as part of a team, learning to structure your time, listening and following directions, these are life-skills," Wallach said. "Sure, the kids get training in singing and dancing and acting but at Random Farms, we stress the process as much as the product."

"In the end, the self-esteem you gain, the friends you make and the skills you learn are far more important than the name of your role or the number of lines you have. The performance only lasts an hour or two but we hope the experience of participating in this production will stay with our young cast members for a lifetime."