



AIDING YOUNG ACTORS: Growing up in Wayland, **Harley Yanoff** remembers being so shy that he wasn't able to go up on stage in the third grade to accept an award in front of his fellow Boy Scouts. However, from his first experience performing in the musical "Fiddler on the Roof" at age 13, he also knew he wanted to become an actor.

Yanoff, 24, who has performed in musical theater, television, and movies, is returning from New York City to direct a children's theater camp in Weston for the third summer.

Building on his research for an independent study and honors thesis while a student at Brandeis University in Waltham, he formed Spotlight Productions to provide children ages 7 to 17 the opportunity to learn stage, television, and film acting techniques and perform in a fully staged musical for a public audience, Yanoff said.

"Most of the other acting majors were putting on plays on campus, but I was more interested in doing something entrepreneurial, something that would further me after I graduated," said Yanoff, whose family owns Pizzapalooza in Newton.

"I dipped my brush in a lot of different aspects of theater workshops and camps, so I knew how things worked."

Yanoff opened Spotlight Productions after graduating from Brandeis in 2008.

While he remembers being lumped with 40 or 50 youths on stage when he was starting out, Yanoff said, his camp emphasizes individual attention so every child feels integral to the success of the show.

"There's nothing worse than being cast as a tree and having no one know your name. We're not here to teach the harshness of the theater world," Yanoff said.

"The life of an actor can be a tough road, but the confidence and self-esteem you build also makes it a lot of fun."

Spotlight Productions will be offering two three-week workshops, creating a production of "GREASE" in July and "SEUSSICAL" in August, at St. Julia Parish, 374 Boston Post Road, in Weston. For details, go to www.spot-light.org.