

# THE OBSERVER ENTERTAINMENT & DINING

## A Genius in the Galaxy of Goofballs



King Max encounters some hippies in Goofball Galaxy.

Photos by Lauren Di Giacomo

By Lauren DiGiacomo  
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What do a pink Cyclops, a dinosaur and a robot have in common? They are products of the mind of 9-year-old Sam Jacovitz and are featured in his play, "Goofball Galaxy," performed at the

Meadowlands Environment Center in Lyndhurst last Friday and Saturday. And yes, you read correctly, Sam Jacovitz is just 9 years old.

"I read the story Sam developed — before that, he could barely write," said Charlotte Mamorsky, Jacovitz's grand-

mother. "He has got some great ideas, and now he gets to do something with it."

Jacovitz, who also lists baseball, piano, soccer and chess as some of his favorite activities, began writing the story at age 5 as a way of practicing his handwriting. "One day I was being weird, and

my mom said I must have come from Goofball Galaxy," Sam said of the play's title. He continued working on the story for the next three years, resulting in 26 pages at its finish. Throughout the course of his work, Jacovitz read pieces of it to

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his class. "They enjoyed it," he said.

"Through a series of wonderful events, I met a musician who was looking to make [Sam's story] into a musical," said Lisa Williams, Sam's mother. "Then we got the idea that we should perform it." Williams currently works as a writing and literature professor at Ramapo College and decided to apply for a grant from the Meadowlands Commission last February to turn "Goofball Galaxy" into a play.

After being awarded the grant last spring, Williams and Jacovitz, who live in Manhattan with husband and father Richard Jacovitz, sought out a team that could bring the play to life. It was also at this time that Williams, who has written two nov-

els, adapted Sam's story and characters into a play format. "I came up with the idea for saving the environment to give structure to the play," said Williams. "They were all Sam's ideas, I just gave it language."

Jacovitz and his mother found the Striking Viking Story Pirates, an acting troupe that has been in existence since 2003 and is based out of New York. The goal of the Story Pirates is to "adapt and perform stories written by kids as a way of celebrating the words and ideas of young people."

The Story Pirates spent the next few months preparing and often met with Jacovitz regarding input as well as lyrics for the musical. "Sam wrote the lyrics, and it was a big group effort," said Jono Hustis, the director, and a Story Pirate who acted in the play. As for the idea to

combine puppets and actors in the play, Sam said, "I didn't envision it [when writing the story] but now, that's how it should be."

"This show is the most fun that we've ever had," said Hustis, noting that it's the first hour-long show for the Story Pirates. "It was easy because he wrote a great script, and it was a great collaboration between adults and kids."

The play features a planet called Goofball Galaxy and its leader, King Max, who with his best friend Johnny and his robot, work to save the other planets that have been affected by damage to the environment. They visit the land of Sleep-n-Snore, where all the residents do is sleep and where they have used up all water on the planet. "I thought there would always be more," one of the

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The group takes a bow at the end (9-year-old playwright Sam and his mom are in the middle).