



By Contributed Photo

Harley Yanoff with actor Dane Cook

## Local actor opens summer theater camp in Weston

By Cheryl B. Scaparrotta

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WESTON - If you suspect your children are budding stars and you're wondering how to keep their creative juices flowing this summer, there's a new local option. A theater camp will throw open its inaugural doors in Weston in late June, the brainchild of a Wayland High School alumnus who has racked up quite a few acting credits of his own since graduating in 2004.

"The Spotlight Summer Theater Workshop is for youngsters aged 8 to 17, and will be held at the St. Julia's Parish Center in Weston Center," explains Harley Yanoff, a senior at Brandeis University and the camp's founder. "The camp is the result of my senior honors thesis I started over a year ago when I did independent study."

Yanoff, a Wayland native, is himself a theater camp alumnus, having worked his way through the Turtle Lane Playhouse in Newton for almost a decade.

"I've held virtually every position in a theater camp program, and I've seen how things work," he says. "So the Spotlight Workshop is a culmination of years working in performing arts programs, and I'm adding my own special touch to it by including a film and TV acting element to the camp."

Campers who attend the three-week sessions will benefit from instruction in singing, dancing, auditioning, technical theater and more.

Yanoff, who says he became hooked on all things thespian after watching "Sweeney Todd" in class at Wayland Middle School, and continued studying drama under Wayland High School teacher Richard Weingartner, believes the timing is right for such a camp.

"The Boston area is becoming a major filming location for big-budget movies – we're ranked second behind the state of New Mexico," he points out. A recent package of tax incentives enacted on Beacon Hill has contributed to the boom. "As a result, there are a lot of acting opportunities," he says.

Yanoff says the difference between Spotlight Theater Workshop and most other theater camps is that others don't address the differences between film and theater acting.

"We'll have a camera and monitor on hand at Spotlight, because film acting is more about framing, and the actor's eyes are so important, which isn't always the case on stage," he says.

Spotlight Theater Camp instructors are all professional theater artists trained in various areas of the performing arts, from musical directors to choreographers to vocal coaches. At the end of the three-week summer session, campers will stage a musical open to family, friends and the public.

"During the workshop, we'll also have scripts on hand from TV commercials, as well as selected scenes from different films and plays," Yanoff says.

Since the age of 13, Yanoff has been cast in numerous local and professional theater productions, as well as independent films and major motion pictures.

"I just worked on a film called '21' with Kevin Spacey, that's coming out now," he reveals. "I play an MIT student."

In September, he will also be seen alongside Arlington native Dane Cook in a film titled "My Best Friend's Girl," which was shot in part at East Boston High School.

Based on the amount and quality of his work, Yanoff was recently declared eligible to join the Screen Actors Guild, which he did shortly thereafter.

As for the camp, Yanoff says his goal was to create a program that would not only be fun for youngsters, but also focus on strengthening their skills and teaching them new and exciting elements involved in the performing arts.

"We're excited about this opportunity to start a new acting program in the area," he says.

For more information on Spotlight Summer Theater Workshop, visit [www.spot-light.org](http://www.spot-light.org)