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PARENT TALK**Name that big Dalmatian**

The Nassau County Firefighters Museum & Education Center is running a contest to name its new, 20-foot-tall Dalmatian puppy, and the winner will get a party for 30 kids. The contest is open to kids age 12 and younger. Contestants are encouraged to learn about the history of Dalmatians' association with firefighters, and their special personality, appearance and characteristics to help them nominate an imaginative, appropriate name.

Kids may want to view the winning name will be given a children's firefighter-themed party for up to 30 children 12 or younger and four adult chaperones. The party will include a light lunch courtesy of Mac & Melts of Garden City plus Dalmatian party favors, a special Dalmatian cake with the names of the winner and the mascot.

To submit a name, email NameTheDog@NCFireMuseum.org. Include contestant's name, age, date of birth, school name and current grade, home address and telephone number. Entrants must be New York State residents who are 12 years old or younger at time of entry.

The contest runs through Jan. 15.

— **BETH WHITEHOUSE**



Kids can enter a contest to name the museum's puppy.



Actor Kieran Quinn Kerekes and playwright-lyricist Lena Pennino-Smith with Rana the frog — the princess of the production.

hopping right to it

With 'Princess Frog,' LI Children's Museum makes a leap to original stagings

BY **BETH WHITEHOUSE**

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The true-love kiss didn't work.

Prince Tre had been sure the Princess Frog would turn into a human princess when he gave her the big smooch. But nothing happened. He was devastated. Now what? Could he — would he — marry an amphibian?

That's the riveting — or ribbeting — question in a new family musical commissioned by the Long Island Children's Museum in Garden City, the first time the museum has sponsored the creation of an original stage show.

"Princess Frog: A Musical Fairy Tale" complements the

museum's current temporary gallery, called "Once Upon a Time: Exploring the World of Fairy Tales," and will be performed 14 times in the museum's 144-seat theater from Saturday to Dec. 31.

"We thought this would be a great way to tie the theater into the gallery and the gallery into the theater,"

says Maureen Mangan, museum director of communications. "We picked the dates we picked — the week before Thanksgiving and the week between Christmas and New Year's — because multiple generations will be together and can come to the show."

The one-hour play and its more than half-dozen original songs were written by Lena Pennino-Smith of West Babylon, who also operates the talking frog princess puppet, named Rana, the Italian word for frog.

The story is a modern retelling of an Italian folk tale called "The Prince Who Married a Frog." The performance includes a variety of

WHAT "Princess Frog: A Musical Fairy Tale"
WHEN | WHERE Saturday and Sunday and Dec. 27 through 31 at 11:30 a.m. and 2 p.m. at the Long Island Children's Museum, 11 Davis Ave., Garden City
COST \$9 with museum admission of \$13 for adults and children older than 1; \$12 for seniors 65 and older, free for children younger than 1; \$12 theater only
INFO 516-224-5800; licm.org

shadow puppetry, live musicians and catchy numbers such as a duet between the human Queen and



LINDA ROSIER

South Oceanside Road School fourth-grader Alyssa Howard, 9, visits the "The Elves and the Shoemaker" section.

Enchanted tales kids can explore

Jessie Celestin, 8, a third-grader in the Oceanside School District, stuck her hand through a cloth barrier and into a box at the Long Island Children's Museum.

"It feels like a glove," she says. Good guess, but it's wrong. It's velvet.

"This one is easy! I think it's a bracelet," she says, sticking her hand in a second box.

Close enough — it's a beaded necklace.

The guessing game is part of the museum's current traveling exhibit, "Once Upon a Time: Exploring the World of Fairy Tales," which will be at the museum through Jan. 3 and is included with museum admission.

During a school field trip, Jessie is trying to reach in and determine the gifts Belle received from the Beast in the fairy tale "Beauty and the Beast."

The gallery looks at seven fairy tales: "Beauty and the Beast," the Chinese fairy tale "Lon Po Po" —



LINDA ROSIER

Visiting students try their hand at the cobbler's bench in the part of the exhibit inspired by "The Elves and the Shoemaker."

meaning "Granny Wolf" — the African spider story "Anansi and the Talking Melon," "Jack and the Beanstalk," "Cinderella," "Thumbelina" and "The Elves and the Shoemaker."

"Fairy tales are the quintessential storytelling format for children," says Erik Schurink, museum director of exhibits. And one of the goals of the gallery is to promote literacy.

Even parents may learn something they didn't already know —

for instance, that the story of Cinderella has more than 1,500 versions, with Cinderella being named Yeh-hsien in a Chinese version and Cendrillon in a French telling.

Other interactive elements of the gallery let kids hammer nails into the soles of shoes as part of "The Elves and the Shoemaker" story, hoist a wolf in a basket up a tree as part of "Lon Po Po," don a dress to ride in a pumpkin coach like Cinderella and more.

"You really do step into the stories," says Maureen Mangan, museum director of communications. "If you can inspire children to want to read, they'll read for the rest of their lives."

Kids also have a chance to "write" their own fairy tale at the exhibit by filling in the blanks in a computer template they can then print out to take home.

Priscilla Abadia, 8, a classmate of Jessie's, chooses a troll as her main character "because it looks funny," she says. He falls in a "river" and is rescued by a "woodsman" who uses a "fishing pole" to yank him out.

— BETH WHITEHOUSE

Prince Tre, in which Tre laments, "I like humans, I like hair, teeth and nails and stuff," and the Queen admits, "I hate frogs; frogs are gross."

The human cast also includes Tre's two older princely brothers and their fiancées, who compete with Tre and his

"frog-ancee" in a reality TV-show style competition to see which couple should be heirs to the throne. Things come to a head when the Queen, scheming to find a challenge the frog can't possibly win, declares the final competition to be a beauty contest and the

Princess Frog doesn't stand a chance.

"It's very smartly written," says Kieran Quinn Kerekes, 26, of Hempstead, who plays Prince Tre, the youngest brother. Kerekes says he was "jumping" — excuse the pun — at the chance to play his role.

The museum is providing an online, downloadable, free activity packet to accompany the play. Like many fairy tales, the story has a moral.

What is it? Kerekes won't say, but he did promise this: "You have a message on top of a very fun script."



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LEARN TO SCULPT

Here's an opportunity for kids ages 9 to 12 to learn to sculpt using **Model Magic** at East End Arts School in Riverhead. Kids who attend the three-hour class at 9:30 a.m. Saturday will complete two projects. \$60. Call 631-369-2171 to reserve, eastendarts.org



TIM FARRELL

SNOOPY AND FRIENDS

The Peanuts gang comes to life in "You're a Good Man, Charlie Brown" by Plaza Theatrical Productions at Bellmore Movies (222 Pettit Ave.). The two shows this weekend are 11 a.m. Saturday and noon Sunday. \$10. 516-599-6870, plazatheatrical.com



PLAZA THEATRICAL



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