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## Chit-Chat with actor Ian Paul Custer: Q-u-i-r-k-y spells for entertaining 'Spelling Bee'

Submitted by [Alicia Spates](#) on April 27, 2010 - 5:32pm

Spelling wasn't Ian Paul Custer's forte growing up in St. Charles, he admits. He remembers the flashcards, spelling tests and the perk of getting extra recess time, if he scored high on his tests. The 2008 DePaul University graduate and actor is glad to reminisce on those times — though even happier he doesn't have to live through it again — with the Noble Fool Theatricals production of "The 25th Annual Putnam County Spelling Bee." The show, which is rated PG-13, plays in the Mainstage Theater at Pheasant Run Resort in St. Charles.



(Left) Samantha Dubina, from left, Ian Paul Custer, Cara Rifkin, and Jack Sweeney sing out in the Noble Fool Theatricals production of "The 25th Annual Putnam County Spelling Bee" at Pheasant Run Resort. STAFF PHOTO BY STEVE BITTINGER (Right) Ian Paul Custer. SUBMITTED PHOTO

### How does this play make a spelling bee entertaining?

There are a few different devices that are used in this play. One is that we are 20-something and 30-something-year-old adults playing 14-year-old kids who have to spell words standing in front of hundreds of people. ... And then there are the characters. The beautiful thing about all the characters is that they all have different backgrounds and every character goes through their own journey. The audience will be able to relate to the characters.

### What's the story behind your character?

I play William Barfee. He has a bunch of personal problems, including allergies, like to peanuts and pollen, plus he has echolalia, where he has the problem of repeating what people say. He's a bright individual but doesn't have amazing social skills. ... He tends to use his foot to spell out words. That's his quirk.

### Did you have to get in touch with your inner child for this play?

Yes, of course. (laughs) You have to think about the good and the bad of when you were a child. I



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