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'Bee' actress enjoys taking on different roles

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By **RANDALL G. MIELKE** For Sun-Times Media

As an actress, Samantha Dubina finds great satisfaction in her career choice.

"It is one of the most fulfilling jobs you can have," said Dubina, who will appear in "The 25th Annual Putnam County Spelling Bee" at Pheasant Run Resort and Spa in St. Charles beginning April 22. "We take people to another place. It is an escape for them. Being in this profession is like having Halloween every day. I always get to be someone else."

The someone else she portrays in "The 25th Annual Putnam County Spelling Bee" is Olive Ostrovsky, a 12-year-old elementary school student who is competing in the bee. In the show, six quirky adolescents compete in the spelling contest, which is run by three grown-ups who barely managed to escape childhood themselves. The musical features a cast of nine adults, six of whom play children who battle it out for the title only to learn that winning isn't everything and losing doesn't necessarily make you a loser.

"You have to get in touch with the inner child," said Dubina about playing a 12-year-old. "In real life I am also a nanny, so I interact with children. I may take on some of their characteristics for this show."

Previews for the show, which is being produced by Noble Fool Theatricals, begin April 22. The show opens May 1. The music and lyrics for "The 25th Annual Putnam County Spelling Bee" are by William Finn; the book is by Rachel Sheinkin. The Broadway show was nominated for six Tony Awards in 2005 and won two: for Best Book of a Musical and Best Featured Actor in a Musical.

The show also offers audience participation. At each performance, four audience volunteers are selected and invited on stage to participate in the bee, making each performance unique.

"In the lobby before the show, people can sign up to be one of the spellers in the show," Dubina said. "We pick four people. We dance around with them on stage and have fun. I look forward to that part of the show."

Although she will share the stage with non-professionals, Dubina is not concerned that someone might use the opportunity to take a crack at stardom and monopolize that segment of the show.

"The vice principal of the school in the show runs that portion of the bee, and some of the other actors have done the show before," Dubina said. "I am sure we will have a back-up plan."

In addition to loving what she does for a living, Dubina also finds that sometimes the shows in which she performs can be educational.

"This show," she said, "will make me a better speller."

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