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## [Kids fired up about show focused on calming](#)

By Robb Murray [Free Press Staff Writer](#)

MANKATO — With a half-moon arc of kids in front of him — eyes focused, faces intent, bodies gently swaying back and forth in time with the music — Dave DeGennero taps the keys of his piano for a fourth run through a song called “Legend of Calm.”

“Calm is a place where I’d like to go. Like a warm embrace, it comforts me so,” the kids sing, as DeGennero leads them. “It stills my harried heart so tossed about at sea. Calm, I’m sailing for thee.”

The song, written in part by the 30 kids signed up for the Monkey Mind Pirates puppet show program, is part of the show they’ll perform Friday at the Lincoln Community Center. It mentions all the things in life the kids find calming. And it is part of a show steeped in themes of finding calm and reeling in a racing mind.

Monkey Mind Pirates, indeed, gets its name from the yoga term “monkey mind,” which refers to the state the mind can drift toward when distracted by anxiety, depression or ADHD.

It is a weeklong YMCA program where the kids meet for several hours each day. In addition to preparing for Friday’s puppet show, the week has been full of making new friends, learning the craft of puppet-making, and even a little yoga.

At Friday’s performance, the gist of the show will be this: A sea captain sets sail for the Legendary Waters of Calm. But en route, he gets sidetracked by a series of bugaboos known as



Dave DeGennero helps Leah Klint, 8, put the finishing touches on her pink squid for the Monkey Mind Pirates puppet show Wednesday during preparation at the YMCA. Pat Christman



Children practice making shadows with their monkey puppets during a rehearsal for the Monkey Mind Pirates show Wednesday at the YMCA. The show, being performed Friday at Lincoln Community Center, is steeped in themes of finding calm. Pat Christman

Winston (named for Winston Churchill, who suffered from depression) Ansel (named for Ansel Adams, who suffered from attention deficit disorder) and Brontë (named for Emily Brontë, who suffered from anxiety).

Monkey Mind Pirates was developed as a way to help kids dealing with such mental speed bumps. They wanted to offer a creative outlet for kids built on the theme of finding ways to mitigate the negative effects of ADHD, anxiety and depression.

DeGennero says that, although the story's content addresses the issue of navigating personal mental struggles to find calm, the week of program is just as important. Call it the journey vs. destination arguments.

Tez Redeaux, an 11-year-old who attends Jefferson, mentioned the yoga before anything else when asked how the week was going so far.

"They teach you poses and everything," Tez said, smile beaming. "Some of those poses are hard!"

He said his mom signed him up. He didn't know what to expect.

"At first I thought it was going to be boring," he said. And it wasn't. "I made a lot of friends."

Allicen Green, 11, who also goes to Jefferson, said she's made friends, too.

"It's a lot of fun," she said.

Still, she's nervous.

“I’m afraid I might disappoint some people,” she said. “Usually I try to meet my parents’ high expectations of me.”

If she needs reassurance that it’s all going to be OK, she can talk to Anthony Lundin, 11, who will attend Franklin this year. Lundin’s a Monkey Mind Pirates veteran, having attended the program last year when it was held at the Southern Minnesota Children’s Museum.

He said the best part is the experience.

“Just coming here. Playing. Meeting new people,” he said.

Having said that, he’s still a little nervous.

Why?

“All those people,” he said.



A play entitled Monkey Mind Pirates is teaching children not only how to perform in a theater group, but also how to deal with ADHD, Anxiety, and Depression.