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NEIGHBORS

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Park City



NOAH'S BIG ADVENTURE

COVER PHOTO BY DANA KLEIN

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PLEASE, LET ME SAY IT

AFTER NOAH, A TEENAGER WITH DOWN SYNDROME, ESCAPES FROM PARK CITY HIGH SCHOOL TO CLAIM HIS INDEPENDENCE, HIS MOTHER, BRITT SADY, REDISCOVERS HER INDEPENDENT VOICE. THE RESULT IS **NOAH'S BIG ADVENTURE,** A FEATURE FILM IN THE MAKING.

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"PLEASE, LET ME SAY IT." SIXTEEN-YEAR-OLD NOAH MOUTON-SADY STOPS HIS MOTHER, BRITT SADY, FOR THE FIRST TIME OF MANY DURING OUR CONVERSATION IN THEIR PINEBROOK HOME. Noah, born with Down syndrome, is determined to answer questions in his words. He's the lead actor of *Noah's Big Adventure*, a forthcoming feature film in which Noah (playing himself) runs away to prove he doesn't need anyone else, only to discover how much we need each other. Britt is the director and co-writer.

The interview with Britt, Noah, and his older brother, Gaël, mirrors a question at the heart of the film and the events that inspired it: How do we learn to be—or remember to be—independent while accepting our interdependence with others?

In real life, Noah tricked a substitute driver into letting him off a Park City High School bus that was supposed to take him home. He hitched a ride on a friend's e-bike to Fresh Market on Park Avenue. Someone spotted him and called Britt, who then called Noah. He told her he was on the bus, then turned his phone to silent.

Why? "Because this adventure is way better than taking the bus," says Noah, adding that he felt "so happy that I'm doing this for myself."

When Noah didn't arrive home on time, Britt drove out in pursuit, tracking his phone. She spotted him ripping down S.R. 224 on the back of the e-bike (driven by a girl Noah won't name). Britt pulled in front of the e-bike and told Noah to get in the car. "You're in so much trouble," she recalls saying.

The ensuing conversation was, as Britt put, "an explosion." Britt was furious that he had lied. Noah said that Britt had to stop controlling everything he did. "She told me 'You're in trouble,' but I said, 'You cannot get me in trouble. I'm big,'" says Noah. "I am going to prove to the world that I can do anything on my own."

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Britt looked inward. "This guy is such a fun-aholic," she says of Noah. "I do tend to let myself get drowned in the responsibilities of life until I have forgotten how to have fun. Sometimes, it's the people who love us most who put their foot down and say, 'No, this is no way to live.' Which is kind of what he was doing."



Responsibility had dimmed Britt's independence. Raised in Salt Lake City from the age of 10 onward, she studied acting at the University of Utah, then moved to Los Angeles, followed by New York, to pursue her career. Her credits include a lead role in NBC's *Another World*, a TV series, and a role in *Death Defying Acts*, a play written and directed by Woody Allen. She began to produce, write, and direct her own material. Then, she met her former husband. Gaël was born in 2009, and Noah in 2006. The latter's Down syndrome diagnosis weighed on Britt.

"Parents of kids with disabilities feel this unbearable burden of responsibility," she shares. "They feel this absolute need to protect and guard."

That burden came with a cost: Britt's creative career. "That inner voice of beauty and creativity was on the bottom shelf of a closed closet," she says.

In 2017, following her divorce, Britt moved Gaël and Noah to Delaware Water Gap, Pennsylvania, a town near the Poconos. One day, she noticed Gaël making faces in the mirror and realized he was acting. She and Gaël got involved with a community theater. "We were in the worst production of Romeo and Juliet I've ever experienced," she says. Soon, Britt was dragged into directing plays while studying to become a nurse. Theater alone wouldn't pay the bills.

Gaël's passion led him to a performing arts high school and, eventually, a spot in Tisch Drama's Experimental Theater Wing at New York University, where he is currently studying. Britt began to live vicariously through her eldest son.

Noah, meanwhile, found Delaware Water Gap limiting. The nearest Special Olympics event was 40 minutes away and severely understaffed. And Noah was beginning to exercise his independence. One day in eighth grade, Britt kept Noah home from school for a doctor's appointment. He decided to go to school anyway. The police found him on the shoulder of I-80, scootering towards school.

In 2023, Britt's dad, who had retired near Park City, suffered a debilitating stroke and could no longer live independently. Britt moved him to Delaware Water Gap. Quickly, she realized that it was no place for two people with disabilities.

Where else could they live? "I thought about the bike paths in Park City," Britt says. "That means someone who is likely never going to drive could commute everywhere safely." The family moved just as Noah entered high school.

In Park City, as Noah found the space to take risks, so did his mom. The e-bike adventure inspired Britt to dust off her creative voice. For two weeks, she spent 12 hours a day writing the script for a feature film that would take off where Noah's escape began.

For a co-writer, Britt brought on Diane Wagner, who taught Gaël at his performing arts school in Pennsylvania. She also assembled a local team including volunteers who'd worked on the TV show Yellowstone and its spin-off Marshalls, both filmed (partially) in Park City. They shot a five-minute proof-of-concept for *Noah's Big*



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Adventure in March 2026 for the Easterseals Disability Film Challenge.

"I had no idea if he could do this," Britt admits, in retrospect. Noah had never acted (besides in a Christmas pageant), yet he'd have to carry the film. In preparation, he worked with Salt Lake City acting coach Charla Bocchicchio.

On set, the conflict of independence continued, as Britt tells it. "I found that I was a weak link in directing him. I didn't think he could do it. So, I'm giving him all this direction that he doesn't need. Other people on set are like, 'Britt, you can back off. He's got this.'"

"Nothing was challenging," says Noah. "Like, it's not hard. It's really not because it's so fun to do it."

The proof of concept screened at Park City Library's Jim Santy Auditorium on April 2, 2026. The next step is to complete fundraising for the feature-length version, which will shoot in 2027. Britt aims to bring disability nonprofits aboard. She's no stranger to this world, having launched and led the New York City branch of GiGi's Playhouse, an international network of Down syndrome achievement centers.

In beautiful symmetry, Britt has rediscovered her independent voice by creating a film



centered on Noah's quest for independence. Noah, meanwhile, continues to prove that he is capable of more than she assumes. He uses Park City's bike paths to go grocery shopping, and if he misses the school bus in the morning, he hails another bus (often, not at an official stop).

"It's made me think differently about what's possible for him," Britt reflects. "I don't think he ever had any doubts about what was possible for him, but he's proving it to the world, which doesn't just change him. I think it changes everyone."



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