

Ailey Camp Miami Teaches Kids about Dance, also Boosts their Self-Esteem

By: Cata Balzano

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AileyCamp Miami students dance their way to stronger self-esteem at the Adrienne Arsht Center, July 21, 2016. **CHARLES TRAINOR JR** - ctrainor@miamiherald.com



Dance instructor Valerie Moise leads AileyCamp Miami students in a jazz class as 100 Miami-Dade County middle-school students dance their way to stronger self-esteem at the Adrienne Arsht Center, July 21, 2016. **CHARLES TRAINOR JR** - ctrainor@miamiherald.com

When Chanell Lewis, a 14-year-old from Jeremiah Academy in Miami Gardens, heard about AileyCamp Miami, she signed up to take the dance-intensive course expecting nothing more than just dance.

After her fourth week in the program, though, Chanell has not only learned various dances, but she has also taken youth empowerment courses. She now feels a deeper passion for dance and has learned to be more open to reaching new objectives.

"I expected it to be just dance and that you're just dancing every day, but it was so much more than that because there are classes to help you grow as a person and as a dancer," said Chanell. "I'm more open to change and to new things and to meet new people and experience different things now."

AileyCamp Miami is a summer program provided by the Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater and fully sponsored by the Adrienne Arsht Center, that involves various forms of dance classes and genres, as well as creative and artistic courses to help area students strengthen their self esteem.

The students learn to dance West African, ballet, modern, and jazz while also honing skills such as conflict resolution, health, nutrition, drug prevention awareness and body image among the topics discussed throughout the personal development and creative communication classes also taught through the weeks.

"They tackle subjects they don't tackle in class. We go to school and talk about math, science, language arts, but we don't talk about being a good global citizen and what the responsibility is of being a good community member," said Jairo Ontiveros, director of education and community engagement at the Adrienne Arsht Center.

Students from Homestead, Allapattah, Doral, Little Haiti, Liberty City and downtown Miami participated in this year's program.

AileyCamp, which is available for children 11 to 14 years old, began June 27 and runs through Aug. 6, ending with a public performance called “#OneDream” at the Adrienne Arsht Center.

On July 20, the parents of the 100 participating middle-schoolers were invited to an open house, where they saw the progress the students made after completing more than half of the six-week camp.

“You could see the parents have stars in their eyes when they watch the kids dance on stage and just be gleaming with joy and appreciation at the same time and hope for what their child will become,” said John Richard, CEO and president of the Adrienne Arsht Center.

During the open house, parents were welcomed to spend the day at the John S. and James L. Knight Concert Hall where they toured different salons watching dance classes take place led by Alvin Ailey staff, volunteers and instructors.

Treyon Sargent, 19, was part of the first generation of middle-school students from Miami to participate in AileyCamp.

Sargent, who is now a theater and public relations student at Florida A&M University, believes the program influenced his growth and wanted to give back to Miami.

“It changed me into a whole new person. I went from this secluded little boy to this blossoming flower. The root was growing and it made me a better individual character-wise,” said Sargent, who was 12 when he joined AileyCamp. “It feels so good [to give back] because it’s part of one of my dreams, it’s on my list to get those inner city kids out of the city and doing something positive and something good.”



Watch Ailey Camp Miami soul Train Video Here:
<http://www.miamiherald.com/news/local/education/article91971512.html>