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Summer of Inspiration: AileyCamp Empowers and Uplifts Local Youth in New York City and Newark During July-August in Six-Week Full Scholarship Program

Innovative National Program Celebrates 35 Years of Transforming Young Lives Through Dance in 10 Cities Nationwide with “Excellence”



Photo Credits (L to R): Children's Aid/AileyCamp New York in Modern class; New York Director Damazi Williams with participants showcasing their artwork in Creative Communications class; AileyCamp Newark 2023 final performance. All photos by Danica Paulos.

(New York, NY) - June 27, 2024 – This year, [AileyCamp](#) celebrates **35 years** of transforming the lives of nearly 1,000 youth annually across the country through dance, inspiring students to discover their unlimited potential. The two local programs will kick off their six-week summer sessions on July 1, 2024, in the Bronx, in collaboration with Children's Aid Society, and in Newark, with New Jersey Performing Arts Center and Newark Public Schools.

The Kansas City Friends of Alvin Ailey and Mr. Ailey created this program in Missouri in 1989, ultimately becoming the last initiative he founded for AILEY, which [now operates in 10 cities nationwide](#). As featured in the [anniversary film](#), **AileyCamp marks over three decades of dedication to youth development across America**, providing a safe space for students ages 11-14 to explore their creativity, build leadership and communication skills, and develop a foundation for successful futures.

“It brings me so much joy to celebrate 35 years of this amazing, life-changing program. Alvin Ailey's present to our youth has enabled participants to shine brightly as leaders and created a ripple effect that positively impacts friends, families and communities,” said [Nasha Thomas](#). **“After being hired by Mr. Ailey and performing with the Company for 12 years, it's also been a great honor to serve as the National Director of AileyCamp for the past 25 years** – it has profoundly enriched and changed my life too. I'm forever grateful for the gifts that Alvin Ailey shared with me and the opportunity to pay it forward, so his legacy continues to inspire the next generation.”

Guided by the theme of “Excellence,” the AileyCamp curriculum engages students in daily dance technique classes in Horton-based modern, ballet, jazz, and West African. The Personal Development classes allow students to work on goal-setting and conflict resolution, as well as Creative Communication classes to unleash their creativity in visual arts-based projects, creative writing, and more. With [Daily Affirmations](#) such as, **“I will not use the word can't to define my possibilities,”** AileyCamp provides youth with the tools they need to thrive throughout their lives.

The dedicated instructors and staff are positive role models who nurture campers' creativity within an atmosphere of warmth, respect, and trust, allowing them to express themselves and build self-confidence. Damazi Williams continues to serve as the Children's Aid/AileyCamp New York Director for over 10 years and personally experienced how life-changing the arts can be. In 1980, Mr. Williams's was offered the opportunity to begin training at AILEY, leading to his dance career. The AileyCamp community strengthens each year, as alumni return to the program in leadership roles, helping to guide their young peers.

Each AileyCamp culminates with a special final performance for family, friends, and community leaders where campers showcase their hard work in original productions of choreographed dances, poetry readings, and theatrical improvisations. To commemorate the metro area youth's transformations and accomplishments, AileyCamp Newark's final performance will be on Thursday, August 8 at New Jersey Performing Arts Center and Children's Aid/AileyCamp New York on Monday, August 12 at 7pm at Hostos Community College.

The AileyCamp experience extends beyond the summer sessions, with reunions and special activities, including witnessing a performance by Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater during the annual season in New York City, on December 4, 2024-January 5, 2025, which features three AileyCamp alumni who were introduced to dance through the program: [Christopher Taylor](#) (Newark), a participant of the inaugural AileyCamp Newark, continued to study on scholarship at The Ailey School and danced with Ailey II before joining the Company; Taylor, alongside [Solomon Dumas](#) (Chicago), the first former AileyCamper to join the troupe and [De'Anthony Vaughan](#) (Kansas City, MO), also an Ailey School scholarship student, proudly share the stage with similar dance journeys. Although AileyCamp is not meant to be a training ground for professional dancers, some students are awarded scholarships to further study at The Ailey School or pursue training at other accredited dance schools and have later performed with professional dance companies.

"I am trying to show the world we are all human beings, that color is not important, that what is important is the quality of our work, of a culture in which the young are not afraid to take chances and can hold onto their values and self-esteem, especially in the arts and in dance. That's what it's all about to me." – Alvin Ailey.

PRESS: Upon request, media interviews and coverage opportunities may be arranged to highlight AileyCamp during its six-week program including final performances. Click here for [photos](#) and [videos](#). For additional information, please visit pressroom.alvinailey.org.

Upcoming Local AileyCamp Important Dates:

July 1, 2024 – Opening Day for AileyCamp New York and Newark
July 15, 2024 – AileyCamp New York Site Visit (Children's Aid Society)
July 23, 2024 – AileyCamp Newark Site Visit (Newark Arts High School)
August 5, 2024 – AileyCamp New York and Newark students visit the Ailey Studios in NYC
August 8, 2024 – AileyCamp Newark Final Performance (NJPAC)
August 12, 2024 – AileyCamp New York Final Performance (Hostos Community College)

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About Ailey Arts In Education & Community Programs

Since 1992, Ailey Arts In Education & Community Programs has been committed to bringing dance into homes, classrooms, and communities across the country to positively impact people of all ages through the power of dance. In addition to AileyCamp, a full scholarship day camp for youth, in-person and remote programs include, lecture demonstrations; technique classes; innovative curriculum-based residencies inspired by *Revelations* and *Night Creature*; and AileyDance for Active Aging, a program that serves as an outlet for artistic expression and fosters a sense of joy. For more, visit www.alvinailey.org/AIE.

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