

Neighbors

AVENTURA
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BISCAYNE PARK
HIGHLAND LAKES

MIAMI BEACH & THE BEACHES
NORTH MIAMI
NORTH MIAMI BEACH

06



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Alonzo and Tracy Mourning Senior High 11th-grader Shantell Gonzalez is a trailblazer among Navy Junior ROTC cadets as she leads 75 fellow students in developing leadership skills, assuming increased responsibility while in high school, and introducing cadets to career fields outside their comfort zones.

Stepping up

Student commands JROTC — and respect — at her school, Page 3



HAULOVER BEACH
24th annual Kite Day celebrated at park, Page 4



SCHOOLS
Fifth-graders take cues from Alvin Ailey dancers, Page 14



COCONUT GROVE
Art lovers enjoy 53rd annual Arts Festival, Page 17

Fifth-graders take cues from Alvin Ailey dancers

Week-long residency meshes dance and education, teaching language arts, social studies and dance

In the program, the students use creative-thinking skills while exploring the life story of Alvin Ailey

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Dr. Contessa S. Bryant, principal of Lenora B. Smith Elementary, has always believed in the importance of integrating art into the education of her students.

Throughout the school year, students are taken to see theater performances and musical presentations, but last week, it was their turn to make the moves and dance.

Fifth-graders were allowed to sign up and participate in a one-week residency program at their school with instructors from the Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater.

"Someone gave me an opportunity, and for me it came through the arts," Bryant said. "I am a huge believer in making sure that our children are exposed to the arts. I know that one opportunity can change your whole life, and I was the first in my family to go to college. Since then, we've had sev-

eral other graduates, so for me this message resonates because it is my story."

Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater was founded in 1958 by Alvin Ailey, a choreographer looking to change the perception of American modern dance. Ailey was an advocate for meshing arts into education and bringing that concept into underprivileged communities and public schools.

Within the programs Ailey implemented: "Revelations: An Interdisciplinary Approach," a residency curriculum that engages students' analytic and creative thinking skills while exploring the life story of Ailey.

Directed by dance professionals, the residency challenges students to look deep into the study of language arts, social studies and dance throughout the sessions.

"The arts in general are important, whether it's dance or music or theater, and it's very important for young people to be able to have an outlet to express themselves," said Nasha



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Nasha Thomas-Schmitt, third from left, former Alvin Ailey star dancer and master teacher, leads a group of fifth-graders at Lenora B. Smith Elementary School in a student workshop exploring Ailey's masterpiece 'Revelations.'

Thomas, a dance instructor for Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater who has been teaching for 40 years and has been involved with the Revelations program since 2000. "They are exploring their own ideas, learning how to work with people they don't necessarily talk to or see every day, and they are given an opportunity to share their own creative process through the theme of the ballet revelation."

Ife Richards is a fifth-grader at Lenora B. Smith Elementary in Liberty City.

Being a dance lover, she was told about the Revelations Residency and immediately felt motivated to sign up.

"[Dance] not only inspires you, but it also helps your future," said Ife, 10. "Let's say I was doing dance to-

day, I might be on stage tomorrow being the next big star. It's always been something I've wanted to do."

Last Thursday, Ife was among more than 30 other students who danced, laughed and learned historical facts about the country and about Ailey.

The children and instructors stood in front of the cafeteria's stage, practicing choreography and doing group dances.

Miami-Dade Public Schools Superintendent Alberto Carvalho visited the students on their fourth day of the program.

He also joined them in learning the multiple-step choreography.

"Good people often come together and carve out common ground to make things happen, and I think this is something

If you go

What: Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater performs 'Awakening.'

Where: Adrienne Arsht Center, 1300 Biscayne Blvd.

When: Five performances from Thursday, Feb. 18 to Sunday, Feb. 21.

More Information: Call 305-949-6722 or visit arshtcenter.org.

On Friday, Lenora B. Smith Elementary and other Miami-Dade County public schools will visit the Adrienne Arsht Center to see a performance of Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater.

great happening right here at Lenora B. Smith, in the heart of Liberty City," Carvalho said to the children. "Any one of you can be on that stage for the rest of your life. Any one of you can be the director. Any

one of you can be the master teacher. Any one of you can be a math teacher. Whatever you decide to be or to do, you can be it if you try really hard."

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