



AileyCamp Offers Dance Classes and Confidence Boost For Kids in Need

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WASHINGTON HEIGHTS, NY- "I always tell my mom, hurry up I have to go to camp!" Christian Herrera exclaimed. Dance is the destination for kids across the city this summer. "This is basically the only thing that I want to be doing," Herrera smiled. Every step, plié and pose means something different for these young artists. "Dance means to me like telling a story through moving," Chloe Dunbar said. "For me dance means like freedom," Jayson Acosta added.

From ballet and tap to modern and jazz, Aileycamp offers classes for free. "AileyCamp gives them an opportunity to express themselves to have a platform for creative expression," Nasha Thomas explained. The six-week program, in partnership with the Children's Aid Society, is celebrating its 27th year in New York serving more than 100 students. Nationwide, 1,000 kids in ten cities also have access to this program. "Our young people here don't get exposure to the arts," Thomas described. "Some of these children are foster children and quite frankly they have a lot of challenges that they're dealing with."

For some, this is their only option as dance programs dwindle inside schools. "I was kind of upset about that because it's not fair," Dunbar said. "Even though school is important they had [dance] so people can enjoy themselves and they cut it off short." At AileyCamp not only do they get the chance to expand their technique but also to evolve as a person. "The foundation of the program is really personal development and that is where they deal with those different issues of self-esteem, conflict resolution, health, nutrition, peer pressure and decision making," Thomas said.

Engrained in the curriculum are affirmations: "*I am a winner, I am in control, etc.*" which they repeat every day. "It's going to help me because like Miss Nasha said you're not here to become a better dancer, you're just here for yourself and to have fun and I'm definitely going to take this with me when I get older," Herrera said. In addition to free classes, the kids are also given dance apparel and shoes.

Watch the video here: <http://pix11.com/2017/07/21/aileycamp-offers-dance-classes-and-confidence-boost-for-kids-in-need/>