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Camping With A Quilt

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AlleyCampers sign the quilt they made on July 18 at the Adrienne Arsht Center for Performing Arts of Miami-Dade

Miami Times photos/ Kishanda Burns

CAMPING WITH A QUILT

ALVIN AILEY MIAMI SUMMER STUDENTS UNVEIL THE 4,000-SQUARE-FOOT MURAL MADE FROM FABRIC

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The campers came, sewed and stitched to create a quilt to celebrate AlleyCamp Miami's 10th anniversary.

The young dancers presented the quilt on July 18 in front of an audience of parents and relatives.

AlleyCamp Miami is a six-week, full scholarship program that is funded by the Adrienne Arsht Center

for Performing Arts of Miami-Dade County. During the time, campers work to boost their self-confidence and become fluent in West African, jazz, modern and ballet dance routines.

And now they know how to make a quilt.

Camp staff and faculty brainstormed the making of the quilt by their charges.

"It's something that we came up with as a team," said Assistant Vice President of

Education and Community Engagement Jairo Ontiveros as he spoke about the quilt. "Celebrating our 10th summer, we wanted to visualize and make visible the uniqueness of the program, but also the objective of the program and that is to help kids that are ages 11-14 boost them, their self-confidence and get them prepared before they go into their high school years."

The finished quilt will be displayed in the Knight Concert

Hall of the Arsht Center.

The camp usually culminates with a free performance, this year set for 7 p.m. Aug. 4 at the Adrienne Arsht Center.

Before the presentation of the 4,000-square-foot quilt, John Richards, the Arsht Center's president and CEO praised the camp and campers.

Richards is credited for bringing AlleyCamp to the Arsht Center.

"The center has raised, believe it or not, over \$3 million over this 10 year for a thousand kids to participate," said Richards.

Following Richard's speech was the presentation of the quilt.

As campers gently place the quilt down on stage, "oohs" were heard as they reacted to the quilt that was made by them.

The youth screamed "To Miami with joy" as they

placed their painted-white hands on the quilt. They were also able to sign the quilt.

Ontiveros explained the quilt's construction.

"The individual patches were made by each of the campers," said Ontiveros. "There are three different layers. When they first got to camp, it was one of their first activities. Each camper got a retraceable paper and they traced their face. They lined

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Two students in AlleyCamp sign the quilt they made on July 18 at the Adrienne Arsht Center for Performing Arts of Miami-Dade.



A camper at AlleyCamp Miami produces beats with a bucket.

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up all the windows along the Knight Concert Hall. The natural light that comes into the Arsht Center was the perfect setting for them to be able to trace their faces. From there, they took the list of superlatives and affirmatives that they had created for themselves and then layered that on top, so there are two different pieces of drawing that each camper has that was then translated to the actual fabric of the quilt."

Julius Pascal, 13, a camper at AlleyCamp said that he felt special, especially since this is only his first year at the summer camp.

"I feel brought in. That quilt will be in this building for a long time. I feel committed to being at AlleyCamp," said Julius. "It's so crazy because everything I learn here, I have never learned before."

Parents say the camp has changed their children's lives.

Tasheba Poulainne, 35, and mother of camper Joy Poulainne, 12, said, her daughter has blossomed over the six weeks of camp.

"It has made a big impact on her life because she's very shy and timid at times, and I feel like it kind of brought her self-confidence to where it used to be," said Poulainne. "So I appreciate AlleyCamp for that."