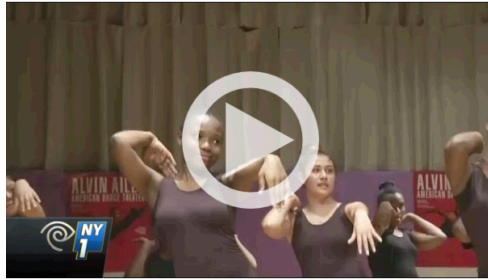




Alvin Ailey Summer Dance Camp Marks 25th Year with Theme of Gratitude July 28, 2015



One of the nation's most celebrated dance companies, Alvin Ailey, is running a summer camp in Manhattan. As NY1's Lindsey Christ found out, AileyCamp, as it's called, is about more than dance.

On the third floor of a middle school in Washington Heights, 112 students are spending the summer absorbed in formal dance training.

While the students are focused on training their bodies, their instructors are hoping to help them manage their emotions and develop their minds.

"I will keep a positive attitude all day every day," the students recited in unison.

Brought to New York 25 years ago by American dance legend Alvin Ailey, AileyCamp is a free, five-day-a-week summer program dedicated to teaching students life skills through dance.

"How to resolve conflicts. How to deal with peer pressure. How to take care of your bodies—health and nutrition. Goal setting. You know a lot of them you ask them, 'Well I want to do this, I want to do that.' Well how is that going to happen? It just doesn't happen by osmosis. We really get them focused. And then we get them thinking and listening. Listening is very, very important," said Nasha Thomas, National Director of AileyCamp.

To be accepted, students don't need any formal dance training, or even talent. AileyCamp wants students who will benefit from the experience.

"Dance is an emotional thing because dance, it shows expression itself. So say you're feeling sad. You dance it out. If you're happy, you dance it out," one student said.

The students study ballet, modern dance, West African dance, jazz and percussion. They also take personal development and creative communications classes and go on field trips.

"My favorite trip was yesterday when we went to the Alvin Ailey Dance School, and I was so excited!" said another student.

The camp is hosted by the Children's Aid Society, and most of the young dancers are Children's Aid clients.

Some of them fall in love with the art of dance every year.

"Dance is just something unexpected and it's like a gift from... it's like a gift from God, from out of nowhere." said one student. "It's just like dance is now my everything."

Watch Here:

<http://www.ny1.com/nyc/manhattan/news/2015/07/28/alvin-ailey-summer-dance-camp-marks-25th-year-with-theme-of-gratitude.html>