



Spotlight shines on young performers as AileyCamp 2015 ends

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Dozens of local middle-schoolers took center stage at the Adrienne Arsht Center Saturday as the seventh AileyCamp Miami drew to a rousing close.

After six weeks of hard work trying to nail every little step, these young dancers had to battle those butterflies in the stomach, but they conceded the show must go on. "It's always exciting when showtime gets close, and then always, right before the show, you get super nervous," said performer Isaiah Nelson.

Isaiah and other students chosen to participate in the demanding program said the opportunity is a good outlet to hone their craft. "Kids nowadays have a hard time expressing themselves, so when you're here, they really push you to express yourself," he said.

"I would say that it's fun, and it accepts them for who they are," said CampAiley dancer Hope Jean.

The camp, which is free of charge to participants, is a selective program, taking in only 100 public middle school students ages 11 to 14 by application. The students earn a full scholarship that covers food, transportation, dance attire and field trips.

The camp's director, Jairo Ontiveros, told 7News he's noticed the growth from the young group. "As you see behind me, they're like a family. They're brothers and sisters, they take care of each other, and they've come a long way in six weeks. They've learned a lot," he said.



Ontiveros said the students tackle topics like peer pressure, bullying, and health and nutrition. They also get to channel their growth on stage after creating new friendships, refining their talent and building self-esteem.

And now, they have an audience to watch. "We are overwhelmed and so proud of these 100 children this summer, because of their commitment, their discipline, their uniqueness," said Ontiveros.

For more information on AileyCamp Miami, go to www.arshtcenter.org.

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