

Model Rayuana Aleyce Spends 'Her' Day Inspiring Students at Boys and Girls Club, ACIT

Was Mentored by Director of Stockton Champions of Youth Program

For Immediate Release; with photos on [Flickr](#)

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Galloway Township, NJ - Rayuana Aleyce, a winning model on Project Runway last year, grew up in a housing project in Atlantic City and struggled before achieving success. So when the City of Atlantic City decided to honor her today, she was determined to pay it forward.

"Rayuana Aleyce Day is about supporting area youth by providing a positive outlet to express themselves through art, music and culture," said Aleyce, who is starting a foundation to continue her efforts. "The foundation seeks to empower youth through the arts and to develop compassionate leaders that will contribute to the community in which they live."

The day began at the Atlantic County Institute of Technology (ACIT) with vocal, dance, and drama performances, as well as "mini" runway performances by Fashion Design students.

Aleyce told Fashion Decoration and Design students of ACIT about working in the performing arts and the fashion industry, and the path she took to where she is now.

"No one can do what you do," said Aleyce. "You have the power to master any craft." She added, "I am extremely excited to be back and interacting with the students in our community."

Jaime Moscony, curriculum coordinator at ACIT, said: "Rayuana was here today to talk about her experiences in both the Performing Arts and Fashion Industry. Like many of our students, Rayuana has a commitment to pursuing what she loves. She is an inspiration and true example that hard work and dedication pay off."

Melissa Martinez, a Fashion Decoration and Design student at ACIT, said: "Rayuana was beautiful and nice and loved our fashion show, which is great!"

"Rayuana gave us great advice on the modeling and fashion industry," added Brianna Kelly, also a Fashion Decoration and Design student. **-more-**

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Afternoon events at the Boys and Girls Club of Atlantic City included a Scholastic book giveaway, the Noyes Museum of Art of Stockton College facilitating an art project for teens, and the club providing games for young children, cookie baking, and a toy giveaway.

Scholastic donated book bags with two books apiece for 60 older students and one book and book bag for each of the 60 third-fifth graders. Scholastic's mission is built on helping children learn to read and love to read, which ties in with Aleyce's focus on literacy.

Michael Cagno, executive director, Sara Gendlek, assistant director, Saskia Schmidt, director of Education, and Dorrie Papademetriou, director of Exhibitions and Collections, from the Noyes Museum of Art of Stockton College helped students make hand-painted t-shirts. While their shirts were drying, Cagno photographed the students in front of a professional backdrop with off-camera lighting and then printed the portraits for the students to take home.

Aleyce is a native of Atlantic City, NJ, where she grew in Stanley Homes Village. After graduating from Atlantic City High School, she pursued a career in modeling, finding work in New York and Miami. On *Project Runway*, Rayuana was the winning model with designer Dom Streater of Philadelphia.

When Rayuana arrived at the club, over 100 children greeted her. She told them she was "a club kid," adding: "This is a very special day for me - Rayuana Aleyce Day. I wanted you guys to be part of it. Are you ready to party?"

"Party!" they responded. "Party!"

Her mentor, Michael Everett, is director of the Stockton Champions of Youth program, a nationally successful youth-mentoring program at the Boys and Girls Club, where he originally met Rayuana.

"Rayuana is a success story in which all of us can take pride," Everett said. "To her credit, she does not linger over past achievements, but looks to make a difference in community by inspiring its youth through the creation of The Rayuana Aleyce Foundation, which will focus on wellness, the arts and reading literacy."

"We are excited to take part in this special day honoring club alumna Rayuana Aleyce," said Robert Taylor, executive director of the Boys and Girls Club. "Returning to Atlantic City and sharing her story with our club members confirms her good character, strong leadership qualities and kindness. It's important to remind our children about the importance of setting goals, believing in yourself and giving back to the community."

"Rayana's visit is inspiring and motivating to many; and she is a prime example of the impact the club's programs can have on Atlantic City children," Taylor said.

Atlantic City Councilman Frank M. Gilliam, Jr., councilman at-large and a Stockton alumnus, and Councilman Rizwan Malik of the 5th Ward, represented the City of Atlantic City in honoring Aleyce. The Atlantic City Council officially proclaimed Dec. 23 Rayuana Aleyce Day at 5 p.m. at City Hall.

She partnered with the Champions of Youth of The Richard Stockton College of New Jersey, Scholastic, a producer of publications, technology and educational programs for schools, the Atlantic County Institute of Technology, Echelon Hair Co., The Boys and Girls Club of Atlantic City, and the City of Atlantic City to make the day's events possible.

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A party with entertainment by Philadelphia-based singer Chartel from 8:30-9:30 p.m. and music by local DJ Fah D from 9:30-11 p.m. was set at the Tropicana's Planet Rose.

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