

- Leadership
- Expectations
- Transparency
- Stability

CITY OF ATLANTIC CITY
OFFICE OF THE MAYOR

- Accountability
- Credibility
- Excellence in Execution



MAYOR MARTY SMALL, SR.

City Hall
1301 Bacharach Boulevard • Suite 706
Atlantic City, New Jersey 08401
Telephone 609-347-5400

NEWS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

MEDIA CONTACT:

Andrew Kramer (Public Information Officer) – 609-226-3470; AKramer@acnj.gov

5 Atlantic City Students Sent to South Africa By City Deliver Presentation Reflecting on Life-Changing Experience

Atlantic City, N.J. (July 6, 2023) – The five high school students from Atlantic City who embarked on an all expenses paid, two-week journey to South Africa last month courtesy of the city, Atlantic City Youth Services and youth education program “A Leadership Journey,” have returned home and, today, delivered a presentation in City Hall Council Chambers reflecting on their experiences. In attendance were City of Atlantic City Mayor Marty Small, Sr., city leaders and the student’s family and friends. While on their South Africa journey from June 2nd-June 18th, the students were tasked with keeping records of their experiences to later share during this presentation. Each student also selected a social justice issue to research before and during the journey.

“We provided five kids from the City of Atlantic City with this experience for free, and they made us all proud,” said Mayor Small. “As a mayor who has made taking care of our youth a priority of his administration, this journey meant as much to me as I know it meant for them, and I look forward to seeing what these young people are going to do in the future. They were the perfect representation of our great city in South Africa.”

“The students are still feeling the effects and are still transforming as people from this journey to South Africa,” said Atlantic City Youth Services Director Christina Noble. “We all pushed ourselves to have deep, meaningful conversations throughout this experience, which is what allowed us to grow as people and, one day, change the world. Every student on this trip added something unique and special, and we enjoyed this life-changing experience as one.”

“Mayor Small and Atlantic City Youth Services put in a lot of time over a short period to make this journey happen and I thank them for that,” said “A Leadership Journey” founder Akeem Lloyd. “Our mission is to challenge, encourage and inspire young people to see themselves not just as U.S. citizens, but also global

citizens with a global perspective, so they can understand, in this case, what's happening in Atlantic City is also happening elsewhere.”

Noble, Lloyd and Atlantic City Youth Services Specialist Elizabeth Trigg accompanied the students to South Africa. To be selected for this experience, applying students had to be an Atlantic City resident enrolled in grades 9-12, and had to submit an essay explaining why they should be chosen. The Atlantic City Youth Services team anonymously reviewed the essays, then interviewed the selected students. Below are the students who went to South Africa and some notes from their presentations.

Tim Tran

Incoming Senior at Atlantic City High School

Research Subject: Struggle with Drugs and Alcohol Abuse

Ubuntu Moment/Interpretation: Losing a special bracelet and a friend he met in South Africa went above and beyond to find and return it to him.

Leadership Experience: Communicating with South Africa school kids through sports and teaching those kids kickball, which they were not familiar with.

Mental Health: Learned to understand it's fine to feel certain emotions and seek help when needed.

My “A Leadership Journey” was: “It's a life changing experience. It's a never-ending journey. I'm still in my A Leadership Journey, I'm still learning. Every step that I took in A Leadership Journey changed my life and changed who I am today. A Leadership Journey is what no text book can ever teach.”

Evan Johnson

Incoming Senior at Atlantic City High School

Research Subject: School Systems

Ubuntu Moment/Interpretation: Recognizing everyone has something to contribute and developing such close friendships in just two weeks.

Leadership Experience: Discovering there are many different ways to be a leader.

Mental Health: Learned the importance of taking care of yourself and discovered the positive impacts of meditation for the first time.

My “A Leadership Journey” was: “During this trip, the activities and assignments we had made me become a better person, and I feel like I can come back to my city (Atlantic City) and make an impact.”

Melanie Hernandez-Di Domenico

Incoming Senior at Atlantic County Institute of Technology

Research Subject: Sexism

Ubuntu Moment/Interpretation: Consider yourself and everyone around you as an extension of yourself. You are considerate of others' needs as well as being aware of yours. I am what I am because of who we all are.

Leadership Experience: Working alongside a new friend to run a painting session with 50 kids. Being able to trust yourself to head something and know it'll be great.

Mental Health: Was never scared on this trip because she trusted herself and everyone around her

My "A Leadership Journey" was: "Now I feel like I can tackle anything. I learned the true feeling of being grateful by seeing how happy the kids can be even with what little some of them had. It ignited a passion for taking care of our youth and community. Seeing all the kids there wanting to do better in life, I know they'll do great things and I want that for our community too."

Makiyah Coppin

Incoming Junior at Atlantic County Institute of Technology

Research Subject: Sexism and Gender Roles

Ubuntu Moment/Interpretation: It's a connection built where people recognize they're both human and a person is a person through other people.

Leadership Experience: Seeing I can help youth by influencing and guiding them, and leading by example.

Mental Health: Learned mental health is important and you should always put yourself first. This journey allowed me to open up and vocalize my feelings.

My "A Leadership Journey" was: "This was life changing, enlightening, peaceful, educational, free flowing, wholesome, fun and intellectual. I participated in different cultural activities, applied myself and engaged in intellectual conversations about society's standards in South Africa."

William Harris

Incoming Senior at Atlantic City High School

Research Subject: Classism

Ubuntu Moment/Interpretation: Seeing school children who may be struggling in life perform and dance and be happy.

Leadership Experience: Leadership is the art of inspiring others to follow your vision, even when they can't see it.

Mental Health: Learned mental health is just as important as physical health. Learned to set goals for himself at the start of each day.

My "A Leadership Journey" was: "Not just a journey but the start of the real journey which is life. I learned what I need to do to keep pushing on my life journey. My Leadership Journey is not over."

###