

# Cool Culture makes museum visits fun for all ages

By **DEMETRIA IRWIN**  
*Special to the AmNews*

Hundreds of New York City families enjoyed a day of games, songs and museums as part of Cool Culture's Museum Mile Festival. The festival, which required the closure of 5th Avenue from 105th Street to 82nd Street, began with a kick-off event at El Museo Del Barrio. Children, most under 5

flipped through the Cool Culture Hunt Cards, which turned the upcoming museum visits into a treasure hunt of sorts by asking families to find certain objects.

Integrating the whole family into the museum experience is an important part of Cool Culture's mission.

"When we did our research for this organization, we found

they felt out of place or unwelcome there," explained educator and Cool Culture co-founder Edwina Meyers. "We decided to find a way to allow parents and kids to learn together and enjoy the experience."

Cool Culture did just that for the Atkinson family. Alicia Atkinson brought her 4-year-old and 11-year-old to the Cool Culture event for the sake of her children and herself. "I'm kind of aware of these places, but I had not been to them before today. I'd definitely like to know more about the museums. I learned about today's event through my daughter's school," said Atkinson.

Not all of the parents at the Museum Mile Festival were first timers, though. Sonia Law was there with her son, James, and his 3-year-old daughter, Isabella. Born and raised in Panama, Sonia Law was the daughter of a well-traveled merchant marine who stressed the importance of learning about culture. When Sonia raised her own family in New York City, she made sure they visited cultural institutions as well.

"My sons and I visited the Museum Mile many times when they were young. Isabel-



Three-year-old Isabella works diligently on her chalk drawing during the Museum Mile Festival.

(Demetria Irwin photos)

la will, too. This is her second year at this event," explained the proud grandmother.

Cool Culture partners with 430 early education programs to provide free access to 90 cultural institutions for 50,000 income-eligible families in New York City. "About 52 percent of our kids are Latino and about 30 percent are Black," said Cool Culture Executive

Director Candice Anderson. "We try to make sure that everyone feels comfortable walking into places like this regardless of race or income. The Cool Culture Hunt Cards make the experience less intimidating."

For more information about Cool Culture or to inquire about your family's eligibility, visit <http://www.coolculture.org/>.

## Pint-sized dancers tell the Apollo, 'Groove With Me!'

By **DEMETRIA IRWIN**  
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Dance recitals are generally small affairs filled with cooing

Apollo event.

The chairwoman of Groove With Me's board of directors, Marguerite D'Aloia, came up with the idea of giving the little



Children sing and dance at the Cool Culture kick-off event at El Museo Del Barrio.

years old, participated in song and dance routines, blew whistles, drew on the street with sidewalk chalk and did tricks with magicians. Their parents watched from the sidelines and

that low-income parents were not taking their children to museums and other cultural institutions mainly because they either didn't know about the existence of these places or