Deeply Rooted Dance Theater (DRDT) is expanding opportunities for young people on Chicago’s South Side to engage in professional dance education with its inaugural Bridge to Success 2020 Youth Development Dance Project.

DRDT has partnered with Forward Momentum Chicago to design a bridge program for 10 promising students from South Side avocational dance programs, all on scholarship supported by lead sponsor Allstate, to join DRDT’s Youth Ensemble. The Ensemble develops dancers’ technical skill and performance readiness with classes in technique (e.g., ballet, Horton, Graham, modern, African-based).
and repertory workshops led by DRDT’s Artistic Team, company members, and guest artists. Due to COVID-19, students started the program with twice-weekly classes in October, rather than June, and will complete their participation in July 2021 with DRDT’s four-week Summer Dance Intensive.

“Providing young people with opportunities for meaningful, sustained participation in the arts can improve academic achievement and develop 21st century skills, such as confidence, persistence, leadership, and collaboration,” said Deeply Rooted Co-Founder and Creative Director Kevin Iega Jeff. “These opportunities are particularly important for students on the South Side of Chicago, where schools lag behind in student achievement and arts programming.”

“Collaborating with Deeply Rooted through Bridge to Success has been an incredible opportunity for Forward Momentum Chicago students to improve their technical skills and explore new forms of dance,” said Forward Momentum Chicago Founder/Executive Director Pierre Lockett. “The program has vastly improved their ballet and modern abilities and helped lay a solid foundation that will lead to a better understanding, execution, and expansion of their dance vocabulary.”

A critical component of Bridge to Success is the opportunity to perform, including the DRDT Spring Dance Education showcase with DRDT’s apprentice company and the Mature H.O.T Women class. Students will also perform with DRDT’s Youth Ensemble as part of future outreach efforts designed to increase access to the arts and build new audiences in underserved Chicago neighborhoods.

“Bridge to Success is an important component of Deeply Rooted’s goal to establish a healing, nurturing, community-building presence in Chicago’s South Side community,” said DRDT Managing Director Jackie Robinson. “The program represents similar initiatives in dance education and cultural enrichment that the company will offer at its forthcoming South Side Dance Center.”
Premiering in 1996, Deeply Rooted Dance Theater is rooted in traditions of modern, contemporary, and African dance, as well as storytelling, in universal themes that spark a visceral experience and ignite an emotional response in diverse audiences worldwide. Collaborating with nationally renowned choreographers across the spectrum of modern, ballet, and African dance, DRDT presents work that reflects eclectic voices in contemporary life.

Deeply Rooted programs are partially supported by the Reva and David Logan Foundation, MacArthur Funds for Arts and Culture at the Driehaus Foundation, the Arts Work Fund and Smart Growth program of the Chicago Community Trust, Allstate, the Alphawood Foundation Chicago, Chicago Park District's Night Out in the Parks Program, CityArts grant from the City of Chicago's Department of Cultural Affairs & Special Events, the Gaylord and Dorothy Donnelley Foundation, Ginger Farley Charitable Fund at The Chicago Community Foundation, the Martha Struthers Farley and Donald C. Farley, Jr. Family Foundation, the Field Foundation of Illinois, the Lloyd A. Fry Foundation, Gilbert Fund, Irving Harris Foundation, Illinois Arts Council Agency, Illinois Humanities, the International Association of Blacks in Dance, the Joyce Foundation, National Endowment for the Arts, the John G. Palfrey and Catherine A. Carter Family Fund, the University of Chicago’s Accelerator Program, US Bank, and Deeply Rooted Family of Friends. Special thanks to the Auditorium Theatre, Ballet Chicago, the Chicago Community Trust, Chicago Dancemakers Forum, the Chicago Park District, Hyde Park School of Dance, the Reva and David Logan Center for the Arts, Maywood Fine Arts Academy, and St. Benedict the African Church for their partnership and support.

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Screenshots of Bridge to Success class sessions courtesy of Deeply Rooted Dance Theater.
Bridge to Success student Naomi Sadler courtesy of the student.

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