

Stepping out like a lady

New class teaches kids etiquette

Kim Anderson of Chicago wanted her daughter and nieces to learn how to act like ladies when they were out in public, so she decided to sign them up for an etiquette class.

"I felt it was going to be a valuable experience because a lot of young children don't have proper manners and don't know how to act in public places," Anderson says. So she signed up the four girls, ages 12, 14, 16 and 17, for a Stepping into Etiquette class offered in Chicago.

Leontina Richardson, president and founder of Stepping into Etiquette, says it's often the parents who decide their kids need to take the class, but kids quickly warm up to it.

"The young girls love it, it gives them a chance to act like a young lady," Richardson says. "In all my classes I have a bell, so every time someone uses improper English or slouches in their chair, you can ring the bell and the kids love that. I don't want to be the old-school etiquette teacher who's really strict and mean. I want this to be fun and interactive."

Richardson started teaching etiquette at the church where her father was pastor after graduating from Western Illinois University. But as she pursued a career in business and her master's

Stepping into Etiquette

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degree, she began to realize the classes she was teaching were more fulfilling than the corporate world.

In April, Richardson took a leap of faith, quit her job and started Stepping into Etiquette for boys and girls age 6-19. She holds classes at local park districts, YMCAs and schools. Her classes include everything from communication to how young men and women should sit, how to give and take a compliment, and taking personal responsibility.

And while Richardson acknowledges much of this should be taught at home, it's hard for parents to teach children everything they need to know.

"I had two parents who spent a lot of time with me and taught me a lot, but not everything," she says. "They never told me with my peers to make eye contact. They never taught me that when someone comes in the room I should stand up and shake hands."

"I believe all kids need etiquette," she says. "Etiquette really gives good social skills in order to succeed."



Leontina Richardson teaches an etiquette class.

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