

Sense & Civility

MAKING A COMEBACK AS CHILDREN AND ADULTS LEARN ABOUT SOCIAL SKILLS INSIDE MAGAZINE CHERRY CREEK

MATTHEW age 12, isn't thinking about how he'll handle his first job interview fresh out of college. He isn't worried about how he'll interact with co-workers when he becomes a company manager.

Right now, he's trying to remember the fox trot; trying not to think about how uncomfortable he feels in his dark blue blazer and tie; trying to check out his friends and the girls giggling at one end of the ballroom without being obvious.



Matthew has arrived early for the last class of the Jon D. Williams 32nd Annual Spring Cotillion. For five weeks, he has mastered lessons on first impressions, dress, communication, table etiquette, character and ethics. And of course he learned how to dance; how to fox trot, waltz, mambo and swing. Finally, he even admitted it hasn't been all that bad – “*except maybe the girl part!*”

Matthew is one of over 11,000 young people that Jon D. Williams Cotillions instruct every year across the country – from Boston, MA to Carmel, CA. In the Denver metro area alone, JDWC teaches at the Denver Museum of Nature & Science, the Cable Center at Denver University, Denver



Country Club, Columbine Country Club, Wildlife Experience, Highlands Ranch Recreation Center, Ken Caryl, Rolling Hills and the Evergreen Lake House. In addition, the company also has a program at the Wyatt-Edison School – Open Door program for children at risk.

Social Education Becoming Mandatory

Jon D. Williams III, president of the Denver-based company knows that the skills Matthew is learning reach much further than the dance floor. To Williams, what these children are learning today – courtesy, respect, consideration, character, ethics, sense and civility – is just as important to their education and future as any other subject they will ever take. As stated, “How you act is not just a reflection of your character. It's also a demonstration of your

education.” Maybe Williams is right based on the fact, that the Company’s social education course was mandatory at the United States Air Force Academy for over ten years. Today, their course on social skills and character training is becoming more and more popular at high schools, universities, and businesses across the country.

Serious Fun

Sounds pretty serious, but are the children having fun? “Yes,” according to Cotillion Director Annabel Day. “Our students and their parents grade every one of our classes. To date, over 94% of students want to return from year-to-year.” It looks like Matthew agrees. Right now he is laughing and skillfully performing the jitterbug with his partner Ashley.

But how is doing the jitterbug going to help Matthew’s and Ashley’s futures? “Well, first of all we use dance as a tool to teach social skills.” states Ms. Day. “Dancing offers a healthy environment that teaches respect and consideration for one another. It breaks down inhibitions and teaches self-confidence.”



In each of the five 1½ hour classes, dancing represents about half of the class. The rest of the class is dedicated as Mr. Williams says, “To subliminally get

across some very important messages about how to get along with one another. The students are having fun, in addition they’re learning something valuable in the process.” Denver cotillion chairwoman, Jean Nielsen, seems to agree with the value of the classes. “It is amazing to watch the children gain self-confidence from the first class forward. The social skills they’re learning today will



help them build strong, positive relationships throughout their entire life. My grandchildren have gone through years of cotillion, and I honestly believe it has had a very positive effect on all of them. I applaud the education.”

Just the Facts

Sounds heady? Well, not according to some recent studies. Harvard University, The Carnegie Foundation and the Stanford Institute of Research conducted a study that established that technical skills and knowledge account for only 15% of getting, keeping and advancing in a job. 85% of job success is based on people skills. Wow! Reading, Writing, Arithmetic and..... Social Skills?

For further information and schedules on the Jon D. Williams Cotillion programs, go to their website at www.cotillion.com.