



The Katy chapter of Junior Cotillion has more than tripled in size since they started in 2005

Katy's National League of *Junior Cotillion*

Since 2005, Katy cotillion students have been building their confidence and character by learning etiquette, manners, and how to ballroom dance

Written by Wendy Teng | Photography by Reinaldo Medina

The Katy Chapter of the National League of Junior Cotillion (NLJC) was formed in February 2005 with fewer than 70 students. In 2015, the program is now in its 11th year and has the highest season to date of approximately 300 students. The organization's mission statement is "to act and learn to treat others with honor, dignity, and respect for better relationships with family, friends, and associates and to learn and practice ballroom dance."

IMPORTANCE OF ETIQUETTE IN CHILDREN

The teachings on etiquette, manners, and ballroom dancing are the main features of NLJC. In addition to educating young people on proper etiquette and dancing skills, the program strives to achieve a positive impact that will last a lifetime. Director of Katy's NLJC, Amy McAfee, talks about the program's aim to teach young men and women about etiquette. "We are more interested in building strong self-

confidence and interpersonal skills in our students," says McAfee. The program helps young people improve leadership qualities through the building of confidence and character at a variety of social and professional events. It also improves the communication between the students and the people they meet and encounter in various situations and settings.

BEYOND MANNERS

"My husband and I believe that pre-cotillion and junior cotillion would be a positive and supportive way to help us teach our boys manners," says Holly Givens, who signs up her two boys up for NLJC yearly. "I think with today's casual atmosphere, children aren't exposed to the formal social setting and rules that our parents expected out of our generation." Givens signs her boys up for monthly classes to help her and her husband set the standard as parents. "It goes beyond manners, with teaching them confidence in escorting



a girl, interview skills, dancing, and social media etiquette. The boys may not be so excited about the girl interaction yet, but if they shake hands properly and open the door for their date someday, it's worth it," says Givens.

Proper etiquette is especially important for young men and women entering the workforce. McAfee advises, "Today's youth conduct most communication via text and social media. Face-to-face interaction is being lost, and when they enter the workforce in a few years, it will be a necessary reality for them. It takes seven seconds to form an opinion after an initial introduction. It then takes multiple future interactions to undo a bad first impression. We are teaching skills to last a lifetime."

FUN AND POSITIVE FEEDBACK

Although the program teaches about proper etiquette and dancing, the students also have fun. The students usually feel that the classes are better than what is expected after attending the first class. The two-hour Fall Ball is filled with music, partner dancing, and contests. It has been known as a cotillion favorite by former students.

Parents constantly give feedback about how their kids have benefited from the program. Students that participated in the program and are now young adults also have given positive feedback. "They report that they knew how to conduct themselves in job interviews, when making business acquaintances, and even when meeting the parents of someone they were dating. Cotillion provides them with the self-confidence and social skills to be able to form meaningful relationships," says McAfee. **KM**

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Katy Cotillion Fast Facts

- Cotillion is for fifth- to eighth-graders
- Pre-Cotillion is for first- to fourth-graders
- Enrollment is limited to 200
- Tuition is \$300

TOPICS COVERED IN THE FIVE CLASSES, WHICH INCLUDE A TRADITIONAL FIVE-COURSE DINNER AND A FORMAL BALL:

- Telephone manners
- How to acknowledge accepting gifts
- Pay and receive compliments
- Engage in polite conversation
- Table manners
- Role-playing social interactions
- Proper firmness of a handshake
- Introductions and first impressions
- Proper use of silverware
- Ballroom dancing