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On their proper way

Boys' philanthropic group learns about etiquette from a former beauty queen who says the boys are now ahead of their peers.

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NEWPORT BEACH — Sit up straight. Use eye contact. Repeat the girl's name often. Pull out her chair.

And, please, use the utensils from the outside in, guest speaker Janet Terrell instructed.

Terrell spoke to about two dozen 16- and 17-year-old high school boys — dressed up in blue and black suits, dress shoes and ties — as they listened about how to behave at Sunday night's dinner party.

"Nobody is born knowing these skills," she said. "We have to learn them, and then we have to practice them."

Terrell, a former beauty queen, gave a crash course in basic dining etiquette to the junior class of the Newport-Mesa chapter of the Beach City Service League, a philanthropic organization for high-school boys and their mothers to spend time together to better the community.

The boys invited their peers in the National Charity League, a similar philanthropic organization for high-school girls and their mothers, to attend the dinner so they could also practice their social etiquette.



Courtesy Anne Quinn

The boys showed up at one of their chapter meetings with a rose for each girl and an invitation to the event, said 16-year-old Christina Young.

In terms of dating, a boy who knows dining etiquette and has good manners is always a plus, said Paisley Muller, 17.

"I think it matters," she said. "They're much more attractive if they have manners."

Terrell gave the boys the basic etiquette information they would need to get through the evening, but also tips for applying to college, internships and jobs. The tips even included a few for taking a girl on a date: plan ahead, arrive on time and call the next day.

"Manners and etiquette are really important, and they make a good first impression," said Hamilton Randle, 17, who said he found the dating etiquette especially interesting.

The Newport Harbor High School junior said he looked at the event like a practice in not only etiquette, but meeting new people, mingling and dressing like he was in the business world.

"It's teaching us the ways of being an adult," he said.

Although Terrell only went over the basics, she said they will still be ahead of most of their peers.

There has been a continual decline in social etiquette, Terrell said, adding that she thinks it has a lot to do with how busy people are.

Proper etiquette, though, is as important as ever, she said.

"The basics will take you a long way in life," she said.