

# A program that helps put the 'kind' in kindergarten

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**K**indergartner Jimmesha Mack already knows about kindness.

"When the art area was messy, I cleaned it up, even though I didn't make the mess," Jimmesha recalled.

Classmate Sherice Manns offered another example.

"When Aerie dropped a puzzle, I helped her pick it up," said Sherice.

On a recent day, right after the mid-morning bend-and-stretch, Jimmesha, Sherice, and the rest of the class were practicing their good-will lessons, and the compliments sailed back and forth.

"She's happy," said one.

"He's nice," said another.

"She's beautiful," said a third.

At the public West Chester Area Day Care Center, the teachers instruct even the smallest of their charges on the gentle art of being kind. It's a lesson, the teachers say, meant to last a lifetime. At the center, it's one they've been emphasizing for the last five years.

Good deeds win recognition, maybe even a treat. In the kindergarten classroom, teachers Betsy Billie and Keya Smith have been handing out cotton-puff snowballs this winter when they notice a child being helpful or especially considerate toward a classmate.

The lessons are basic, and repeated over and over.

"How do we treat each other?" asked Billie.

The answer came back loud and clear.

"Treat people the way you want to be treated," the children answered in unison.

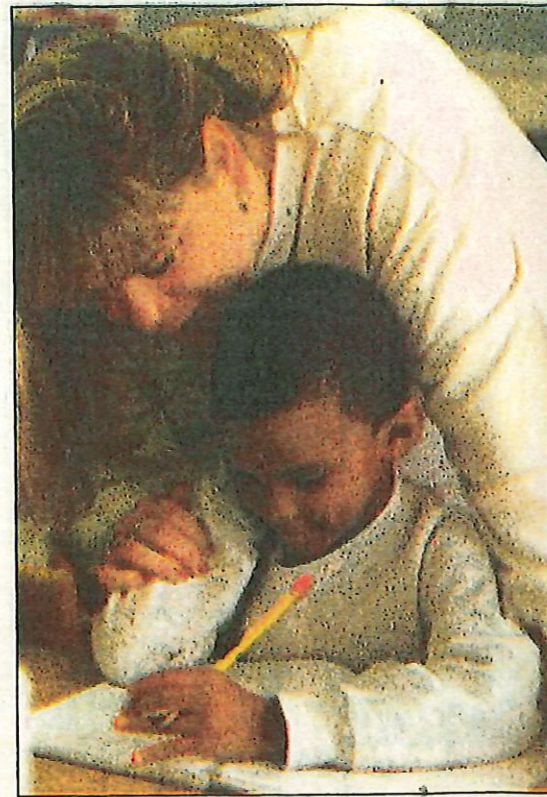
"What if someone does something mean?" the teacher asked. "What do you say?"

Several children answered as one, "I don't like what you're doing. Please don't do that ever again."

"Oh . . ." Billie sighed, "how many times do I hear that in a day."

Though the teachers are convinced that these lessons will remain with the children far beyond the preschool

See **KINDNESS** on H6



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**Teacher Betsy Billie works with Zachary Butcher at the West Chester Area Day Care Center, where the Golden Rule rules.**

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