

The Valley Press

Through new book, local moms teach kids that manners matter

By Abigail Albair
Editor, The Valley Press

Mind your manners.

That old adage has for years been used by mothers to remind their children to be polite; to say "please" and "thank you." Through their new children's book, two local mothers and friends have given manners new meaning.

"This is not a book about formal etiquette as in fork on the left, knife on the right," explained co-author Mary Cashman.

"We tried to focus on manners in relation to the core values of kindness, respect, being grateful and things like that. We wanted to teach kids manners in relation to these values so they'll learn to be good to one another, which I think is so important for kids."

Cashman and Cynthia Whipple attended Trinity College together and then reconnected after both attended law school when they worked at the same firm.

"We became the best of friends," Cashman said.

One Mother's Day the pair began discussing the need they felt was out there for a character that kids could relate to that would help teach them manners.

Cashman explained, "We came up with this idea and wrote what we thought was the book though it went through probably 30 rewrites. We decided to self-publish because

we had a vision for what we wanted it to look like and wanted to choose our own illustrator."

After 2 1/2 years of work, the book that resulted, "Mer-

rilee Mannerly and Her Magnificent Manners," is a picture book about a young girl named Merrilee "whose family wrote 'the book' on good manners," according to a press release. "Imagine Merrilee's surprise when a princess from a land of no manners moves in next door and invites Merrilee to her birthday party.

With her grandmother's magnificent Manifesto of Manners, Merrilee Mannerly is ready to help her new friend, Princess Posy, host the best birthday party ever. Through a series of funny misinterpretations and puns, this book encourages young girls to learn and understand what it means to have good manners."

Angela Antonelli, owner of Creative Works for Children, a

storyline, Merrilee Mannerly succeeds in presenting its mes-

so they have helped us get into Barnes & Noble, Borders, and now we're getting ourselves into specialty stores," Cashman said.

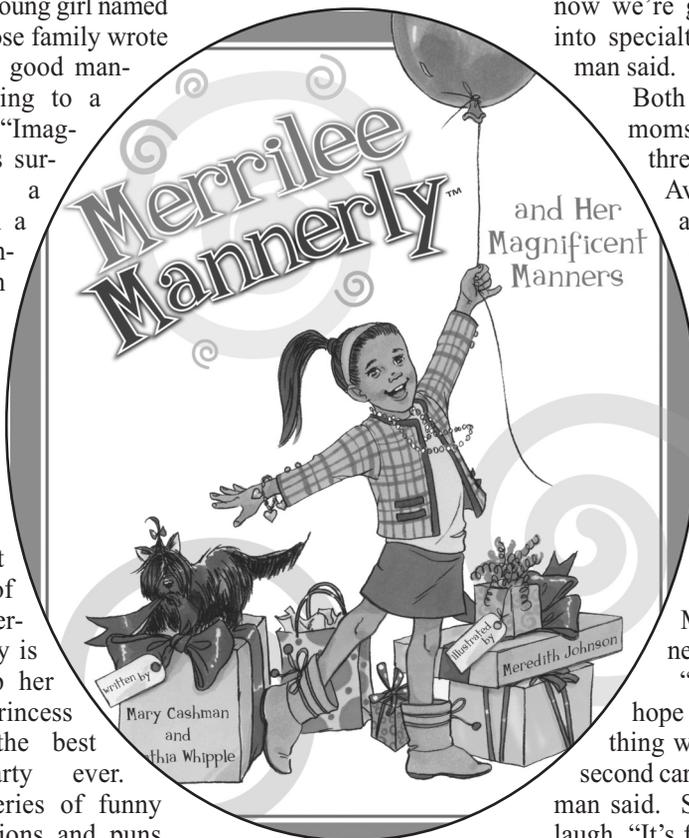
Both stay-at-home moms – Whipple has three children in the Avon school system and Cashman has one child who will attend Pine Grove next year – the pair hopes to turn the book into a series, but are first focusing on generating a buzz about "Merrilee Mannerly and Her Magnificent Manners."

"We definitely hope that this is something we can turn into a second career for us," Cashman said. She added with a laugh, "It's fun. It's more fun than being a lawyer."

The book is available for sale through their website www.merrileemannerly.com. It is also available nationwide in Barnes & Noble and Borders, and locally in specialty stores such as Over the Moon and the Toy Chest.

Whipple and Cashman will hold a book signing at the Wooden Toy in Wethersfield on Oct. 23 and one at The Toy Chest in West Hartford on Nov. 6. On Nov. 27 they will hold a Teddy Bear tea and book signing at the Yankee Candle Flagship store in Massachusetts.

Cashman said, "One of the best things is that the book is really funny, not preachy. Kids really laugh. We're teaching manners in a fun way. This princess from the land of no manners takes everything so literally that it's silly and very fun. It's something kids and parents will enjoy."



The character Merrilee Mannerly as she appears on the cover of the book.

sage about the importance of manners."

Cashman and Whipple formed their own publishing company, Pink & Brown Publishing.

They found a freelance editor who introduced them to their illustrator, Meredith Johnson, an accomplished illustrator of over 200 children's books, and then found a printer out of Minnesota. "We wanted to keep the printing in the U.S. and this printer matched overseas prices. They are also involved in distribution as well,

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company specializing in providing unique, interactive programs for children, said in the press release, "Through humorous text, whimsical illustrations and an appealing