

Hosting a 4-H Special Needs Day in Your Community

A person with special needs has a disability, whether mental, physical, emotional, behavioral, or learning. In Mississippi, 16 percent of students enrolled in public schools have a disability. Like all 4-H'ers, people with special needs can gain valuable skills through 4-H activities. Host a 4-H Special Needs Day in your community to give these young people an opportunity to gain essential life skills!

Volunteers

You will need registered 4-H volunteers to implement a 4-H Special Needs Day. A registered volunteer is a volunteer who has completed the 4-H Volunteer Packet, which includes a background check. Registered volunteers should complete the packet 30 days before the event. Other volunteers may be used to help with the day, but registered volunteers should lead the stations. Other volunteers might include senior 4-H'ers who help with water stations or passing out materials.

You'll need roughly one registered volunteer for every two to three 4-H'ers. 4-H volunteers can be recruited from schools, churches, community groups, or local therapy centers. Special education teachers or aides may be willing to participate. A volunteer leader will be assigned to each station and oversee the activity at their station.

Parents are welcome to stay and help their children during the event.

Planning

Extension agents and registered 4-H volunteers should begin planning early when developing a 4-H Special Needs Day. Here are some things to consider when making plans:

- **Timing:** Pick a time of year when you can reasonably expect good weather.
- **Wheelchair accessibility:** Can a person in a wheelchair comfortably access restrooms, project areas, and parking lots?
- **Location:** You'll need plenty of room for 4-H'ers to participate in various 4-H projects.
- **Environmental comfort:** Can participants who are sensitive to noise, lighting, or crowded environments easily access calmer spaces when needed?

- **Sensory supports:** Are there options for reduced noise, softer lighting, or quiet areas to help participants who may need alternative environments?
- **Timing:** The educational experiences outlined in this publication are expected to last between 3 and 4 hours. A sample schedule (page 2) outlines how agents may organize the day. Realize that 3 to 4 hours is a long time for some children. You might want to split the activities into two separate events.
- **Participants' interests:** Choose the activities that best represent the interests of your 4-H'ers.
- **Stations:** A 4-H Special Needs Day should include two to four educational stations representing the main 4-H project areas: agriculture, STEAM (science, technology, engineering, arts, and math), healthy living, and civic engagement.

Registration

Registration should be completed before the event so that agents can plan for materials and volunteers. Social media posts about the day can be helpful, but also consider visiting local special education classrooms or therapy clinics with flyers to pass out.

Social Stories

Consider creating a *social story* to send to parents/guardians and volunteers before the event. Social stories are typically made in PowerPoint or Word and provide photos or illustrations of what a 4-H'er will see and do at the event. Each image is accompanied by simple instructions that help the young person understand what they are expected to do. Social stories can reduce anxiety about doing something new or being in an unfamiliar environment.

Activity Stations

Upon arriving at the 4-H Special Needs Day, parents should sign in and receive a name tag for each 4-H'er. Name tags should have a number on them to indicate which group the 4-H'er is in and which station they will begin at. For example, if the name tag has the number 3, then that 4-H'er will start at station 3, then go to station 4, and so forth. When assigning group numbers to 4-H'ers, make sure each group has about the same number of 4-H'ers.

Participant engagement: As volunteers work with youth, remember that participants may engage at different levels, communicate in various ways, and require differing amounts of support. Some 4-H'ers may demonstrate learning or participation in ways that look different from others. Volunteers should remain flexible and responsive as they notice individual needs throughout the session, keeping in mind that successful participation does not have to look the same for every participant.

Have Fun!

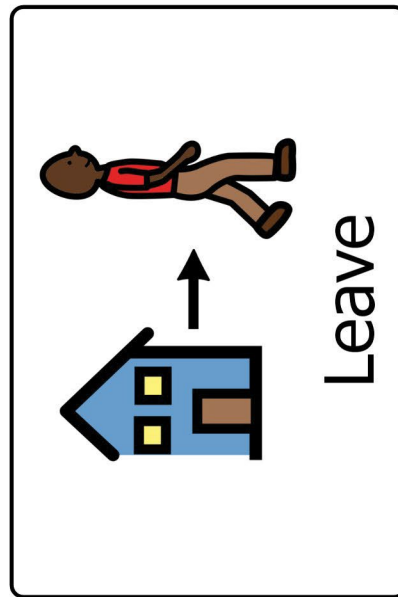
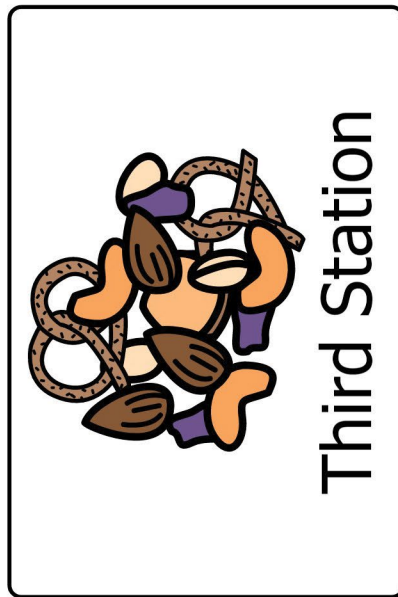
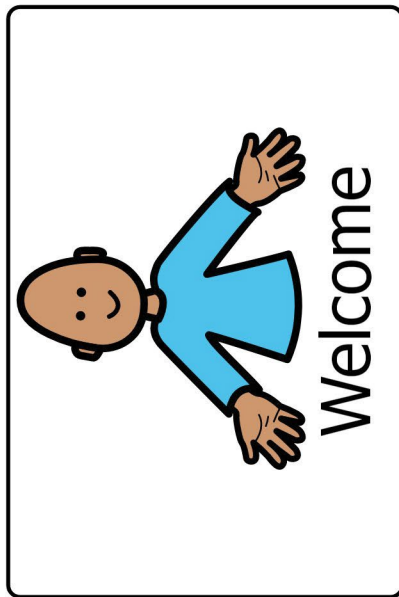
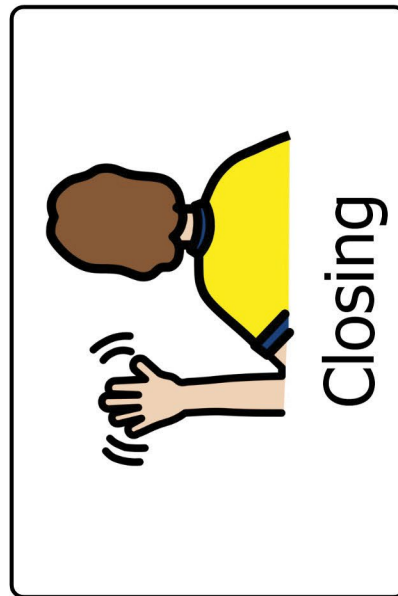
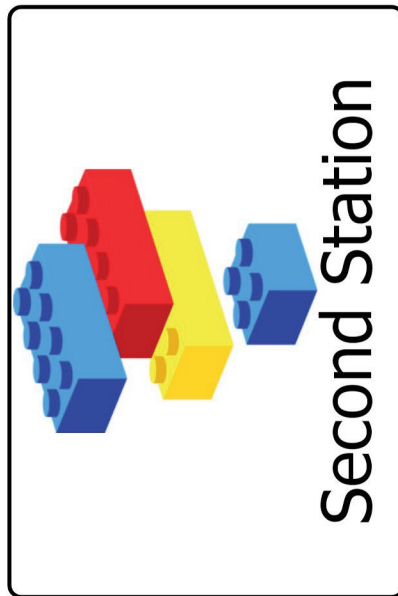
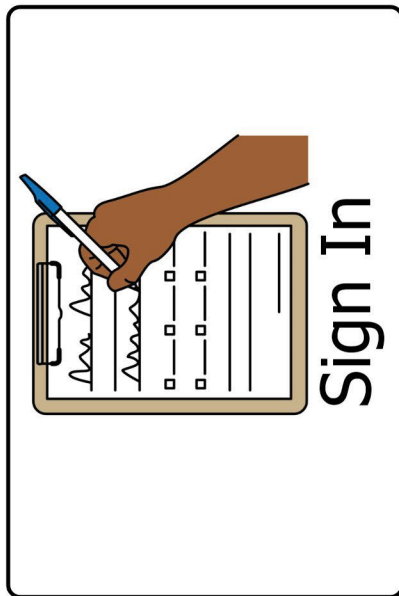
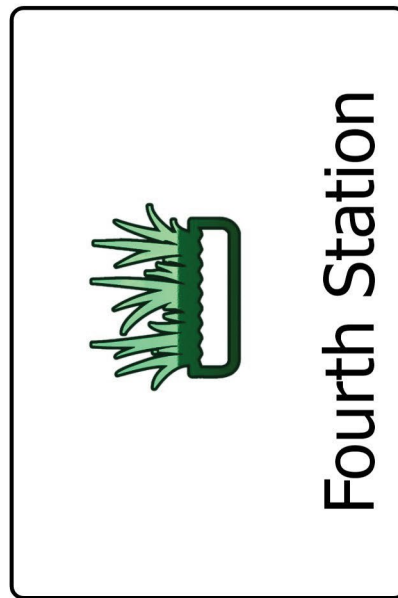
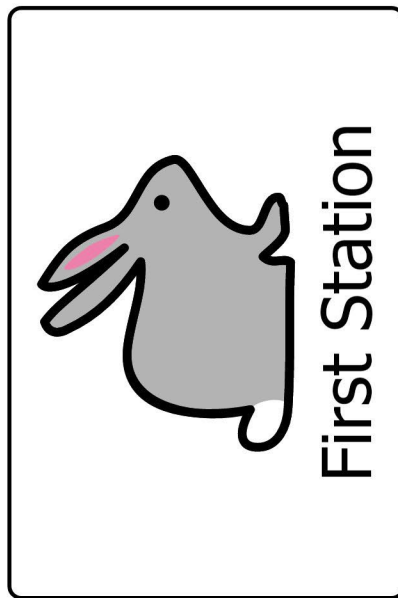
Remember, hosting a special needs day in your community will require some special considerations. Youth with special needs may need more time to perform tasks or learn skills. Be patient and flexible while treating each 4-H'er as an individual. Remind participants and their parents that projects like the ones they created at the event can be entered as county exhibits or state fair projects.

Sample Schedule

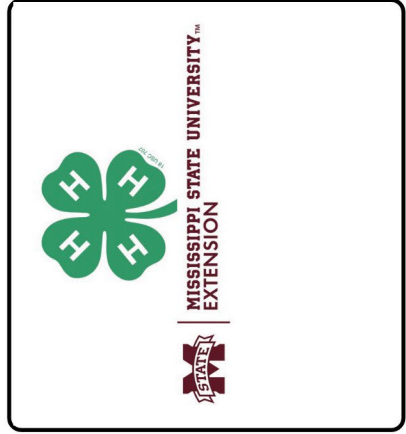
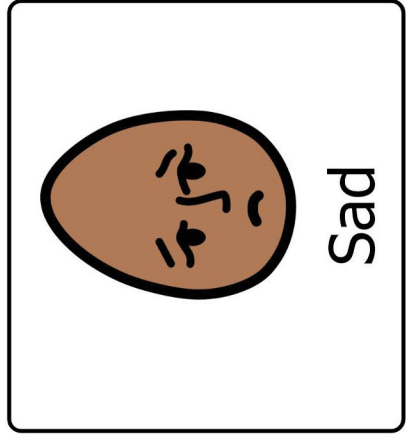
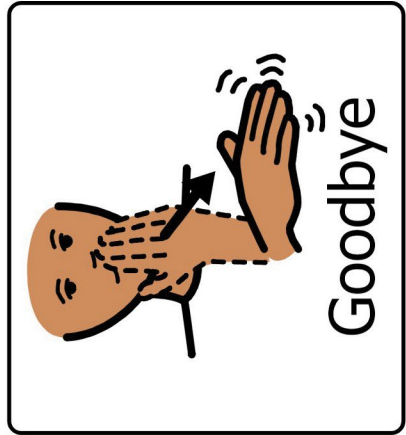
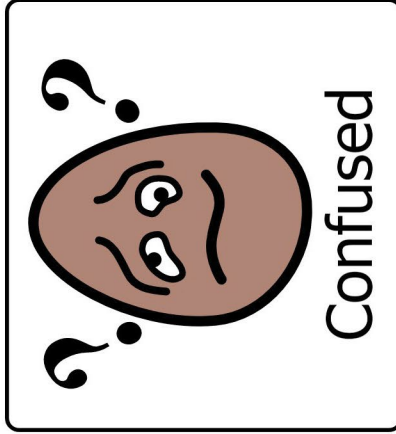
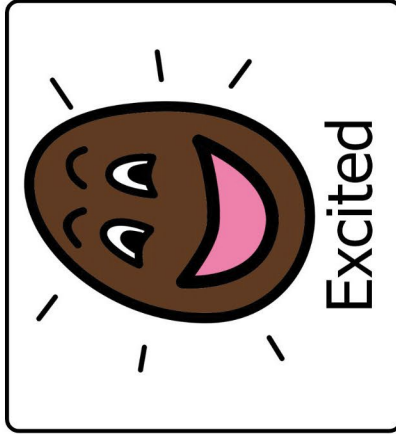
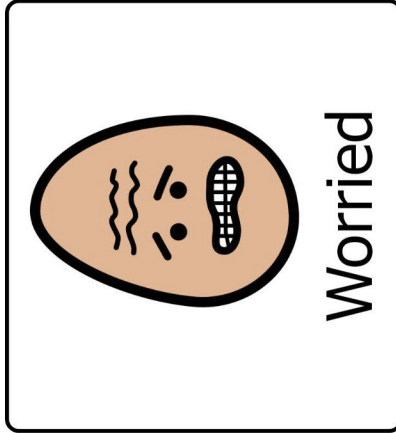
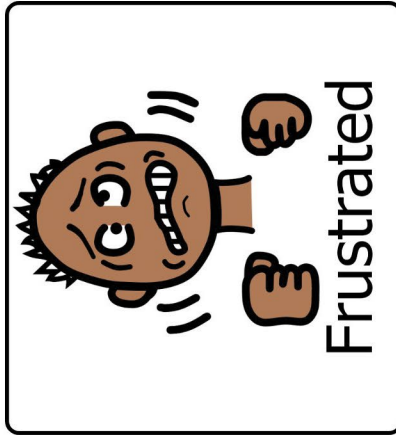
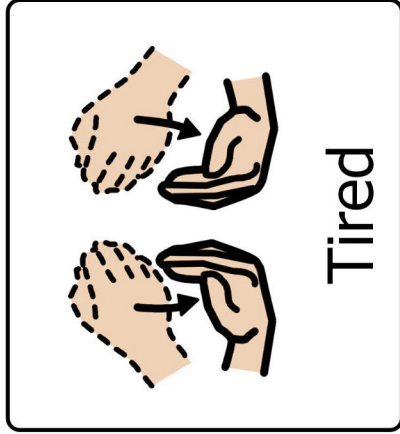
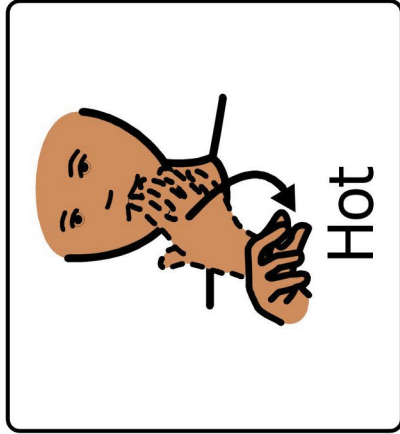
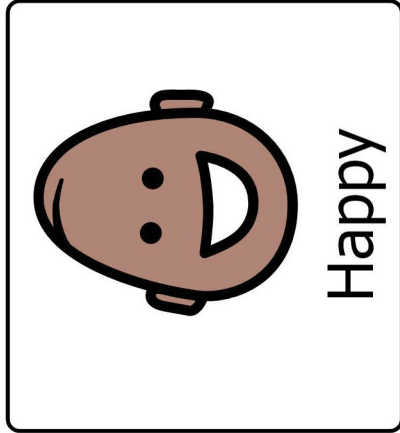
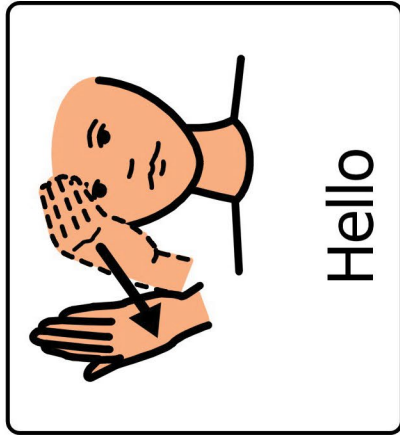
- 8:00 a.m.** Sign in 4-H'ers, parents, and registered 4-H volunteers and gather to hear a welcoming statement and outline of the day's events.
- 8:30 a.m.** 4-H'ers report to their first assigned station.
- 9:00 a.m.** 4-H'ers move to their second assigned station.
- 9:30 a.m.** 4-H'ers move to their third assigned station.
- 10:00 a.m.** 4-H'ers move to their fourth assigned station.
- 10:30 a.m.** 4-H'ers, parents, and registered volunteers gather to hear a concluding statement from the agent.
- 11:00 a.m.** 4-H'ers and parents are released.

References

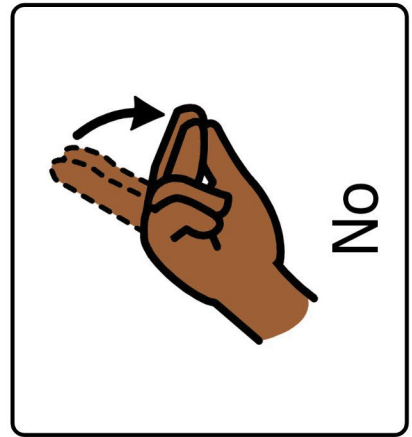
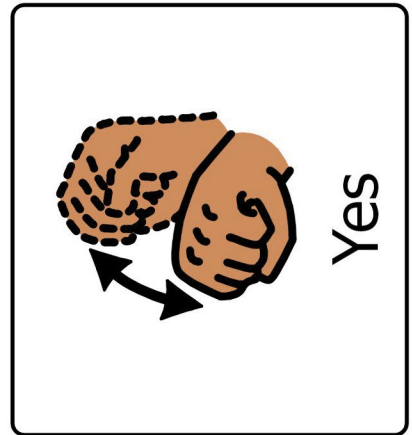
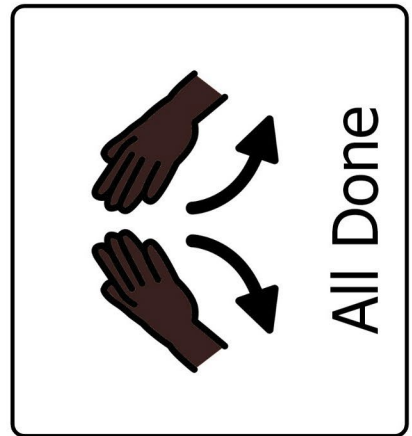
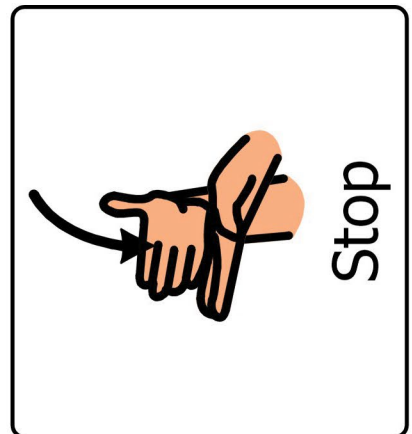
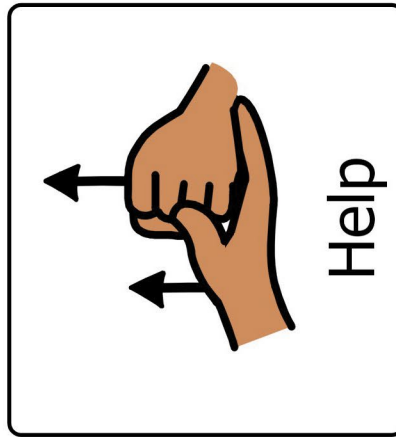
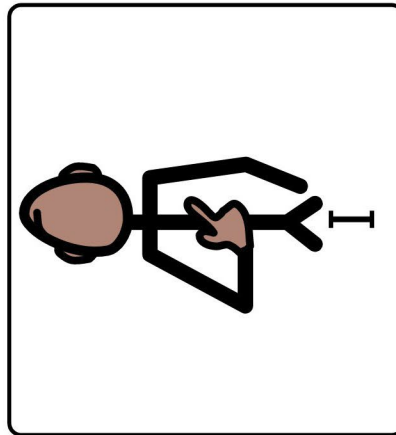
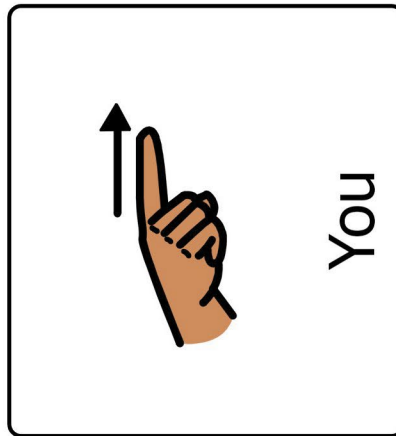
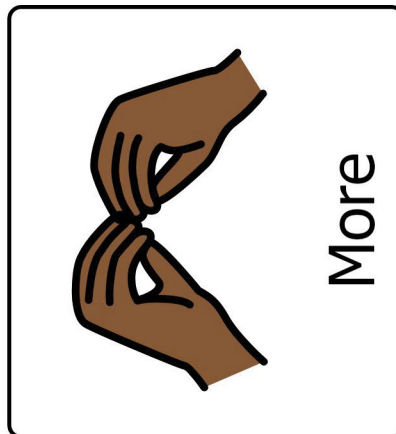
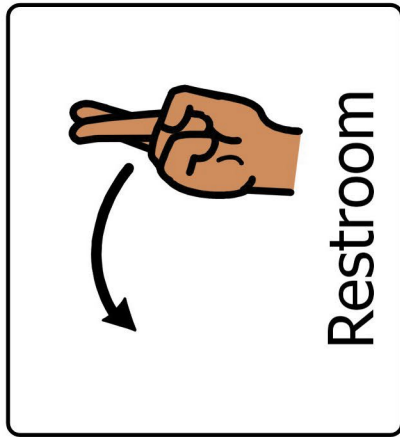
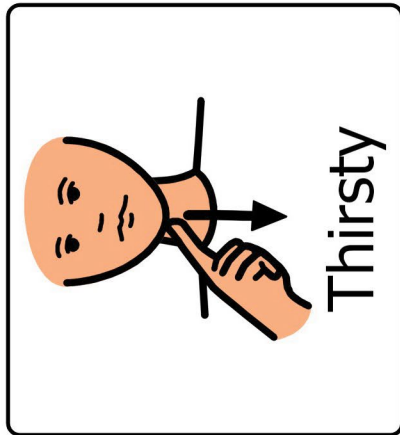
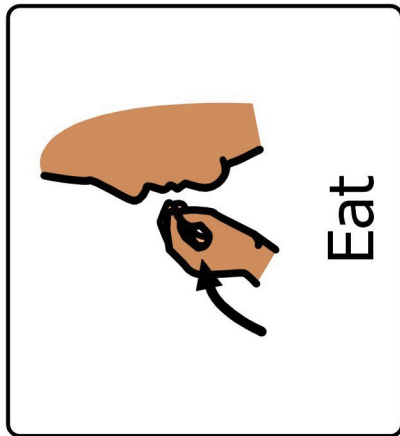
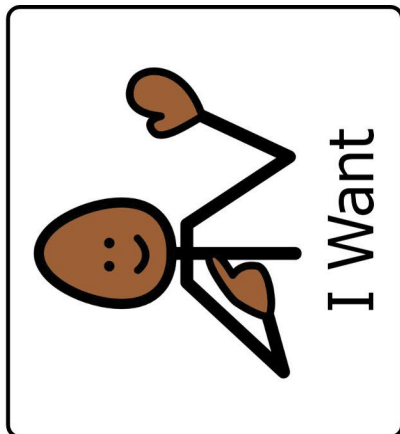
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- Legal Information Institute. (2021, August). Special needs. https://www.law.cornell.edu/wex/special_needs



Communication Board 1



Communication Board 2



Station 1: Rabbit Petting Station

4-H Project Area: Agriculture/Animal Sciences

Supplies

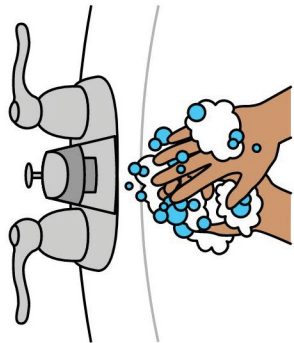
- Rabbits
- Device to play song
- Hand sanitizer

Volunteer Leader Instructions

1. Encourage everyone to sanitize their hands with hand sanitizer.
2. As the child approaches the rabbit, say things like, “Gently pet the bunny using two fingers” and “The bunny has two ears. How many ears do you have?” Encourage them to be gentle with the rabbit.
3. Use the song “This is the Way the Bunny Hops” by the Kiboomers, which can be found on YouTube, and encourage children to sing, dance, and copy the fun things the bunny does.
4. Encourage everyone to use hand sanitizer after touching the rabbit.

4-H'er Instructions

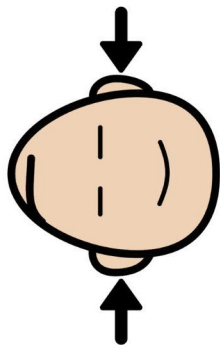
1. Sanitize hands with hand sanitizer.
2. Gently pet the bunny with two fingers.
3. Count how many ears the bunny has. How many do you have?
4. As you listen to the song, hop like the bunny hops.
5. Listen to the song and wiggle your nose like the bunny does.
6. Listen to the song and pretend to flop your ears like the bunny does.
7. Listen to the song and shake like the bunny shakes his tail.
8. Hop like the bunny hops one more time!
9. Sanitize your hands with hand sanitizer.



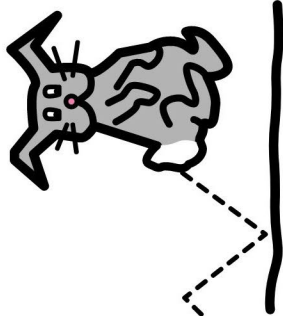
Wash Your Hands



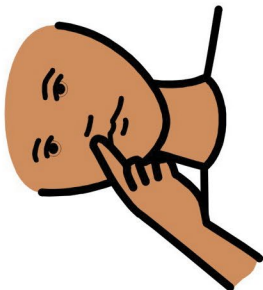
Pet the Bunny



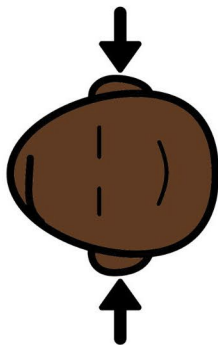
How Many Ears?



Hop like a Bunny



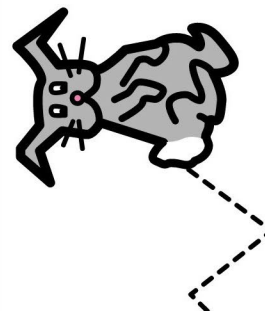
Wiggle Your Nose



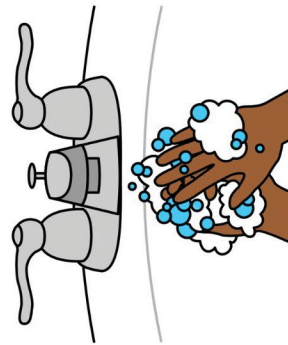
Flop Your Ears



Shake



Hop like a Bunny



Wash Your Hands

Station 2: Lego Station

4-H Project Area: STEAM/Engineering

Supplies

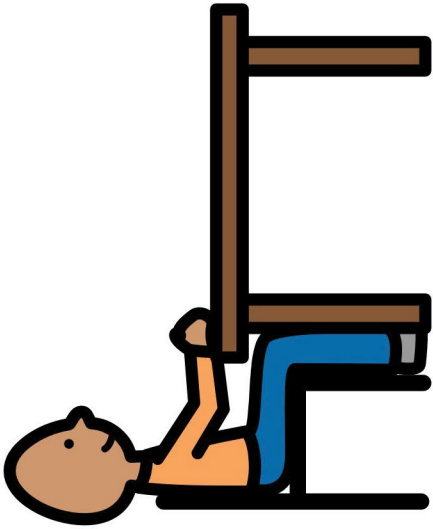
- Legos (Mega Bloks or Duplos)
- Prepared Lego bags (five red, eight blue, and two yellow blocks in each bag; make enough bags for each 4-H'er to have one)

Volunteer Leader Instructions

1. Guide 4-H'ers to take a seat at the table; each spot should have a bag or container of Legos.
2. Say to the 4-H'ers, "Create a model using two blue blocks."
3. Give them time to construct a model using two blue blocks. Praise their creations.
4. Say, "Create a model using five red blocks."
5. Give them time to construct a model using five red blocks. Praise their creations.
6. Say, "Create a model using five red blocks, eight blue blocks, and two yellow blocks."
7. Give them time to create their models, and then praise their work.

4-H'er Instructions

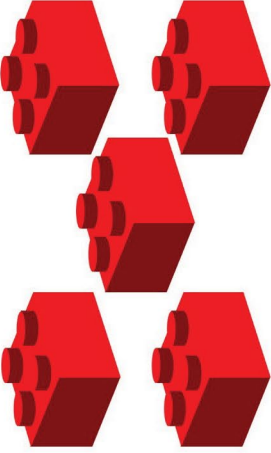
1. Pick an empty spot where there is a bag or container of Legos.
2. Create a model using two blue blocks. Show the volunteer leader your model.
3. Create a model using five red blocks. Show the volunteer leader your model.
4. Create a model using five red blocks, eight blue blocks, and two yellow blocks. Show the volunteer leader your model.
5. Place all of the Lego blocks back in the bag or container.



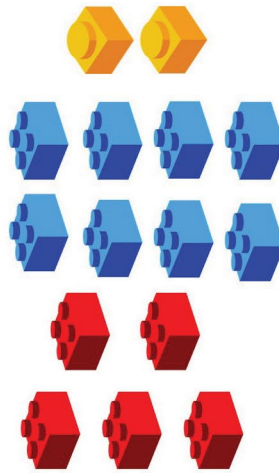
Take a Seat



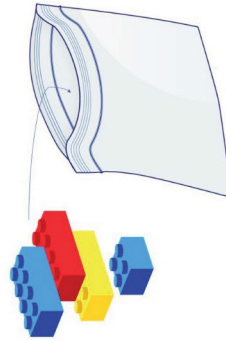
2 Blue Blocks



5 Red Blocks



5 Red Blocks, 8
Blue Blocks, 2
Yellow Blocks



Clean Up



Station 3: Making Trail Mix

4-H Project Area: Healthy Living/Foods and Nutrition

Supplies

- Zip-top bag for each 4-H'er
- Spoon or small cup for each 4-H'er
- Pretzels
- M&Ms
- Goldfish
- Cheerios

Before the event, ask parents about food allergies to make sure the snacks are safe for each 4-H'er. Divide pretzels into multiple bowls, Goldfish into multiple bowls, and so forth.

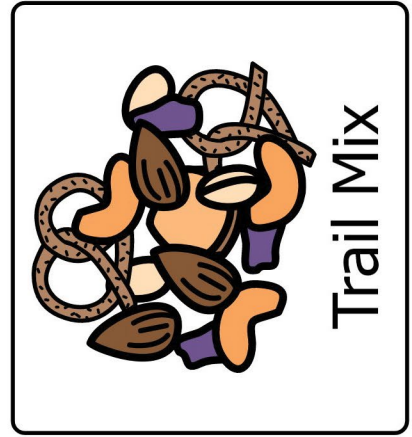
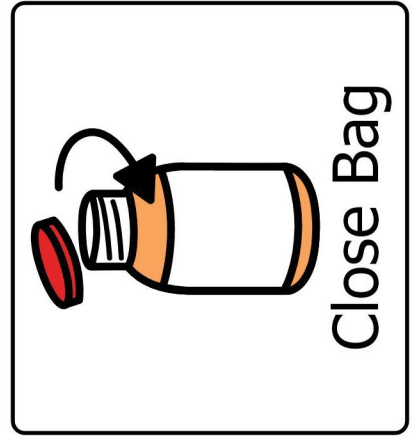
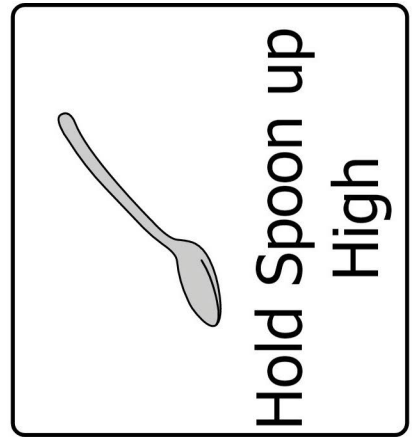
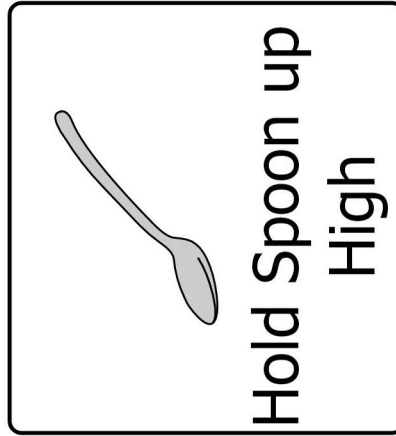
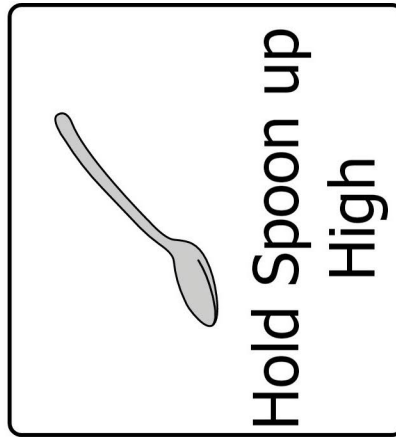
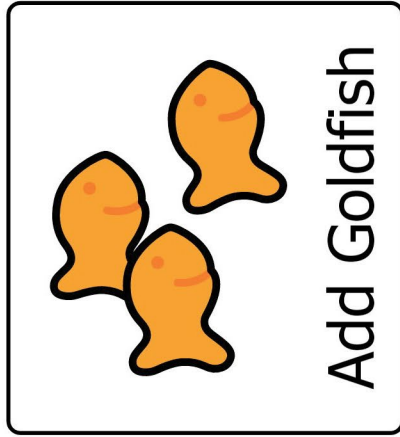
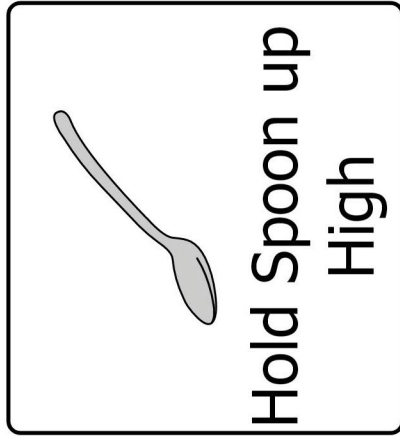
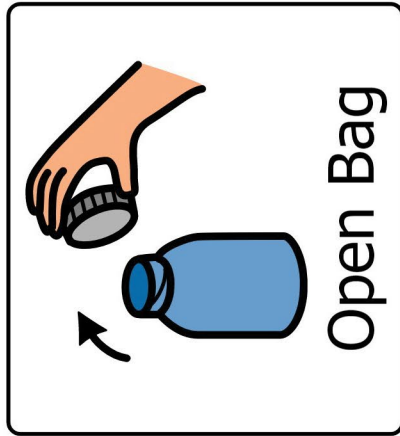
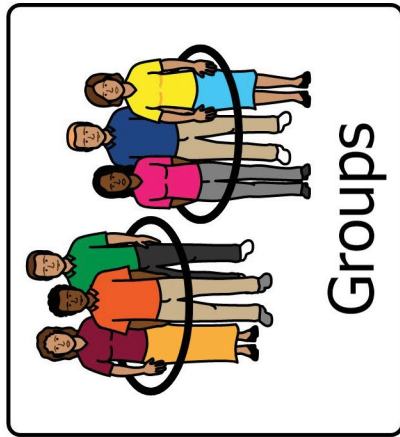
When 4-H'ers approach this station, divide them into groups and provide each group with a bowl of each snack food. Give each 4-H'er a zip-top bag and spoon or small cup.

Volunteer Leader Instructions

1. Say, "Everyone open up your bag." Help as needed.
2. Say, "Hold your spoon up in the air. Now, take your spoon and put one spoonful of Goldfish into your bag."
3. Say, "Hold your spoons up high! Now, carefully get one big scoop of Cheerios and put it in your bag."
4. Say, "Hold up your spoons again! Now, scoop a spoonful of M&Ms into your bag."
5. Say, "Let's see those spoons again! Now, scoop a spoonful of pretzels into your bag."
6. Say, "Now, close your bag." Offer help if needed.
7. Say, "You've made trail mix, which is a fun snack to make and eat!"

4-H'er Instructions

1. Get into groups.
2. Open your bag.
3. Hold your spoon up high in the air.
4. Scoop one spoonful of Goldfish and add it to your bag.
5. Hold your spoon up high in the air.
6. Scoop one spoonful of Cheerios and add it to your bag.
7. Hold your spoon up high in the air.
8. Scoop one spoonful of M&Ms and add it to your bag.
9. Hold your spoon up high in the air.
10. Scoop one spoonful of pretzels and add it to your bag.
11. Carefully close your bag.
12. Enjoy your bag of trail mix—a fun snack to make and eat!



Station 4: Dry Erase Self-Care Mats

4-H Project Area: Healthy Living/Health

Supplies

- Toothbrush for each 4-H'er
- Small hairbrush/comb for each 4-H'er
- Washcloth for each 4-H'er (can use paper towel cut into small portions)
- Play food item for each 4-H'er
- Laminated self-care mat for each 4-H'er
- Yarn or string
- Dry erase marker

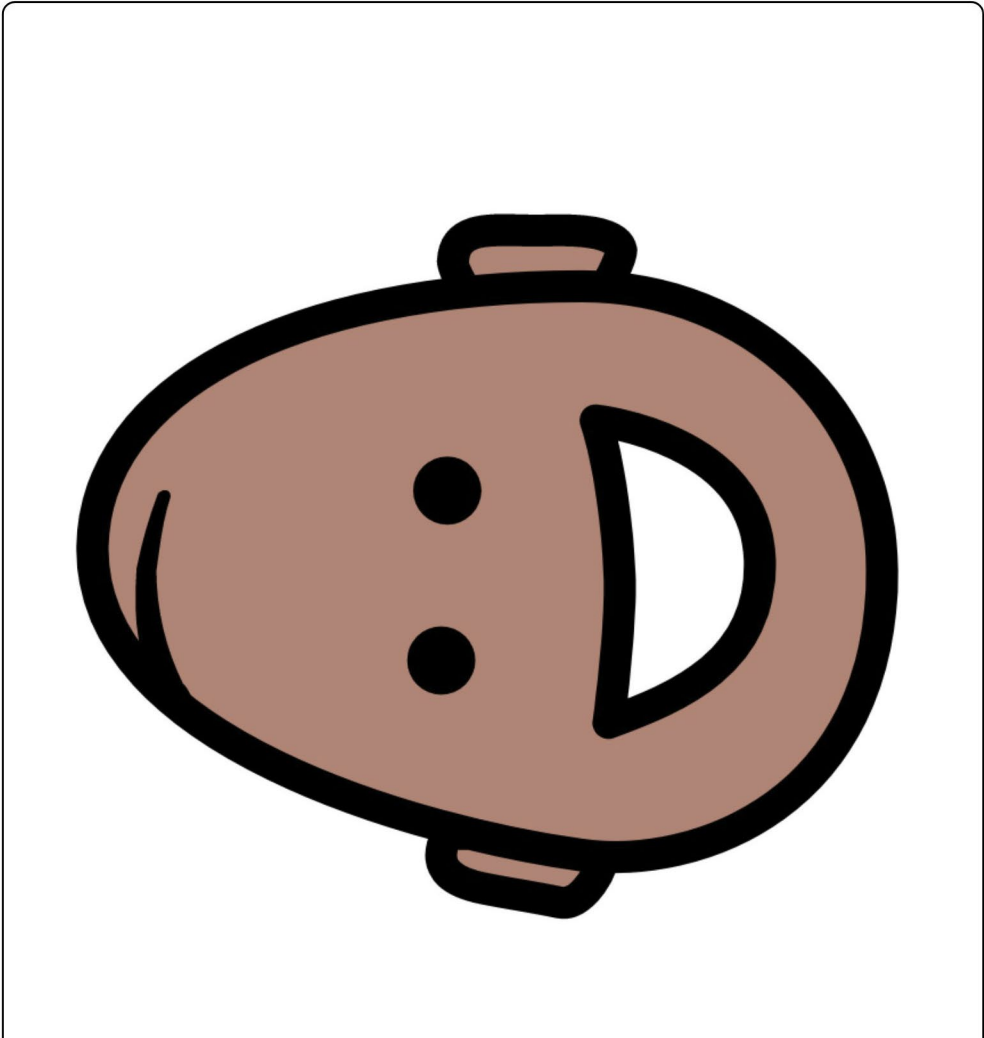
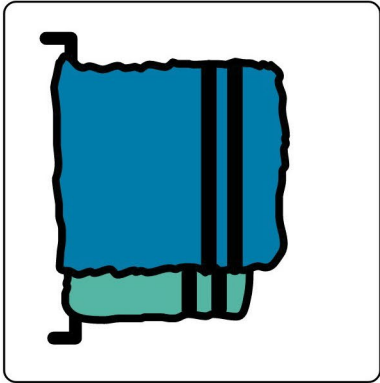
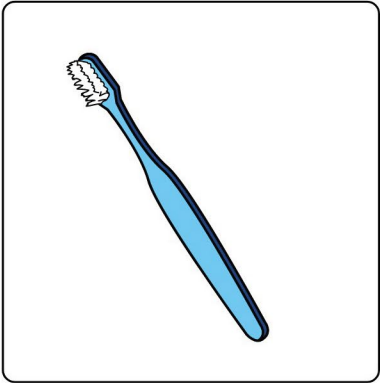
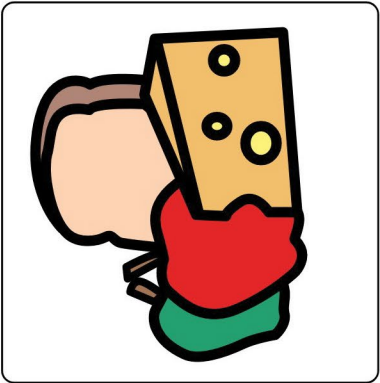
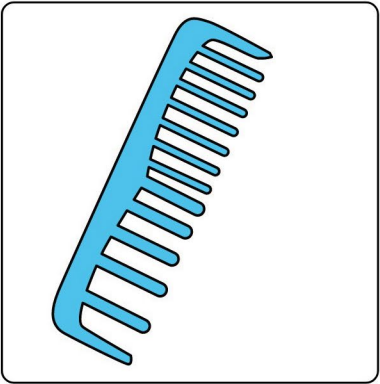
Before the event, print and laminate self-care mats. Make sure to have enough for each 4-H'er. Add string or yarn to create hair on the mat character.

Volunteer Leader Instructions

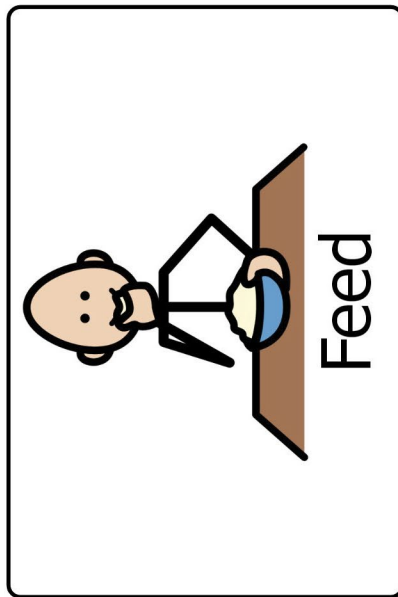
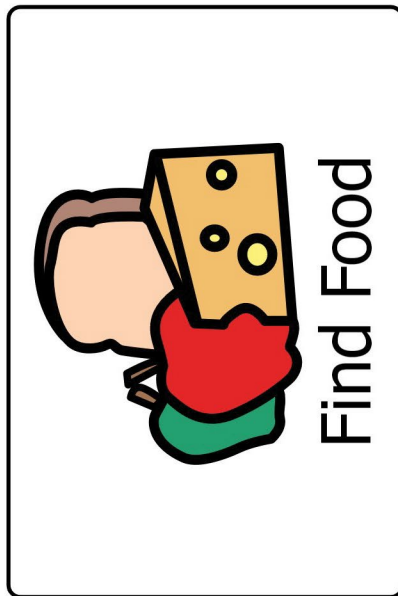
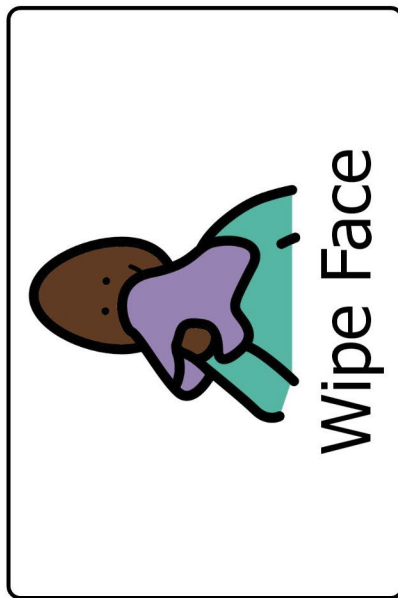
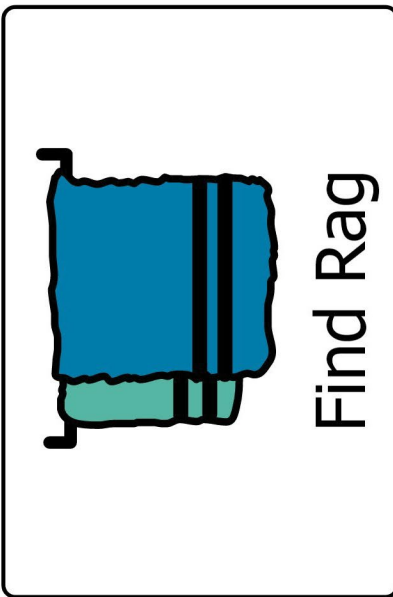
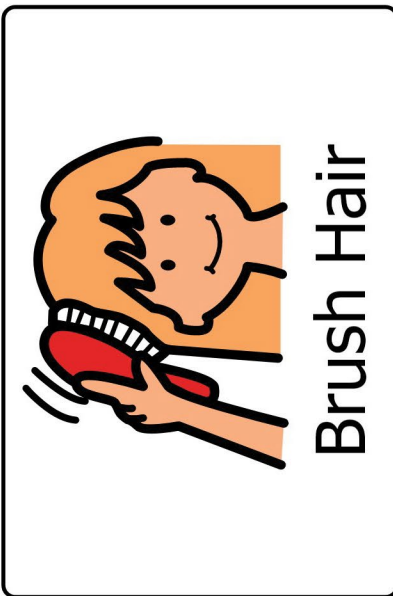
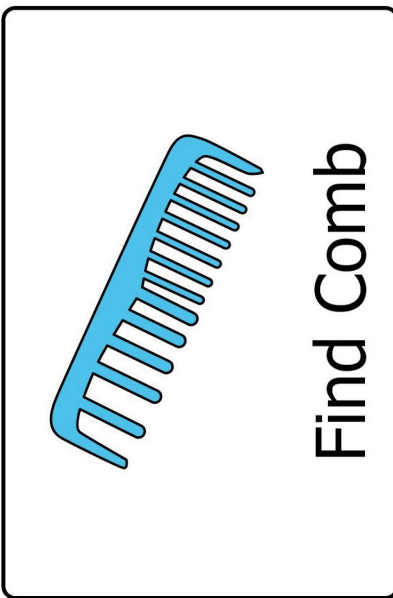
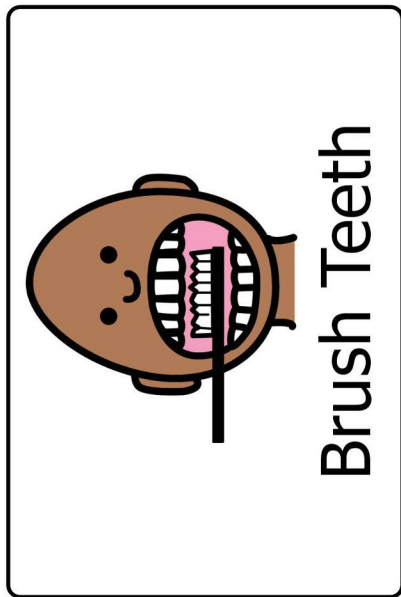
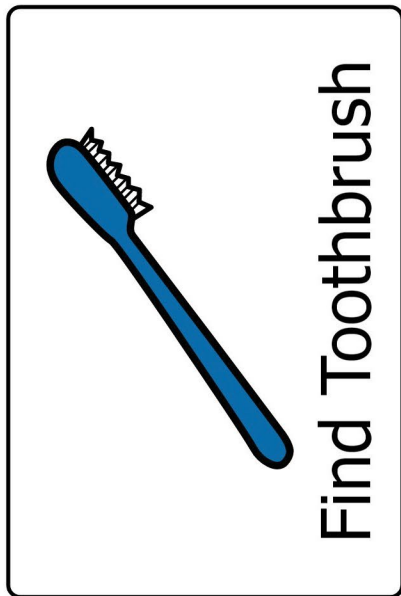
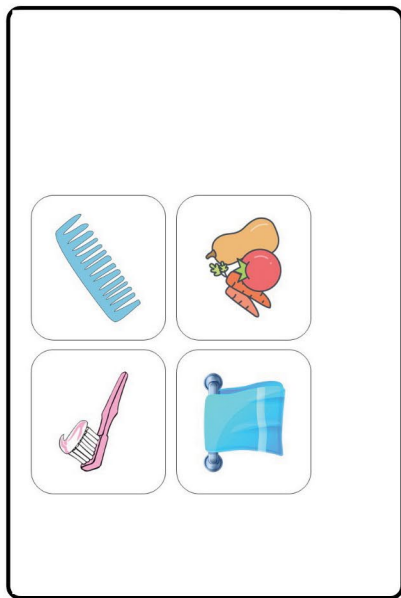
1. To prepare the self-care mats, draw blemishes/dirt on the face and teeth with a dry erase marker.
2. Give each 4-H'er a self-care mat, toothbrush, hairbrush or comb, washcloth, and item of play food.
3. Encourage them to keep each item on its respective square on the mat.
4. Say, "Brushing your teeth helps to remove bacteria and keep your mouth healthy. Can you find your toothbrush? Take your toothbrush and gently brush the teeth on your mat. See how brushing our teeth helps to keep our mouth and teeth clean?"
5. Say, "Brushing your hair helps to keep your hair and scalp healthy. Can you find your hairbrush/comb? Gently brush the hair on your mat to get rid of any tangles."
6. Say, "Washing your face helps to keep your skin clean and healthy. Can you find your washcloth? Use it to gently clean and wipe the dirt off the face on your mat. See how washing your face can help keep you clean?"
7. Say, "Who likes to eat? Everybody loves to eat, and it is important that we do. Eating healthy helps us grow big and strong. Can you find the piece of food? Take the food and pretend you are feeding it to the person on your mat."

4-H'er Instructions

1. Put each item (toothbrush, hairbrush or comb, washcloth, and item of play food) in its place on the mat.
2. Find your toothbrush on the mat.
3. Brush the teeth of the person on your mat. Once done, put the toothbrush back in its square.
4. Find the hairbrush or comb.
5. Brush the hair on the mat. When you're done, put the hairbrush back in its square on the mat.
6. Find your washcloth on the mat.
7. Gently wipe off any blemishes on the face. When you're done, put the washcloth back in its square.
8. Find your food on the mat.
9. Feed the food to the person on the mat. When you're done, put the food back in its square.



Dry Erase Self-Care



Station 5: Grocery Shopping

4-H Project Area: Consumer Judging

Supplies

- Play money
- Individual packs of snacks (Goldfish, pretzels, cheese crackers, applesauce, etc.)
- Table or shelf to set up your “grocery store”

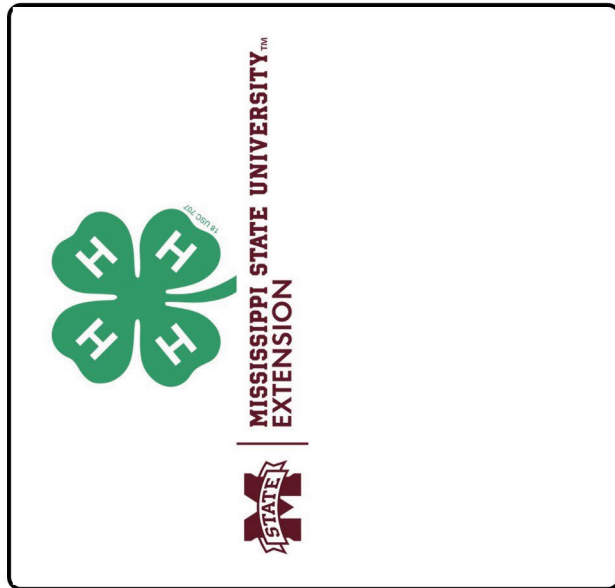
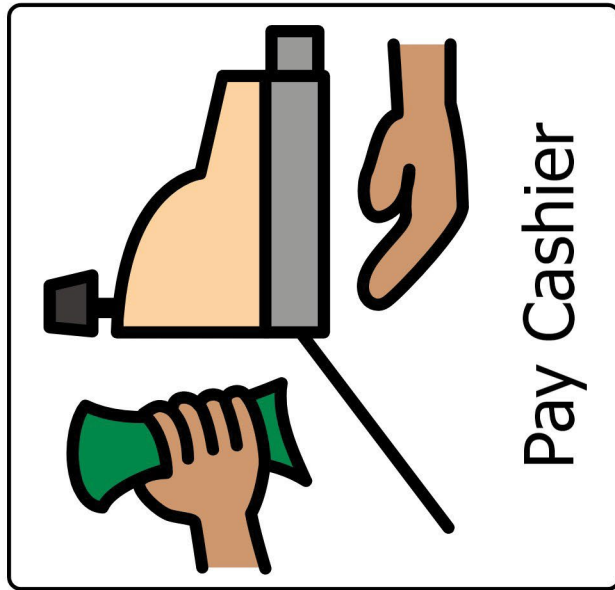
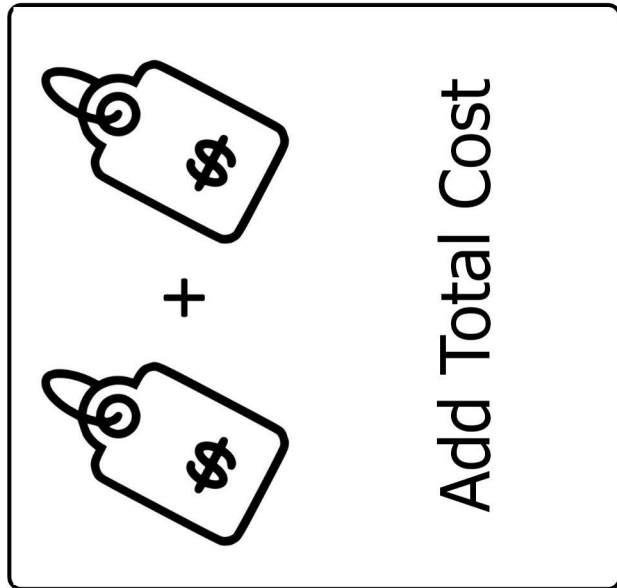
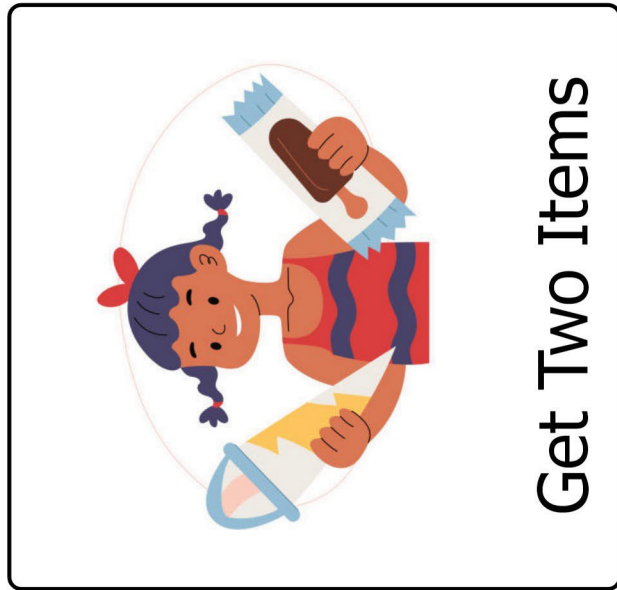
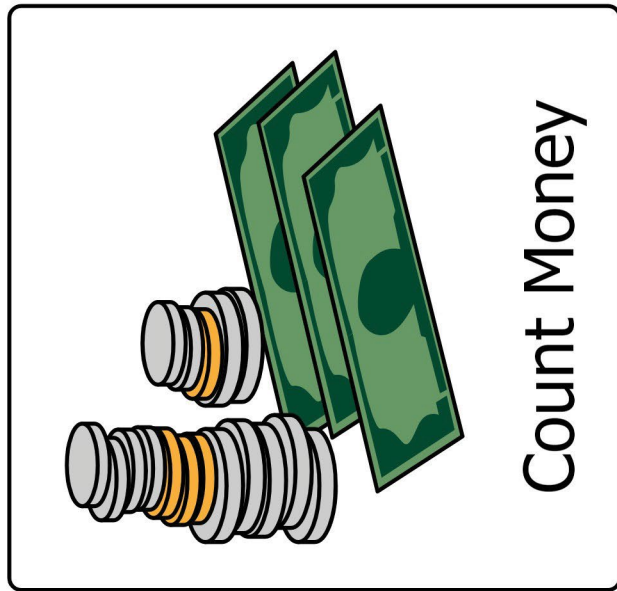
Before the event, set up a “grocery store” by taking individually wrapped snacks and lining them up in groups. Create price tags for each item, ranging from \$1 to \$3. Make sure 4-H’ers will be able to purchase any two items with the amount of money they will have.

Volunteer Leader Instructions

1. Give each 4-H’er three \$1 bills and one \$5 bill.
2. Depending on the size of each group, ask one or multiple 4-H’ers to come to the front to buy two items from the grocery store. The volunteer leader will be the “cashier.”
3. 4-H’ers will choose their items and give the cashier the correct amount of play money to “buy” these items. Ask how much each item costs and what their total will be. If change is required, ask them how much change they should get.
4. Let them keep their “purchased” items.

4-H’er Instructions

1. Count the money you are given.
2. Walk to the grocery store and select two items you would like to purchase.
3. Add up the total of the two items.
4. Count the correct amount of money to pay for the items.
5. Give the cashier money for the items. Tell how much they cost and if you need change.



Station 6: Making a Plastic Bottle Bird Feeder

4-H Project Area: STEAM/Wildlife

Supplies

- Empty plastic bottle with pre-drilled holes for each 4-H'er and volunteer leader
- Piece of string (30 inches long) for each 4-H'er and volunteer leader
- Wooden dowel (10 inches long) for each 4-H'er and volunteer leader
- Birdseed
- Funnel
- Bird Bingo Cards

You will need an empty plastic water bottle for each 4-H'er and one for the volunteer leader to demonstrate making the bird feeder. Before the 4-H Special Needs Day, make two holes at equal height approximately one-third of the way up from the bottom of the bottle. Make sure these holes are big enough to fit the wooden dowel rod through. Make two more holes about 3 inches above each of the first holes. Right under the lid of the bottle, make two holes to feed string through to hang the feeder. Print (and laminate, if desired) Bird Bingo Cards before the event.

Volunteer Leader Instructions

1. Give each 4-H'er a bottle, string, wooden dowel rod, and birdseed.
2. Demonstrate putting the wooden dowel rod through the two bottom holes of the empty bottle. Say, "Put your wooden dowel through your bottle like this."
3. Unscrew the top of the demonstration bottle and pour birdseed into it, stopping before you get to the large holes in the bottle. Say, "Now pour birdseed into your bottle."
4. Screw the lid back on the bottle and allow 4-H'ers to do the same.
5. Show 4-H'ers how to put the string through the top two holes of the bottle, and allow them to do the same.
6. Give each 4-H'er a Bird Bingo Card that shows pictures and names of common birds found in your region. These cards are for 4-H'ers to take home and use as they watch birds visit their bird feeders.

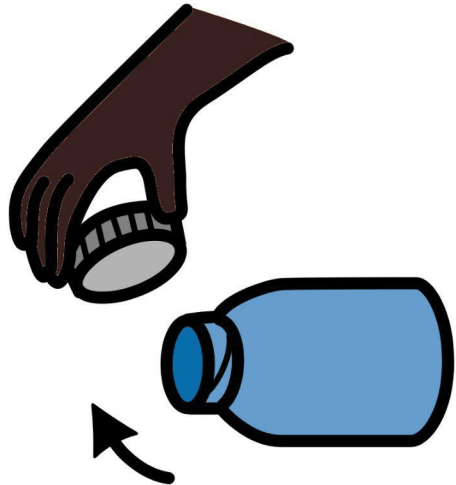
4-H'er Instructions

1. Take your wooden dowel rod and put it through the two bottom holes of the plastic bottle.
2. Unscrew the lid of the bottle.
3. Using the funnel, carefully pour birdseed into the bottle. Stop just before you get to the large holes.
4. Screw the lid back on the bottle.
5. Thread the string through the top two holes of the bottle.

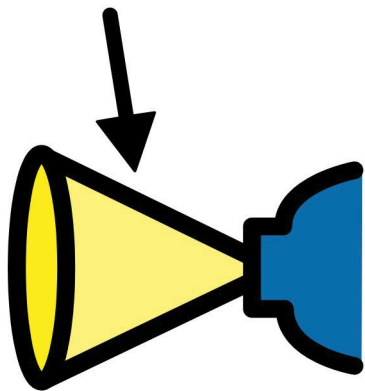
Plastic Bottle Bird Feeder



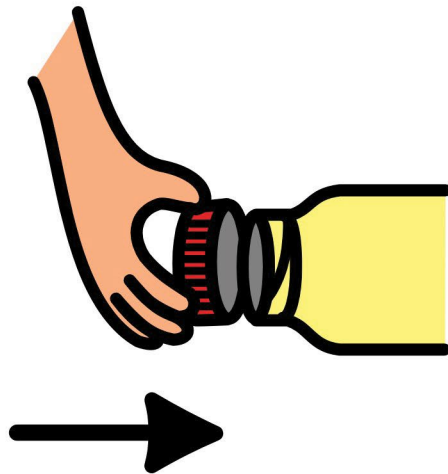
Wooden Rod
Through Holes



Unscrew Lid



Pour Birdseed in
Bottle



Screw on Lid

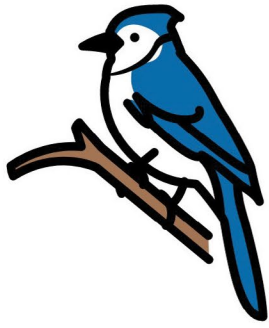


Add String

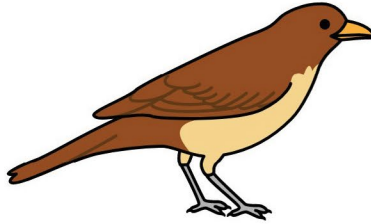


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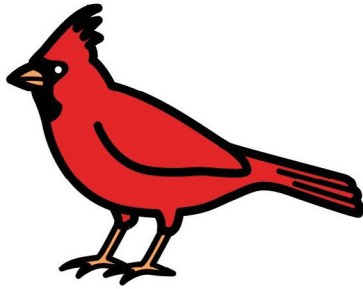
Backyard Bird Bingo



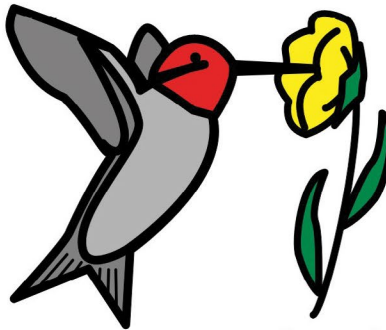
Blue Jay



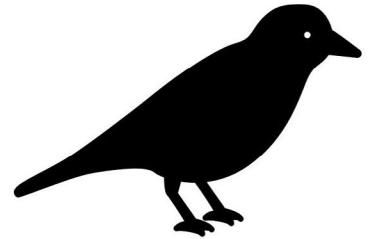
Wren



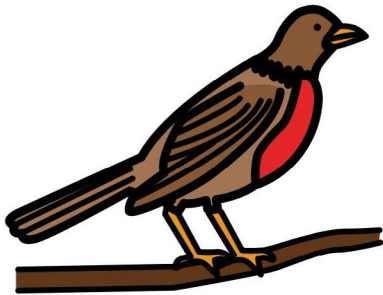
Cardinal



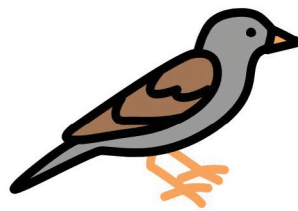
Hummingbird



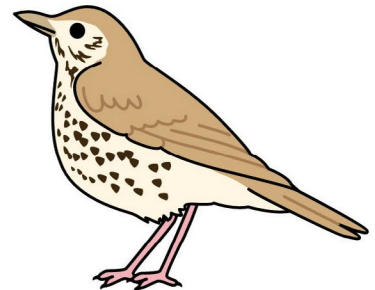
Blackbird



Robin



Sparrow



Thrush

Station 7: Seasons Sensory Bottle

4-H Project Area: Healthy Living/Personal Development

Supplies

- Empty plastic water bottle with no label for each 4-H'er and volunteer leader
- Zip-top bags
- Snowflake-shaped glitter
- Cotton balls
- Orange and blue food coloring
- Leaves (red, orange, yellow, brown)
- Flowers
- Yellow and white pom-poms
- Acorns
- Orange, pink, blue, and silver glitter
- Water
- Baby oil
- Glue
- Funnel

Before the 4-H Special Needs Day begins, prepare bags for each season (summer, spring, fall, winter). Here are some ideas for each season:

- Summer: cotton balls (clouds), yellow pom-poms (sun), blue glitter
- Spring: flowers, yellow pom-poms (sun), pink glitter
- Fall: leaves, acorns, orange glitter, orange food coloring
- Winter: snowflake-shaped glitter, white pom-poms (snow), silver glitter, blue food coloring

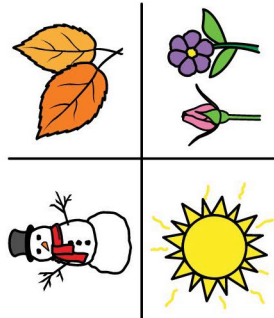
Volunteer Leader Instructions

Briefly explain the four different seasons, including the weather and different holidays.

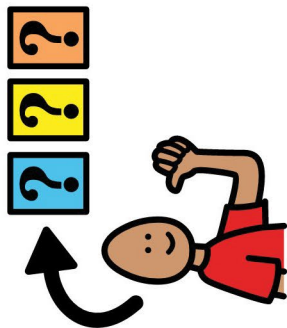
1. Let each 4-H'er choose which season they want to make their sensory bottle. Give them a zip-top bag with that season's contents.
2. Show 4-H'ers how to fill the bottle about one-third full with water.
3. Say, "Now you put water in your bottle."
4. Show 4-H'ers how to add materials to the bottle, explaining what each material could represent.
5. Say, "Now you add your season's materials to your bottle. Be careful so the water won't spill!"
6. Help each 4-H'er finish filling their bottle with baby oil and gluing the lid onto the bottle.
7. Encourage them to shake their sensory bottles!

4-H'er Instructions

1. Listen to the leader explain the four seasons.
2. Choose which season you want to use to create your sensory bottle.
3. Unscrew the lid of your bottle.
4. Carefully fill the bottle about one-third of the way up with water using a funnel.
5. Carefully add the seasonal contents to your bottle using the funnel.
6. Fill the bottle the rest of the way up with baby oil using the funnel.
7. Add glue to the lid of your bottle.
8. Screw the lid back onto the bottle.
9. Shake your sensory bottle and watch what happens!



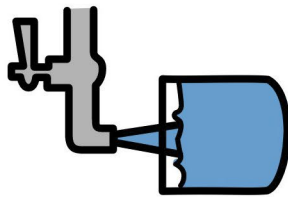
Seasons



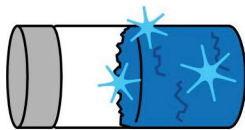
Choose a Season



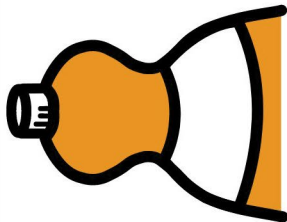
Unscrew Lid



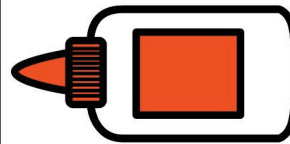
Fill 1/3 With Water



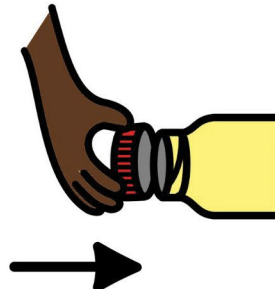
Add



Fill with Baby Oil



Glue on Lid



Screw on Lid



Shake Bottle

Station 8: Planting Microgreens

4-H Project Area: STEAM/Junior Master Gardener

Supplies

- Microgreen seeds
- Tray for each 4-H'er and volunteer leader (yogurt cups, egg cartons, or seed trays)
- Potting soil for each 4-H'er and volunteer leader
- Spray bottles with water

Before the event, grow some microgreens so you can demonstrate how to harvest them. Decide how many microgreen seeds are needed for the size trays 4-H'ers will use. Prepare bags or cups of potting soil for each 4-H'er.

Volunteer Leader Instructions

1. Say, "Today we will plant microgreens! We will do the first step today, and you get to take your plants home and do the other two steps—watering and harvesting."
2. Demonstrate how to fill the tray about three-fourths full of soil and encourage 4-H'ers to do the same.
3. Show how to spread the seeds across the top of the potting soil in the tray and encourage 4-H'ers to do the same.
4. Add a thin layer of soil to cover the seeds and encourage 4-H'ers to do the same.
5. Once all seeds are covered, demonstrate using the spray bottle to water the seeds. Encourage 4-H'ers to water their seeds.
6. Say, "These tiny seeds will grow to become green, leafy plants. To make them grow, you must be sure to take care of them. Water them every day using your spray bottle. After about 2 weeks, they will be ready to harvest. I have some full-grown microgreens, and I will show you how to harvest them."
7. Demonstrate cutting the stems just above the soil.

4-H'er Instructions

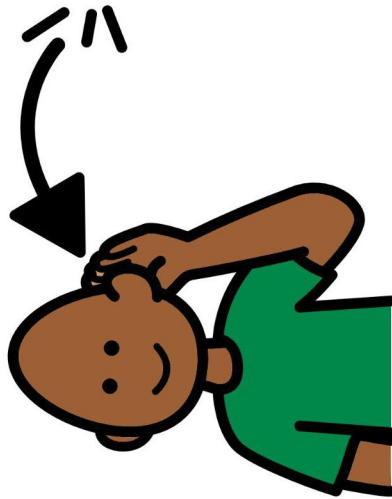
1. Fill your tray three-fourths full of soil.
2. Spread the seeds evenly on top of the soil.
3. Add a thin layer of soil to cover all the seeds.
4. Listen to how to take care of your microgreens and harvest them.
5. Use the spray bottle to water your microgreens.



Add Soil



Add seeds



Listen to Care
Instructions



Water plant



Add Soil



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