

# INTRODUCTION

## OUR COMMUNITIES, OUR LIVES

All of us have needs that we can't satisfy alone. Communities help us meet those needs.

For example, we rely on neighbors to look after our houses when we go on vacation. Churches and temples serve as places to go to practice our faiths. Firefighters and police officers help protect us. Retail stores sell us products we need.

A community may be a place to live, but it can also be a group of people who share a common bond or interest. Members of these types of communities don't have to live in the same town, but may belong to the same club or school.

The activities in this group are designed to help you learn more about your community.

### Activities

- Islands
- Community Patchwork Quilt
- Community Components
- Community Interviews

# ACTIVITY

## iSLANDS

### Procedure

1. Have everyone spread out at least an arm's length away from each other. Tell them they'll be participating in a silent activity.
2. Give each person a blindfold and have him or her put it on. Start the music and ask everyone to carefully and silently move about the room. Tell them that if they bump into someone, they should step aside and keep on moving, with no talking or acknowledging that anyone else is in the room.

**(Volunteer Hint:** Leaders must maintain a safe environment. If it seems as though the group cannot do this safely, stop the activity.)

3. Once members of the group are accustomed to gently bumping into each other and have settled into the activity, read or paraphrase the following information:

*"Imagine that you're living on a distant island and are completely alone. The only food you have is what you've grown yourself.*

*"You build your own shelter. You only hear music that you make and see pictures that you alone create. The only ideas you have are what you think of all by yourself. And, there's no one there for you to love and care about.*

*"How do you think it feels to be so completely alone—to never have contact with anyone else?"*

4. Give participants a few minutes to think about the questions. Then, ask people to keep their blindfolds on and start moving again, but to grab the hand of the next person they bump into.
5. Once everyone has a partner, tell them to take their blindfolds off. They can talk about the questions below or write their answers on newsprint.

- How would it really feel to be so alone?
- What, if anything, would you want from other people?

### PURPOSE

To help participants begin thinking about some of their needs and how the community may meet those needs

### BEFORE THE MEETING

Decide if you need helpers (and if you do, how to use them), gather necessary supplies and review the activity.

### SETTING

Large room

### MATERIALS

- Blindfold (one per person)
- Tape player
- Relaxing background music
- Newsprint or other large paper
- Markers (one set per pair)

### TIME

20 to 30 minutes

## ACTIVITY, CONTINUED

# ISLANDS

### Talking It Over

When 5 minutes or so have passed, bring the group together in a large circle. Talk about questions that came up or use the following:

- 1.** What were some of the things you needed or wanted from others?
- 2.** Are there ways that being part of a community helps you meet those needs?
- 3.** If you could live anywhere, would you prefer being alone in the wilderness or living in the country, a small town or a city? Why?

### Try This, Too

Before bringing the group into a large circle, have the partners join with another pair. Ask them to talk about the skills they now have as four people, rather than two. After a few minutes, have each group of four join another group and repeat the pattern and discussion until all the groups have come together.

Then do the "Talking It Over" questions and include these:

- 1.** Were you able to do more things as a smaller or larger group? Why?
- 2.** How did you feel as the group got larger? Were you able to talk with everyone? Why or why not?
- 3.** How do you think this activity affects our planning a community-service learning project?

# ACTIVITY

## COMMUNITY PATCHWORK QUILT

### Procedure

1. Tell the group that a community quilt is a patchwork of pictures representing various aspects of a community. Each person (or small group) will make a piece for the quilt. When the pieces are complete, hang them on a wall as a visual representation of your community as a whole.
2. Each person must decide on a community component to represent his or her piece (refer to the "Community Component Index" handout if necessary).
3. Give each person a sheet of newsprint. Ask everyone to create a piece of the quilt by filling in the newsprint with drawings or words to describe the community component he or she has chosen. Construction paper, bits of cloth, yarn, string, or other materials can be used.
4. After 10 minutes or so, ask everyone to find a partner. Have the partners tape their pictures together and talk about why they chose to portray what they did. After several minutes have passed, have each pair find another pair of participants to repeat the process (they can also talk about common themes, or differences, in their quilts). Continue this pattern until the quilt is complete. If the group is very large, make several quilts.

### Talking It Over

Bring the group together and ask everyone to describe similarities and differences they found in their squares. Ask the following questions as part of the discussion.

1. Do you think there is just one type of community? Why or why not?
2. What makes your community special to you?
3. Has working on this quilt helped you to better understand your community?
4. What makes the community represented on this quilt unique? What makes it similar to other communities?

### PURPOSE

To help participants think about different types of communities

### BEFORE THE MEETING

Decide if you need helpers (and if you do, how to use them), gather necessary supplies and review the activity.

### SETTING

Large room

### MATERIALS

- Newsprint or other large paper (one sheet per person)
- Markers
- Tape
- Scissors
- Construction paper
- Yarn
- Bits of cloth
- String
- "Exploring Your Community and Helping Others" handout
- "Community Component Index" handout
- "Community Component Ideas" handout

### TIME

About 20 to 30 minutes

Our Communities, Our Lives

## ACTIVITY, CONTINUED

### COMMUNITY PATCHWORK QUILT

#### Try This, Too

- Instead of discussing all the different community components at once, focus on one type of community. It could be a community of plants and animals, or a community of 4-H groups that includes people from other states and countries.
- Use fabric markers and glue pieces of cloth to the quilt to make it seem more like a real quilt.

Our Communities, Our Lives

# HANDOUT

## EXPLORING YOUR COMMUNITY AND HELPING OTHERS

### Our Communities, Our Lives

Communities may seem independent, with their own neighborhoods, services and governments, but they're really comprised of different components that are, in many cases, dependent on each other.

Both we and the community components, are connected to other communities – and the world as a whole – politically, socially and economically. For example, we live in neighborhoods that are located in cities that are in particular counties in a specific state. Many local youth clubs also have county, state, national and international affiliations. Other community components may have those same links.

Our lives and communities are parts of two worlds: a public world and a private world. It's important to keep this distinction in mind when we interact with the community.

These differing components provide the support networks that make a community a community. As a member of a YEA team, you can also learn to use these support networks to help you and your fellow group members develop community service projects. Here are just some of the components you should recognize as part of your own community:

- Business and industry (the economic system)
- Courts and law
- Culture and heritage
- Education
- Faith community
- Government and civic organizations
- Health, safety and welfare
- Media, transportation and utilities
- Natural resources and environment
- Recreation and hobbies

## HANDOUT, CONTINUED

### EXPLORING YOUR COMMUNITY AND HELPING OTHERS

It may be a good idea to visit several agencies that fall into some of the listed categories so that you can really familiarize yourself with the various components. Review the "Community Component Index" handout. For a brief overview of all the categories, read on.

Our Communities, Our Lives

*This list will help you understand some of the different components that comprise communities, make them unique and help them thrive. Even though the list may not include everything that makes up a community, there are enough components listed here to get you started in your explorations. Feel free to refer to this index whenever you encounter different community components for the first time.*

## **Business and Industry (The Economic System)**

Industry turns raw materials (such as iron, coal, sand and wood) into products people can use. Those products include cars, appliances, furniture, food, clothing and electricity. In turn, businesses sell the products that industry provides. Others are in businesses that provide the services people need, such as banking, auto repair, restaurants and laundries.

Private businesses depend on profits from the sale of goods and services for stability and expansion. Business and industry benefit the community by providing jobs and stable incomes for people.

In the United States, this system is referred to as a "mixed economy," since both private enterprise (individuals, partnerships, corporations and cooperatives) and government own and operate businesses.

America's economic system – based on specialized jobs and goods produced all over the world – means that people have to trade with each other, since no one person can produce all that he or she needs.

The consumer determines what kinds and quality of goods will be produced by what he or she chooses to buy. Consumer choices influence producers, processors, wholesalers and retailers.

Most of us want more than we can really afford, so we have to make smart choices about what we buy. Part of the task of growing up is learning to make intelligent choices.

## **Courts and Law**

Without rules and regulations, there would be chaos. So laws are necessary to help a community run smoothly, maintain order and protect the lives, property and rights of all citizens. It's the work of the courts to make certain laws are justly applied. That means they must not only punish those who break the laws, but also protect the rights of law-abiding citizens.

## **Culture and Heritage**

Part of what makes each community unique is its own history, traditions and folklore. These things are evident in a community's homes, buildings, cemeteries and other historical landmarks, as well as in museums, libraries, theaters and art galleries.

## **Education**

Education boils down to acquiring the knowledge and skills a person needs to be able to live and work in society.

Most of that knowledge – and many of the skills – come from the people we come into contact with on a daily basis, such as our parents, friends and neighbors. But we need more than that. We also need the education provided for us by either a public or private school system at the elementary, middle and high school levels.

When we want to expand our knowledge, we choose to attend a college or university – many of which are located either in our community or nearby – as well as trade and vocational schools.

### Faith Community

Religion is the spiritual center of a community. It's found in all communities and is exemplified in 4-H through activities inspired by the "Heart H."

Although Christianity is the major religious faith in the United States, others include Judaism, Islam, Hinduism, Buddhism, Unitarianism and several Eastern religions. The common thread among all faiths is that people come together in one place to worship. These places have different names, however, including churches, synagogues, temples and mosques.

In most cases, local churches and other places of worship also serve as centers for activities in their communities. In addition, many religious groups work hard at helping the poor and elderly.

### Government and Civic Organizations

Our country was founded on the democratic principle that governing leaders are chosen by the citizens. This means that we have a responsibility to take an interest in what our leaders are doing. This habit can be cultivated by attending meetings of local governing bodies and following accounts of what's going on through newspaper or television news reports.

As you study local government, you'll find there are three basic forms: a council, a commission or a city manager. Which type of government exists in your community?

### Health, Safety and Welfare

- **Health:** We want our communities to be healthy places to live. This is done with the help of hospitals and clinics and with such professionals as doctors, nurses, pharmacists, nursing home staff, ambulance services and public health inspectors. Health services may be privately or publicly funded. Residents of large communities expect all of these services to be available to them. But smaller – or rural – communities may lack some important services because they are too costly.

One important way to keep a community healthy is by the proper disposal of garbage, sewage and other waste materials. Most communities have regular garbage pickup and special disposal facilities.

- **Safety:** All of us are concerned about personal safety. Community safety programs are targeted at protecting people from accidents, illnesses and injuries. Examples include the American Red Cross, fire and police services, auto inspection programs and the driver's licensing bureau.

- **Police and Fire Protection:** Police and fire departments are vital to a community's well-being. They're there solely to provide protection for citizens. Police work on crime prevention and traffic control and offer assistance any time there's a community emergency such as a flood, hurricane or tornado. Firefighters also help out in these types of emergencies, even though their main job is fighting fires. They also host fire-prevention and safety programs for community groups and schools and in some communities they provide ambulance services.

## COMMUNITY COMPONENT INDEX

### Health, Safety and Welfare, cont'd

- **Welfare:** While most people are able to care for themselves, others need help. People in that situation because of sickness, injury, fire, family problems or unemployment, often turn to public welfare programs for help. Government agencies have specially trained workers to find the best way to help someone in need. This can mean money, food, medical treatment, job training, job referrals or other types of aid.

In emergency situations, the faith community is often the first place people turn to for help. Houses of worship traditionally offer assistance to their own members and to others as well.

### Media, Transportation and Utilities

- **Media:** Life would be pretty dull without telephones, television, radios, newspapers, magazines and mail. Without all of these, we'd be at a loss about what's going on in the world. Luckily, all of these forms of communication are available in the United States at generally affordable prices.
- **Transportation:** We use transportation to move around the community and to get from one community to another. To do so, we use cars, buses, trucks, trains, ships and airplanes. But we can also rely on bicycles, mopeds, motorcycles and rapid transit systems such as subways or elevated trains.

To use these methods of transportation, we also need roads, bridges, airports,

railroad tracks, warehouses, bus terminals, harbors and tunnels.

- **Utilities:** Many communities have businesses that are owned by the public and run by local governments to benefit all community members. Other businesses serving the community are operated for profit.

In either case, these businesses charge a fee for their services and are called public utilities. They exist to serve everyone and offer services for uniform prices. For example, if you live in a city, your water and sewer systems are public utilities. Additionally, some communities own their electric and gas systems, while others are privately owned.

Utilities are important parts of the community, since they ensure that everyone has an equal right to enjoy the benefits of these basic community services. Without them, each family would have to get its own water, dispose of its own trash, generate its own electricity and carry its own messages.

### Natural Resources and Environment

Our environment consists of natural resources such as land, water, metals, minerals, trees and the air we breathe. But it also is made up of things people construct, such as houses, roads, factories and shopping centers. Each of us has a responsibility to conserve and preserve the environment for future generations to enjoy. That means using things wisely, being careful with our use of energy, water and other resources. It also means not littering or polluting the environment.

### Recreation and Hobbies

Everyone needs to relax and have fun. It's vital to both our physical and mental well-being. That's when recreation and hobbies come into play.

Some people choose to read, collect coins, work on crossword puzzles, camp or hunt for Native American artifacts as ways to unwind. Others like to be involved in recreational activities that can be done alone, with friends or as part of a team.

Most communities provide recreational areas for their citizens. These can include parks, playgrounds, theaters and bowling alleys and organized sports such as Little League baseball or soccer teams.

# HANDOUT

## COMMUNITY COMPONENT IDEAS

	<b>Some ideas on activities to explore the community component</b>	<b>Ways to learn and get involved with the community component</b>	<b>Some indepth ways to find out what is happening</b>
<b>Business and Industry (The Economic System)</b>	List the main industries in your community, arranging them on a map. Invite an official from one of the companies to come in and talk about the business.	Visit a labor union office. Talk with an official there about labor's relationships with industry, business and government. Find out the history behind the labor movement.	Visit your local chamber of commerce. Talk with an official there about future plans for business and industry in your community.
<b>Courts and Law</b>	Hold a mock trial complete with judge, jury, defendant and witnesses.	Find out about the different courts and the responsibilities of each.	Add your ideas.
<b>Culture and Heritage</b>	Make a list of cultural events and art galleries in your community. Take a tour or attend a performance.	Visit historical landmarks in your community. Report the significance of what happened there. Enhance the report by videotaping your visit.	Talk with residents about the history of your community. Share what you learn with the group. Share what you've found with other groups or make a display for a local library window.
<b>Education</b>	Visit a school board meeting, then summarize what's discussed.	Make a list of schools in your community and find out what the cost of education is per student.	Tutor an elementary school student for one semester.
<b>Faith Community</b>	On one page, write what would happen if all religious groups and their influences suddenly disappeared from your community.	Volunteer to help with a community activity sponsored by a religious organization in your community.	Attend a service of a religious group that's different from your own.
<b>Government and Civic Organizations</b>	Discover the public services offered by your city government.	Attend a city or county council meeting to get a sense of how that section of government runs. Learn the names of the city or county council officials.	Explore opportunities for teens to serve on city or county advisory boards and commissions.

## Our Communities, Our Lives



# HANDOUT, CONTINUED

## COMMUNITY COMPONENT IDEAS

	<b>Some ideas on activities to explore the community component</b>	<b>Ways to learn and get involved with the community component</b>	<b>Some indepth ways to find out what is happening</b>
<b>Health, Safety and Welfare – Health</b>	Pick a food product (such as milk or eggs) and find out how inspections are done on it as it moves from producer to consumer.	Make an appointment to visit the head of your community health department. While there, ask about the department's primary functions and the duties of the people who work there.	Visit a city garbage dump and learn how trash is disposed of. Write a report on what you learned.
<b>Health, Safety and Welfare – Police and Fire Protection</b>	Arrange to visit the police department. Among the questions to ask: How are police trained? Does the department have special programs to help citizens protect themselves and their property? Then list and explain these programs.	Arrange to visit the fire department. Watch a drill and find out how the department investigates a fire. Ask about the fire prevention programs it offers.	Find out how the police and fire departments are funded and staffed. Find out how volunteers are used in the departments.
<b>Health, Safety and Welfare – Safety</b>	List the organized groups in your community whose primary concern is residents' safety. Describe the functions of each.	Create an escape plan for your family that you could use if your house caught fire.	Add your ideas.
<b>Health, Safety and Welfare – Welfare</b>	Adopt a grandparent, either in or out of a nursing home. Run errands, write letters and read for him or her. Or, help with household chores, talk with the person or learn skills from him or her.	Visit a public or private welfare agency in your city or county. Find out about the needs of the people they serve, how programs are financed, what social workers do and why it's necessary to provide these programs with public funds.	Become involved on a regular basis with a community service organization.

# HANDOUT, CONTINUED

## COMMUNITY COMPONENT IDEAS

### Our Communities, Our Lives

	<b>Some ideas on activities to explore the community component</b>	<b>Ways to learn and get involved with the community component</b>	<b>Some indepth ways to find out what is happening</b>
<b>Media, Transportation and Utilities – Media</b>	Arrange a tour of your local newspaper office, television station, telephone company, post office, telegraph office, Internet service provider or radio station.	Read the editorials in your local newspaper for a week. Make a list of the issues discussed in this section.	Add your own ideas.
<b>Media, Transportation and Utilities – Transportation</b>	Make a list of all the different types of transportation available in your community.	Over a week's time, list the different types of transportation you used and for what purpose.	If it's available in your community, use public transportation all week.
<b>Media, Transportation and Utilities – Utilities</b>	Find out the source of water to your home and how it gets there.	Where does your gas and electricity come from? How is it financed?	Add your ideas.
<b>Natural Resources and Environment</b>	Get a group together and "adopt" a mile of roadway to keep trash-free. Make and display an exhibit on water quality.	Help plant or care for trees, shrubs, flowers or grass around churches, community buildings or street intersections.	Research and present a community environmental concert to your county commissioners.
<b>Recreation and Hobbies</b>	Assist with a day camp for children.	Help plan and carry out a recreational activity for handicapped or elderly persons.	Add your ideas.



# ACTIVITY

## COMMUNITY COMPONENTS

### Procedure

- 1.** Organize the participants into small groups of two or three, then give one “Community Component Ideas” handout to each person. The members of each group should then identify a community component (in the left-hand column) they’re interested in.
- 2.** Next, have each group pick and carry out one or two activities listed under their community component. (These activities can be modified or groups can create their own.)
- 3.** Tell each group it should be prepared to report its findings on the activities to the larger group at a specified date.

### Talking It Over

- 1.** After the projects are completed, ask what each group learned through its explorations.
- 2.** Were there any surprises?
- 3.** Encourage the participants to talk about their experiences with one another. Also, suggest that they write down their feelings about their experiences in journal form.
- 4.** Encourage the participants to make posters that combine some of the insights uncovered by the various small groups.

### PURPOSE

To provide participants with a way to explore the diverse components of their community

### BEFORE THE MEETING

Decide if you need helpers (and if you do, how to use them), gather necessary supplies and review the activity.

### SETTING

The community in which the participants live

### MATERIALS

- Paper
- Pens or pencils
- “Community Component Ideas” handout (one per person)
- An adventurous spirit!

### TIME

Varies

# ACTIVITY

## COMMUNITY INTERVIEWS\*

### Procedure

1. Read aloud or paraphrase the following information:

*"Now that you know about different community components, it's time to learn more about where you live by talking to people who are associated with these components. You're going to plan, conduct and reflect on a series of interviews with different members of our community. But we won't start the interviews until you're confident that you're ready."*

2. Have the participants break into the community component groups they worked in during the "Community Components" activity. Everyone should be paired off. If individuals previously worked alone, put those with similar interests together in groups of two.
3. Have the pairs brainstorm by writing ideas on a piece of newsprint. Then they should select who – or what – they'd be interested in knowing more about in the community.
4. Once this is done, bring the entire group back into a large circle. Tape the ideas on the wall. Talk about which people or organizations would be best to interview, then assign one interview subject to each pair.
5. Team members can practice the steps in the "Telephone Procedure Role Play" handout. Ask a volunteer to demonstrate to the group how this is done. Each pair should then practice separately until they're comfortable with the procedure.
6. Review how to look up resources in the telephone book. Then have team members call the person or agency assigned to them and request an interview. (The calls can be placed from the meeting site or from their homes.)

### PURPOSE

To help participants get to know their community better by connecting them with those who can teach them more about where they live

### BEFORE THE MEETING

Decide if you need helpers (and if you do, how to use them), gather necessary supplies and review the activity.

### SETTING

A large room and various locations in the community

### MATERIALS

- Newsprint or other large paper
- Markers
- Paper
- Pens or pencils
- Tape
- "Telephone Procedure Role Play" handout (one per person)
- "Interview Role Play" handout (one per person)
- "Community Interview Record Sheet" (one per person)

### TIME

Two or three meetings (or more, if needed)

\* Adapted with permission from *Citizenship: My Community 4-H Member Guide Unit 4* (PB1224) and *Citizenship: More About My Community 4-H Member Guide Unit 5* (PB1218), by the University of Tennessee Agricultural Extension Service and the Southern Regional 4-H Citizenship Literature Committee.



# ACTIVITY, CONTINUED

## COMMUNITY INTERVIEWS\*

# Our Communities, Our Lives

### Procedure, cont'd.

7. Once the interviews are scheduled, read aloud or paraphrase the following to the teams:

*"Now that the interviews are set up, let's talk about how to conduct an actual interview. Because you're working in pairs, you'll be able to help each other out if things get difficult. That's unlikely to happen if you practice what you're going to ask. Keep in mind that what's most important to a successful interview is really listening to what you're being told."*

8. Review the "Interview Role Play" handout with everyone, using the same procedure you did for the "Telephone Procedure Role Play" handout. Pass out the "Interview Role Play" handout for team members to use at the actual interviews.
9. Read aloud or paraphrase the following information:

*"One of the best ways to feel comfortable with the interviewing process is by practicing on your parents or even me, first. The interview sheets give a good, basic outline to follow once you're there. But prepare some of your own questions that specifically address who you're going to talk to. Either tape record or write down, the person's comments so you can report back to us at the next meeting."*

### Talking It Over

Once the interviews are completed and you get back together, talk about the experience. Have someone record the participants' responses on a piece of newsprint. Ask the following questions:

1. What are some general impressions you received from the people you interviewed about our community?
2. Can you report what some saw as the strengths and weaknesses of our community?
3. What were some suggested solutions to problems?

After the group members discuss the questions, have the teams take turns reporting their findings to the entire group.

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## ACTIVITY, CONTINUED

## COMMUNITY INTERVIEWS\*

### Try This, Too

- Consider holding a special meeting for these presentations.
- For more information on developing communications skills, see the *Communications Toolkit: Fun Skill-Building Activities to Do With Kids* (4-H 1560, 4-H Youth Development, Michigan State University Extension, 2000). The toolkit is available through Michigan county Extension offices.

Our Communities, Our Lives

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# HANDOUT

## TELEPHONE PROCEDURE ROLE PLAY\*

For many people, it's not easy to call a stranger. But if you've prepared in advance, it seems less difficult. The only way to do this is by practicing. Before you make that call, practice with your interview partner using the script below. Continue to practice until you feel comfortable. Your practice calls might sound something like this:

**Caller:** Hello, my name is \_\_\_\_\_ and I represent a local community-service learning group called \_\_\_\_\_. We're conducting an interview project in the community and I'd like to interview you about your role in our community.

**Interviewee:** That sounds like something I'd like to do.

**Caller:** When would be a good time for us to meet?

**Interviewee:** How about next Tuesday after school?

**Caller:** That would be great. I'll see you next Tuesday after school (set a specific time) at your office. Is this your correct address\_\_\_\_\_?

**Interviewee:** Yes, that's right. I'll see you Tuesday.

### TELEPHONE TIPS

- Identify yourself immediately.
- Speak slowly and clearly.
- Never chew gum or eat while talking on the telephone.
- Make sure you have a piece of paper and pen handy to jot down information. Write down the time and place so you won't forget.
- Be patient. It can take more than one phone call to connect with the right person.

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# HANDOUT

## INTERVIEW ROLE PLAY\*

An interview can be one of the most stressful things you do, whether you're being interviewed for a job or conducting an interview yourself. But interviews can be a fun way to find out more about something that interests you by talking with an expert!

Practice is all you need in order to do a good job and to feel comfortable doing it.

Consider the following before you go out to do the interview:

- 1. Appearance:** Approach this the way you would a job interview. That means dressing up (no jeans or T-shirts!). You should be neat and clean (hair combed, nails trimmed, etc).
- 2. Communication Skills:** Ask your questions clearly and in an organized manner. Listen carefully to what's said. Don't be so intent on asking your next question that you don't hear what you're being told. You might miss some vital information that way! Also, speak distinctly and with confidence.
- 3. Attitude:** Greet the interviewee with a warm smile and handshake when introducing yourself. Try to be sincerely interested in the interviewee. Don't make inappropriate comments or jokes.
- 4. Punctuality:** It's best to arrive at the interview site at least 10 minutes early to give yourself a little time to collect your thoughts. Sit calmly – and properly – while waiting. Don't chew gum or bite your nails.
- 5. Record:** Take a notebook and pen with you to the interview. Write down what's said. You might even want to bring a tape recorder (that you've tested before the interview). If you do this, ask for permission before you begin recording.
- 6. Questions:** Ask the right questions. The idea is to gather information. The best way to do that is by asking open-ended questions that require more than "yes" or "no" answers. A good way to start an open-ended questions is by saying, "Can you tell me about...?" Closed-ended questions can usually be answered with a "yes" or "no." Other "closed-ended" questions include "What's your name?" and "What's your title?"

### SAMPLE OPEN-ENDED QUESTIONS

- What sorts of things do you find really interesting about our community?
- What can you tell me about your role in the community?
- Do you see areas in our community that could use some improvement or assistance?

### WHEN THE INTERVIEW IS OVER

- Thank the person by name.
- Shake hands and leave.
- Send a thank-you note within a week.

Our Communities, Our Lives

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## INTERVIEW ROLE PLAY\*

- 7. Creativity:** Use the “Community Interview Record” sheet, but don’t be timid about asking your own questions. Think about it beforehand and write down some of your own questions to ask.
- 8. More Questions:** Some people are talkers and some aren’t. Bring extra questions so that if the interview goes too quickly and you’re not sure you have all the information you need, you’re prepared.

Our Communities, Our Lives

\* Adapted with permission from  
*Citizenship: My Community 4-H Member Guide Unit 4* (PB1224) and *Citizenship: More About My Community 4-H Member Guide Unit 5* (PB1218), by the University of Tennessee Agricultural Extension Service and the Southern Regional 4-H Citizenship Literature Committee.



# HANDOUT

## COMMUNITY INTERVIEW RECORD SHEET\*

**Community Component:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Name of Organization:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Person Interviewed:** \_\_\_\_\_

- 1.** What's the purpose of your organization or agency?
  
- 2.** What do you do in your position?
  
- 3.** Can you tell me how you got your position and what the requirements were?
  
  
- 4.** What do you think are the strengths of our community?
  
  
- 5.** From your perspective, what are some of the problems or issues in our community?
  
  
- 6.** How do these problems affect other parts of the community?
  
  
- 7.** What do you see as possible solutions to these problems?
  
  
- 8.** What could someone like me do to help solve these problems?

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