



Kids' Community

4-H Youth Solve a Problem With Common Sense

(NAPSA)—Sometimes, the best solution for a problem is simply better awareness and common sense. That's what two 4-H members in California, Brandon Emerson and Nakia Wheeler, learned during a project to find how to make 4-H activities more accessible to youth with disabilities.

Even though 4-H is open to all young people across America, Nakia and Brandon discovered that there is a need for better understanding and training of 4-H leaders and volunteers in order to include more children with disabilities within 4-H youth development programs.

Their solution was to research and write, "Youth With Special Needs Leaders Handbook: Making 4-H More Accessible." The California Youth Development Program and The Regents of the University of California are the project's underwriters.

"We approached it from a positive attitude," they said. "Let's see how we can do this to make it work." And, that positive approach is underscored throughout the 16-page handbook that Brandon and Nakia created.

"Many organizations, like 4-H, are well-meaning and sincerely want to be open to youth with disabilities," Brandon says. "It's just that sometimes they need a little additional understanding." The handbook helps.

The handbook is a guide for additional understanding and increasing awareness in working with people with disabilities. Thorough with definitions, techniques and policies, Brandon and Nakia thoughtfully crafted the handbook to aid not only youth with special needs, but also those who work closely with them every day. The



book heightens awareness and promotes using common sense through a brief overview of disabilities and alternatives to correct misuse of language and mistreatment of people with disabilities.

Highlighting a positive attitude throughout the handbook are tips for working with disabled people, sections on specific disabilities and advice on how to become better educated.

"As 4-H members, volunteers and staff, we must work to increase our understanding of the disabled," they say. Brandon and Nakia encourage this attitude throughout the handbook and throughout the 4-H system. With the help of the new handbook, more disabled youth will now be able to partake in 4-H programs.

There are seven million kids in 4-H, a community of young people across America who are learning leadership, citizenship and life skills.

To learn about 4-H youth development clubs and programs, visit 4HUSA.org (www.4husa.org). You may find your own community of friends in the 4-H adventure.