



## Oklahoma 4-H Youth Development Program

# Building Leaders for Tomorrow

Instilling and developing leadership capabilities in youth and adults.

### ACTIVITY 4: “Urgent Telegrams”

**AGE LEVEL** - Advanced

**CONCEPT OR SKILL** – Civic Involvement/Youth Governance  
– Identify needs in the community, environment, organization or individual. Take action for improving social needs by utilize the laws and the democratic process.

**LIFE SKILL(S)** – **Heart** – Concern for Others, Empathy

**Hands** – Community Service Volunteering, Contribution to Group Effort

**Head** – Wise Use of Resources, Service Learning, Resiliency, Problem Solving

**BEHAVIORAL INDICATOR** – Are developing community consciousness. Enjoy discussions and debates on social and economic problems

#### THINGS TO KNOW:

The youth of today are the leaders of tomorrow. 4-H volunteers assist teens in understanding the importance and significance of becoming a responsible citizen. Responsible citizens are those who are compassionate towards others, are concerned with current issues and events and take positive action to help foster change in order to better their communities. By giving youth the opportunity to explore issues they become empowered, passionate and contributing toward a common goal/issue. Youth learn about the power of the individual voice, as well as the unification of many voices with a common message. Empowering them to make choices and act on those choices builds skills which make them concerned and responsible adults.

This activity provides a simple means by which students can identify and clearly state something that is important to them. The written expression of urgency will ideally prompt youth to take further action concerning their statement.



**Materials Needed:** Blank Western Union telegrams, pens, dictionaries and thesauruses.

**Do:** Give each individual a blank Western Union telegram form. Ask the members of the group to choose a real person and write a telegram to that person beginning with the words: “I urge you to...” The message is to consist of 15 words or less. Limiting the number of words is a good exercise in being concise

in choosing words to communicate a message. Make sure everyone takes responsibility for their urgent statement by signing his/her name to the telegram. “I urge telegrams” can be sent to a politician, a local/county/state officials, school board, fair board, someone in the entertainment or the sports world or even to a relative or friend. In each case, the telegram should reflect something the sender feels is important, something he/she values and feels deserves attention. If they are comfortable, have each member read their telegram to the group. You may have to remind the group each individual is entitled to their own opinion and the exercise is not intended to become a debate. This exercise may generate some interesting discussion which may in turn lead to action by an individual or the group.

**Reflect:** 1) Why did you choose the individual or topic for your telegram? 2) What was it like to have a limitation on the number of words? How did you overcome the challenge? 3) Which messages had the greatest written impact? Why? 4) What qualities would have helped develop a message with greater impact?

**Apply:** This activity is practice in communication and activism. 1) What does it mean to be an informed and responsible citizen? If their issue is political or social (rather than personal or familial) remind them to think about referencing past and present laws or research so their message has increased impact. 2) Did any of the telegrams sound so urgent that the group agrees the issue needs immediate attention? How could this group begin the process of bringing about a change?