

Dear 4-H Leaders, Educators, and Community Leaders,

The United States is one of the most culturally diverse countries in the world and its population is becoming more varied each year. To function effectively in society and to get the most out of life, young people must learn to live harmoniously with people of different cultures and beliefs. *Seeing i2i: Adventures in Diversity and Cultural Awareness*, is a research-based 4-H Curriculum developed in Nebraska. It is designed to help youth, ages 11-14, develop skills associated with cultural competence. Basic elements of social competence involve:

- Engaging in self-reflection (e.g., learning about your own cultural background and heritage; exploring your own thinking and biases)
- Acquiring cultural knowledge (assessing what it is you know and what you don't know about cultures other than your own)
- Developing attitudes and beliefs that lead to valuing your own culture and the cultures of other people (exploring your beliefs about yourself and your beliefs about others)
- Gaining culturally relevant skills and behaviors (such as perspective-taking, empathy, and interaction skills)
- Applying knowledge and skills in day-to-day life

As you read the Leader's Guide and the Participant's Manual, you will see that the curriculum is organized around these five competence areas. Ultimately, *Seeing i2i* helps young people explore their place in the community and the place of others, both similar and different from themselves. Some of the important messages conveyed in the program include:

- I am a valuable member of my community; others are too.
- People have much in common.
- People are not alike in every way. Our differences make us unique and enrich our lives.
- We have much to learn from one another.
- There are things we can do to better understand one another and to live together productively.

At one time, educators believed that the best way to achieve social harmony was to focus solely on the notion that 'people are all the same,' disregarding individual differences. That approach ignored the realities of human development. Globally, children observe similarities and differences among people early in life. Before they are three years old, children notice people's physical features and begin to compare these with their own. In early childhood, children focus on visible traits such as those related to gender, race, language, and dress. However, by middle childhood, they become aware of more subtle cultural attributes such as customs, ideas and beliefs. As a result, children this age are keenly interested in similarities and differences among people and mature enough to explore both external and internal expressions of culture and human diversity. This developmental awareness makes the 4-H years a perfect time to explore the five elements of social competence.

Seeing i2i: Adventures in Diversity and Cultural Awareness has been designed to incorporate the latest findings regarding youth development, ethnic identity development and effective educational programming. Researchers, curriculum designers, community leaders and families have reviewed the program's structure and content. It is flexible, meaning it can be used in a variety of settings including schools, 4-H clubs, camps, after-school environments, and other

youth-focused programs. It has enough structure to guide leaders and participants, but is not so rigid as to preclude adaptations to individual groups and programs.

I am delighted that the guide, *Seeing i2i: Adventures in Diversity and Cultural Awareness* is now available for use in youth-oriented programs nation-wide. It is a valuable resource that tackles an important and sometimes daunting topic with sensitivity. It is neither prescriptive nor heavy handed. It is insightful and useful, timely and relevant.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Marjorie Kostelnik". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Marjorie Kostelnik, Ph. D.
Dean
College of Education and Human Sciences