Life Skills:
Communication, Leadership

What to Do:
Share family traditions with other group members

Measuring Success:
Youths will identify similarities and differences in the way group members celebrate family holidays.

Audience:
4th – 12th grades

Time Involved:
30 - 60 minutes

Group Size:
3 - 15

Preparation and Materials
Copies of the lesson work sheet for each group
Copies of the list of special occasions

Introduction
How does your family celebrate different occasions like birthdays, Thanksgiving, Independence Day? What do you do that is special?

The Activity
Let's break up into groups of two to four people. I'd like each group to pick one of the special occasions from the list. (Distribute work sheet.) Use the work sheet to discuss and record how you celebrate that occasion. I'll give you about 10 minutes. (After 10 minutes, have each group report.)

Reflect/Discuss
Share What You Did
How did your group work together to answer the questions?
Were some of your answers different?

Tell What's Important
Describe similarities in the way your families celebrate.
Describe differences in the way your families celebrate.
Generalize to Your Life
Describe how your family is important to you.
Describe how you are important to your family.

Apply What You Learned
How can you, as a member of your family, make contributions that will create a stronger family? How do stronger families contribute to a stronger community and nation?

More Challenges
- Assemble a photo album, a scrapbook, an exhibit or a kit (box) that tells about one special occasion for your family.
- Invite a speaker from a culture other than your own to discuss family traditions.
- Use the Web to investigate how others around the world celebrate special events.
- Interview older family or community members to learn how family celebrations have changed over time.
Your Family Traditions

Special Occasions:

• New Year's Day is celebrated January 1st in the United States. The celebration of the new year is the oldest of all holidays. It was first observed in ancient Babylon about 4,000 years ago. In the years around 2000 B.C., the Babylonian New Year began with the first New Moon (actually the first visible crescent) after the Vernal Equinox (first day of spring). Today, we use this day to mark the coming of a new year.

• Ramadan is the ninth month of the Muslim calendar. It is during this month that Muslims observe the Fast of Ramadan. Lasting for the entire month, Muslims fast during the daylight hours and in the evening eat small meals and visit with friends and family. It is a time of worship and contemplation, a time to strengthen family and community ties. Depending on the Muslim calendar, it can be celebrated in November, December, January or February, July or August.

• Martin Luther King Day is a celebration of the life and accomplishments of civil rights leader Dr. Martin Luther King. It is a time for people in the United States to remember the injustices that Dr. King fought against as well as his fight for the freedom, equality and the dignity of all races and peoples. It is celebrated the third Monday of January.

• Purim is the most festive of Jewish holidays, a time of prizes, noisemakers, costumes and treats. The Festival of Purim commemorates a major victory over oppression and is recounted in the Megillah, the scroll of the story of Ester. Purim takes place on the 14th and 15th days of Adar, the 12th month of the Jewish calendar.

• Easter is the day Christians celebrate the resurrection of Jesus Christ. It's held on a Sunday in March or April. It is a time to welcome spring and hold springtime festivals, hide eggs, wear new suits and new dresses, and gather with friends and family.

• Memorial Day was originally called "Decoration Day.” It is celebrated on the last Monday of May and is a time for people in the United States to remember those who have died in military service for our country.

• Independence Day celebrates the birthday of the United States of America, founded on July 4, 1776, with the signing of the Declaration of Independence. It's a day to enjoy patriotic music, fireworks displays and apple pie.

• Labor Day began more than 100 years ago. The idea came from labor unions in the United States and is a tribute to working people's contributions to the United States and its economy. Labor Day is a vacation day and a good-bye to summer. It is celebrated on the first Monday in September.

• Thanksgiving Day, which dates back to the colonial days, is a time for people in the United States to offer thanks. Often people gather with family and friends around a holiday meal. The meal traditionally includes turkey, stuffing and pumpkin pie. It is celebrated the fourth Thursday of November.
• Christmas, celebrated on December 25th, is a time for Christians to celebrate the birth of Jesus Christ. It is a time for families, fun and festivities! It’s also a time of family gatherings, holiday meals, gift-giving, twinkling lights, Santa, stars and singing carolers.

• Kwanzaa is a seven-day festival celebrating the African American people, their culture and their history. It is a time of celebration, community gathering and reflection. Kwanzaa begins on December 26th and continues until New Year’s Day.

• Hunakah or Chanukah, the Festival of Lights, is a Jewish celebration of the victory of the Maccabees and the rededication of the Jerusalem Temple. It also commemorates the miracle of the oil that burned for eight days. It's celebrated the 24th night of the Jewish month of Kislev (Hebrew calendar) in December.

• Wedding

• Birthday

• Family Reunion

• Occasion of Your Choice.

See work sheet on next page.