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**The Life of the Honey bee**

**K-adult**

**I have been doing this fun activity for over 15 years with groups learning about honey bees. It works well with any age group. -Becky Griffin**

**Introduction:** As female honey bees mature through their lifetime they age through several roles that benefit the hive – bee chores. Young people usually have chores like emptying the trash or putting away their clothes. As they age their chores become more involved like cleaning up the kitchen or babysitting their siblings. Female honey bees are similar. The exception is the queen bee. There is only one queen bee in each hive and her only job is to lay eggs.

During this activity participants will learn about honey bee chores as they dress as each role.

**Supplies Needed** (many can be made or purchased at a dollar store):

Play Crown

Easter eggs in a basket

Dust pan and broom

Nurses cap

Baby bottle

Paper fan

Black cloth

Small play sword

Pom-pom craft balls in a basket

Crazy straw

Call students up one at a time and hand them the bee role props.

**The Queen Bee – place a play crown on top of the student’s head and hand them the Easter eggs.** There is only one Queen Bee in a hive. Her main job is laying eggs to ensure that the hive is always full of bees. Other bees care for her, feeding and grooming her, so that she can concentrate on her job. She also produces a pheromone which spreads through the hive and assures the other bees that everything is well in the hive.

**Cleaning the hive cells – hand the student the small dust pan and broom**. The first job of a newly emerged bee is to clean out her cell and any around her that need cleaning. The clean cells are important for re-use.

**Taking care of the young larvae (Nurse bee) – put a nurse’s cap on the student’s head and hand them a bottle**. Nurse bees feed the bee larvae honey and pollen before the larvae cells are capped.

**Fanning the hive – hand the student a paper fan**. It is important for bees to use their wings to fan the hive to keep it cool in the summer. Bees also fan cells of nectar, lowering the moisture content of the nectar helping make it into honey.

**Undertaker bees – give a piece of black cloth to a student to tie on their arm as a mourning band.** Undertaker bees have the job of removing dead bees from the hive. This is important in keeping the hive clean and free of disease.

**Guarding the hive – hand the student a small play sword.** The guard bees stand just outside the hive and check on bees as they enter the hive. If they don’t have the pheromone of the hive the guard bees will deny entry. Guard bees will attack an intruder and can also sound an alarm, another pheromone, to alert the bees that there is an attack on the hive.

**Foraging for pollen – hand the student a basket of colored pom-poms.** This is the first stage of a female honey bee’s life where she leaves the hive. The bee forages for pollen, flying up to 3-5 miles looking for a good source. Pollen isn’t always yellow. It can also be orange, green, purple, white and even red. The bee collects the pollen and moves it to her pollen baskets, called corbicula, located on her back legs. When the bee returns to the hive, the guard bees let her inside and the pollen is placed in a hive cell.

**Foraging for nectar – hand the student a crazy straw**. The final job in a bee’s life is to forage for nectar. She uses her tongue to lap up the nectar and store it in her honey stomach. She brings the nectar back to the hive where it is placed in a hive cell. The fanning bees work on evaporating moisture from the nectar to turn it into honey.

****Notes: The average honey bee lives about six weeks. The most common cause of death is that their wings wear out. Flying back and forth from flower to hive puts a strain on delicate wings. Male honey bees are called drones and their only job is to leave the hive to mate with a queen from another hive.