

Season's Greeting Cards for Children with Speech Delays

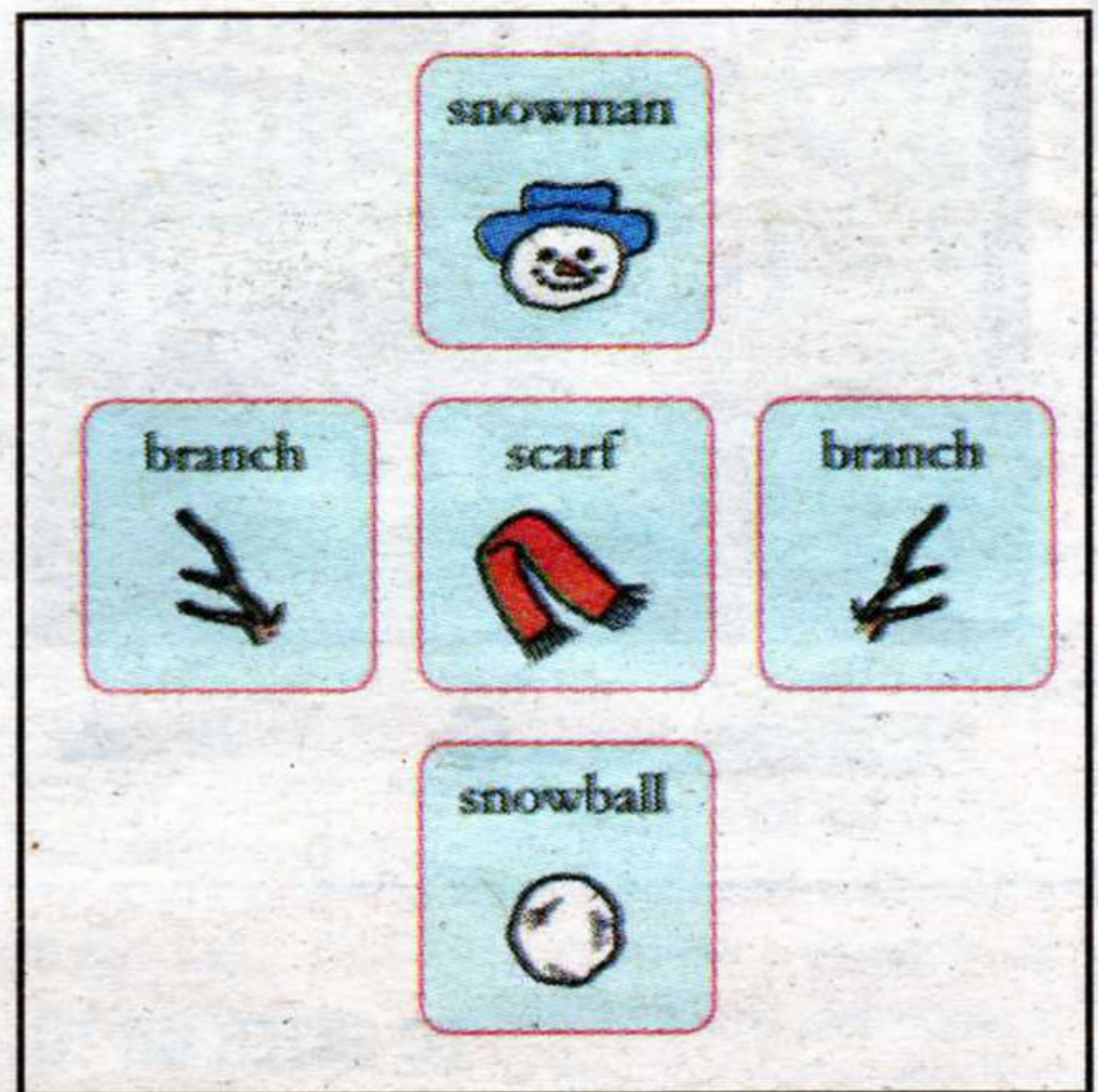
Shortly after giving birth to her son Graham, Randi Sargent knew that life would be slightly different. Graham was born with cerebral palsy, thus necessitating a variety of lifestyle changes for the family, as cerebral palsy carries with it a variety of physical challenges—one of which is often a difficulty or delay in speech.

Tackling her son's speech delay, Sargent began researching best approaches to give her son an active voice. Her efforts led her to using Mayer-Johnson's Picture Communication Symbols™, recognized worldwide as a communication system leveraging simple visual symbols in place of spoken words.

After using picture symbols at home and at school, Randi derived a new business idea — designing note cards and gifts picture symbols to promote awareness for children with speech challenges. In 2002, Sargent opened the doors to her new venture — Giving Greetings— and today retails galleries of note cards, holiday cards, notepads, and gifts through her website — all featuring picture symbols licensed from the Mayer-Johnson company.

"For children with speech delays due to developmental disabilities including autism, the inability to effectively communicate choices or feelings can often lead to tantrums, acting out and overtly challenging behaviors making parenting even more stressful," said Sargent. "Visual supports or pictures assist children in becoming more active participants at home, school and within the community, while also helping to build self-esteem and independence."

Special for the holidays, Sargent has designed a line of winter-themed cards for gift-giving or to send to your holiday card list— all of which promote awareness and acceptance of children with



communication challenges. Sold under the name Symbolic Sentiments™, the owner-crafted note cards also carry a philanthropic benefit as up to 20% of all proceeds from the sale of Symbolic Sentiments cards are donated to the Federation for Children with Special Needs, a Boston-based organization. In light of recent statewide budget cuts, purchasing and sending holiday greeting cards from Giving Greetings benefits several Massachusetts charities—a nice incentive for those seeking a way to 'give back' this year.

Source: www.givinggreetings.com.

Wendy Bulawa Agudelo is a mother of three from North Andover. She is an avid supporter of the special needs community and serves as P&K's special needs liaison.