



WORKING TOGETHER To Make A Difference

By Carrie Lennox, Jefferson County Parks & Rec. and Diana Hughes, PhD.

How can private gym clubs work together with local schools, rec programs, YMCA's, and other groups in order to coordinate efforts to provide fun and safe physical activity to kids of all ages and abilities – basically to support the activity of gymnastics which hopefully leads children into the sport of gymnastics?

Outreach programs, like the one described in this article, can go a long way to increase enrollment for gymnastics clubs that make the effort, so it can be a win-win situation for all involved. In communities large and small, there are often several options for families to provide physical enrichment to their youth. These programs are commonly offered by private or public entities, including Parks and Recreation programs, YMCAs, school districts, churches, private gym programs, and others. These programs share the

common goal of getting and keeping kids active, but many differ in how they do it.



Set up in the gymnasium

A recent cooperative effort among several organizations resulted in a two-day event at Blue Heron Middle School in Port Townsend, Wash. Activities were planned by one main coordinator and were geared toward providing

students, of all different skill levels, an opportunity to succeed. Recreation and YMCA staff, along with physical education teachers, were assigned stations with simple activities and a list of a various challenges. There were several run-and-jump stations using a combination of bouncy equipment and mats. Jr. Bars were set up with rings attached, to create several

Continued on pg. 18



WORKING TOGETHER To Make A Difference

pull-up stations and beams and slacklines were set up for several balance stations.

Even the instructors with little or no experience, working with groups on this type of equipment, commented on the ease of helping kids to learn and grow. The physical education teachers were ecstatic as they noticed students, who are typically inactive in class, participate with excitement.

Feedback from students in the following days included:

- "That was the best PE class we've ever had!"
- "I did pull ups for the first time ever!"
- "When can we do that again??"

These comments came from fourth through eighth grade students who are in a crucial time of developing identity and positive self-esteem. The two-day event was considered a great success for all – students, teachers and program coordinators. It provided a terrific model for developing more events like it in the future. So, think about reaching out to your local Recreation Center, Community Center, YMCA or school to see if you can organize an event like this one in your community. The kids will benefit, and your enrollment can benefit, too. After having experienced an event like this, many children will look to their local gymnastics club for similar activities and just may sign up for a birthday party or even a class or two.



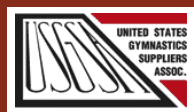
Pull-Up Stations



Run-and-Jump Stations



Since it was a two-day event, equipment was stored overnight in a corner in the gym.



Industry members who support your industry.
The United States Gymnastics Supplier Association proudly supports Industry Education.