Strength Stations! (20 minutes)

Items needed for this activity:
- Activity Station Signs (provided)
- About 10 objects of differing shapes and sizes for members to jump over (Choose age-appropriate objects, such as cones, buckets, or boxes; not to exceed 12 inches tall.)

Activity set up:
- Clear an area large enough for four activity stations – crab walking, bounding, push-ups, and flutter kicking. Label each station with a sign.
- For the bounding station, place the 10 objects in a circle, with enough room between them that members can jump over each object while moving around the circle.

Step 1: Information to share with club members (5 minutes)
Did you know our bodies have over 600 muscles? They are all made up of an elastic material almost like that of a rubber band. Some of our muscles we control, but some work without us even thinking about them. We have three types of muscles in our bodies. The first is called smooth muscle. These muscles are involuntary, meaning we can’t control them. The muscles that move the food we eat through our body are smooth muscles. So are the ones that help us to breathe. The second type of muscle is called cardiac muscle, which is found in our hearts. These muscles are very strong and work to pump blood throughout the body. Cardiac muscle is also involuntary. The third type of muscle is called skeletal muscle. These muscles we can control. Skeletal muscle is found all over our body – in our arms, legs, hands, feet, fingers, toes, face, back, and neck. I want you to roll your head around in a circle. You were just using the skeletal muscles of your back and neck! Now, everyone put on a big smile. You were just using your facial skeletal muscles. When you do things like kick a soccer ball, swing a baseball bat, or run in P.E. class, you are using skeletal muscles!

In order to keep these skeletal muscles strong and healthy, we need to eat the right foods and exercise. One important nutrient for having healthy muscles is protein. In what types of food is protein found? (Wait for responses). That’s right! Foods like meat, beans, eggs, poultry, cheese, fish, and nuts give us the protein that we need. Protein is also needed for use by all of our body’s cells – not just muscles.

Another way to keep our muscles healthy is by getting enough regular physical activity. Exercises in which we use our muscles, such as push-ups,
bike-riding, running, and stair-climbing, all help to strengthen our muscles and make them more powerful. Stronger muscles can allow us to throw or kick a ball further and run or swim faster!

(Source: www.kidshealth.org)

**Step 2: Group Activity 1 (15 minutes)**

Today we are going to explore a few different muscle-strengthening activities. We are going to have four different stations so that you can all practice the activities. Two of them will strengthen your arms, and two will strengthen your legs.

Before we start, I will explain and show you a demonstration of each activity. The first one is the crab walk. Maybe some of you have done this in gym class. The crab walk is good for your back, arms, and shoulders. Can I have a volunteer to demonstrate the crab walk? (Ask for volunteer and have him/her demonstrate). For the crab walk, you want to have your body supported by your legs and your arms. You should be facing the ceiling.

Next, you will do what we call flutter kicking. Can I have another demonstrator? For flutter kicks, you will lie on your back with your hands underneath the small of your back. Slowly kick your legs up and down, but don’t let them touch the floor at all!

The third exercise is the push-up. Can someone demonstrate a push-up for us? You can either put your toes or your knees on the floor. Try to keep your body in a straight line from your shoulders to your ankles or knees. Slowly bend your elbows and go down, then straighten your arms and come back up.

The last exercise will be bounding. We did some bounding last month when we jumped with both feet. For this station, I have set out some objects in a circle. You will bound – that means to jump with both feet – over each object, one at a time. This activity will strengthen your legs and test your balance.

Now, let’s all divide up into four groups. (Divide members into four groups with equal numbers. Pick which groups will start at which stations). Now we are all at our starting stations. We will practice this activity for three minutes, and when I say “Move!” your group will move to the next station. Make sure you spread out at your station because we want everyone up and moving at the same time. (Inform members of the order of the stations, according to provided signs).

(Start everyone off at their first station. After three minutes, say “Move!” Repeat until members have done all four stations).

Great job everybody! You have worked really hard to strengthen your muscles today. These activities are ones you can do anytime. Next time you are on the computer or watching television, try to take a “time out” to do a couple of these exercises.

**Get Up & Move!**