



Springfield-Greene County Park and Recreation

Springfield, Missouri

Intensive Site

“We had a girl that came to the Media-Smart Youth. She would not eat anything. When she came to the Friday club program they encouraged her to try fruits and vegetables. She started eating them. By the end of the program she loved it! Her dad picked her up and told me that she now makes him buy fruit and vegetables every week. Thank you for helping her eat better. She made a big turnaround.”

Description

The State Team of Springfield-Greene County Park and Recreation has a strong history of community-based obesity prevention efforts. It was a Hearts N’ Parks Magnet Center for three years, is a 21st Century Learning Center, and has successfully implemented the Community Learning in Centers for Kids (C.L.I.C.K.) program—a free after-school program designed to expose students to a variety of experiences, energize their interests, and boost their academic performance. Springfield-Greene was able to augment its efforts by adding **We Can!** to its school year programs at five sites, as well as an additional five sites during its summer programming. In addition to implementing the youth and adult education programs, Springfield-Greene promoted **We Can!** at numerous, well-attended community events and created several strong partnerships in its community.

Key Site Successes:

- Media-Smart Youth Program participation and final projects.
- Springfield-Greene found a great opportunity to distribute **We Can!** materials and healthy food samples to the community at the city’s annual *Fire Fall* event, which regularly draws over 60,000 attendees.

Community Outreach

Springfield-Greene connected the **We Can!** program into pre-existing and successful outreach programs at the local and state level. The site participated in four community events that attracted more than 70,000 community members, generated local media coverage, and fostered partnerships with a variety of organizations in the community.

Community Events

Fire Fall (June 2005 and June 2006). Springfield-Greene County Parks and Recreation sponsors this city-wide event each year that attracts over 60,000 attendees to celebrate Independence Day in style. The event includes vendors, live bands, and celebrity appearances. Vendors set up booths to sell or distribute their materials. The site set up a **We Can!** booth to distribute nutritional information to the community about healthy living and eating, including food samples. Springfield-Greene participated in this event again in 2006, which was attended by more than 70,000 people.

Building Blocks for Healthy Youths (August 2005). Community partnerships of the Ozarks sponsored this event to promote healthy youth activities to over 400 attendees. Children from the YMCA, Boys and Girls Club, and Springfield-Greene County Parks' day camp programs enjoyed activities such as parachutes, water games, broom ball, relay races, Frisbee tossing, and others. Springfield-Greene was able to promote **We Can!** to community members with materials and free, nutritious smoothies, donated by its partner, Smoothie King.

Lights On (October 2005). This national event, sponsored by J.C. Penney, celebrates after-school programs. The Springfield-Greene County Parks worked with the YMCA, the Boys and Girls Club, and some of its **We Can!** partners for this big event at which 250 students and parents enjoyed food tasting, carnival games, and live performances. Each family received nutrition information, community resource brochures, and free milk and cheese donated by Springfield-Greene's partner, Highland Dairy.

Parenting Partnerships Family Festival (March 2006). Practical Parenting Partnerships is a program intended to get parents involved in schools and their children's learning and activities. Springfield-Greene participates in the weekend-long event every year that attracts around 450 participants from across the state of Missouri. The event is organized by the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education and includes various workshops. Springfield-Greene was invited to present a workshop to parents, educators, and health professionals in attendance. During the C.L.I.C.K. and **We Can!** workshops, site organizers distributed **We Can!** brochures, program information, food samples, and fun activities. For example, parents were able to participate in an elbow tag game where children partnered with their parents. Springfield-Greene was able to promote many of the **We Can!** messages such as energy balance, portion size, increasing healthy food choices, reducing high fat and low-nutrient food choices, increasing physical activity, and reducing screen time.

Media Outreach

Springfield-Greene received local television coverage at its Building Blocks for Healthy Youth event, and it also publicized its programming, including **We Can!**, in its C.L.I.C.K. flier and calendar.

Partnerships

Springfield-Greene was able to recruit 12 partners to support its **We Can!** activities. Springfield-Greene's strong reputation earned funding from **Caring Communities**, a multi-agency nonprofit. The group funded some of the **We Can!** activities, as well as scholarships for youths to participate in the activities. Springfield-Greene contributes to its partnership with Caring Communities by participating in its block party, at which the site performs CATCH Kids Club activities. Many of its partners got involved with the site's community events, including **Community Partnership of the Ozarks** with volunteers and funding to support the program, **Smoothie King** for nutritious smoothies, **Jordan Valley Ice Park** for ice skating, **D.A.R.E.** for

drug education, **Greene County Sheriff Department** for stranger awareness, **Springfield Police Department** for bicycle safety, and **Cox Medical Center** for donated supplies. The **YMCA** works with the site each year to organize the Lights On event and provided funding, facilities, and volunteer support. The **Boys and Girls Club** provided volunteers, program organization, and support with fundraising. **Highland Dairy** works with Springfield-Greene to organize the Lights On event each year, and supplies milk and cheese.

Parent and Youth Curricula

We Can! Energize Our Families: Curriculum for Parents and Caregivers

Springfield-Greene utilized elements of the six-lesson *We Can!* Parent Curriculum—developed by *We Can!* specifically for parents and caregivers—during various activities. Another program, Nifty Nights, promoted the *We Can!* Parent Curriculum and presented the information to parents who like to do the activities with their kids. The site also incorporated the nutrition and recreation parts of the curriculum into some of its health fairs. No data were available for analysis.

CATCH Kids Club

Springfield-Greene implemented the CATCH Kids Club Curriculum—designed for children in grades K–5 in after-school or summer-care settings to encourage healthier dietary and physical activity behaviors—five times at its summer day camp. The kids met five days a week and enjoyed the program’s physical activities, and especially enjoyed the nutrition portion, getting samples of food and learning about new food. In all, 24 children consisting of 13 girls and 11 boys received nutrition lessons, participated in physical activities, and learned recipes for making healthy snacks.

An analysis of 24 respondent surveys found statistically significant increases in **food knowledge; food attitudes: self-efficacy, intentions to reduce fat, intentions to drink skim milk; physical activity attitudes**, and decreased **screen time behaviors: weekday TV viewing**. At the completion of the program, youths had increased knowledge of healthy eating habits including identifying healthy food choices, and reported more positive attitudes towards healthy eating including increased intention to reduce intake of higher-fat foods and to drink low fat or skim milk instead of whole milk. Youths also said they were more likely to engage in physically active behavior and had decreased their television viewing during the week. Although not statistically significant, the analysis also suggested positive movement toward *We Can!* objectives related to **healthy eating behaviors: reading labels** and decreasing **screen time behaviors: weekend TV viewing and weekday video gaming**.

CATCH Curriculum Demographic Characteristics

Characteristics	% (n)	Characteristics	% (n)	Characteristics	% (n)
Gender		Grade		Age	
Males	46 (11)	Third	29 (7)	8	8 (2)
Females	54 (13)	Fourth	46 (11)	9	46 (11)
Race		Fifth	25 (6)	10	25 (6)
African American	17 (4)			11	17 (4)
American Indian	4 (1)				
Asian	4 (1)				
Caucasian	58 (14)				
Hispanic	4 (1)				
Other	13 (3)				

N = 24

CATCH Summary of Findings

Measure	Pre-Test Mean	Post-Test Mean	Mean Difference	% Change	t Value	df	p
Food Knowledge	19.13	23.63	4.50	24%	3.72*	23	< .05
Food Attitudes: Self-Efficacy	15.48	19.33	3.87	25%	4.72*	22	< .05
Food Attitudes: Intentions to Reduce Fat	9.67	13.54	3.88	40%	12.10*	23	< .05
Food Attitudes: Intentions to Drink Skim Milk	1.17	2.00	.83	71%	10.72*	23	< .05
Healthy Eating Behaviors: Reducing Fat	1.42	1.08	-.33	-23%	-.92	23	.37
Healthy Eating Behaviors: Eating Fiber	2.17	1.67	-.50	-23%	-1.63	23	.12
Healthy Eating Behaviors: Eating Fruits and Vegetables	9.43	8.08	-1.30	-14%	-2.42*	22	< .05
Healthy Eating Behaviors: Reading Labels	.67	.92	.25	37%	1.66	23	.11
Physical Activity Attitudes	5.83	7.13	1.29	22%	2.78*	23	< .05
Physical Activity Behavior	1.00	.79	-.21	-27%	-2.46*	23	< .05
Screen Time Behaviors: Weekday TV Viewing	4.92	3.54	1.38	28%	-2.62*	23	< .05
Screen Time Behaviors: Weekend TV Viewing	4.88	3.79	-.71	-15%	-1.73	23	.10
Screen Time Behaviors: Weekday Video Gaming	1.63	1.50	-.13	-8%	-.31	23	.76
Screen Time Behaviors: Weekend Video Gaming	1.42	1.63	.21	15%	.59	23	.56

*Statistically significant finding

Media-Smart Youth: Eat, Think, and Be Active!

The Springfield-Greene County Park and Recreation implemented Media-Smart Youth twice at the beginning of 2006. The 10-lesson curriculum focuses on helping 11–13-year-olds understand the connections between media and health, and concludes with the Big Production where students apply their new skills to create a media project to help motivate other young people to take action for better health. The sessions were held in an elementary school and a middle school reaching 5th and 6th graders that met for one and one-half hours, once a week, for ten weeks. The kids really enjoyed making their own video, as well as the supermarket trip where they participated in a scavenger hunt.

An analysis of 18 respondent surveys suggested positive movement toward *We Can!* objectives related to **nutrition knowledge, food attitudes, and physical activity knowledge and attitudes**; however, these findings were not statistically significant.

MSY Curriculum Demographic Characteristics

Characteristics	% n	Characteristics	% n	Characteristics	% n
Gender		Grade		Age	
Males	39 (7)	Fifth	61 (11)	10	17 (3)
Females	61 (11)	Sixth	39 (7)	11	44 (8)
Race				12	39 (7)
African American	6 (1)				
Asian	28 (5)				
Caucasian	67 (12)				

N = 18

MSY Summary of Findings

Measure	Pre-Test Mean	Post-Test Mean	Mean Difference	Percent Change	t Value	df	p
Nutrition Knowledge	12.91	12.71	.33	3%	.38	2	.74
Food Attitudes	22.38	27.71	3.58	16%	1.26	11	.23
Physical Activity Knowledge	4.13	4.56	.11	3%	.17	8	.87
Physical Activity Attitudes	10.65	12.25	1.87	18%	1.67	14	.12

