



Gary Youth Services Bureau and Park Recreation

Gary, Indiana

Intensive Site

“Being a part of the national program gave our efforts the integrity needed to get others a little more focused on what we were doing, which then gave us a chance to talk about the concerns in Gary.”

Description

The Gary Youth Services Bureau and Park Recreation was a national Hearts N’ Parks Magnet Site for three years. During that time, it implemented programs that focused on healthy eating education and physical activity for youths and senior citizens. These efforts, conducted in afterschool sites and summer recreation sites and with community youth sport programs, led to an easy transition when becoming a **We Can!** Intensive Site.

Key Site Successes:

- Leveraged the strong reputation and familiarity of **We Can!** to grow its involvement in community obesity prevention efforts. **We Can!** opened doors to new settings, participants, and sponsors. The program helped Gary increase the number of program participants by 500 percent.
- As a Hearts N’ Parks site, Gary did not work with partners; however, **We Can!** facilitated partnership development that allowed Gary to extend its promotion efforts. Along with its new partners, Gary was able to create a “Fitness Zone” to raise awareness and promote wellness, including offering more prizes and giveaways.

Community Outreach

Gary coordinated several activities to promote **We Can!**, and the site reached out to its community to support its activities. Gary worked with the local health department, a community fitness center, and its other partners to promote **We Can!** through its community events. The site was able to generate additional awareness through local radio and television coverage of its kickoff event.

Community Events

We Can! Kickoff (June 2005). Gary officially kicked off its ***We Can!*** program with an end of school event in Tolleston Park. Nearly 100 kids and adults attended the action-packed day that included arts and crafts, clowns, fitness workouts, refreshments, prizes, and giveaways. This event provided a great opportunity for Gary to distribute ***We Can!*** materials and other wellness-promotion resources. Some of the partners, Gary Youth Services Bureau, Gary Park and Recreation, a local fitness center, and the local health department, chipped in and provided materials, snacks, and a fitness expert to answer questions and lead activities. The well-attended event received local radio and television coverage and kicked off a great summer of ***We Can!*** programs.

Green Gary (April 2006). Through a collaborative effort with its partners, Gary participated in the coordination of this environmental and wellness event that promoted outdoor physical activity. More than 150 community members attended the event at Marquette Park and Beach and participated in activities such as bike riding, hiking, and walking. A variety of organizations exhibited information about how to be more active, and attendees learned about ***We Can!*** Children received ***We Can!*** wristbands and toy giveaways after completing physical fitness activities like jump rope, hula hoops, and running games. Parents received wristbands, parent handbooks, and recipe books after completing a wellness survey. With materials and staff support from its partners—Gary Parks and Recreation, Gary Youths Services Bureau, and the National Park Service—the site provided a fun-filled and active day to an eager crowd.

Youth Services and Park Recreation Challenge Day (We Can! Health and Fitness Day) (June 2006). This wellness event, which coincided with the one-year anniversary of ***We Can!***, was hosted in partnership with the Youth Services Bureau, the local health department, and Gary Parks and Recreation and offered healthy snacks, games, and giveaways to more than 100 attendees. Most of the participants were youths and families who had participated in Youth Services' programs. Attendees received giveaways—water bottles, T-shirts, educational materials, and ***We Can!*** wristbands after completing a series of physical challenges and playing nutrition information games.

Media Outreach

Community members learned more about the Gary site and its activities, including its kickoff event in June 2006, though local radio and television media coverage.

Partnerships

Gary formed partnerships with five local organizations that provided support to its programs and efforts. **Strack and Van Til/Key Market**, a supermarket, provided gift certificates for snacks. **Subway®** provided healthy snacks for classes. **Main Sporting Goods**, a local sports vendor, provided fitness items for door prizes and printed ***We Can!*** T-shirts. **Ivy Tech College**, a local educational institution, helped distribute information and provided culinary staff for classes. **WGVE/Radio/Gary School Corporation**, the school media center, provided instruction and support to the site when it produced its Media-Smart Youth commercials. Proud to work with these partners, Gary listed each of them on its ***We Can!*** promotional T-shirts and program materials. Gary also formed a partnership with the Purdue Food Extension Services that later conducted a nutrition camp during July for Gary youths in summer recreation.

Parent and Youth Curricula

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

Gary began its implementation in June 2006 with a group of five parents; some additional parents dropped in for a few sessions, but did not complete the course. This motivated the Gary site to reexamine how to increase participation. The site reached out to parents who had children that were participating in a CATCH Kids Club Curriculum at another site, but that attempt was not successful. Another inspiration was to target a local fitness center where kids were participating in Media-Smart Youth, and that idea paid off with new recruits. Gary implemented the Parent Curriculum at the Youths Services afterschool facility where participants met three days each week for two weeks.

Gary utilized local staff resources by working with a local, community college culinary program. The site was able to enlist chefs from the program to provide in-class demonstrations of healthy cooking. These instructional and engaging lessons provided the Curriculum participants with helpful ideas and tips that they could put into practice at their homes. The participants said they really enjoyed the program and the way that Gary organized the lessons. In addition to the local chefs teaching the nutrition components, Gary employed fitness specialists to lead the adults in physical activity breaks to get the participants “up and moving” after the educational lessons. The parents’ interest was piqued by the Portion Distortion lesson, as well as the information about the amount of sugar, fat, and salt in common foods, and they all appreciated the Parent Curriculum workbook.

Although not statistically significant, an analysis of five respondent surveys showed movement toward *We Can!* program objectives related to **energy balance attitudes; portion size attitudes and behaviors; healthy eating knowledge, attitudes and behaviors; healthy food behaviors; screen time knowledge, attitudes, and behaviors; and physical activity knowledge, attitudes and behaviors.**

Parent Curriculum Demographic Characteristics

Characteristics	% (n)	Characteristics	% (n)	Characteristics	% (n)
Gender		Age		Adults in Household	
Males	20 (1)	18-25	20 (1)	1	40 (2)
Females	80 (4)	26-35	60 (3)	2 or more	60 (3)
Race		Ethnicity		Education Level	
African American	100 (5)	Non-Hispanic	100 (5)	High school graduate	20 (1)
				Some college	60 (3)
				College degree	20 (1)

N = 5

Summary of Parent Curriculum Findings

Measure	Pre-Test Mean	Post-Test Mean	Mean Difference	Percent Change	t Value	df	p
Energy Balance Knowledge	2.40	2.20	-.20	-8%	-1.00	4	.37
Energy Balance Attitudes	6.60	8.00	1.40	21%	1.06	4	.35
Portion Size Knowledge	1.40	1.20	-.20	-14%	-.41	4	.70
Portion Size Attitudes	3.80	4.40	.60	16%	1.50	4	.21
Portion Size Behaviors	5.60	7.60	2.00	36%	1.22	4	.29
Healthy Eating Knowledge	2.00	2.80	.80	40%	1.21	4	.29
Healthy Eating Attitudes	10.60	12.60	2.00	19%	1.91	4	.13
Healthy Eating Behaviors	19.20	21.80	2.60	14%	1.29	4	.27
Healthy Food Behaviors	9.80	12.60	2.80	29%	1.79	4	.15
Physical Activity Knowledge	1.80	2.50	.50	28%	.78	3	.50
Physical Activity Attitudes	18.60	24.50	5.25	28%	1.40	3	.26
Physical Activity Behaviors	17.40	20.40	3.00	17%	1.20	4	.30
Screen Time Knowledge	1.40	2.40	1.00	71%	1.12	4	.33
Screen Time Attitudes	8.80	12.00	3.20	36%	2.19	4	.09
Screen Time Behaviors	9.80	13.80	1.20	12%	1.81	4	.15

CATCH Kids Club

Gary completed three CATCH Kids Club implementations—one at its summer program at Youth Services Recreation, one at its summer program at Parks Summer Recreation, and one in an afterschool setting in the Simmons Afterschool Program. At each location, students met daily and engaged in the educational lessons two times each week and participated in the physical activities and games during the rest of the week. Many of the kids involved in these implementations recognized much of the information and activities from previous programs when Gary was a Hearts N’ Parks Magnet Site, but they still enjoyed participating. The CATCH Kids Club programs were another example of how Gary tapped into its community resources; they used college students to manage the afterschool program.

An analysis of 32 respondent surveys found statistically significant improvement on 11 of 14 measured constructs related to **food knowledge; food attitudes: self-efficacy, intentions to reduce fat, and intentions to drink skim milk; healthy eating behaviors: eating fiber, eating fruits and vegetables, and reading labels; physical activity attitudes; and screen time behaviors: weekday TV viewing, weekend TV viewing, and weekday video gaming**. By the end of the CATCH curriculum youths knowledge of healthy eating habits including knowing how many servings of fruits and vegetables should be eaten each day, positive attitudes towards healthy eating habits such as drinking low fat or skim milk instead of whole milk, intentions to limit intake of high-fat foods and energy-dense foods, and positive attitudes toward exercise such as making sure to be physically active multiple times a week increased. Youths increased healthy eating behaviors such as eating fiber and fruits and vegetables and decreased screen time behaviors. The analysis also suggested positive movement toward *We Can!* objectives related to decreased **screen time behaviors: weekend video gaming**; however, this was not statistically significant.

CATCH Curriculum Demographic Characteristics

Characteristics		% (n)	Characteristics		% (n)	Characteristics		% (n)
Gender			Grade			Age		
Males		47 (15)	Second		13 (4)	8		22 (7)
Females		53 (17)	Third		22 (7)	9		25 (8)
Race			Fourth		31 (10)	10		31 (10)
African American		97 (31)	Fifth		19 (6)	11		13 (4)
Caucasian		3 (1)	Sixth		9 (3)	12		6 (2)
			Seventh		6 (2)	13		3 (1)

N = 32

CATCH Summary of Findings

Measure	Pre-Test Mean	Post-Test Mean	Mean Difference	% Change	t Value	df	p
Food Knowledge	20.97	24.22	3.06	15%	2.34*	30	< .05
Food Attitudes: Self-Efficacy	15.00	17.63	2.63	18%	4.26*	31	< .05
Food Attitudes: Intentions to Reduce Fat	10.86	13.19	2.36	22%	4.27*	27	< .05
Food Attitudes: Intentions to Drink Skim Milk	1.31	1.66	.34	26%	3.57*	31	< .05
Healthy Eating Behaviors: Reducing Fat	1.91	1.28	-.63	-33%	-2.92*	31	< .05
Healthy Eating Behaviors: Eating Fiber	1.94	2.25	.31	16%	2.99*	31	< .05
Healthy Eating Behaviors: Eating Fruits and Vegetables	8.91	10.70	1.77	20%	4.51*	29	< .05
Healthy Eating Behaviors: Reading Labels	.94	1.25	.31	33%	3.30*	31	< .05
Physical Activity Attitudes	6.10	7.09	.97	16%	3.99*	29	< .05
Physical Activity Behavior	.78	.94	-.16	-21%	-1.97	31	.06
Screen Time Behaviors: Weekday TV Viewing	5.59	4.91	-.69	-12%	-4.03*	31	< .05
Screen Time Behaviors: Weekend TV Viewing	5.13	4.53	-.68	-13%	-2.53*	30	< .05
Screen Time Behaviors: Weekday Video Gaming	1.81	1.56	-.25	-14%	-2.49*	31	< .05
Screen Time Behaviors: Weekend Video Gaming	1.75	1.69	.06	3%	-.63	31	.54

*Statistically significant finding

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

Gary completed one implementation of the Media-Smart Youth Curriculum. This successful implementation was led by an intern who had a background in media. This expertise helped her communicate and work with the group of girls that enrolled in the program all of whom were participating in a local cheerleading camp and were very media savvy. The group completed the curriculum in two weeks, during seven sessions. The participants created a radio public service announcement for their final project that focused on healthy choices and shopping habits and was intended for airplay on the local high school radio station. No data were available for analysis.

