



Benton County Healthy Weight and Lifestyle Coalition

Corvallis, Oregon

Intensive Site

*“[We like] the credibility part and the quality of the materials. The umbrella of **We Can!** has the potential to pull partners together. It’s a positive thing; people want to be part of it. In small communities it’s about relationships. My relationship with the Park and Rec has broadened. The community has this need to pull together.”*

Description

The Benton County Healthy Weight and Lifestyle Coalition, formed in December 2001, is comprised of 22 community members and partner agencies. The coalition brings together individuals, families, communities, businesses, schools, worksites, healthcare systems, organizations, and city and county governments. Together, they work to improve the health of Benton County residents and reduce the risk of chronic diseases through daily physical activity and healthy eating. The Benton County site added **We Can!** to its effort to support healthy choices through policy promotion and environmental changes in 2005. Along with its extensive coalition, Benton County provided its community with a variety of events and youth and adult education programs.

Key Site Successes:

- Halloween Party
- PSA development
- Library, Park and Recreation and Public Health collaboration
- Implementation in rural area

Community Outreach

Benton County was successful at getting its community involved in **We Can!**—including schools, libraries, universities, and parents—to adopt the healthy attitudes and behaviors that the program promotes. The site participated in seven community events that attracted more than 1,000 community members, generated local media coverage, and strengthened partnerships with 16 organizations in its community.

Community Events

Children's Halloween Party (October 2005). Benton County really got its community involved when it turned a traditional “trick-or-treat” event into a **We Can!** event. The site worked with Samaritan Regional Medical Center No #1, a **We Can!** partner, to promote the event by placing 50 table tents describing **We Can!** and the Halloween event in the hospital cafeteria. Nearly 700 community members, who were encouraged to dress up in costumes, turned out for the party held at the Corvallis Public Library. Each attendee was thrilled to receive a **We Can!** flashing light for the back of his or her bike that said “**We Can!** Get Active.” The site recruited teenage volunteers to interact with the younger kids and distribute wristbands with the **We Can!** goals and purpose attached. Everyone enjoyed healthy snacks and drinks, like popcorn and trail mix, instead of candy.

Turn-Off TV (April 2006). For one week in April, Benton County encouraged parents and children to learn more about the effects of television viewing on children's health. Benton County worked with its partner, Oregon State University Extension Services, to provide valuable information, as well as fun activities to kick off the week. The site issued a press release to raise media awareness, and the event was featured in the *Corvallis Gazette-Times*, with an article that lauded Benton County's efforts.

We Can! Aquatic Center Challenge (April 2006). During Spring Break 2006, Benton County partnered with the Corvallis Park and Recreation Aquatic Center to offer the **We Can!** Aquatic Center Challenge. Promoted by local **We Can!** efforts, the event established a **We Can!** exhibit at a local city pool and challenged community members to log personal swim time in exchange for free facility passes. A number of community members participated in the challenge, learning about the benefits of tracking daily physical activity and the overall importance of energy balance.

Get Real, Get Fit Festivals (June 2006). Through its partnership with the Alsea, Monroe, Philomath, and Corvallis libraries, along with Benton County Parks and Recreation and the Public Health Department, the Benton County site promoted teen health to nearly 200 parents and youth. The site coordinated four Get Real, Get Fit events—one at each library during the month of June. These events also launched the teen summer reading program and the Corvallis Parks and Recreation activity guide. Attendees received door prizes, including bike lights, carabiners, and healthy food.



Building healthier communities together

Media Outreach

Benton County placed three articles in the *Corvallis Gazette-Times*, issued a press release, received local radio airtime, and ran its PSA on the local cable channel, for three months. The PSA included a tag line for the **We Can!** events. It also advertised its programs in the Corvallis Parks and Recreation activity guide. **We Can!** events were advertised in school newsletters.

Partnerships

Benton County's site organizers were already a part of an extensive coalition with 16 partners that contributed to the success of the site's activities and efforts. Many members of the **Healthy Weight and Lifestyle Coalition** participated as **We Can!** partners, including the



Benton County Health Department, which provided funding (\$800), and the **Corvallis Clinic**, which provided a \$100 donation for food and childcare during Parent Curriculum sessions. In addition, **Corvallis Parks and Recreation** and **Samaritan Health Services** coordinated a meeting with Comcast to film the Media-Smart Youth public service announcement (PSA) and provided funding to purchase broadcast time to air the PSA (\$2,500) and to purchase and distribute *We Can!* parent handbooks and wristbands (\$2,500). The **Willamette Dietician Association** also provided funding.

In addition to the coalition members, Benton County partnered with numerous groups including **Corvallis Parks and Recreation**, the **Corvallis-Benton Library**, and **three branch libraries** to coordinate their Get Real, Get Fit community events. These events were funded through a Libraries of the Future grant. **Nickelodeon TV** provided a Get Real, Get Fit series videotape for the events. **Benton County Extension Services** (of **Oregon State University**) participated in community events and provided staff support for teaching the parent education sessions. The **Cheldelin Middle School** allowed Benton County to advertise in its parent newsletter and use display cases to showcase materials that students created as part of the Media-Smart Youth Curriculum. It also provided space for class facilitation. The **Invale Elementary School** helped the site facilitate its Media-Smart Youth implementation. The site received staff support from the **Philomath Rural Parenting Initiative** in the form of funding for meals and childcare during parent classes in rural settings. The **Oregon Dairy Council** provided materials for events. The **Good Samaritan Foundation** gave financial support for a media campaign with a local cable network (Comcast) and to purchase additional parent handbooks. The Foundation also promoted classes and events to its 1,500 employees.

Parent and Youth Curricula

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

Benton County attempted three implementations of the six-lesson *We Can!* Parent Curriculum—developed by *We Can!* specifically for parents and caregivers—but experienced barriers in recruitment and retention, forcing the classes to be canceled. The site then modified the curriculum to a four-lesson program and successfully implemented it at an Even Start program with 16 female participants. To condense the program, the facilitator combined some of the lesson components to create four one-hour sessions. No parent data were available for analysis.

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

The Benton County Healthy Weight and Lifestyle Coalition implemented Media-Smart Youth—a 10-lesson curriculum developed by the National Institute for Child Health and Human Development that focuses on helping 11–13-year-olds understand the connections between media and health—five times at three elementary schools, one middle school, and a parks and recreation center. At all locations, a total of 87 participants met once a week for 90 minutes. Benton County involved Comcast, who filmed the PSA.



An analysis of 31 respondent surveys including 11 girls and 20 boys, from the January 2006 and April 2006 implementations at **Invale Elementary School** suggested positive movement of **physical activity attitudes** supporting *We Can!* objectives.

MSY Curriculum Demographic Characteristics

Characteristics	% n	Characteristics	% n	Characteristics	% n
Gender		Grade		Age	
Males	65 (20)	Sixth	32 (10)	11	10 (3)
Females	36 (11)	Seventh	29 (9)	12	29 (9)
Race		Eighth	39 (12)	13	29 (9)
Asian	3 (1)			14	26 (8)
Caucasian	94 (29)			15	3 (1)
Other	3 (1)				

N = 31

MSY Summary of Findings

Measure	Pre-Test Mean	Post-Test Mean	Mean Difference	Percent Change	t Value	df	p
Nutrition Knowledge	16.15	15.80	-.09	1%	-.17	22	.87
Food Attitudes	24.20	22.96	-1.40	6%	-1.27	24	.22
Physical Activity Knowledge	6.57	6.47	-.10	-2%	-.29	28	.78
Physical Activity Attitudes	11.34	11.87	.52	1%	.99	28	.33

