

## The Maine Event: The *We Can!*<sup>®</sup> Debut Made For One Busy Summer!

It was an eventful summer in the great state of Maine, and *We Can!* was the main attraction, with *We Can!* community site additions and a surge of *We Can!* activity.

It all started this past spring when the University of Maine Cooperative Extension hosted a *We Can!* training in Augusta, which attracted over 100 participants. Prior to the training, Alan Majka, MS, RD, Assistant Extension Professor at the University, worked to coordinate a *We Can!* coalition with local organizations, partners, and surrounding counties to promote healthy lifestyle choices to residents. Since the successful training, *We Can!* has spread throughout the state at warp speed.

In June, Washington County joined as the first *We Can!* County in the state, and was quickly followed by Kennebec County, with others set to join. Additionally, two general community sites in Maine joined the *We Can!* program this summer.

Currently, in Kennebec County, Majka is working with sixth-grade teachers at Waterville Junior High School to implement *Media-Smart Youth: Eat, Think, and Be Active!*<sup>®</sup>, and his colleague, Wendy Lagasse, is using the S.M.A.R.T. program with third-graders in Waterville. Majka is also using CATCH Kids Club to improve physical activity and nutrition education in three afterschool programs that serve high-risk youth.

In Washington County, Eleody Libby is working with several local organizations and partners to implement a variety of activities, including youth and parent education sessions, afterschool programs, events that promote physical activity and healthy lifestyles, and family cooking classes. Additionally, Kristie LeBlanc of Somerset Heart Health is working with Majka and local school systems to implement *We Can!* youth and adult curricula.

Community sites in Maine have accomplished a great deal, and they are just getting started! Majka, who acts as the statewide coordinator for *We Can!*, is planning for more curricula implementation, more community site additions, and continued promotion of the *We Can!* program at events and conferences throughout the state. Stay tuned to see which Maine County carries the *We Can!* torch next!



From left to right:

**Renee Page**, School/Youth Program Manager, Healthy Communities of the Capital Area

**George M. Jabar, II**, Kennebec County Commissioner, District 3

**Nancy G. Rines**, Chairman, Kennebec County Commissioner, District 2

**Beverly Daggett**, Kennebec County Commissioner, District 1

**Alan Majka**, Assistant Extension Professor, University of Maine Cooperative Extension

# Charles County Trio Proves that Good Things Do Come in Threes

Do good things come in threes? In Charles County, Maryland, that is proving to be the case.

The Charles County Department of Health, Charles County Parks and Recreation, and Civista Medical Center recently teamed up to help families in their community live healthy and have fun while doing it! The partner trio began using **We Can!** in July of 2009 when they received a Maryland Department of Health grant.

“It just seemed natural for us to all to work together,” said Linda Thomas, Program Manager at the Charles County Department of Health. “We all contribute different resources and bring our tools to the table to really make it happen.”

And Charles County really has been making things happen—and the successful partnership is only the start. Since beginning their work with **We Can!**, Charles County has experienced success in three major areas, including **We Can!** events, curriculum implementation, and local media coverage.

This past spring the trio sponsored a **We Can!** Night Out at the Southern Maryland Blue Crabs professional baseball game. At the event, the organizations hosted a **We Can!** information table, had a **We Can!** family throw the first pitch, and even had GO, SLOW, and WHOA messages displayed for the 800 game attendees on the stadium’s jumbotron. Additionally, the Charles County **We Can!** trio has hosted a series of other community events, including swim nights, hikes, triathlons, and 5K family fun runs.

Charles County also takes a three-pronged approach to making a difference in their community by engaging three different audiences: health professionals, youth, and parents and caregivers. To recruit participants for their **We Can!** classes, Thomas and her colleagues from the Charles County Health Department traveled to several local pediatricians’ offices, sat in waiting rooms, and persuaded doctors to recommend the classes to at-risk patients and their families. Soon after, the phone was ringing off the hook.

“Several times, a doctor would have a patient and the patient’s parent in his office, and would call during the appointment to sign the family up for our classes,” said Joyce Riggs, Director, Community Development and Planning, Public Information Officer at Civista Health. “Patients would also walk into their doctors’ offices waving the **We Can!** flyer [that advertised the classes], wanting to know more about the program.”

Health professionals are also involved in all of the classes. A pediatrician, a dietician, a counselor, a school nurse, and an exercise physiologist attend most of the sessions to provide content expertise and to help with the various sections of the classes, which are comprised of both kids and their parents.

“We really encourage the whole family to come to the classes,” said Riggs.

Radio PSAs, PSAs on the local cable television channel, ads in the local paper, and outreach through the Health Department and the hospital also help to capture community residents’ attention. All of the outreach efforts seem to work, since most of the events are packed and a total of 40 people (from 25 families) are registered for the fall **We Can!** class. One thing is for sure: there is no shortage of **We Can!** activity in Charles County.



Making trail mix after **We Can!** ‘Family Swim Night’

