

I-Can Collaboration in Springfield, Massachusetts

The Black Men of Greater

Springfield Inc. (BMBS), a notfor profit organization, conducted the Amer-I-Can program during the 2006-2007 school year. The funding came from a grant sponsored by the Massachusetts Department of Education. State Representative Benjamin Swan has been a longtime supporter and advocate for I-Can and BMGS.

The program operated under the auspices of the New England Amer-ICan Program (managed by I-Can Programs President Dean Renfrow).

Renfrow provided the facilitator's training, general program support, and end of the year student evaluation/research. The I-Can Facilitators consisted of men and women from a wide range of personal and professional experiences; corrections, law enforcement, health management, community services and a formerly incarcerated educator.

The six I-Can groups served 85 students and operated from the Department of Youth Services, the Springfield Boy & Girls Club, the Massachusetts Career Development Institute and the Springfield Family Center. In addition to the life management skills curriculum, the students participated in field experiences at the University of Massachusetts, Smith College, the Basketball Hall of Fame, Career Day and other special events. These students also interacted with other kids from various development programs in the span of the school year.

The after care component will be conducted this summer; I-Can programs will be available to the students at area community centers. These programs have been designed, funded, and operated by I-Can Facilitators, staff and community centers staff.

Rep. Swan has proposed funding for the I-Can Program for the up-coming fiscal year. The BMGS plans to extend the program to additional groups and organizations. Lt. William E. Blatch of the Massachusetts State Police, President of BMGS, and one of the ICan Facilitators agreed that: "It is the intentions of the BMGS to continue spreading the Amer-I-Can Program throughout Greater Springfield, and to support its students with more programs provided by the BMGS and its many partners."